



The Essex Tai Chi Academy Newsletter Three, July 2017

Holding the Ball of Chi

Stand with the outsides of your feet parallel, shoulder width apart.
With your hands at waist height, rub them together quickly to get them warm,
then slow down the motion and pretend you are holding a small pearl.
Move your hands in small circles around the pearl and make it larger as your hands move
further away from each other.

Your hands should be soft and stretched, keeping the Tiger's Mouth open,
and your arms rounded.

Now imagine holding a large beach ball, keep it moving.

You should begin to feel warmth, which is energy.

It may take some practice, but keep going and you will feel it!

Your hands may feel as if they are pulsating,
warm, magnetic, or full.

Adapted from Victoria Cobb, *The Yin & Yang of it ...* Damselfly Publishing, 2009

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and we welcome any information that will enable us to do so]

**The Essex Tai Chi Academy runs classes in Tai Chi, Sabre, Lok Hup Ba Fa and Sword at
Birchanger, Black Notley, Burnham-on-Crouch, Cold Norton, Felsted, Maldon and Mundon**

The founder of Tai Chi in the west, Mr Moy Lin-Shin (1931–1998)

Following on from David Woollcott's piece in the last Newsletter on Chang San Feng, herewith information on Mr Moy

Mr Moy was a very sickly child. In China at the time there was very little opportunity to obtain quality healthcare, so his parents opted to place him in the care of Taoist monks in a monastery. (Perhaps the nearest equivalent to the NHS?) Although he was not expected to live beyond his teens, Mr Moy's health improved with the help of the monks and his devotion to the study of Taoist and Chinese internal arts including, meditation. He also studied Tai Chi, Lok Hup Ba Fa and Ch'i Kung.

Initially, Mr Moy attempted to leave China for the USA but, so the story goes, due to the relationship between the two countries, a visa was out of the question. Initially, he settled in Brazil but Canada later granted him a visa and the rest is history, as they say. Otherwise, we might have relationships with Academies in Brazil!

After emigrating to Canada Mr Moy began teaching martial arts in a small studio, but soon found that his students needed to regain their health more than they needed to learn how to fight. He changed his teaching to better serve that need, modifying the Yang Style Tai Chi 108-move set by emphasizing turning, stretching, rising and falling. He also borrowed principles from other martial arts forms, as mentioned above.

Mr Moy was always attentive to the needs of each student. He would change his methods to suit the students' needs, paying close attention to students with health problems. The instructors of the Essex Tai Chi Academy aim to follow his example, helping each student to follow his or her best path to the common goal of health improvement.

Mr Moy frequently referred to the 'four stages of life' as birth, ageing, sickness and death. Although birth, ageing and death are obviously inevitable, sickness can be prevented.

With diligent practice, Tai Chi and Lok Hu Ba Fa can help reduce sickness and prevent the suffering many of us would otherwise experience.

Although Mr Moy died in 1998, his vision of 'A world without suffering from illness' lives on.

To finish this brief biography - have any of your instructors mentioned practising the Set and moves silently? Well, so another story goes, Mr Moy was due to visit one of the Tai Chi classes to start teaching Lok Hup Ba Fa. As he mounted the stairs towards the practice room, he could hear the students' feet. He declined to teach Lok Hup Ba Fa until the class could perform the 108-move set, and the individual moves, without any sound coming from their feet. So, quiet, please!

Many lives, in many days. News from you and your classes

John Herring

We're rather cruel to animals when practising Tai Chi,
We grasp birds' tails, part horse's mane and as for tigers, they complain
of carriage to a mountain's height, of stricken ears first left then right,
then both together, what a plight!
Before they're ridden then are shot with bow and arrow, that's their lot!
While all storks do is cool their wings.
Which seems an unfair state of things.
So let's remember this reminder to try to be a little kinder.
There must be better ways to treat 'em
But at least with tigers, we don't eat 'em!

Judy Lee-Fenton

I have received an extraordinary amount of good wishes, cards, gifts and flowers from Tai Chi members ... a thank you to everyone for their thoughts and kindness. I have literally been aware of the strong positive thoughts that have surrounded me and helped with my positive attitude towards healing. I have been overwhelmed.

