

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: In His Words

Justin Stone Speaks

[T'ai Chi Chih] is not meditation, though it seems to bring the serenity of the most successful meditation – a serenity that teachers often notice in the faces of their students near the end of classes. Indeed some students who come to class under a lot of tension are then embarrassed to begin yawning, [which is] obviously a release of tension. One who is tied in knots does not yawn.

And T'ai Chi Chih is not exercise, though it seems to be the easiest and most effective form of exercise. It is one of the few practices that exercise the internal organs, particularly important for women. And those who practice regularly seem to never have problems of constipation.

When I first used to go to Japan I had to take some bulk or roughage with my meals as the soft food tied my stomach in knots. However from the day I started to do T'ai Chi Chih I could forget about taking the Metamucil or bran; the problem disappeared. On long train trips or driving from state to state, a little T'ai Chi Chih before leaving (and perhaps during a pause on route) seems to take care of regularity. To one sitting behind a desk or wheel all day this can be heaven sent.

One is naturally gratified to receive these benefits from regular practice of T'ai Chi Chih, but there are deeper effects that must be experienced personally. The practicing student will first notice a tingling in the fingers, and soon a slight shaking of the fingers as the *Chi* spreads. Heat may appear at points where there is blockage or has been an injury. And often this heat (which is very healing) will appear sometime after practice – while walking down the street or engaging in some other activity. A surge of energy is common, and students are advised not to practice T'ai Chi Chih after the evening meal, as the heightened energy may interfere with sleep.

The tingling in the fingers may appear in the very first practice session of T'ai Chi Chih. And the inadvertent trembling only confirms the flow of the energy, which the student feels quickly. This is the first manifestation of the circulation of the *yin* and *yang Chi*, which separate when we begin



From **Justin Stone Speaks (CD)**, transcribed from an oral talk; excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing.

to do the movements, and then come together when we rest.

If we practice regularly and get the habit of doing the movements when we arise in the morning, we will probably continue faithfully because we will notice the affect in our lives, and experience the joy thru movement.

As we continue we should one day have the ecstatic feeling that nobody is doing anything, that the *Chi* is flowing by itself, and T'ai Chi Chih is doing T'ai Chi Chih. I first had this experience at dawn in a Japanese garden. And it was almost like a Satori or enlightenment experience. It will take some time before this occurs.

The third confirmatory sign of our success in T'ai Chi practice will come only after we have

been doing T'ai Chi Chih for a long time, to the point where the balanced *Chi* begins to flow the movement we lift our hands – and probably flows through us most of the day while we are carrying out other activities. Then we will be surprised to learn that we can do T'ai Chi Chih mentally. We can be sitting at a boring lecture or on a plane and closing our eyes begin to do the movements in our minds. The *Chi* then begins to flow just as if we were standing and moving. No one around us will even know we are doing it, but we are getting the benefits of T'ai Chi Chih practice while sitting quietly.

Starting at the point of the circulation of the Vital Force we have now arrived at the point where it is completely influenced mind. I leave you to imagine how wonderful such a realization will be, but it will only come after considerable time. One of the first effects we will notice is the absence of fatigue in activities that usually tire us.

I remember hearing from a former student, a nurse, who said, "I don't seem to yell at the kids anymore or kick the cat. And when I come home from work fixing the evening meal doesn't seem to be a chore. This doesn't have anything to do with T'ai Chi, does it?" "What's the difference?" I replied, "As long as it's happening." I'm not going to burden her with the information that I've heard scores of such comments. If lives are enhanced that is enough and no more has to be said.

Free e-newsletterette

Have you ever noticed the “Get Updates from Us” form on the homepage of taichichih.org? About 200 people have. So we have begun sending a free, monthly e-newsletterette featuring snippets from *The Vital Force*. This outreach has a dual purpose: increase subscriptions by offering teachers (who have signed up for the e-newsletterette) an easy way to electronically share inspiration with their students, and 2.) introduce students to the rich sharing within *The Vital Force*. Please sign up through the homepage if you’d like to receive it.

Updated Teacher Database

Per the request from the community, our database of teachers has been updated! We sent three email requests to every teacher for whom we had an email address. And we called everyone for whom we only had a phone number. If we did not get a response during our outreach, we removed that teacher from the list.

Please visit www.taichichih.org/tai-chi-chih-teachers to see if your name is missing. If it is, it’s because we didn’t hear back from you. In that case, please email us at kim.grant@taichichih.org if you need to be reinstated.

We “abandon hope” undertaking this endeavor. Since your membership fee only covers the creation of the quarterly issues, extra projects like this are entirely funded through contributions. If you would like to make a donation towards this important effort, you may do so through the green “Donate” button on the homepage. Thank you.

~ WITH GRATITUDE. KIM GRANT, ALBUQUERQUE, NM

Table of Contents

Justin: In His Words	1
May The Vital Force Be With You	2
Silence & Resting Between Movements	3-5
Guiding Thoughts	6
Teacher Training Tips	7
Conference 2017	8
Letting Go	9
Teachers & Students	10
By Teachers, For All	11
Justin: Meditation for Healing	12-13
Conference 2016	14-17
By Teachers, For All	18-19
By Students, For All	20
Events	21-23
Lighter Side	23
Community Calendar	24

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The Vital Force

~ Web Site Updates ~

The on-line database (for www.taichichih.org) will be updated within a week of the following deadlines: January 15, March 1, April 15, June 1, July 15, September 1, October 15, & December 1.

~ Submission Deadlines ~

January 1 for the February issue
April 1 for the May issue
July 1 for the August issue
October 1 for the November issue

What Does The Vital Force Do?

- Produces a quarterly journal by and for its members
- Creates and maintains taichichih.org for everyone
- Keeps up the extensive teacher database
- Extends its reach through a blog and e-newsletter
- Outreach for teachers and students about TCC through social media

~ Submission Guidelines ~

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to tcc@kimgrant.com. A 1/4 page in this newsletter runs about 200 words; a 1/2 page is 400 words. We are always in need of photos and artwork. Please send high resolution jpgs, which the Editor will crop and edit. If you have 10-12 pieces of related artwork – calligraphy, drawings, photographs, or something that will reproduce well in B/W – please submit them for consideration in an entire issue. The Vital Force reserves the right to edit submission for length and clarity.

~ Giving ~

Please consider a tax-deductible contribution to support The Vital Force’s essential and vast outreach. Membership fees cover the journal; our other activities continue through the discretion and generous support of our giving base. They allow us to effectively reach hundreds of thousands of practitioners around the globe. Thanks to our supporters who:

- Bequeath assets to The Vital Force in their estate planning
- Gift stocks to maximize their tax-efficient, year-end contributions
- Contribute monthly (aka our “sustaining members”)
- Give through their employer’s matching programs, thereby doubling their contributions
- Donate by credit card via www.taichichih.org
- Donate by check to: The Vital Force, PO Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199
- Identify The Vital Force as their non-profit charity-of-choice when shopping at smile.amazon.com

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Let's Get Curious About The Space Between The Movements

By Lisa Otero, Port Hueneme, California

At the 2016 teacher conference in Seattle, Washington, we had several opportunities for open, respectful, and honest discussion about some differences that are apparent when we teachers practice together in a large group. Some of the differences can be chalked up to slight variations in pace and timing and hand positioning, as we shift the weight forward and back and side-to-side. None of these were differences that really made a difference and we were easily brought to general consensus with helpful guidance from Sandy.

The biggest obvious difference that makes a difference is the amount of time some of us take between the movements and what we do (or don't do) during those important pauses. T'ai Chi Chih is not just about *doing*; it is also about *not doing*. It is about movement *and* stillness. It is about *Chi* activation *and* absorption.

