

Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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We Need You



URGENT APPEAL! TO ANY TAI CHI STUDENTS OR PRACTITIONERS WHO GET THIS NEWSLETTER for stories for follow up to "VIEW FROM THE BACK OF THE CLASS" book 2.

PLEASE, has any Tai Chi player out there got a story to tell about their personal journey in the Art. It can be funny, inspiring, a reflection, a present position, or a look forward to where you aspire to be on the long path that is Tai Chi.

Sometimes just putting things down makes you realise how far you have come from the 'back of the class', and gives you the motivation to continue. If you had a health problem that you feel has improved since commencing classes, are a new student, or if you are an experienced practitioner/teacher of many years, it doesn't matter. We all have a story to tell and others want to hear it.

Our first book has been shipped to Tai Chi practitioners and students from many different countries and is being well received.

The 2nd volume will have some chapters devoted to PAINTING THE RAINBOW's beginnings and development, so we would be really interested in including the specialised

instructors thoughts and also some of the people who participate in their day-time classes.

Sharing experiences plus highs and lows of Tai Chi is what expands our view and helps others do the same. Whether it's a page or a chapter, please help us spread the word.



HOW TO BE HAPPY

I saw this advice which was part of the Dalai Lama's "GOOD KARMA" way of life and thought it had a great deal of sound advice and seemed put things in perspective.

1. Realise that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
2. When you lose, don't lose the lesson.
3. Follow the 3Rs: RESPECT for self. RESPECT for others. RESPONSIBILITY for your actions.
4. Remember that not getting what you want is often a stroke of luck.
5. Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly!
6. Don't let a little dispute injure a great relationship.
7. When you realise you have made a mistake, move to correct it immediately.
8. Spend some time alone every day.
9. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.
10. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.

11. Live a good, honourable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll enjoy it a second time.

12. A loving atmosphere at home is the foundation of your life.

13. in disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.

14. Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality.

15. be gentle with the earth.

16. Once a year, go somewhere you've never been before.

17. Remember that the best relationship is one in which your LOVE for each other exceeds your NEED for each other.

18. Judge your success by what you had to give up to get it.

Oh, if we could only take on board a few of these wise words



Shaolin Monks... pt.2
Those who decided to stay trained with dedication. Master's where strict and unlike today when "Mabu" (horse stance) practice time is gradually increased from 3 to 5 and then 10 minutes etc, if the trainee monks where told by their master to stand in Mabu, they just had to stand for the full duration, whatever that may be.

A legacy of Shaolin Temple is the existence of two kinds of monks.

Wuseng (scholar monks) and

Wuseng (martial monks) although there are some who qualified as both.

All had to follow the rules such as vegetarianism and abstinence from liquor.

Outside the temple it was more of a personal choice.

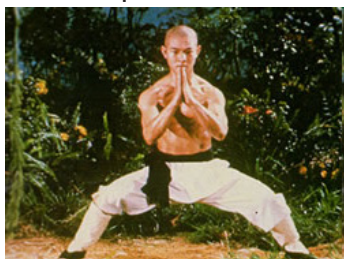
As the scholar monks focus on Buddhist study, they adhere to the rules. Despite being "real" monks some Wuseng do not possess great martial skills, as it is not their focus. Generally most martial artists only ever meet Wuseng, they have the ability to "guard and protect the way"

They have to understand Buddhism to protect it, but also guard against robbers to protect sutras and artefacts, and also protect senior monks who had little martial ability. They must be Buddhist.

All monks must have Zen.

You can be a Christian, you can learn Shaolin but you cannot be a monk and you need to be a Buddhist to be a disciple.

In general all Buddhist temples have a similar certificate process.



In the early 1980s Jet Li went to Shaolin temple to make his debut film, SHAOLIN TEMPLE. When the film was a success tourists flocked there, and bought it back into popularity. But they also bought the negative aspect of blatant tourist traps, some just down the road from the temple. Thankfully the movies positive affect far outweighed these.

An Introduction to Meditation

The words 'meditation' and 'mindfulness' have become commonplace in today's culture. In the world of counselling and psychotherapy there are constant references to mindfulness and within various spiritual circles, particularly Buddhism, and others that some might call the 'new-age', meditation is a common practice for achieving many psychological 'states'. It has been around for a long time. I first came across Zen meditation as a student while studying Karate. Later, as I trained as a Psychotherapist, I came to appreciate the wide ranging benefits of the practise to many aspects of my clients psychological health by helping people relax, manage disturbing emotions, cope with trauma memories and more. I then did some courses in Buddhist Psychology and Meditation and then, it goes without saying, I found Taichi!

This is the first of several articles exploring different aspects of meditation. I wish to generally orientate the reader and offer some initial suggestions as to how to make a start in what, if you take it seriously, will become a lifelong endeavour not dissimilar to our art of Tai Chi.

To some people meditation is mistakenly believed to mean a cutting off all detachment from ordinary concerns however nothing could be further from the truth. Meditation is in fact the focused awareness on what 'is', the 'present moment', and there are many different methods to achieve this.

