



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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Kai Ming club T-shirts New for 2012

The New T-shirts will be red with black print. For Chinese, the colour red is considered as a symbol of integrity which we feel fits in with the ethos of our club. They are **£10 each** and available in various sizes. Please place your order with your instructor. If you are interested in sweatshirts, fleeces, polo-shirts etc please ask for more details.



The Mindfulness of Tai Chi Chuan

Mindfulness is the miracle which calls back in a flash our dispersed mind and restore it to wholeness so that we can live each moment of life.

I was given a book recently by a friend that made me reconsider my focus a little. The book was called 'the miracle of mindfulness' and is a Zen manual for meditation. As I read and digested each page it reminded me of a Chinese proverb we've spoken of before, 'neglecting the near in search of the far'; but more than this it tells us to focus on each instant and

enjoy its detail. I will quote the Sutra of mindfulness and go from there:

When walking, the practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting, the practitioner must be conscious that he is sitting. When lying down, the practitioner must be conscious that he is lying down..... No matter what position ones body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position, Practising thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body...

Over the last few months we have been focusing on developing a natural root and 'whole body movement', not just in one direction but all directions, walking through some of the postures like lotus kick to pay attention to the potential of each step. To be aware that all parts are alive and vital, one must be mindful of the whole. Push hands is an act of nonresistance, of blending with all around you, and so is the form. To bask in each moment is the true glory of Tai Chi, to be aware of yourself and all around you will show you the wonders that life has to offer. But before you all start to run screaming "**Mad hippy**", know that Tai Chi is truly a martial art of amazing refinement, able to offer each of you with the patience, great rewards. If you doubt its martial practicality, try your instructor and wait for the bloody nose..... This months

issue is looking at refinement through awareness of each moment of each movement and each facet of tai chi should feed that refinement



The importance of the five loosening exercises from Master Huang Sheng Shyan. By Master Willie Lim

As exponents of the 37, from the Lineage of GM Cheng Man-Ching, the form needs to be looked at with an acute eye. Many an exponent thinks that learning the form means they are on the way there?! On the way there but how far ahead. little do people realise that within the 37 moves are hidden the 108. Where I am often asked? I change and mould as I move along the form that must be refined and refined.

How do I go about this? Master Huang has left us the five loosening exercises that with proper execution of them, and knowing where they fit into the form, we can refine the form and move ahead in the 37.

What do the loosening exercises involve? The Chinese translation is "Hue-Shou" meaning throwing hands, hence you get lead astray if you interpret as such."Throwing hand" is just a simple phrase to

describe the refinement that must go into the exercises when you perform them. The best way to understand how these exercise are performed is to look at two different analogies. Take rhythmic gymnastic where the girl plays with the ribbon; that is Tai chi at its best. The line you have to remember here is the girl never moves the ribbon. The next analogy is the weightlifter cleaning the weight. What is common here? Both are identical muscle activities. How do you relate one to the other and where are they the same? The same sequential motion of the muscles are in play.

This is what you have to look for when training the 5 loosening exercises, so they in turn fit into the 37 and refine the form. I believe today that without understanding these exercise one cannot develop “ting jing” or listening energy. Differentiate the straight from the curve, full and empty, connect and disconnect, torque and compression. These are some of the principals that are involved.

Take the rotation exercise or No.1 - What is involved? How do you differentiate the straight from the curve here? When is one arm full and the other empty. Does the body and the arm move at the same time? What are the joints that have to be lined up when one sits into one side? How is the arm 'brought' up and how is it let 'down'. Do I really move the arm? When does the caving of the body come in? Do I really cave in or do a “counter rotation cave in” (sink the chest, pluck the back). Where does the compression and the torque come in? There is more and more I could go on.....

This is how you have to look at the loosening exercise and in turn fit them in to your form to really

move on. Tai chi is based on simple principles that have to be honed into the body. It is never easy because it needs time and guidance from someone who is ahead of you to guide you along that path. Just look at master Huang on Youtube. Look at other tai chi Masters. Do they even ever come close to him. For your information master Huang is the one who taught the founder of Goju karate. Tai chi is a journey which is full of twist and turn. It is not as many think, collecting forms, while that has its place as well. Be critical of every small change and enjoy the journey, because it is a lifetimes work moulded into the 37.



FROM HUANG SHENG-SHYAN (HUANG XINGXIAN)

HOW SHOULD WE PRACTICE TAIJIQUAN IN ORDER TO REACH ACCURACY?

