



Agar-Hutton Tai Chi Academy

Newsletter 8

NEWS

It ain't over till the fat lady sings...

I said that the studio was almost finished but decided that the lighting and electrical work that I was trying to avoid because it cost a lot, was a 'must do' rather than a 'would like to do'. So we have now got new lights and new power outlets that makes the studio brighter and easier to manage. It means that the video sessions and any video recording that I do, will be of a much higher quality.

A new old weapon.

Some years ago I posted a short video on YouTube showing the use of the walking stick for self defence (It's still there if you want to have a look). The techniques I used were not particularly Tai Chi ones but recently I have learned (and seen videos) of people doing a modified version of the 24 Move Tai Chi form with the walking stick. I haven't taken the time to learn it yet but will if there is any interest from you and other newsletter readers in learning it. It can be practiced either for self defence use or simply because it looks neat.

CPD

'Continuing Professional Development' - Lee and I have been teaching for years and years and years, but that doesn't mean that we don't continue to learn. Currently we are spending several hours each week taking lessons in a different style of Tai Chi and eventually may be able to teach that too. The interesting thing is that when you learn something new it also helps improve things that you ('we') have been doing for a long time. So what are you learning? Let me know if it's interesting, I might want to learn it too.

GETTING OLD - NO THANKS

"Let us know the happiness time brings,
not count the years."

- Ausonius -

Do you look and feel your age?
Do you worry about getting older?
WELL STOP!

Worrying about getting older is about as pointless a pursuit as there is. There are two choices, continue to get older or die... and trust me, all the evidence suggests that the former is way better than the latter.

Tai Chi helps keep you 'young', it helps you maintain (or improve) your physical abilities and it stimulates you mentally, keeping the brain active.

Now one of the things that is great about Tai Chi is that there is no age limit to doing it and more importantly, there is no age limit on getting better at it.

You want to get better, you can. You want to become an instructor, you can (We have a really neat instructor's program by the way). You want to become a 'master' - yes, you can probably do that too. Of course it takes dedication and practice but age is not a limiting factor.

Often as we age, a benefit is more time to do the things we want to do. If one of those things is Tai Chi then that's great. Time can be in blocks of an hour or quick five or ten minute sessions. The important thing is to keep on doing it.



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FOLLOW THE RULES - 4

So let's move on to the next topic - 'Be Upright'

Tai Chi is full of expressions and ideas that are confusing and this one, especially for people brought up in the West is a great example.

If you think of standing upright, many people would think that it means standing like a soldier at attention. Many of us who are of mature years will have been taught to 'stand up straight' as children and that is probably something that many still try and do.

However, that's not what you should do in Tai Chi, Being upright in Tai Chi means that the body should be straight but relaxed - as if you were lightly suspended from above by a cord attached to the crown of your head that gently pulls you upwards whilst at the same time the body is relaxed and sunk downwards towards the Earth.

It also means that a practitioner of Tai Chi should be 'upright' in the moral sense, whilst Tai Chi has been strongly influenced by Taoism it has also been strongly influenced by Confucianism, and Confucius taught that people should be filial and righteous and trustworthy. So like a lot of things in Tai Chi' being upright has more than one meaning.

The next rule is to 'Move lightly' and of all the rules, this is perhaps one of the most difficult to explain in writing.

Some students (and even some instructors) never learn the skill of moving lightly. Perhaps because in Tai Chi for health and wellness it is less important than in Tai Chi for combat. 'Back in the day', the ability to move lightly (which includes moving at the correct speed, and direction, and distance) could literally be the difference between life and death.

Search YouTube for old videos of Fred Astaire dancing with any of his famous partners and you will see an amazing grace and lightness of movement. However, that is only a small part of the equation in Tai Chi, where you want to be able to move lightly whilst also being firmly grounded. Your body should be as immovable as a mountain and as insubstantial as a morning mist. Once again a Yin/Yang mixture for which Tai Chi is famous but which makes it hard to explain. In fairness not only is it hard to explain it's also hard to do.

There are exercises that I teach that aid light movement but they do require regular practice and often this aspect of Tai Chi gets sidelined unless a student is strongly motivated to learn that skill.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH...

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Thank you for being part of our Tai Chi 'family' and remember that Tai Chi is the best gift that you can give both to yourself and to others you care about.