During our many group practices it was obvious that there is no consensus whether to stay down in what has come to be known as the "rest position" (knees and elbows bent, wrists gently flexed, palms facing the ground) or whether to come to the rest position for a breath or two, until one *feels* fully grounded, and then to release completely, standing for a few breaths in a fully relaxed, upright position, weight evenly balanced on both feet, knees soft (but not bent), arms hanging loosely by one's side *until one feels ready to start the next movement* (usually a breath or two).

Admittedly, it makes for a visually less-synchronized group practice if some people are staying in the rest position and others are releasing from that position in order to stand tall and breath gently in relaxed stillness. And, as some people asked, what do we tell our students to do? Don't we need a rule for this? What did Justin do? These questions made for many interesting discussions about grounding and *feeling* grounded and how we know that we are fully grounded. Sandy suggested that each person be encouraged to do what *feels* right to them.

I agree that this is the best consensus on this particular matter, though it raises more questions than it answers. We need to grow comfortable with the fact that there are not always cookie-cutter answers to every TCC practice question. We need to explore our practice and answer these questions for ourselves, and be open to the idea that our experience may change over time. We need to teach our students to feel the *Chi* in movements and to feel the *Chi* in the pauses between the movements.

TCC is first and foremost an energy practice; it is not synchronized swimming or a choreographed dance performance. The purpose of the practice is to activate, circulate, and balance the *Chi*. Each of us must learn to determine when we have accomplished that purpose in between each and every set of movements. For many of us, and certainly for me,

feeling the Chi is a life-long inquiry and I do not think we should be shy about sharing with our students the ups and downs, delights and frustrations, insights and challenges of our ongoing adventure with the *Chi*.

In our discussions at the conference, it became clear that we do not agree on what it means to "ground." Some people believe that we ground only when we are in the rest position; others believe that we ground both in the rest position and in the relaxed stillness after releasing from the rest position; others believe that we are (or should be) grounding throughout our TCC practice whether in motion or in stillness. This is a rich topic for sharing and discussion and I hope we will continue to have it every time we gather to practice together.

I do not think there is or can be a prescribed time for staying in the rest position. When I practice I sometimes feel the need to stay in the rest position longer after some movements than after others. For example after the "continuous" movements like Pulling Taffy, Variation 3, or Working the Pulley, or Passing Clouds, I usually feel the desire to stay in the rest position for a longer period of time (just another breath or two) and additionally, I still wish to have my "standing in relaxed stillness" time before I am ready to start another movement set. If I do not get this time, I feel rushed and uneasy.

I understand that those who like to stay down between the movements may not be happy about accommodating the leisurely time I like to take between the movements. Accordingly, when practicing together as a group, we must compromise. You might have to stay down a little longer than you'd like, while I may have to move on sooner than I would wish to. Group practice is different than personal practice; it is a shared experience. It is worth a little compromise on all sides in order to reap the benefits of the powerful and rewarding sharing of the *Chi* that comes with group practice.

Leading a large group TCC practice is a big responsibility, akin to conducting an orchestra; it is not a passive activity. Whoever is leading the practice needs to be alert to the needs of the group – looking around and continually feeling the sense of the room. Is more time needed between the movements, less time? The practice leader has to set an appropriate pace allowing for the energy to properly settle between each movement set and allowing for some individual differences in the amount of time needed for grounding and rest.

Sandy inspired us with her willingness to initiate and facilitate an open and respectful discussion of our differences of opinion and experience. She encouraged us to "compromise, without compromising our values," so that we can cooperate and support one another and grow together to build a united and vibrant community in keeping with our mission and vision statements and our responsibilities as caretakers of TCC in service to humanity.

This was just the first of many conversations our community will have on this topic in this forum and at future TCC events and conferences. Please commit to exploring the issue for yourself and to sharing your discoveries and questions with others.

Abide In Silence: Cosmic Consciousness Pose

By Eliza Fulton, Glenwood Springs, Colorado

When T'ai Chi Chih practice is over and we come into silence, it is truly the final pause that unites everything. The silence allows us to resonate with the soul. To rest carries a certain music with it. It is a messenger that brings us inside ourselves once again. It is this silence that heals the body and mind. Dropping into this deep silence nourishes the soul. It is the cause of all creation – it is pure consciousness. Take time off from the torrent of mental activity. Take a rest from your own mind; treasure and respect this final pause.

The silence is alive and you can feel its presence as a living, breathing power. The words “silent” and “listen” are made from the same letters; they are an anagram. Think about that. Silence must be practiced to be observed, and it flourishes when maintained. It bestows knowledge when it is respected. Listen with a silent mind. Listen to your own inner music and soar on the wings within.

Silence, like TCC, is simple yet difficult. It is like watching the sun shimmering on the surface of the water: light absorbs into the water but it is never a burden to the water; it becomes indwelling and is beautiful to see. Imagine the thoughts in the mind to be like rays of the sun or moon; allow them to become like pure light and your body like the water. The light illuminates within the body and does not harm the body.

Abide in silence and become anchored in the state of bliss, the state of mystical silence, the state of the universe. Silence is our true nature; enter this domain of light and hear the sounds of silence.

TCC takes me to this place of profound silence. We must remember to slow down, to be silent and to listen to the divine music within.

--Inspirations from a talk by Swami Chidvilasananda

Where in the World? Carolyn Perkins, Andes Border of Chile and Argentina



Give The “Pause” A Cause

By Alice M. Holden, San Antonio, Texas

While at the 2016 T'ai Chi Chih conference, I was quite aware of and perplexed about the practice of standing straight with hands at one's side after each of the nineteen moves and one pose of our beloved practice.

Yes, I had seen Justin Stone do this in practices in Albuquerque when I visited there, but I never saw it at a conference and certainly not at accreditation. I was also distracted by those who did this; they shifted their weight, looked around, and seemed to be distracted. The practice was, to me, an annoyance. Then, thanks to our fearless leader, the elephant in the living room was acknowledged and we were asked to deal with it. So here I am, making a confession to you, my TCC family.

The morning of the conference, I had read about St. Dominic, who lived centuries ago and started religious communities for both women and men. The article said that Dominic often prayed standing at attention (rather than while sitting, kneeling or prostrate) as a way of feeling ready to do whatever God/life would put before him on that given day.

The two ideas bumped together in my head and I decided to give it a try. Since conference I have practiced the standing pause. It is marvelous. Not only does it give the knees a rest from the soft or even low bend, but it gives me pause to say, “I'm ready for whatever!” and there is an added benefit: during the day, whenever I find myself standing still, I think of the morning practice and say: “I'm ready, Lord, even for this!”

In the next *Vital Force* I hope to share how I have used the three forms of our beloved practice to transform the dualistic tradition of Taoism into a Trinitarian practice of Christianity (which I find helpful as a woman religious in the Catholic-Christian tradition).

To Stand – Or To Stay Down – In Rest?

By Stephen Thompson, Tupelo, Mississippi

After Caroline and I led Friday’s early morning practice at the 2016 teacher conference someone asked, “When did we start standing up at the end of the movements during our T’ai Chi Chih practice?” I glanced at my watch, smiled, and said, “Well, Caroline usually rises after grounding, but today was my first time to do so in a TCC practice.” Why? Caroline had asked me to count while she led. Following her and rising together seemed completely natural at the time.

Three hours later Sandy McAlister deviated from the conference schedule and opened an impromptu floor discussion about what to do during the rest. There was quite a storm of comments. Some teachers claimed Justin taught us to rest, release, and rise. Others said his videos and texts say to hold the rest.

Sandy calmly acknowledged the two groups of thoughts on whether to stay down in graceful conclusion; or, after a short time of grounding, to rise up and release the knees and wrists. She shared that she personally stays down, but understood the reasons some might choose to rise – either because their body couldn’t hold the rest very long while remaining comfortable, or because Justin rose after the rest both in *Seijaku* and TCC. Sandy told us that Justin often said his rising had nothing to do with his age or discomfort and just as importantly, that Justin never corrected anyone who stayed down in rest. This caused someone to exclaim, “That’s all well and good, but what I want to know is, which way should I teach my students.”

