



Agar-Hutton Tai Chi Academy

Newsletter 15

NEWS

BETTER WEATHER - As the weather gets better I will be able to practice with my Guan Dao - I will also try and remember to video the sessions and put them in the membership site as well as putting some of them on YouTube. You may not have a Guan Dao but a lot of the techniques can be done with a long stick (Broomstick, pole, half a tree, whatever).

SPREAD THE LOVE - I'd like to offer you a free one-to-one Tai Chi Zoom session - it will be for 30 minutes and there will be a limited number of these sessions available. They will be strictly first come first served, so if you want a free Tai Chi session email me now at freesession@ahcca.co.uk

STUDIO UPDATE

Because of problems with cameras in recent Zoom sessions not working reliably, I've rearranged my studio and hopefully also fixed the technical issues. The next couple of weeks should allow me to test things. I find it interesting that teaching via Zoom has had so many challenges, I naively assumed that the technology to allow streaming of live sessions would be robust. However it seems that it is not completely so.

I'm also trying to make up my mind as to whether or not putting a carpet on the studio floor would be a good idea. Will make a decision on that within a week or so.

LONDON COMPETITION

Doris Schierer who is an accredited Level 1 instructor in our Tai Chi system, has decided to compete at the London Competition for Traditional Tai Chi Chuan on the 12th June. If you are able to get to the Clissold Leisure Centre, 63 Clissold Road, Hackney, London. N16 9EX and want to cheer Doris on then please let me know and I'll send you additional details. Entry to the event as a spectator is £5. And yes, I will be going to watch the day's events.

KATHIE'S QUESTION

One of my students, Kathie, emailed me the following:

"Can Tai Chi become a natural part of life rather than just another form of exercise and relaxation. Is it more than just a part of the structure of a day or week?"

Besides the obvious, that it's also your work, how important is Tai Chi in your life? Could you live without it? How different do you think you would be without it?"

I suppose I'm really asking that eventually do the advantages and effects of Tai Chi become such an integral part of ones character or being that one doesn't notice them and the changes they've wrought?"

Maybe I just want you to tell me that aside from the pleasure I get from it, it's worth doing and I'll discover the deeper aspects of it."

Those are great questions and I'll have a go at answering them...

"Can Tai Chi become a natural part of life"

The problem that we all have is that we tend to lead busy lives and we have lots of different things that take up our time and demand our attention so it is unusual for a person to dedicate time every day to the practice of Tai Chi (or of anything) however the main benefits of Tai Chi only appear with regular practice.

Now, at what point Tai Chi becomes "a natural part of life" is going to depend on your being willing to practice at least four times a week (I'm making that number up, but I think four days would be about the minimum for most people) and more importantly it depends on whether or not you can take the lessons of Tai Chi, in regards to posture, movement, balance, relaxation, mental attitude, et al, and apply them to areas outside of Tai Chi - that is not always easy. Some people seem to do it, and some just don't, it may be because they don't want to ...cont



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KATHIE'S QUESTION - Cont...

After all, it is OK if you only do Tai Chi for “exercise and relaxation” although it’s perhaps a bit like driving a car with five gears and never going beyond second gear.

“how important is Tai Chi in your life...”

I guess that my answer here is, if I am honest, ‘I don’t know’ - you see I have been doing martial arts all my adult life, and Tai Chi since the late 1970s, so on one hand it’s an integral part of who I am, but on the other hand if I had never done Tai Chi would I simply have found some other different interest, say like playing the Bongo Drums, and would that have had the same effect?

I do think my level of health and fitness is strongly influenced by the fact that each week I am teaching or practicing Tai Chi for 10 hours or more. And as well as the physical benefits that means for that period of time I am not worrying about whatever the latest calamity is, that the press is telling us about.

“discover the deeper aspects”

Hmmmm, when I teach, I very deliberately try and stay away, as much as I can, from being ‘mystical’ or ‘guru like’ however I do know (and have trained with) instructors who regularly waffle on about aspects that I feel are not strictly ‘Tai Chi’ - You see, back in the day, maybe 100-300 years ago, your martial arts instructor was often far more than someone who just taught physical skills, he (or she) were a ‘wise man’... At least, that’s what seems to be the popular history of martial arts.

So, what are the deeper aspects? Are we discussing, Taoism and Buddhism; Medicine and healing; Chi as a manipulable energy; and on and on and on... There are lots of claims, many unsubstantiated, that people make about the deeper aspects which I try and avoid but there are a couple of things that I consider valid and will address...

Firstly, relaxation, now, I do NOT mean the basic relaxation that I try and teach as a physical component of Tai Chi but a much deeper mental and (arguably) even spiritual form of relaxation that deeply affects the way you interact with others, and most importantly the way you interact with yourself.

We are all guilty, from time to time, of negative self-talk and a deep innate level of relaxation allows the mind to notice and neutralise it... One of the reasons that I sometimes meditate (and have taught meditation in the past) is to try and go beyond the general level of relaxation that Tai Chi allows me to practice.

Next, let’s consider spirituality, that is definitely part of Tai Chi if you want it to be but I rarely discuss that aspect because as an atheist and border-line anti-theist I believe that when I am teaching Tai Chi, then it is that and only that which I should be doing. However it is definitely the case that the calmness that Tai Chi can bring can certainly be used as a tool for examining our more deeply held beliefs.

...TO BE CONTINUED

Until next time - have fun, stay well - keep on living the Tai Chi life.

www.ahtca.co.uk

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. So please share this newsletter.