Reminders

- This is *your* Newsletter – feel free to give your instructor a contribution
- Subscription fees are due on 1 July
- Upcoming workshops:
 - Sunday 2 July – Tai Chi, St Ives
 - Friday 8–Sunday 10 September, Norway. If you're interested please visit <http://www.emptystepnorway.com/#/mountain-workshop-at-nesn/>
 - Sunday 1 October – Lok Hup, St Ives
 - Sunday 3 December, Tai Chi, St IvesYou'll have had emails about these (except Norway) ... Lift shares are obviously available so, as before, have a word with your instructor or chat among yourselves
- The Academy library has shrunk dramatically. Please check your bookshelves and remind your instructor which books you have so that we can bring the list/borrowings up to date. Thank you. On the plus side, we now have DVDs of Doug Nettleton's demonstration of the set for lending
- Michael's bench is in need of some TLC. Could anyone (or a working party!) spend an hour or so applying sealant/varnish, please?

Tai Chi and chronic pain

Dr Mark Alexander-Williams is a Consultant in Pain Medicine, and the Academy is grateful to him for writing this piece for our Newsletter and Website

Chronic pain affects up to 19% of the population. It is a hidden epidemic, it can't be seen, it is an invisible misery and the burden to society is greater than with most other chronic diseases.

What separates and distinguishes pain from other diseases is that it is an emotion, and as such is enormously complicated. It is known as a biopsychosocial problem which means that biological factors, psychological factors and social factors all influence both the intensity and impact of the pain and all need to be addressed to get the best relief.

We know that chronic pain very often and understandably leads to depression and anxiety. The anxiety can often be particularly debilitating and is one of the real barriers to improvement.

A manifestation of pain-related anxiety is called fear avoidance. People in pain will often avoid activity that they see as causing pain because of the fear that this will cause a worsening of the condition leading to pain. This would seem at first quite logical but in fact in chronic pain often the reverse is true, this avoidance of movement and the beliefs that go with it exacerbate the condition.

In addition to this, one of the chemical changes that occurs in both chronic pain and depression is a reduction in the endogenous endorphins in the brain, most notably serotonin and noradrenalin. Levels of both of these are known to increase with exercise, the reason that most psychiatrists will recommend exercise as therapy for anxiety, as do pain clinicians for pain!

For exercise to work effectively it has to involve increasing the heart rate; Tai Chi does this. Tai Chi involves fluid movement, over time and with practice the range of movement increases hopefully reducing fear avoidance.

Tai Chi also involves mindfulness. Mindfulness involves finding peace and acceptance, two of the fundamental requirements for a successful outcome in treating a patient learning to live with chronic pain.

All of the above hopefully explains why I am happy to recommend Tai Chi to patients who come to see me in pain.

Any questions to mark@drmarkalexander-williams.co.uk
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Guidelines for and expectations of members at classes of the Essex Tai Chi Academy

As a result of feedback from members and instructors, it seems appropriate to let you have the following Guidelines. Your instructors hope they will ensure that you, as Academy members, understand what to expect from your instructors, and what instructors are hoping for from members during our Tai Chi and other classes and workshops. The Guidelines are based on the principles operating throughout the UK and international academies with which ETCA is associated.*

Class members

Please respect the lead instructor of the class or workshop you are attending, especially if he or she is covering for your usual instructor. Teaching styles of each instructor may vary, but all will follow the fundamental teachings and form of the Tai Chi set of our Founder, Mr Moy Lin-Shin, in focusing on maximizing the positive health benefits of each movement of the form. Please follow the lead instructor at any class, even where there are slight variations in approach or emphasis. Rather than query any variation, perhaps learn from this experience.

You are encouraged to ask questions during a class if you have a query or, especially, do not understand something that has been demonstrated or said. Remember that another student may be pondering the same question or have the same difficulty understanding. Feel free to offer comments when invited. We are all here to learn.

Members who have knowledge of other styles of Tai Chi or forms of martial arts are asked not to practise, demonstrate, offer advice or comment during lessons. This will avoid any conflict between our style and other forms and also avoid any potential confusion in the eyes of others.

Member involvement

As new students join classes, existing members are asked to make themselves known to the newcomers (be a 'buddy', if you like) who may feel, as we all did when we joined the Academy, overwhelmed and nervous. Take the opportunity of talking to someone you don't know! Opportunities for this exist before the start of a class, during refreshment breaks and at the end of the class. Students should take the opportunity to raise any concerns with the lead instructor before any new member leaves, particularly if there is a sense that the new member may not return.

Please generally support the lead instructor by arranging chairs, taking it in turns to make the drinks and clearing away after the session.

How to be a 'corner'

Everyone develops at a different pace, so once you have been through the Tai Chi set some members may be interested in becoming a corner for the set. If this applies to you, watch the teaching methods closely and seek to benefit from the style of different instructors. Over time, as you become more familiar with the moves, volunteering to become a corner will be of significant assistance to the lead instructor, particularly in a Beginners' class, and certainly to your own Tai Chi.

