



Still Mountain

T'ai Chi and Chi Kung Newsletter



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Inside this issue:

The Mind of T'ai Chi	1
T'ai Chi for Heart Patients	2
T'ai Chi and Cancer Treatment	2
Shepherd Wellness: Chi Kung and AIDS	3
Chi Kung for Body and Spirit	3
Events and Classes	4

Kid's T'ai Chi to Start May 28th

Come learn T'ai Chi and self-defense in a safe, non-competitive, and fun environment. The class will teach basic breathing, the fundamental movements of T'ai Chi, self-defense moves such as wrist escapes and blocks, and the Five Animals form. The cost for the four classes is \$40.

Where the Mind Goes, David Clippinger

I am standing on a sunny spot of grass, pausing between the first and second sections of the 108 Movement form, and all of a sudden the song of the robins leads me to a childhood memory and then along a number of pathways that drift farther and farther from here. Only until a cardinal flashes his red wings in the branches do I realize how far I have allowed myself to drift.

While practicing Tai Chi Chuan, training the mind is often overlooked as a vital element of the practice. Just as one facet of the three sides of T'ai Chi—the martial, health, and spiritual training—is often favored over the other two, the mind is often overlooked in its relation to the body and the breath, which seem so much more central to performing the form.

But the mind—what is called the “yi” in Traditional Chinese Medicine—is absolutely vital in the balance of jing, chi, and shen, or body, energy, and spirit. After all, one of the famous T'ai Chi slogans asserts that the “yi leads the chi;” that is, the mind gives direction and purpose to the flow of chi.

Wuyuxiang, a T'ai Chi master, once remarked that the “Mind is the commander, the chi the flag, and the waist the pole.”

Bringing the mind in tune with the body as it enacts the form and coordinating the breath with the movement is the heart of the practice of training the mind. In such focused and concentrated efforts, the whole range of the benefits of T'ai Chi reveal themselves to us—from reducing stressors, toning muscles, cleansing the doors of sensory perception, to healing the body.

In order for our T'ai Chi to advance, we need to bring our full attention to the body in the act of playing the form, to the breath as the exhale presses open a move and the inhale contracts, and as the mind—the yi—leads chi through the body and in and out of the breath.

The mind has immense potential in our practice to heal, strengthen, and nourish our body and spirit—our jing and shen—and our practice should seek to cultivate meditative stillness and focus. Only then will we actually hear the song of the robins without drifting into a state of reverie; only then will we feel the sun and the grass, and realize that our place is always in the here and now. Only in such moments of heightened mindfulness, will we be T'ai Chi.

Song of the Real Meaning

An Anonymous Poem from the Classics of T'ai Chi Chuan.

No shape, no shadow.
Entire body transparent and empty.

Forget surroundings and be natural.

Like a stone chime
suspended from West Mountain.

Tigers roaring, monkey screeching.

Clear fountain, peaceful water.

Turbulent river, stormy ocean.

With your whole being,
develop your life.



Adapted from a translation by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming

T'ai Chi for the Heart



Still Mountain is helping to develop a pilot rehabilitation program at Allegheny General Hospital for heart patients. David Clippinger along with Dr. Betsy O'Neill, Director of Integrated Medicine, and Dr. Barry Levens of the Heart Center, are working on a rehabilitation program that will help patients with a range of heart ailments recover more efficiently and quickly through the practices of T'ai Chi, Chi Kung, and meditation.

Published medical studies have documented that the deep diaphragmatic breathing

of T'ai Chi and Chi Kung are effective means of reducing stressors and speeding the healing process. Building upon this published data, Allegheny General Hospital and Still Mountain will facilitate a clinical study to measure the health outcomes in heart patients. The goal of the study is to demonstrate the inherent benefits of T'ai Chi for patients in the process of rehabilitation, and then to make T'ai Chi and Chi Kung a permanent offering for all heart patients.

Still Mountain and the Integrated Medicine Depart-

ment at Allegheny General Hospital hope to build upon the success of this pilot program in order to begin similar offerings in other departments within the hospital.

In addition to Allegheny General Hospital, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and Magee Hospital Holistic Treatment Center have been in contact with Clippinger to draw upon his expertise in order to integrate T'ai Chi and Chi Kung into their health care services.

T'ai Chi and Cancer, Bill Nason

"More energy, fewer aches and pains, better physical fitness, and a feeling of well-being are some of the benefits I've noticed from Practicing T'ai Chi" Bill Nason



It was April 2002. The diagnosis was chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Cause unknown. No known cure. I was in my early 50s, healthy, and had always taken care of myself. I ate right, exercised, and avoided harmful habits, foods and drinks. Surprise! After the initial shock came a period of waiting until the cancer was advanced enough to be treated followed by a year of chemotherapy to end in July 2004. Time to recover and get on with life. But how? The cancer and chemotherapy had taken a toll. I was weaker and tired. The jogging and weight training I had done prior to treatment would be too strenuous as part of a recovery plan. But doing nothing was not a good idea either. And if further treatment was needed, I wanted an exercise program to help see me through.

Following diagnosis I became, as many people do, more interested in the spiritual and philosophical aspects of life. I spent some time studying religion and Eastern and Western philosophies and health practices. One benefit of this quest was meeting Dr. David Clippinger, practitioner and instructor of T'ai Chi and Chi Kung. In my much younger years I had learned Karate but I knew that it would be too strenuous for my recovery and treatment goals. I needed to improve my health and then maintain it for as long as possible. Fortunately, I discovered T'ai Chi, which definitely helps me achieve that goal.