Many of us were wondering WWJD, “What would Justin do” or say had he’d been present? Fortunately Justin was a prolific writer. Read three quotations from his *20th Century Psalms*, as printed in the August 2016 *Vital Force*:

“The strangest thing is that people come to a teacher to learn and then try to tell him what and how to teach.”

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*The Zen Master, Tokusan, was walking through the hallway one night, accompanied by an attendant, when he came upon two monks quarreling. The Master stopped and crossed his arms, waiting for an explanation. “Didn’t you tell us that we should do so-and-so and follow such-and-such a path?” asked the first. “You are right,” replied the Master. The other monk was astonished. “But I understood just the opposite,” he protested. “I thought we should do such-and-such.” “You too are right,” agreed the Master. At that the bewildered attendant, hearing that the two parties with opposing views were both right, exclaimed: “But they can’t be both right!” Tokusan smiled. “I perceive that you, too, are right” was all he said.*

*After which Justin added these words, “We eagerly dig the pit and then wail piteously when we fall into it.”*

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And further warned, “We believe what we want to believe and we doubt our own experience.”

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Perhaps the division within our community can be put to rest, pardon the pun, by an observation. I noticed those who championed rising after rests were generally speaking those known to practice the advance form of TCC (*Seijaku*), where we rise after the rests in what Justin called “hang time”. Could it be those who defended staying down generally speaking weren’t as familiar, or perhaps as comfortable with the *Seijaku* way?

Which way should we teach our students? Teach TCC to beginning students and teach *Seijaku* to advanced students. “How long should we stay in rest?” Not too long, not too short. When leading a group practice, keep the time spent in rest just short enough (so those who wish to stay down can do so without discomfort) and just long enough (so those who wish to rest and then rise, will to have ample time to do so).

Sandy encouraged us to try both resting forms and to give them an equal chance. “Trust your experience, be guided by the *Chi*,” she said, “and allow others to do the same.” Allow yourself to move past polarity thinking and into mindfully experiencing. Rising or staying down after the rest ultimately is neither right nor wrong. It’s only TCC doing TCC. And if the *yin-Chi* and *yang-Chi* can become one during rest, surely we as a community of teachers can follow its example and do the same.

**Where in the World?** Francesco ‘Mondo’ Mondini, Monte Baldo in Trentino, Italy

# Change And Creativity

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

**During the teacher conference** this past August there were many discussions about the future of this annual event. The results of the survey earlier this year regarding our yearly conference, in which 120 teachers and 50 students participated, clearly showed the willingness of the community to explore changes to the traditional way we have held that event.

The expense of travel was a major reason teachers are not attending conference as often as they use to. Also, the availability of more workshop, retreats, and intensives offers opportunities closer to home to participate in a T'ai Chi Chih program. Many teachers are opting to attend a conference one year alternating with another TCC event closer to home the following year. For a detailed account of the survey results see my article in the May 2016 *Vital Force*.

## T'ai Chi Chih Foundation Teacher Grants

**At the 2016 conference** the T'ai Chi Chih Foundation announced that in 2017 it would give **three \$200 grants** to teachers. The goal of the grants is to educate and promote awareness of TCC. The project or event should have a wider impact than just obtaining students for one teacher. A few examples are: having a booth at a health fair, a well-publicized public talk/presentation with promotional and informational materials available, developing materials about TCC to be widely disseminated. Upon completion, the teacher will write an article for *The Vital Force* letting the community know about their project. The grant proposal form can be found on [tcccommunity.net](http://tcccommunity.net) under "resources." I'm looking forward to seeing the creativity of our community.

In light of the survey results it was decided to hold a community conference of teachers and students one year, alternating with a teacher conference the next. There has been much discussion among teachers about the logistics of a community conference – time frame, a program to satisfy teachers and students, a location where there are many students, etc. It is clear that we need more time to prepare before we move into a combined conference of teachers and students.

**Next year there will be a teacher conference in Boulder Colorado, June 15 – 18, 2017, followed by a *Seijaku* accreditation.** It has not been decided if we will be ready to host a combined student and teacher conference in 2018, but we are working toward the time when we can present a substantial and beneficial community conference.

The theme of the 2016 conference was *Letting Go*, and I appreciate the teachers who are embracing change and letting go of what may not serve us at this point in time. A combined conference of teachers and students will bring

new energy into our community. Students often have an unfettered view of the practice and can offer a fresh perspective enriching a teacher's perspective. Attending a conference may propel students into a deeper connection with TCC prompting them to consider becoming teachers themselves.

If the practice of TCC is a valuable part of your life, then keeping it vibrant and fresh is important to you. Justin relied on the integrity of the teachers to develop their own continuing education program. Consider once a year attending an event that offers the opportunity to explore, assess, question, play, and enjoy TCC. Find an event that serves you whether it is a conference with 100+ like-minded folks or a smaller, more intimate group such as a retreat.

*Where in the World?* Sheila Leonard, Grand Canyon, Arizona



## Entering The Space Between The Movements

By Daniel Pieniacak, Howell, New Jersey

**In this writer's opinion**, it is good that there has been some discussion among teachers about what happens in the time between T'ai Chi Chih movements. I have found Justin Stone's advice, "Always trust your experience" to be very valuable.

TCC practitioners might have come to call the stance when a movement finishes as "rest pose" or "rest position".... But is it really rest?

We are taught that in movement, the *Chi* segregates into *yin Chi* and *yang Chi*, and that the reason we come to a position of stillness then, with the knees slightly bent and the palms of the hands facing the floor, is so that the *yin Chi* and *yang Chi* re-integrate, or come back into a state of unity (the uncarved block). It also is said that *yin Chi* and *yang Chi* become balanced, and that is why we keep our concentration in the soles of the feet both during movement, and when movement comes back into stillness.

Justin has written, "Awareness is the root of T'ai Chi Chih." I believe that this is not only awareness of the *form* of the movements (i.e. shifting the weight, softness and continuity, circularity and polarity) but also awareness of what is happening in the interior – *feeling* the *Chi* moving through the body and *noticing* the dynamics of the *Chi* energy during the practice.

If we really pay attention, something happens each time we come back into the position of stillness after each set of movements; we can feel this. Being sure that the knees are slightly bent and our focus is in the soles of the feet is crucial to feeling what might be like settling down or balancing of energy (*Chi*).

We are asked to hold the closing posture for at least four or five seconds (according to the *Phototext*). After a sufficient period of time in stillness, to this writer, the mission has been accomplished, and it is a time to let go. I feel this letting go *on the interior* – perhaps as a release in the *tan tien*, perhaps as a release of the bent knees, perhaps a release of the hand position.

The point for this writer is having learned that the exterior (body position) is a reflection and outflow of the interior (when the balancing and coming together of *yin* and *yang* is complete). Pay attention and let it be as it needs to be.



## The Future Of TCC

By Pam Towne, Oceanside, California

**Justin foresaw some event**, although he didn't know what it was, that would catapult T'ai Chi Chih into the mainstream awareness of Americans. Perhaps it will be a professional sports team endorsing it or a celebrity. But one thing is clear: when that time comes, we will need a lot more teachers to meet the demand.

TCC has grown over the years by people like you and me getting great benefits from its practice, wanting to share it with others, becoming accredited to teach and starting classes. I invite you to ask yourself, "What is my part in carrying TCC into the future?"

If you are a student, is your part to enthusiastically share with your friends about the benefits you are receiving and invite them to a TCC class? Do you know someone who knows someone who knows Dr. Oz or another TV or radio show host? Followed up on, such contacts can lead to having a TCC spokesperson on their show and educating millions of people about TCC.

