



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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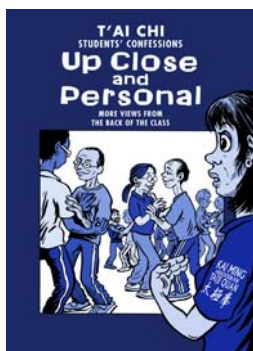
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Chinese New Year starts on 8th February and this year it is the year of the red monkey. The Year of the Monkey 2016 is a good year to break free and take calculated risks as there is nothing more powerful or rewarding than following your heart's desire. The energies are supporting these changes.

The most common Chinese ways of saying Happy New Year are Gong Xi Fa Cai (Mandarin) and Gong Hey Fat Choy (Cantonese).

This year looks to be an exciting one for us. We have published two tai chi books that are now selling internationally and the 3rd is 50% written so will be out later this year. You can order your copies from your tai chi instructor or via Amazon. Search for **Tai Chi: Students Confessions**.



Painting the Rainbow classes are growing as the tai chi in the park program expands, along with our work with AgeUK, Alzhiemers Society, local hospitals and more. We will be involved in a medical research project this year also so watch the newsletters and website for more information.

NB - Anybody interested in training us as a Painting the Rainbow tai chi instructor please let us know.

Have you got the spine for it?

Humans are among a very few animals that move through the world in an upright position. The position puts stresses on the spine not experienced by 4 legged animals. The natural curves in our spine are thus important in providing shock absorption and structural integrity during upright, seated or standing activities.

I remember when I first began training in tai chi and being told a few of the standard tai chi postural adjustments, one of which was "tuck your tailbone under and straighten you back" or words to that effect... but how correct is this? How is our spine designed to function?

Many people are unaware that, as humans, we have three natural spinal curves that are formed in early childhood. We are born with one continuous C-shaped curve. As infants, when we begin to raise our heads, and later, when we push up on our hands to crawl, the concave (or lordotic) curves of the neck (the cervical spine) and low back (the lumbar spine) are formed. The convex curve of the mid-back where the ribs attach (the thoracic spine) is left over from the original C-shaped curve. Please note, some children walk before they crawl and never fully develop the spinal curves. The person with resulting straight spine (referred to as the 'military spine') is prone to neck and back problems as well as headaches related to structural stress.

A healthy lower back depends on good structural alignment, unrestricted range of joint motion, maintenance of the lumbar curve, and the support of a sufficiently strong lower-back and abdominal muscles. The practice of good posture while standing and sitting, along with daily exercise to maintain muscle

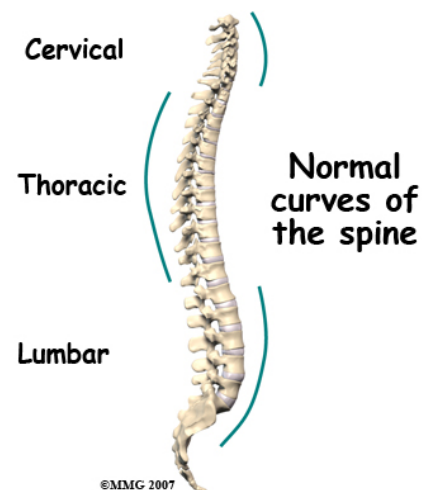
tone and joint movement, will help to reduce the risks of lower back injury.

Tucking the tailbone is contrary to good back health as it can flatten the spines lumbar curve., just as over-arching the lower back can put strain on vertebrae and cause tension in the back muscles. In the practice of tai chi form and push-hands the lower back with naturally tilt and release when changing weight and bending your knees. This action acts to mobilise the spine and feed the intervertebral discs which work similar to a sponge.

Releasing the lower-back may be a better description than 'tuck the tailbone' as it aids natural positioning and promotes good spinal health.

The correct spine curves both act as a shock absorber and spring-like compressive power for tai chi application in all areas of life.

Mark Peters



Ward off right with a zimmer frame

You can't put much weight at all on your left leg, and it's looking increasingly nasty every day. You can only move around between your chair, a commode, your bed and a wheelchair using this special zimmer frame that they've given you with wheels and armrests. You need to get up. You shuffle forward in your chair, bring your feet back so that they are straight below your knees – well the right knee anyway as the left won't bend that much. You reach for the zimmer, which is always next to your chair, and reposition it directly in front of you. You push down on your right foot as if there's a magnet under the floor pulling it down. At the same time, you push your hands down on the arms of your chair until you've risen up enough to be able to concentrate your balance on your right side, get your left arm onto the zimmer armrest quickly followed by your right arm and using the zimmer for support, straighten up.



Then you need to turn. Helped by the zimmer, you have to put some weight on your left leg while you turn your right foot to the right at the heel turning your waist and taking the zimmer round with you until it's facing that way. You transfer weight to the right, turn your left foot at the heel to face to the right also and you can move forward. It may take a few shuffle movements to do this, but on a good day you can do it in one sweep to the right. Having moved along, making sure that your good leg and your arms on the zimmer are taking most of the weight, you remember to stop and go through the same turning movements with your feet whenever you need to change direction. Then to sit down again, you have to do the process in reverse

with a sort of left heel kick once you've got yourself balanced enough to lower yourself down. A lot of the time you manage to remember all this, but luckily your daughter has been to Tai Chi instructor training sessions, and is always prepared to remind you how to lift yourself, as well as showing all the different carers how it works.

I'm very proud of my mum. She was a good student as long as she could remember which her bad leg was. Thanks to the repetition of this routine, she was able to live at home on her own for nearly four months with home care visits, district nurse support and family help. Visitors could let themselves in with a key safe, she could answer the phone, control the telly as long as she didn't pick up her recliner chair control instead, and watch the world go by from her chair. She smiled at us all a lot which was amazing.

So this is how Tai Chi principles all too recently related to my life outside the classroom. We could not have kept mum at home for so long without the help of this methodical way of thinking about movement. Sadly she had to leave her home when the cancer progressed too far, and she passed away six weeks later.

I don't think I could have coped with helping her patiently without the training I've had over the last five years, which I am very grateful for. I now look to it to help me focus on what I'm doing without my mind wandering so much ...

Now if I could just keep my feet facing the direction I'm going in ...

Jayne Wilson, Lichfield group

Take risks...
If you win you
will be happy
If you lose you
will be wise

Banish those aches and pains

When Doctors asked arthritis sufferers to do an hour-long tai chi class twice a week, they cut their pain levels by half in just 12 weeks, whereas people spending the same amount of time doing simple stretching exercise only reduced their pain levels by a fifth.

Patients with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia felt better and moved more easily after taking twice-weekly classes in Tai Chi. This was reported in Health Magazine in late 2011. "It was incredible," said lead study author Dr. Chenchen Wang, an associate professor of medicine in the rheumatology department at Tufts Medical Center in Boston. "You could see them change every week. They became very happy. I felt very, very excited to be with them."

It is great that more and more research is being done into tai chi to encourage its acceptance by the medical profession.



Tai Chi - The Way Forward

When first I started Tai Chi,
I wondered is this really for me.
By the postures I was truly confounded
And by the instructor, I felt
unnecessarily hounded.

My golden cock teetered quite badly
My snake creeps-down appeared little
more than an asp.
The concept of push-hands being
sparring,
I'm sorry, I really couldn't grasp.
We walked up and down in a very
strange way.
I thought what's this got to do with an
art.
I went as fast as I could up the hall,
Then *SIFU* said, get back to the *start!*