From my daily practice, I have realized how physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally beneficial T'ai Chi and Chi Kung are since they combine relatively slow, stress-

free movements with deep breathing practiced in various routines or forms. The forms are actually relaxing and meditative.

But I had wondered how beneficial these practices could be. After all, I was used to the hard hitting exercise routines so common in our culture. But they are beneficial. More energy, fewer aches and pains, better physical fitness, and a feeling of well-being are some of the benefits I've noticed. Dr. Clippinger also taught me a medicinal Chi Kung form used to enhance the health of cancer patients. I do my best to practice every day and can honestly say that I feel better in all respects, and if I don't practice for more than a day or so, I feel less physically fit and more stressed.

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Chi Kung for Spirit and Body, Annabelle Clippinger

Chi Kung is a series of exercises designed to progressively target different systems and areas of the body to great health and healing benefit. This ancient Chinese approach to wellness attunes the body and mind, and enriches the spirit. Using soft breathing as a window to this art, and the body's gentle motions to prompt the natural exhalations or inhalations of breath, the mind become open and calm, and the body becomes relaxed. One exercise that demonstrates this holistic harmonizing is called *Gathering Heaven and Earth*.

This exercise begins with soft breathing and uses linked hands repeatedly returning to the navel area of the body to sink energy there. At last the hands reach toward the heavens, and the eyes follow.

On the deck where we often practice these exercises, this means that one's eyes are drawn up to the trees and sky beyond, connecting the eyes and spirit by lifting both as they enter into the green world and sky. As the breath is drawn in, resting linked hands into the forehead, this is the time to close one's eyes and visualize white or blue starry energy being drawn into this area of the body: the head. The exercise then asks the body to lean all the way down to "gather earth" exhaling air as one leans over; now is the time to visualize the red or brown element of earth as the linked hands scoop the floor and inhale gently up, again sinking this charged energy back into the body using the linked hands, with soft and rhythmic breathing. In this exercise, as in many in

Chi Kung, the center of the body is the place where earth and heaven are brought into balance, and completing this exercise, a near instant sense of well-being ensues.

Not only does the practitioner of Chi Kung get great exercise to tone and stretch the muscles of the body, and to heal the body's organs and systems, but Chi Kung enlivens the spirit and links us to everything around us. Chi Kung enables one to be present in the body and the world, and doing a move like *Gathering Heaven and Earth* is truly a spiritual, and yes, even a sublime experience.

T'ai Chi and Cancer

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I believe a combination of Western and Eastern health practices works best in managing my health. Currently my cancer is well under control and I believe that the practice of T'ai Chi and Chi Kung are key to my success. If the cancer does require further treatment, I plan to continue practicing T'ai Chi and Chi Kung as I am sure they will maintain my well being throughout any treatment.

Bill Nason can be contacted at webnason@comcast.net



"Tai chi is the one exercise that can universally help solve our growing health crisis"
Bruce Frantzis

Shepherd Wellness Invites Recurring Chi Kung Class

One person asked about pain management. Another about naropathy. Another about anxiety, and yet another about insomnia. Over a ten week period stretching from January to March, I taught a medical Chi Kung class at the Shepherd Wellness Center for persons who are HIV positive or who are suffering with AIDS. During that time I began to understand the many physical and psychological difficulties people afflicted with HIV/AIDS deal with on a daily basis. Subsequently, I tried my best to shape the forms that we worked on to

meet the physical and psychological needs of a range of individuals and ailments.

At the end of the ten week period, a number of the participants spoke to me of the success that they were having using Chi Kung to deal with their specific issues, and I was delighted that I had contributed in a positive way to their wellness.

Because of that success, Shepherd Wellness Center has requested that I facilitate another recurring Chi Kung Class for the many people who took the previous session

and for those who were unable to attend.

Beginning in May, I will again offer a medical Chi Kung class at Shepherd Wellness and have been invited to give a workshop at the Wellness Healing Weekend, a regional conference for people dealing with HIV and AIDS. I am delighted to be part of both programs and I hope that sharing my understanding of T'ai Chi and Chi Kung will continue to improve the lives of others.





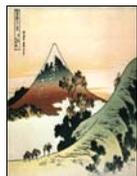
Schedule of Events

- April 30th, World T'ai Chi Day, Schenley Park, Morning; Bird Park, Afternoon.
- May 21st, Day of Zen, Marchbein Center, 2107 Sidney Street, Pittsburgh.
- May 28th, Kid's T'ai Chi Classes Start and run through end of June.
- July 10th-16th, T'ai Chi Workshop, Summer Institute, Kenyon College.

Current Class Schedule

- Monday, 6:30-7:30 P.M. and 7:30-8:30 P.M., Yang Long Form, Still Mountain Studio
- Tuesday, 7:00-8:00 P.M., Yang Long Form, Still Mountain Studio
- Wednesday, 7:00-8:30 P.M., Zen Meditation, Mt. Lebanon
- Thursday, 2:15-3:00 P.M., Adult T'ai Chi, Mt. Lebanon Recreation Center
- Saturday, 10:00-10:45 A.M., Introduction to T'ai Chi, Marchbein Center, 2107 Sidney Street, Pittsburgh
- Saturday, 1:00-1:45 P.M., Kid's T'ai Chi

For information on T'ai Chi or Chi Kung or to register for classes or private lessons,
Contact Still Mountain at 412.480.9177 or dwc8@adelphia.net
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