Is your inner guidance urging you to become an accredited TCC teacher? It is a very rewarding path that also enhances your health, happiness, and fulfillment in life. If you'd like more information about the accreditation process, you can find it at [www.taichichih.org/accreditation](http://www.taichichih.org/accreditation). Look for the link to *Download a Teacher Accreditation Referral Form*. And certainly talk with your teacher. You can also feel free to contact me.

If you are already an accredited teacher, are you teaching in settings with younger people? With diverse ethnic groups? With men? If your classes are at a senior center, would you be willing to step outside your comfort zone and set up at least one class for younger students? Who do you know that can connect you with opportunities to give presentations and start more diverse classes?

Fortunately, we can practice TCC at any age, and we have many active TCC teachers in their 70s and 80s. Yet, as our teacher population continues to age, we need younger teachers.

Part of our job is to inspire and prepare new teachers. Check out the *Teacher Candidate Preparation Guidelines* on the *Referral Form*. It is designed to help you prepare students for accreditation. Please ask me or another trainer if you have questions about preparing candidates.

The future of TCC rests in your hands, and heart. What is your part?

**Where in the World?** Sheila Leonard,  
Ocean Grove, New Jersey

# Feel the Chi ~ Share the Chi

## 2017 T'ai Chi Chih Teacher Conference; June 15-18, 2017

By Marie Dotts, Lisa V, Leya Cragin and Lisa Otero (the 2017 Teacher Conference Committee)

**We invite all T'ai Chi Chih teachers** to mark your calendars and start making plans to join us on June 15-18 in beautiful Boulder, Colorado, for our annual conference. We are planning a rich program of multifaceted learning opportunities and festive social activities to bring us together to deepen our personal practice (*Feel the Chi*), and also to support and inspire one another as teachers (*Share the Chi*). As always, we come together to have fun, celebrating our community and the *Joy of the Chi*.

Our venue is a resort hotel, the Millennium Harvest House Hotel. We have personally inspected the spacious and comfortable guestrooms, many with breathtaking views of the Rocky Mountains from a private patio. Our meeting space includes a 5,000 sq. ft. outdoor pavilion, as well as a 5,000 sq. ft. ballroom with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking beautiful gardens. There are also plenty of indoor and outdoor spaces for socializing after hours. Summer is high season in Boulder, but our June dates provide an excellent value.

For those who extend their stay before or after the conference, the hotel has 16 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds, including 15 tennis courts, an indoor and outdoor pool and bar, gym, garden, and restaurant. The hotel, in the heart of the city, is less than two miles from five of Boulder's top six tourist picks for things to do: the Flatirons, Chautauqua, Pearl Street, Boulder Creek Path, and The University of Colorado.

Boulder has been voted number one in some fun polls: Happiest City, Brainiest City, Highest Well-Being Index, America's Foodiest Town. The charming city is 25 miles northwest of Denver and sits adjacent to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Rocky Mountain National Park is just one hour from Boulder.



Every teacher conference is a special opportunity to grow and enrich our community. No other event brings so many teachers together to exchange ideas, experiences, inspiration, and support. Please join us!

Registration materials will be available by late November at: [www.taichichih.org/conference-2017](http://www.taichichih.org/conference-2017).

### A Special Message From Marie, Conference Coordinator

**I invite you to Feel the Chi ~ Share the Chi.** I cannot imagine T'ai Chi Chih without community. We have ten new teachers in Colorado and all would tell you that community is one of the things they love most about TCC. I believe this is so because community is a direct expression of the fundamental Truth that we are not separate but part of a Oneness; whenever we are aligned with Truth, the experience is always one of Joy.

This Oneness is often likened to a tapestry where every thread is essential and plays an important part in holding the tapestry together. Indeed, every thread is interdependent. A strong community understands and values this interdependence. The community helps each individual express his/her full potential and the individual plays an essential part in helping the community express its ultimate integrity and beauty.

My individual practice has deepened greatly and become richer because of the support of our community. I am a more effective teacher because of the inspiration and support of all of you. The *Chi*, in turn, guides me in expressing what I am uniquely called to do to support the community. Because of the generosity of spirit each of us expresses, our community grows stronger. This interdependence and exchange of energy is the essential movement and flow of Life itself, the *yinning* and *yanging* of the *Chi*. When we accord with this flow there is no limit or end to our individual potential and the potential of our community.

I invite you to come to next year's conference and feel the joy of this flow. **Please know that your presence matters. You are an essential thread** in the TCC tapestry; you give to the community in ways that no one else can. Come share your *Chi* and together we will help each other grow into who we are all meant to be. I am honored and grateful to be in community with you and look forward to seeing you next June in Boulder.

# Letting Go

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, New Mexico

**The theme of the 2016 teacher conference was Letting Go.** It was a good theme as it is the most important aspect of T'ai Chi Chih. We invite it into our practice from the first movement of Rocking Motion. Our hands are relaxed and open, ready to move into the new. With each practice, we do not know what that new will be, but we do know that there will be a new understanding, feeling, or insight. This is always related not only to ourselves, but also to the bigger picture of our lives and life in general.

A student recently shared some negative thoughts he had about certain movements. I did not agree with his thinking because it took him to a negative state. Justin often said, "Don't think about the movements; just do them." As we work with our practice more and more, we begin to find that the quiet we experience in the body leads to a stillness of mind. This leads us to let go of negative opinions that may have popped up when we were first learning the movements.

I often tell the class not struggle with the movements, to keep in mind how unbalanced the body felt when they were learning Rocking Motion. But a short week later, after daily practice, the movement will seem like the most natural thing in the world, and later, stillness while in motion will become the experience with its many insights. Letting go of thinking is a most important base to our practice.

Justin asked us not to teach without becoming accredited, even though the movements may seem very easy to do. An accredited teacher is worth her and his weight in gold because each brings *teh* (inner sincerity) into the learning of TCC. *Teh* is sincerity and is the easy way of letting go. When we are being sincere, there is no conniving, no trying to find advantage over others by being clever like a fox. Once we start being clever, it takes more and more thinking, rather than going deeply into the stillness. Cleverness is the opposite of sincerity and letting go.

Letting go leads to knowing *teh* within ourselves. It is a selfless act. It teaches us to love and share the *Chi*. I invite teachers to plan to attend the 2017 conference.

*Where in the World?* Sheryl Adair, Pender Island, British Columbia, Canada



## Pyramid Poetry: Go For A Walk & What Do You See

shift  
aware  
connected  
improvement is  
supported  
let go  
deep  
– LISA STROYAN

now  
seeing  
things anew  
the need to make  
the movements  
happen -  
gone  
– DORA WIEMANN

all  
things are  
new in this  
moment right now  
precious is  
the true  
one  
– LEYA

soft  
rain bright  
lights shining  
many colors  
across sky  
within  
all  
– MW

new  
or old  
which is it  
how can i tell  
did i think  
it just  
now  
– JERRY G.

shift  
vision  
character  
color me soft  
azure blue  
lead me  
in  
– JENETH RUNDLE

new  
listen  
see the light  
hearing for the  
first time, now  
it makes  
sense  
– JUDY

pain  
tension  
melting now  
softly gently  
flowing through  
open  
gone  
– PAULINE

joy  
release  
awareness  
precious moment  
tai chi chih  
always  
new  
– JOYCE VEERKAMP

new  
calling  
hold yourself  
in gentleness  
like a babe  
reborn  
love  
– REBECCA P.

## TCC Feels Like Playing

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

**I began teaching formally last month,** and I must say it's fascinating and wonderful to see new students experiencing T'ai Chi Chih for the first time. In our third class, I was reminding students that tension blocks energy, and that I've noticed it cuts off my awareness of my feet. One student's eyes widened, and I could see a click of understanding.