The gap between accurate and non-accurate achievement is wide. Remember the words of the ancient Taijiquan master Wang Zongyue, that the body must be naturally and vertically balanced, and that one must bear in mind the principles of being relaxed, rounded, and aware of the various parts of the body. During practice of the form, one must be careful, conscious or alert, observant, and must feel where one is moving. Otherwise there is form without

substance and deception of others. To achieve accuracy, the principles of Taijiquan must be followed, in addition to having correct methods of practice.

A good master is necessary, coupled with one's own constant research. The art must be learned progressively; one must be on firm ground first, before advancing to the next step.

Personal requirements are also important. One must be determined, confident, persevering, and motivated. One must have a secure means of livelihood and a normal environment; these, coupled with learning and practice, and a clear, thorough understanding of the principles—all this will lead to achievement of accuracy.

This is in contrast to those who want to learn fast, who concern themselves with the external forms and who learn and practice sporadically.

Those who hope to learn first and be corrected later, do not realize that this is worse than having a new person learn from scratch. Others take the principles of Taijiquan lightly or superficially and liken the art to a common exercise, drill, or dance.

All of these cases have form but no substances. One's body must be likened to a perfect machine where a wrong spare part will affect the operation of the machine. The founder of Taijiquan said, “achieving the Dao is important, acquiring skill in the art is secondary; but not learning my Dao, he is not my student”.

Therefore, also important are honesty, righteousness, and a good moral character.

For me this question and answer explains the importance of mindful practice without the distractions of life's daily worries, impatience or aims of self-aggrandisement. Once these are removed from the equation then

the body and mind can focus on developing the inner skills of taijiquan or as Willie calls it 'moulding into the form'. Steven Covey is often quoted as saying "begin with the end in mind" which can be applied here as 'practice with intention', what is your aim? To feel natural balance, to play the postures and see where they lead, to discover martial possibility, accuracy, to.... Well, whatever you choose! As GM Cheng says "form without function is no form at all". This does not mean just fighting, it to means what is your aim! To practice without intention is to play an empty dance; the classics are a guidebook of intentions you can play with as are Huang's 5 loosening exercises. Accuracy is not an outside shape its an inside feel; when the feel is right the shape and application becomes naturally correct. The advanced monthly classes I run aren't about learning new forms or techniques, they are about developing a deeper practical understanding of tai chi (Taijiquan) as a living art. What is your aim? You can change it by the way, as you no doubt will as you train more and more. An aim gives you the ability to develop accuracy, well how can you be accurate if you don't know what you're striving to be accurate at! The wonderful things is once you have planned your journeys end (the aim) you are free to enjoy the journey and discoveries made along the way.



Ben Lee's Story

My Tai Chi journey

I am the Instructor for the Bromsgrove Class.

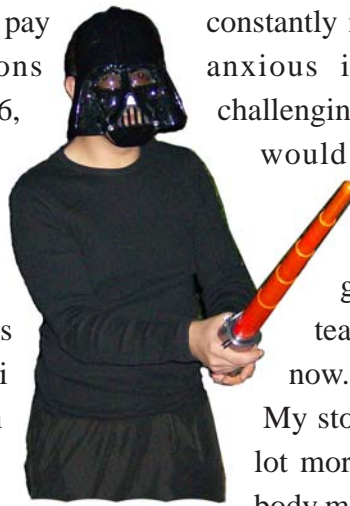
I started learning Tai Chi when I was 23. I am now 37. When I first started at Selly Oak Jenny Peters

told me I only needed to pay half price for lessons because I was under 16, if only I had retained those youthful looks!!! My entire life has been a very strange journey of discovery and it has been mirrored in my Tai Chi. Tai Chi has been immensely beneficial for me for reasons I will outline below.

When I was 28 I was diagnosed with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and recently I was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome (a type of Autism). I slipped through the net of the educational system in the UK. No one picked up my difficulties at School or at University even though they were quite apparent. In my earlier years I frequently went to my teachers for help but in the best cases they were unable to help me and in the worst cases they made me stand in the corner of the classroom and not participate in lessons.

When I was a baby my parents thought I was deaf because of my lack of interaction with the world and other people around me. They were unable to get any help as there was not even the medical knowledge around at that time of my condition to reach a diagnosis, let alone give them help and advice.

I did not make eye contact with people, because after I made eye contact with the wrong person at University I was set upon by 9 youths. I was also frightened of the down escalators as they were



constantly moving. I was always anxious in what I found a challenging situation. I certainly would not have thought I would be able to stand in front of a group of people and teach them Tai Chi as I do now.