As a corner, always try to do the moves as demonstrated by the Instructor at that class, even if something slightly different has been shown at another class, or the demonstration is more 'basic' than your level of Tai Chi. Again, watch the teaching techniques and listen to the resolution of questions closely.

Please do not offer advice to other students regarding the moves or method. This includes prior to the start of a lesson, during or after the lesson and in the break for refreshments. If another student asks you a question, you should refer them to the lead instructor.

Always try to do the moves as demonstrated by the lead instructor, even if you have been shown something different at another class. Remember – beginners are watching you!

Maintain a friendly and interested role at tea break. You can never be too polite!

Role development

In time, some members may be interested in becoming an instructor. You will be encouraged to attend other Academy classes/workshops, and workshops organized by other academies. At the appropriate time, you may be invited to attend an instructors' workshop/meeting in order to gain more insight into the role. You may be invited to assist or support the lead instructor on occasions, which may involve leading the foundation exercises, demonstrating a move or taking the lead corner during the Tai Chi set.

*Other academies

Asociacion Tai Chi Sin Fronteras
Canadian Tai Chi Academy
Dengie Tai Chi Club
Eastern Counties Tai Chi Academy
Leeds Tai chi Academy
Shropshire Tai Chi Academy
Suffolk Tai Chi Academy
United Counties Tai Chi Academy

Performing the set – Single whip, Step up and Raise Hands

Judy Lee-Fenton and David Woollcott

In our second Newsletter we concentrated on the Commencement, Left Grasp and Grasp Bird's Tail with regard to their effect on ligaments, muscles, tendons and the martial arts implications.

Continuing this theme, as we turn into Single Whip, the tendency is to lead with the arms as opposed to the emphasis (which instructors often refer to) being on the body turning the arms. From Grasp Bird's Tail, as the weight moves back from being mainly on the front foot towards a central position, the elbows drop slightly from the extended arm position. As we turn, the arms should remain in the 'neutral' position, neither leading nor lagging behind the body. This allows you to focus through the hands as if you were following an opponent moving around you.

There are variations of Single Whip depending on the style of Tai Chi, particularly in the movement of the arms, both offensively and defensively, with both arms used to tackle an opponent who is attempting grappling moves. However, perhaps the most important aspect is the 'sitting or relaxing', spiralling from the right '45-degree corner' to the front and placing the foot before transferring the majority of the weight to the front (left) foot, while not forgetting to square the hips and shoulders.

The next move, Step Up, involves transferring the weight from the left foot to the right foot and back again before settling into the Raise Hands position. This movement strengthens the knee joints and increases flexibility in the hips due to the rotation and transfer of weight.

In martial arts terms, in the transfer of the weight from Single Whip to the left leg, the muscular part of the right arm is used to strike an opponent, approaching from the right or behind, in the face or upper body. In transferring the weight to the left leg, the left arm is now used in a similar fashion to strike an opponent approaching from the left. A case of 'two for the price of one!'

Finally, the move into Raise Hands involves a further shift of weight onto the right leg with a spiral into a 'half sit' position which, as with all moves, is best described by your instructor rather than in a newsletter. Suffice to say, this 'settling' into Raise Hands is a fairly typical pose (ready for action) used by martial arts practitioners.

In the next newsletter we will move on to Stork Cools Wings, Brush Knee, Play the Pei-Pa, and the Brush Knee and Twist Step sequence.

The ten essences of Tai Chi

In the coming Newsletters we'll cover all ten essences. Here are the first three in detail for you to think about and practise.

1. Lift the head to raise the spirit

Stand straight and hold the head and the neck upright but stay relaxed. If your head is bowed your spirit cannot be high.

2. Lower the shoulders to sink the elbows

Make sure your shoulders are relaxed; this makes your elbows sink and point downwards.

3. Soften the chest and curve the back

Don't stand to attention, but don't slump. When your shoulders are relaxed and you soften the chest your back automatically curves very slightly. This means you can breathe gently but deeply from your abdomen, which leads to better functioning of your internal organs.

The others are:

4. Loosen the waist

5. Be aware of weight distribution

6. Co-ordinate the top and bottom halves of the body

7. Continuity in movement

8. Unite body and mind

9. Use mind, not force

10. Seek stillness within motion and motion within stillness

Thought for the quarter

Let the Chi move without breaks so that there is no part it cannot reach

(Wu Yuxiang, 1812-80. A Chinese Tai Chi Chuan teacher and government official active in the late Qing dynasty. From an influential and wealthy family, he left a large body of writing recognized by many other scholars not associated with his style.)