"When I'm standing here, I can feel my feet, but not when we're moving!" She said. Her amazement reminded me so much of my first experiences – of knowing there is a physical connection to this mysterious *Chi* I heard people talking about. I warned the students that not everyone would feel the *Chi*, and that it was often fleeting and elusive, and suddenly I realized that words cannot convey the joy and depth waiting as someone discovers the *Chi*.

How can I describe how TCC feels? It feels like playing. It's running my fingers through damp sand. It's riding the carousel, feeling the support of being moved without effort. It's making mud pies with no other thought than the joy of shaping clay. It's standing against the front rail of a boat, held upright the wind. It's riding horseback in the sleepy, achy chill of dawn. It's the timelessness of floating beneath a waterfall on an inner tube. It's dancing with an invisible partner with whom I can let go of all planning and simply move where I'm lead.

"If you've never eaten chocolate, you cannot imagine the taste of chocolate. You must experience it for yourself," one teacher recently explained.

I never studied with Justin in person. I feel incredibly lucky, though, to have had not just one profoundly impactful teacher, but also, exposure to a succession of great teachers, each bringing a deeper understanding of TCC, each giving me a precious element of the bigger picture. Even though I didn't always know it, a tapestry was forming as I gathered thread after thread from different teachers. I'm honored to be a part of that TCC teacher community. I'm sure I've only scratched the surface; I can't wait to discover more. And I hope to meet and share with many of you at the conference in Colorado next summer.

## 19 Years Ago

By Margery Erickson, Hanover, Pennsylvania

**Nineteen years ago** I became accredited and have been actively teaching since then. Some of you may have heard this accreditation was held in our home weaving studio. The energy from that week still lingers.

Today, reflecting on this past weekend at the Seijaku-Meditation retreat in Silver Beach, New Jersey, my thoughts reach into the past. TCC has been a wonderful journey. Feeling grounded and centered, walking through the day in a quiet comfortable space, balancing thoughts with good health. Is this what it is like to mature? Or is it what it is like to grow practicing TCC?



## Student Comments

Compiled by Mary Wichmann, Rochert, Minnesota

**On many summer mornings** I lead T'ai Chi Chih practices in the memorial garden outside my church in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. This week I received feedback from three students:

"Thank you for being so kind to my mother. She took your classes here years ago in her wheelchair and felt it helped her even as her health was failing. Thank you for loving her. Thank you for doing this for us. I especially like the feeling as our hands pass near each other in the circle." – *Reva*

"I wish my husband would do this with us. Why don't more men do this? It's improved my balance." – *Gail*

"Thank you for introducing me to TCC. I've been doing it first thing when I get up (after having some orange slices). I love to watch night changing into morning and birds waking up and coming for breadcrumbs I've put out. This helps to calm me, settle me or give me whatever I need. It's a beautiful gift you've given." – *Lorraine*

I reminded Lorraine that the gift came from Justin Stone. "A gift to humanity" as he often reminded us. In small but deep ways we are changing the lives of our students. Just ask them.

# Yinning & Yanging

By Eliza Fulton, Glenwood Springs, Colorado

**There is always the challenge of** helping new students recognize the correct feeling when *yinning* and *yanging*. I recently learned a little trick from my yoga training that adapted perfectly to this situation: take a yoga strap (a belt or scarf will also work) and put it gently across the back at the kidneys. Place your arms by your side with elbows at a 90-degree angle; hands are forward. The strap comes across the back and then forward on each side of the body and is held with the hands. Just hold the strap with your arms by your side and your forearms and hands forward.

Now for the movement. As you shift your weight into the forward foot the belt is then allowed to just rest gently on the back. As you move back, shifting your weight into the back foot, you move the kidneys into the belt with a gentle push. This allows the student to feel the gentle fluctuations of the hip flexors as you open and close, pivot lightly at the hip flexors, and then rock back at the hip flexors (like a rolling pin just turning up and down). The student is now *yinning* and *yanging* with new body awareness thanks to the use of the belt. It works like a charm.

I then check to see that the student has understood the essence of the move by placing my hand on the student's lower back to feel that the correct movement is being executed. Most students feel an ah-ha movement with the use of the belt. Since *yinning* and *yanging* is at the core of the practice, any tools that help a student embody the movement correctly are wonderful. This may be one more teaching arrow to put in your quiver.

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## Misty Fjords

By Donna Deffenbaugh, Prescott, Arizona

Imagine

Not waiting to get somewhere...

No gift store at the end of the ride

No we are here now moment

Deep cold water tall mossy spruce

Thick, thick travels through ancient hemlock forest

Cedar, aspen

Mountain cirques and peaks

Granite going nowhere

Cinder cones forever frozen lava floes

Puffed up sun-soaked pillow clouds

Not getting anywhere

But here

Being here



## YES!

By Carol Nelson-Selby, San Luis Obispo, California

**I am always struck by how** the practice of T'ai Chi Chih helps me better understand other things. Take neuroscience, for instance. Recently, there have been many scientific articles addressing what every practitioner of our moving meditation already knows: that body movement itself *changes the brain*.

Actions often have more power than words or ideas to change our emotions. In the most recent issue of *Discover* magazine, studies have shown that hand washing can reduce feelings of guilt over something *done*, while washing the mouth soothes the guilt of having *said* something bad. We have learned that shaking our fist can make us angrier and standing tall and acting happy can help with depression. Body positions and gestures are so hard-wired to our brains that communication is always a two-way street, but in some cases (particularly those concerning emotions) our bodies send more compelling messages than our brains are able to.

Because of this, TCC could be thought of as a Body/Mind experience, rather than the other way around. By moving in a way that is universally calming, our bodies tell our minds that we are calm and focused. (Think about the shifting weight of a mother soothing her crying baby, a sailor adjusting to the rolling of a ship, a bather feeling the pull and push of the ocean when standing in an ocean lagoon, or enjoying a porch glider on a warm evening.)

In the same way, many hand gestures of TCC are related to universal expressions of emotion. No matter where you go or what culture you are observing, hands talk. For instance, the open palm rotating to the side and facing up (as in Pulling Taffy) is interpreted throughout the people and communities of the world as conveying: "You are welcome here." The gently falling other hand in the same movement (sometimes referred to as "petting the cat") is a gesture that means "be calm." The falling hands in Daughter on the Mountain, one in front of the other, expresses falling rain in the Polynesian hand language of hula (although they subtly move the fingers as the two hands drop, before rising again into the cloud). The rising hand gesture in Daughter in the Valley is exactly what all uninhibited humans do (though faster) when overjoyed. It says "wow" or "yes!"

I'm not suggesting that hand talk should become the focus of our TCC practice, but only that we can all enjoy and appreciate that every gesture in TCC is inherently self-affirming and emotionally uplifting. Our hand movements – combined with the flow of energy rising through the body, settling then rising again through each gentle but powerful movement, through the *chuis* in *Six Healing Sounds* and ending in the unifying Cosmic Consciousness Pose – acts as a wonderful symphony celebrating our very humanness. Through movement, we can feel connected to each other and to all of mankind. How very healing that is. Yes!

# Meditation For Healing

By Justin F. Stone

[Editor's Note: Justin refers to himself as "the author" in the introduction in this book.]

**The author's interest in healing through spiritual means** goes back many, many years. Such healing methods must stand the test of actual practice; results must be achieved. Simply to believe in something because one wants it to be true is delusion, and **delusion is diametrically opposed to true spirituality.**

One hears of such healing practices as aura adjustment, though there is nothing in the teachings of any of the great masters about this. People speak of astral, the etheric body and other concepts in regard to healing – as though they have actually experienced them rather than merely having read about them. Twenty five hundred years ago **the Buddha cautioned against believing what had not been experienced.** His teaching was aimed at pointing the way for followers to arrive at the same states he had known and to have the enlightenment experience for themselves.