Perhaps it would be most appropriate to start with a basic introduction to two of the main types of meditation. The first is known as 'concentration' or in Sanskrit 'Samadhi'. The second is known as 'insight' meditation, in Sanskrit, 'Vipassana'.

'Concentration' meditation consists of many techniques

evolved in different cultures. It is used to enable a person to concentrate their awareness sometimes using an external object such as a flame, a flower or other imagined objects such as a cloud or anything of the person's choice. Of the many methods available perhaps the most common is the 'mindfulness of breathing' which is what I will introduce later on in this article.

The other form of meditation known as 'insight' oriented meditation is usually embarked upon once a person has achieved a satisfactory ability in the former. Within this, one meditates on various problems, metaphors or prescribed visualisations. Two classic examples of these are the 'Koans' one often finds in Zen – "Does a dog have Buddha nature?" and certain visualisations that one finds in the Tibetan Tantric traditions – for example, imaging a connection with the deity Manjushri via the breath and crown chakra. In fact Gautama Buddha would prescribe various visualisations to fit the different temperaments and the elements of the person he was offering it to. One could almost say this may have been an early form of psychotherapy for people who were perhaps obsessional, lazy, over committed, anxious, depressed, stressed etc.

There is nothing wrong with engaging in some of these practices along with basic concentration, in fact in the Zen tradition it is argued that sudden 'awakening' – (the spiritual aim of meditation) can occur at any time without the years of preparation and practice.

A checklist for your meditation posture

This checklist will allow you to run through a quick routine to allow for optimal performance in meditation.

1. Adjust your seat height and angle so that your back is relatively straight, and also relaxed.

2. Make sure that your hands are supported so that there's no strain in your shoulders or between the shoulder-blades.

3. Relax your shoulders, letting them roll back to open your chest. Let your shoulders move with your breathing.

4. Take a few deep breaths into the upper chest to allow your chest to open. Relax on the out-breath, but see if you can keep a sense of space across the front of the chest.

5. Adjust the angle of your head, so that the back of your neck is relaxed, long and open, and your chin is slightly tucked in.

6. Relax your jaw, your tongue, your eyes and your brow.

The following meditation is taught by the FWBO: 'Friends of the Western Buddhist Order' and is a simple introductory meditation to enable us to experience the initial stages of meditation – quieting the mind. It starts with some guidance with regards to posture



The Practice

The mindfulness of breathing we give the breath our full attention. We use the physical sensations of the breath as an object that we focus on. We just allow the breath to happen. This is not a breathing exercise. We simply observe, and see what happens.

Stage 1 Count 1-10 just after each out breath (breath 1, breath 2 etc)

Stage 2 Count 1-10 just before each in breath (1 breath, 2 breath etc)

Stage 3 Stop counting and experience the general flow of the breath

Stage 4 Maintain your attention at the point where you are most aware of the breath e.g. your nostrils, lips or perhaps your belly.

Our Tai Chi form has sometimes been called 'meditation in movement' and then we think

about the ebb and flow, expansion and contraction, expand and release, so beautifully demonstrated in our art, we can think that with our breathing and right focus it is indeed meditation in movement.

Furthermore when we think about our Qigong sets, the first principle is 'structural alignment', the second is 'breath' and the third is our 'attention and intention', hence, we shouldn't be thinking about work or what we are going to do when the session ends – we should be either 'empty' (as far as possible) or visualising according to the prescriptions of the form. An example would be the 'microcosmic orbit' during standing post. The same three principles occur in any good meditation.

Over the next few articles, I'll discuss the 'point' of meditation, psychological, spiritual or physical? Or all three? Some history of the different aspects Buddhism and Daoism and how meditation practices have been influenced by these, and finally, offer some more suggestions for practice.

Mark Walker
Sutton Coldfield Instructor



RECIPE CORNER

ACKEE & SALTFISH

(Don has been asked by a number of people how to cook this dish, so here we go)

Ackee and Salt fish is considered the national dish of Jamaica. It can be eaten at anytime, but is often traditionally at breakfast time. Ackee is Jamaica's national fruit grown on the evergreen tree it has the look and texture of scrambled eggs!

Salt fish is fish that has been salted and dried to preserve.

There are many different ways to prepare this dish but this is Don's favourite.

Ingredients:

300g of skinless and boneless salt fish (Asda/Tescos/Asian/Shops)
2 medium onions halved and sliced.
2 sprigs of fresh Thyme or ½ tsp of dried.

1 red pepper prepared and sliced into various sizes.

1 tbsp vegetable oil.

1 clove of garlic (optional) finely chopped.

½ tsp chilli powder.

1 large tomato quartered, soft flesh removed, sliced.

½ tsp black pepper.

Tsp of butter.

1 can of Ackee (optional) available at Salt fish source.

Method: Prepare the Salt fish by soaking in cold water for a minimum of 8 hours up to 24 hours. Change the water from time to time. (Gets rid of unwanted salt as it soaks)

Drain water from fish, place the fish in a pan, fill with cold water and bring to the boil.

Simmer for 20 minutes then rinse under cold water tap and leave to cool.

