



# Painting the Rainbow Newsletter

<http://www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk>

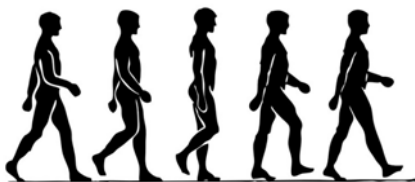
## Community Based Tai Chi & Chi-Kung for everyone

*Improvement cannot always be measured, it is something you feel*

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### WALK OFF YOUR ARTHRITIS.



Researchers from Boston University have published a paper with the results of their two year study on almost 1,800 men and women with osteoarthritis of the knee or judged to be at risk of it. Some 8 million people in Britain have osteoarthritis, the most common form of joint disease.

Stiff, swollen and painful joints can make walking difficult. Everyday activities can be a struggle. The participants in the study aged between 50 and 79, wore pedometers for a week and the number of steps they took each day was logged. Their walking speed was logged. Their walking speed was timed and they filled in a questionnaire about how easy they found tasks such as walking and dressing.

They filled in the form again two years later and underwent a second walking test, to check test, to check if they had slowed down.

Few of those who had clocked up more than 3,000 steps a day (roughly a mile and a half) had dramatically worsened. And walking at least 6,000 steps was particularly beneficial, the journal *Arthritis Care & Research* reports.

The results could not be explained simply by those who were fittest at the start of the study declining more slowly than others, researchers said.

Overall, the more the adults walked, the better off they were two years later.

Each extra 1,000 steps cut the odds of a big reduction in mobility by almost 20 per cent—probably by keeping the joints lubricated.

Dr Daniel White a researcher said “There is no need for people to go to the gym—steps taken during activities such as commuting, housework and gardening all count.” He continued “As clinicians, we should be promoting walking in our patients with knee osteoarthritis. We should have them measure their physical activity with a pedometer, much like people monitor their weight with a scale.” Professor Alan Silman, of Arthritis Research UK said; “Exercise such as walking is vitally important for people with osteoarthritis of the knee, as long as they wear sensible trainer-type shoes with soft, thick soles and pace themselves. Using a walking stick can also help to reduce pain.” He added “Many older people are worried walking will make their osteoarthritis worse, but we want to encourage them to keep doing the things they love”. (like maybe Tai Chi?)



### STRANGE BUT TRUE JOINT POINTS

A few things you may not know about bones and joints——

By the time a foetus is four months old, its joints and limbs are in working order and ready to move.

A newborn baby has 350 bones, many of which fuse to form the 206 bones of the adult body.

Cartilage is 65-85 per cent water. (The amount of water in your cartilage generally decreases as you get older.)

When you run, the pressure on your knees can increase to ten times your body weight.

Not a single man-made substance is more resilient, a better shock absorber, or lower in friction than cartilage.



### The Natural Foot

While I was waiting for a mot on my car I picked up a magazine in the waiting room that just happened to be on top of the pile, it was a copy of the times eureka supplement, as I was browsing through it when an article about natural running caught my attention.

The article was about a study that had been carried out as to why 79% of people that run get injured, and that modern running shoe design is contributing to a problem to quote the article.

“Millions of years of human development that have honed our ability to run have been largely ignored in the last four decades?”

It went on to compare the San people who still run bare foot and have no word for knee degeneration and endurance injury’s are rare; elsewhere however studies have shown that between 20% and 79% of most other long distance runners suffer a lower extremity injury each year. Are shoes to blame?

The article then goes on to compare how shod runners heel strike when running and bare foot runners land on the forefoot which is less stress full to the knee. This is when what was described all began to sound familiar and struck me how principal methods we use in tai chi apply to so many different activities that we undertake on a daily basis .

Further reading of the article stated the training methods that were recommended to improve the running gait starting with “The key to this is the feedback system linking the feet to the brain which enables the body to adjust and control shock absorption”.

Not all people who run shod suffer injury and have adapted to shod running and suffer no problems but those who do would properly benefit from changing the way they run

The article then goes on to describe how Dr Dave Clarke and Darren James at London South Bank University are researching barefoot walking and are believers in retraining our feet to walk properly before we can run. “We want to train the foot to appreciate more information”. Says James.

What is described next as a method to retrain the feedback in the feet you will have heard this every week at a tai chi lesson, William Chen has written an article about it called The Three Nails. Does this sound familiar.

1. Practice on a variety of surfaces your brain and feet will start to communicate,
2. Posture is everything.
3. Keep your chest and head upright be stable but untensed,
4. Take shorter strides and try to make your steps quieter,
5. Your weight should move from heel to big toe in one smooth motion.
6. Be patient

We practice this at all times when we are engaged in tai chi practice but this is a natural way to perform everyday tasks such as walking running shopping, etc.

So next time you practice beginning at the start of your form and as you shift the weight to ward-off left and ward-off right appreciate the information you receive from your feet and feel the changes in your feet as your balance shifts around in your foot . Perhaps all the researchers needed to do was attend their local tai chi class as you all know the root of tai chi is in the foot.



### BREATHING AND THE MIND

I always begin my Tai Chi practice with a deep exhalation, to remove the carbon dioxide from the lungs, clear away scattered thoughts from the mind.

A gentle inhalation takes place, awareness increases, fingers are energized, palms are raised upward and outward, until a Tai Chi posture is formed. The mind is fully awake and the lungs are filled with oxygen.

When the lungs need to release carbon dioxide, exhalation naturally follows.

With a slow deflation of energy, the palms gradually fall downward and move inward.

Expel all wasted air and all anxious thoughts are reduced, my hips are relaxed again and the posture is dissolved. There is plenty of room for incoming oxygen after slow and long inhalations. The slow motion practice of Tai Chi Chuan gives us a sufficient supply of oxygen for all body cell needs.

When we are happy, we inhale, the upper torso straightens when we are cheerful.

When we are unhappy, we exhale and our body sags.

The mind, body and breathing interact together.

When the mind begins to think, we inhale. Mind and body energize each other as active thoughts cause mind and body movements.

These are natural interactions. Breathing regulates the thought and alertness of the mind. Inhalation will increase thoughts or awareness in the mind, and exhalation help reduce the thoughts and awareness decreases.

The alertness and awareness pattern changes while a person is in deep sleep, when he takes in oxygen, it helps increase the awareness or stimulate alertness, as we exhale, we are less aware and alert.

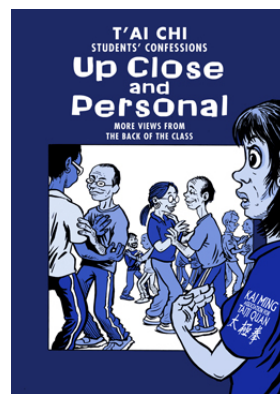
Therefore, breathing and awareness and physical movements correspond to each other.

Taken from –Breathing and Awareness of the Mind by William CC Chen.



**View From The Back Of The Class** now available on Kindle. It’s been a long journey but at long last our first tai chi book is now available on Kindle. If you’re interested please search on Amazon or email for a sample chapter and index page.

We are now working on volume 2 (**Tai Chi Up Close and Personal, more views from the back of the class**)



which will be available later this year and maybe even volume 3 not to long after that. We’d love to hear from you if you’d like to contribute to the books. The theme is to share experiences from different perspectives (student, teacher and even partner) as we feel this brings tai chi into reality and within the reach of everyone. Our books are not form instruction or technical manuals, but a fun and interesting look at our tai chi journey and experiences.

We’re looking for articles, poems, illustrations, both fun and serious, so everybody who’s life has been touched by tai chi has something to share.