Today, such a spiritual iconoclast as Krishnamurti says, "Don't believe it because somebody else tells you to." The Chinese saying reinforces this: "You cannot appease your hunger by reading a menu." This is healthy skepticism. If the reader wants to experience the healing practices in this book, he will have to perform them regularly for himself. **Mere belief in them will avail nothing.**

Nevertheless, the author has seen and experienced remarkable results through various practices of meditation. Many years of work with the Japanese Healing Church (*Sekai Kyu Seikyo*) brought him to an understanding of what illness really is and how the body and the psyche are related. He saw many interesting results, not only with humans, but also with plants. The same life force flows through all living things. From this came an understanding that **illness, misfortune and misery all have a spiritual basis.**

The Healing Church speaks of illness as puri-

fication; in many cases, for instance, fever is to be welcomed as it melts accumulated toxin and, after some suffering with it, enables the physical organism to purify itself. The author saw how this caused such chronic and unpleasant maladies as herpes simplex, where the heat of the sun's rays takes the place of fever in melting the accumulated toxin. To suppress such manifestation because it is unpleasant cosmetically will only increase the state of disease and require a new purification of greater intensity.

In the late 1950's, the author, who had always been fascinated by Chinese lore, was first exposed to *T'ai Chi Ch'uan* and Taoist teachings. Interest in Chinese health methods based on an understanding of the Cosmos (not just physiology), and a realization that Chinese medicine was thousands of years older than Western symptomatic medicine, led the author to seek Chinese sages and scholars who could teach some of the great wisdom of the *yin-yang* system.

Professor Wen-shan Huang, Dr. Chung-yuan Chang, Tin Chin Lee, Professor Nan, Dr. Wu and the patriarch Liu all contributed to the author's study and outlined paths of practice to be followed. There is particular gratitude to Professor Huang, anthropologist, culturologist, scholar, *T'ai Chi* master and philosopher – a true Buddhist-Taoist-Confucianist in the great Chinese tradition.

In India it is believed that all illness is the result of an imbalance of the *Prana* (intrinsic energy of the individual, being merely a part of the universal energy that the Indians also know, and sometimes worship, as *Shakti* and *kundalini*). Indian philosophy says

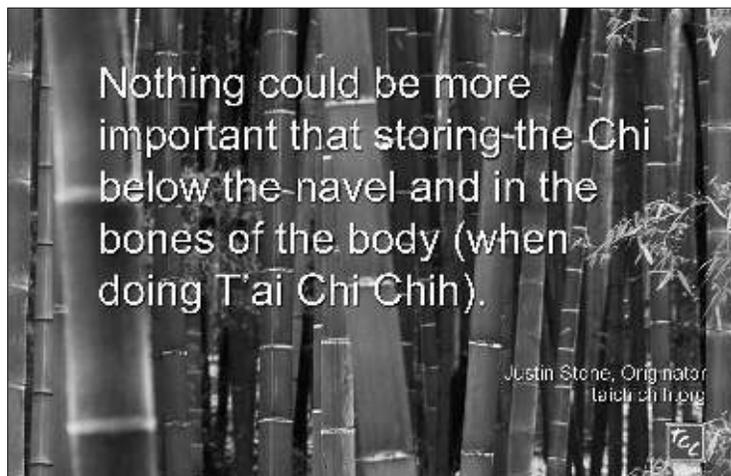
that, in the final analysis, there is only space (*Akasha*) and energy (*Prana*) in this manifested universe. Science tends to corroborate this view, hence the theories of atomic energy, where matter now turns out to be energy. Far Eastern teaching goes farther, however, and says that ultimately, **this energy is of the nature of thought.**

**A mastery of this *Prana* energy in its individual and universal aspects would be the greatest power,** capable of creating universes. Conversely, dissipation and imbalance of the *Prana* lead to illness and unhappy lives. To fully understand this point of view, one must stop thinking dualistically and understand all life as being part of one continuum.

Naturally, ancient Ayurvedic medicine of India sought to heal the imbalance of *Prana* when it appeared, through use of herbs and more esoteric ways of setting up counter-vibrations. Use of Mantra, changing the vibration (and *Prana* through vibration) was much the goal of medicine as it was of yoga. Both wished to take **the fragmented and make it whole.**

Similarly in China, illness is looked upon as a radical imbalance between the yang (positive) *Chi* and yin (negative) *Chi*, with *Chi* simply the Chinese name for *Prana*.

In Chinese cosmology, from the ineffable Reality we (originally) get a manifestation of two



forces, *yang* (heat, light, expansion, male) and *yin* (cold, dark, contracting, female), thus setting up the first polarity. It is the juxtaposition of these two forces, and imbalance of them, that brings the world into being – creating heaven, earth and man. Man is the result of the wedding of the great *yang* (heaven) and the great *yin* (earth), which are represented in the body by the heart (*yang*) and the kidneys (*yin*). **From these proceed the world of the 10,000 things – the endless phenomena of life.**

When the *Chi* that flows in the individual, and creates the individual, is radically out of balance, Chinese medicine (acupuncture) tries to bring them back into balance. This is total organism medicine, not bothering with local symptoms except as signposts on the way. This medicine is very old, and we can see how it agrees with ancient Indian healing methods in trying to restore balance – whether we call it vibratory balance or use such expressions as balancing the polarity (*yin* and *yang*).

This being so, how does meditation fit into the picture? In what way is it curative? ... It is no wonder that the Buddha said, **“When the body is mastered, the mind is mastered – and vice-versa.”**

The reciprocal character of mind and energy means that we can reach one through the other. This is why such great mental serenity seems to be achieved through the moving meditations, *T'ai Chi Chih* and *T'ai Chi Ch'uan*, which are essentially physical, and which directly circulate and balance the intrinsic energy (*Chi*).

Taking the above into consideration, we can see how a disturbed mind



causes inflamed breathing and unbalanced *Chi*. Conversely, deep and one-pointed concentration and meditation reintegrate the mind, bringing it to a focus, with similar integration of the *yin-yang* elements of the *Chi* energy.

When we study Chinese cosmology deeply and learn the influence of the seasons, the elements, the times of day, we begin to intuit how the flow of the *Chi* varies and how we are affected by it. These Chinese masters know where the *Chi* is flowing strongly in the body at any time, relative to the time of day, the season of the year and other influences. From nine external pulses, the Chinese acupuncturist can discern imbalance in the Vital Force of the internal organs. He is not interested in a localized pain or discomfort; his aim is to restore balance of the over-all life force.

In observing healing work throughout the Far East, either consciously carried out or through religious services and yoga-like practices, the author has noted **the unifying principle in them all, that is, bringing the *Chi* into balance and reintegrating the individual.** Perhaps in other cultures witch doctors and medicine men try to do the same thing.

When after many, many years of study the author began to develop the moving meditation *T'ai Chi Chih*, he realized he was working with this basic life force, the *Chi*. And when, in its incipient stages, he used *T'ai Chi Chih* mentally to augment the healing practice known as *Johrei* in the Japanese Healing Church, he got results far beyond any that he had contemplated. So strong were the results of the combined forces that he eventually gave up doing the healing work. **In the final analysis, the best healing is self-healing, and there is no better way to achieve this than through the various types of meditative practice.**

When meditation achieves total abstraction, for the moment there is complete healing. This passes as the abstraction fades, but it has had its effect. In such meditations as the *Nei Kung*, the Reverse Meditative Breathings and the moving meditations, we work directly with *Chi* itself. Results have been amazing. Seemingly incurable chronic ailments such as heart trouble, asthma, high blood pressure and even diabetes, seem to yield to the radical change in *Chi* balance.