When cool flake the fish (check for any fish bones at this point) and put to one side.

Gently fry the onions in oil for 5 mins then add the sweet peppers. Continue to fry until the onions are just soft.

Add the chilli, black pepper, thyme, and butter and sauté for a few more minutes, stirring frequently.

Add the chopped tomatoes and stir for a few more minutes.

Add the flaked salt fish and gently fold in.

Add the finely chopped garlic to one side of the pan and gently "fry off" for a few seconds to remove the raw flavour, and then slowly fold in.

Cover and heat on a low setting for about 5 mins, stirring occasionally.

When hot very slowly add the Akee, fold in as not to break it up.

Then heat through
Taste and season further to
preference.

Serve with potatoes/sweet potatoe.
Spring cabbage/spinach.
Rice/carrots or whatever vegetable is
your preference

OR TRY WITH CRUSTY BREAD
FOR BREAKFAST! (You may just
start a habit!!!)

Please let us know if you have tried
and enjoyed any of the recipes we
include in the newsletter.

We have lots of different cultures in
Kai Ming and would love to share any
of your favourite national dish
recipes, just e-mail to Mark.



As you know from previous
newsletters, Mark and I have recently
moved house (together I hasten to
add) and at times it has been a hard
road to travel since we arrived here
in December.

There have been times when I think
we both thought, what else can go
wrong?

When would the necessary people we
had to contact to get commodities
installed get their act together? When
would we stop getting bills for things
we didn't owe? Would another ceiling
fall down!?

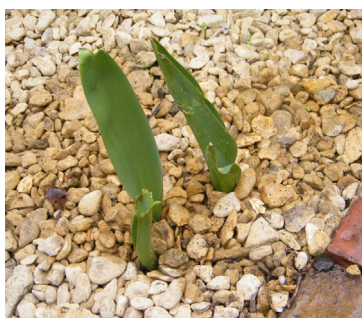
I have to admit Mark puts his "money
where his mouth is" known as
following your own advice of *tai chi is a
self defence for life*, much better than
I do, but even he has succumbed to
the odd raised voice on the telephone.
Friends asked "is it worth it?" what
will you eventually gain.

You may wonder where all this
rambling is going.

Well, 3 weeks ago we had a
greenhouse erected near the house on
the site of a small side garden that was
overcome with weeds through lack of
care, by the elderly lady a widow who
had been the previous owner.

The chap assembling it had to clear
the patch first, hammer down the
earth, lay a thick layer of large gravel,
then a single layer of bricks around
the edges to stand it on, and then more

gravel once erected inside, to form a
floor.



The photograph you see with this
article is what I saw when I went
inside this week to pot up some seeds.
It had been a week since I had been
in there and to my amazement these
plants had against all odds appeared
standing straight, reaching towards
the light and sun.

They must have struggled relentlessly
to make their way to the surface,
through impacted earth and thick
gravel to survive.

I can now say to my friends "Yes" it
was worth it.

We have a home we both feel we have
always lived in, and a lovely feeling
of this is where we have been
travelling to.

I like to imagine those little plants felt
the same as soon as the first ray of
light and warmth appeared as they
broke through.

As the old saying goes; you get out
of life what you are prepared to put
in to achieve your goal. A fact often
ignored these days.

This can apply to Tai Chi also, if you
want it badly enough put the effort in
and reap the rewards.



Cloud-hands can sometimes become
such a blur of whirling arms that you
don't know if its "wax on wax off"
from karate kid or you're just about
to take off....

Training for 2011

Workshops are held in Hopwood Vil-
lage Hall, Hopwood, South Birming-
ham unless otherwise stated.

As with all our workshops *we offer a
£5 discount from the listed price
when courses are paid in for full* at
least a month in advance. Places are
limited and a £10 deposit is required
to book your place.

June 5th – **Fan Short form** – this form
was developed from the long form as
taught by Master Tan Ching Ngee.
The form holds to the essence of the
original but enables the learner to
apply the skills in a shorter time. It is
open to all; if you need a fan please
order in advance. Wood and silk fans
are £15, Metal and silk fans are £20.
Please ask your instructor if you'd
like to see a fan beforehand.

Spaces will be strictly limited so book
and pay you deposit as soon as
possible.

10am to 4pm £70 members and £90
non-members

June 19th – **Tai Chi Cane short form**
There has been a great deal of interest
in the tai chi cane (walking stick) but
some worry that it is too long to
remember and practice. With this in
mind we have developed a shorter
form that keeps to the essence of the
original plus makes learning and
applying more accessible.

Spaces will be strictly limited so book
and pay you deposit as soon as
possible.

10am to 4pm £70 members and £90
non-members

July 23rd to 25th – **Tai Chi camp** –
Last years camp was a great success
with people attending from other
clubs as well as ours. The focus will
continue to be deepening our
application of Cheng Man Ching's
approach to tai chi chuan. Other areas
covered will include mindful walking
and form, tai chi short stick, key
principles (e.g. dong-dang and use of
4 ounces). More details to follow;
again please ask your instructor as
booking forms will be available in the
New Year.