My stoop has gone, I have a lot more confidence and My body movement is a lot better.

It is all down to my daily practice of Tai Chi. My shoes are size 8 now; believe it or not they were size 11 for many years due to my poor posture and balance. This is all thanks to Tai Chi.

I have also been studying NLP with Mark Peters and found it very rewarding. My advice to anyone considering learning NLP is go for it, you will be amazed how much it teaches you yourself and your interaction with those around you. As far as I know I am the only Qualified Tai Chi teacher and Accountant with my disabilities. Ultimately my journey has taught me that disability only means an inability to do something a certain way, tai chi has taught me new ways.

It has helped me with my studies, It has relaxed me, It has got me through 3 nervous breakdowns, an Employment tribunal and two episodes of depression.

Beginnings

My mum had started attending Mark and Jenny 's Tai Chi Class at Shenley court Hall in Selly Oak.

I was looking for a martial art where a smaller person with good



skill levels could defend themselves with confidence whatever the size or strength of the attacker. I wanted to feel safe when I was out and about.

I came along and Mark demonstrated the soft power of tai chi (fa-jing) on me and sent me flying backwards. That was when I started to get hooked. I wanted to learn how to do that. Kai Ming was able to offer me what I was looking for; everyone was warm and welcoming.

Middle

I carried on attending the Selly Oak class for about 6 years. I went through all the stages that you go through in your form practice. There was an entire year when Mark had been saying 'Move your waist'. I tried it unsuccessfully and my form was really bad. It then turned out it was your 'Martial arts waist' which is actually your hips. I went through year under-stepping, then overstepping in my postures, sticking my bum out etc. I have stood in posture for many hours in my tai Chi career.

I've been corrected many times by Mark. For some reason you hold a posture and all is well, you think you are doing OK. You look out of the corner of your eye to see where Mark is. He is checking another student. What seem like hours pass and you continue trying to hold your posture. Your muscles give up slightly and that is the moment he chooses to come and



look at you. And it's 'all wrong'. Then there is breathing correctly while doing the form. My form has changed so many times over the years as I've pick more things up and my hips loosen sufficiently to do the form more easily.

I have also been to every Unstone Grange Tai Chi weekend since it started. I was one of the foolish people who volunteered to take part in a 'Native American Indian Sweat Lodge'. That was sold to me as an amazing religious experience as I had been invited to take part in the heart of the Indians religious season. What they did not tell me was that I was not able to eat or drink for 6 hours before the sweat lodge.

What they also did not tell me that it was a 'Naked Sweat Lodge'. The woman from the Deer Tribe stood at the entrance to the tent and said 'clothes off everyone' she then took all her clothes off and went into the tent. I won't go into details about what happened in that tent. That is best left to the imagination.

If any of my students bribe me with enough money I might tell them. I have also done Bouncy Sumo which bought a new fun dimension to tai chi fighting.

Starting to teach

Mark starts his Bromsgrove class asks me to help, and throws me in at the deep end. I was one of those people who stood at the back of the class and never considered my Tai Chi anywhere near good enough to stand in front of people and teach them.

I arrived at the address for the newly launched Bromsgrove class in the Methodist Centre. There were over 40 people who had turned up. I had been told I was to walk around them helping them out. Instead I was called out to the front of the class and stood on a raised platform with all the new students looking at me. It was a very daunting experience. It also made me practice my Tai Chi more as I had to teach people. Since being forced into it I found that regular Tai Chi practice was beneficial to me. I made Tai Chi part of my daily routine which it still is now. I do the form twice a day and a Chi-Kung set every morning.

I was awarded with the 'most dedicated student' award in 2005 as voted for by all the students and instructors of Kai Ming which was an honour. I also attained my junior instructorship. Since then I have gone on to achieve the status of full instructor and run my own class. It's been an amazing journey and I'm still on it so I hope you're looking forward to the next chapter.

As you can see, the only photos I have of Ben are fun ones, which reflect his happy open personality I think. Thanks for sharing your journey with us Ben.

Mark Peters

THE QUIET CORNER

Balance

The indication of balance in life is a sense of well-being, optimism and a clear conscience. The foundation for achieving this is to look after myself spiritually - making my mind peaceful, loving and thoughtful at all times. Then I will instinctively know how much time to spend on my own well-being and how much on fulfilling other responsibilities. I can only give my best to others when I am myself at my best.