Such results are not promised; **each must seek for himself.** The author has seen many of these results and there are others documented by handwritten letters he has received. So we can begin to study meditation and the way it affects the *pranic* balance and, while studying and practicing, perhaps gain the benefits of meditation the way so many others have. **All it takes is perseverance.**

From *Meditation For Healing*, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing.

# Presentation: Teaching TCC In Colleges & Universities

By April Leffler, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

**Imagine being 18 years old again.** Your freshman year in college as a nursing or engineer major, feeling uncertain about your future, unprepared for everyone's expectations, overwhelmed by the newness of everything, and completely stressed out. You just had a fight with your roommate; you miss your family and friends back home. Nothing is familiar. You wake feeling anxious as you try to remember everything on your to-do list and your mind races on.

And then you enter your PE (Physical Education) class, barely even remembering walking across campus to the building. The instructor says, as she dims the lights, "Check your brain at the door. Check your to-do list at the door. Drop the attention to the soles of the feet and take a deep breath. Be here now." Your mind comes to a screeching ... WT#?

~~~~~

It never occurred to me to teach T'ai Chi Chih to college students. And yet it has been such a complete joy to teach this population since 2008. The offer to teach at Widener University fell into my lap, as the yoga teacher from the YMCA (where I teach) also taught at Widener; she recommended TCC and me to the PE Director. The PE Director is very progressive and was excited to offer something different and hired me sight unseen.

When I was invited to speak at this year's conference on the subject, I contacted my PE Director and asked him for salient points. What do teachers need to know about teaching TCC at their local college? I was surprised to find that the national PE standard requirements have TCC written all over them, metaphorically speaking. I Googled several PE programs and college departments throughout the country; they all used familiar verbiage heard in TCC circles.

Any PE program worth its salt promotes four key components: social, emotional, psychological, and physical. As we all know, TCC easily fits into these categories.

Two important PE component questions are: 1.) Can you do this (activity) for the rest of your life? 2.) Can this be done in an outdoor setting? Of course, TCC is an easy answer to both questions.

PE catchphrases include "kinesthetic awareness" and "sound mind/sound body." Do I even need to expound on this relative to TCC?

Because I had gotten my teaching job without meeting the PE Director, I asked him what I could say to get his attention if I was a total stranger expressing an interest in teaching TCC at the college. This is the list he offered:

- There are no equipment costs;
- Use your certification with your name ("Jane Doe, Accredited TCC Teacher");
- Explain how to utilize the "softer side" (well-being, stress reduction);
- Mention that TCC is innovative, offering variety to PE classes to match diverse interests;
- It promotes life-long learning and can be done throughout life;
- It promotes social, emotional, psychological, and physical well-being;
- It enhances kinesthetic awareness;
- It cultivates sound mind, sound body;
- It reduces stress;
- It improves focus and concentration;
- It provides appropriate coping techniques to life and school stressors.

For graduate programs, TCC makes an excellent research study topic.

I also spoke to other TCC teachers offering college classes and was surprised by the variety. Some classes are 50-minutes; others are over two hours. Some classes are once weekly for 14 to 16 weeks; others consist of two 3-hour classes for three to four weeks during winter sessions. Summer sessions are six weeks with two-hour classes twice weekly. (Larger universities have summer programs.) Some offer PE credits ranging from 0.5 - 1.0 - 1.5; other classes are for personal enrichment with no credits offered.

What really dawned on me after all of this research? TCC is exactly what PE programs need; they just don't know it yet. We have a valuable service to offer colleges and their student population and it *behooves us to begin educating the educators.*

For sample syllabi from three TCC teachers, more details, and my PE notes, please see taichichih.org/conference-2016. Thanks to Janet Oussaty and Sharon Sirkis for willingly sharing their syllabi. Thanks to Sharon Sirkis and Donna McElhose for answering my many questions and sharing their experiences during the interviews.



Going Home & Letting Go

By Tom Rothenberger, San Anselmo, California

I had just said goodbye to my new friends from Dan Pieniac's Seijaku Intro/Review course at the University of Washington. I really did not want to leave, but it was time to let go. Dan's class was so open and relaxed; his ability to convey the power of Seijaku with words and experiences made an exceptional session. I resisted Seijaku for six years because it had already taken so long to find softness in TCC. The thought of pushing through a wall seemed to take things in a different direction. I had had the wrong impression of holding fast and letting go and the impact Seijaku presents. Those doubts are gone.

My wife and I were headed from the University of Washington to a fish restaurant about three miles away along the water. In the car my thoughts slipped back to Dan's comments about no anticipation, no expectation, be in the present, start softly with the *tan y'en*, and then "Oh, there's the resistance." Letting go. That resonated in a way that kept me more in the present.

My wife and I had a great time catching up and enjoying boats, kayaks, and paddleboards moving slowly on the water. The weather had been nice the whole week in Seattle and today was no exception. I listened better, without anticipating or judging, to what my wife was saying. More letting go. I could feel her joy as she talked about some fun times she had in Seattle.

That afternoon we caught the light rail to SeaTac airport; it was commuting time so the trains were standing room only. I found a vertical support rail just inside the door to hang on to. As we began moving, it was obvious I didn't have much practice standing while traveling in a moving vehicle. After some adjustment I began to ground into the soles of the feet. I closed my eyes to better feel the train movements and began to relax, letting go. I opened my eyes to see Seattle's unique neighborhoods passing by.

Our full flight was on time and we were lucky enough to board early so we were not in any rush. The plane grew noisier as it filled with passengers, and there was a young child nearby who began to cry. So much for the calm I had been enjoying. After 10 minutes the pilot told us they needed to check an engine and it would be another 20 minutes. My mild claustrophobia coupled with engine problems were starting to add up to panic. I focused on the present the best I could and read some of *The Vital Force* in my lap. I looked out the window to clear my vision.

I thought about the great conference and Dan's class that had followed. I remembered lunch the first day of the conference, where we agreed that between



Sandy McAlister's introduction the night before and Antonia's presentation that day, we already had gotten our money's worth. And yet the conference only got better. There was a much deserved standing ovation for Julie Heryet's presentation about teaching TCC at Folsom Prison, Sandy McAlister's helpful movement refinements, and a very fun vocal auction. With those thoughts in mind, the calm returned; I sat with no tension and was able to let go.

At home people asked, "How was your vacation?" It was simply fantastic. How often do you go away and feel this good when you return? My wife and I have a trip planned to Spain towards the end of this year. I hope that it will allow me to let go and enjoy like I have after this conference. I know one thing: I am definitely ready for next year's conference in Colorado.

Presentation: Letting Go

Lessons Learned From Young TCC Students

By Lucinda Kutsko, Youngstown, Ohio

This is not a presentation on how to teach TCC to children; it just some fun anecdotes.

I read in our community's monthly newspaper that the elementary school was looking for a martial arts teacher in an after-school enrichment program. **My first thoughts were:** 1.) Kids don't need to be learning martial arts. TCC is much more beneficial; and 2.) Most of my TCC students have been 50ish and older. It would be fun to teach kids.

Canadian Reflections

By Tamara Zujewskij, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The Seattle conference offered us four Canadians a wonderful opportunity to connect with each other and our American friends. As always, the daily practices brought us into closer communion with the broader TCC community; it's like drinking from the same wellspring. Sharing our collective energies during practice draws us closer to understanding and realizing the tremendous power of the *Chi*.

Attending the conference has left us refreshed, reenergized, and rededicated to the commitment of spreading knowledge of the *Chi*. The tremendous impact of the annual TCC conference cannot be overstated. There is always something new to learn, the sharing of experiences, and bumping up against the challenges of change, growth, incongruity. Sandy, Pam, and Daniel presented their experiences in teaching the teachers and the challenges of the evolution of form itself. These are all valuable lessons and provide rich nuggets for further reflection and exploration.

Thank you Justin Stone for encouraging us to attend the annual conference. It is an opportunity like none other.



L to R: Carolyn O'Donnell, Lorraine Dumont, Tamara Zujewskij, Sheila Leonard

My immediate vision included a group of 20-30 elementary children who, through TCC practice, show marked changes in behavior and become role models for other children who now want to learn TCC. Then within five years the entire school system would be practicing TCC. The school would become a model for other schools; TCC would spread through the public school systems. What an ego.

I called the principal, gave a brief explanation, and during our meeting, she loved the concept of TCC versus martial arts. Within 10 minutes, we are talking about the details of classes (the number of days, time, fees). The school went all out promoting the TCC afterschool enrichment classes. I was psyched.

Then a little panic set in. It's been 25 years since I'd taught groups of young children. I needed advice. I remembered that New Mexico TCC Teacher Judy Hendricks had made a presentation at a conference about teaching elementary school children. I emailed Judy, who responded immediately with written material and phone conversations. With her guidance, I felt prepared.

Registration forms showed two first graders and six second graders (2 boys and 6 girls) had enrolled. Flyers were directed to grades one through five, so I was surprised to have all little ones. No problem.

First class: Because the after school program was immediately after school, the principal suggested a short snack period before the class started. I met the kids in the hall as instructed and our little group walked together to the cafeteria where we sat on the steps of the stage for snack time. Judy advised me to greet each child individually for each class and to look them in the eye while doing so. They were so cute. They also sized me up while gobbling their snacks.

Then the chaos began. When the first student finished her snack she began running back and forth on the stage. Despite my efforts at control, the stage became a play ground for everyone dancing, twirling, sliding across the floor and doing karate kicks. Judy also advised that children enter the classroom silently and begin classes silently. This wasn't going to happen.

I finally got everyone's attention, to stand where I wanted so I could give the "rules." There was still some chopping and kicking going on, so I explained that TCC was not about punching and breaking boards. "My mom lied," was an immediate response from many.

I said, "TCC is about being powerful, but we don't need to kick and punch to be powerful. How are some ways we can be powerful?" Lots of waving of hands were raised. Sarah held her hand high and steady with confidence and said with great poise, "When a whole bunch of people get together and decide to do something together, that's powerful." I pause to take in this profound answer; I know who is going to be the leader of this class and it was not going to be me. Sarah was definitely the alpha dog. All the children had similar stories of how being powerful involved helping others. I was impressed.

At the end of the class, Becky took a deep bow and said *Namaste*. Becky takes yoga, and so I explained what *Namaste* means. Everyone bowed and the class ended with a spontaneous group hug.

Our schedule called for 10 classes meeting twice a week. I never gained the calm control and discipline I imagined for the group. But I let go of an image of myself as Miyagi from the *Karate Kid*, gaining the children's rapt attention and admiration.

I employed some maneuvers. I allowed exercise time immediately after the snacks; students took turns leading the exercises. After we practiced a movement, I asked a student to come to the front and lead a movement with me. They wanted to show off that they knew it. Since they didn't have a sense of personal space, I used tape to make Xs on the floor to show them where to stand. This helped some.

I was never able to engage Brian, a boy who wears goggle style glasses with a strap that holds them in place. Brian cannot hold still for more than 30 seconds. The principal suggested that I use tape a box around his X to help him know his boundaries. I did so with reluctance; it turned out to be "The Box" that no one wanted to stand in. I was determined that TCC was going to help Brian be calmer, more focused, that it would be his savior. I had to let go of this vision I had for him.

As I let go of my expectations of myself as the perfect teacher, I relaxed had some fun. I let go of my expectation for the performance of the children. I saw that they were learning the more simple movements I had chosen. They were not as coordinated as I thought and did not always move with continuity, but that was alright. Tiny 7-year-old Isabel was the exception; she moved with the softness and grace of a floating butterfly.

The children liked to rename the movements. What would Justin

Poem

By Margery Erickson, Hanover, Pennsylvania

Where have all the T'ai Chi Chih teachers gone?
Long time passing
Caring for parents, children, grandchildren
Teaching classes when they can
Attending local workshops
Spending time with friends in need
When will they ever return?

Where have all the T'ai Chi Chih teachers gone?
Long time passing
Saving coins in a jar
For next years teacher conference
Hope to see your friendly faces
Smiling in the morning circle
When will they ever return?

think? I let go of the formality and let them enjoy using their imagination. For example: Rocking Motion became Planting Flowers; Around the Platter became Pick Up the Potato and Put It In the Pot.

Thinking it would be an incentive for them to pay better attention, I asked if they'd like to perform for their families at the last class. They were very excited and it helped their motivation a little. When 25 family members arrived, to my utter amazement, the children walked with great pomp and circumstance onto the stage, lined up, and stepped forward to introduce themselves. I offered few words to explain TCC.

With the students on the stage, I stood on the ground level with my back to the audience. As we moved through eight movements, my chin dropped lower and lower. Where were the children I had been working with? These children – even Brian – were doing TCC movements. Not perfectly of course, but they were doing it. The principal later told me that she could see my face struggling not to burst out in laughter. We did Cosmic Consciousness Pose (now called Making a Wish), and they enjoyed the drama of holding this pose and then with a very deep bow said, *Namaste*. The audience erupted into applause and we all laughed.

The principal and I will begin classes again the next school term. The middle school athletic coach expressed interest in having classes for his teams. Maybe that initial vision could really happen after all. I saw 8-year-old Christy at a community event recently. She gave me a hug and said she was looking forward to taking classes again in the Fall. She'll be in the third grade then.

Coincidence? I Think Not

By Lisa Vander Vliet, Fort Collins, Colorado

My teacher, Marie Dotts, always tells me that “the *Chi* has found you and you didn’t have a choice.” I think yes, I fit into our community pretty well and have found T’ai Chi Chih to be helpful to my physical and emotional health. Now I find myself saying the same thing to my new friend Trudi.

Last November, I was visiting a neighborhood Senior Living Community with my parents. On our visit we interacted with a couple that lived there, Trudi and Art. A few months after my parents moved in, my dad told me that Trudi did “T’ai Chi.” I told him that I doubted that she did T’ai Chi Chih and asked him to find out what form she practiced. A week later he said, “Trudi does T’ai Chi Chih.” My dad doesn’t always pronounce things correctly so I still had my doubts because Marie was the only teacher in Northern Colorado for a few years. Another week passed, and while I was having lunch with my parents, we ran into Trudi and Art. I asked Trudi what style of T’ai Chi she practiced. She said, “The same as you: T’ai Chi Chih.” She said she learned TCC by following Carmen Brocklehurst’s YouTube video. She had read the AARP article about TCC that was published in 2011 and tried to find a teacher, but at that time there weren’t any TCC teachers in Fort Collins, Colorado.

The next week we had a community practice in a city park so I invited Trudi to come with me. Sure enough, she knew all the moves and fit right in. Then I asked her to join me and some new teachers for a weekly practice at my house. On the first week, Trudi and Doriane Tippet realized that they knew each other from church. Six months after *not coincidentally* finding Trudi (who had been practicing TCC for five years alone with her iPad), she has become a regular participant in our practices. She now comes to the weekly practice at my house, attends the new class that Doriane Tippet and Lisa Stroyan teach at their church, and just joined a Seijaku class that Marie started.

Yesterday, while having dinner with my parents, I ran into Trudi in the dining room. I asked if she could believe that she had gone from being the only person in Fort Collins doing TCC to attending three highly attended classes each week. The lovely 84-year-old woman smiled and shook her head. The *Chi* brought her into our community and it was *no accident*.



L to R: Lisa Stroyan, Rebecca Paulson, Trudi Leissa

The Practice In Pieces: Reflections Of A Caregiver

By Dixie Adeniran, Ventura, California

Can you do this practice in pieces? Can the practice of T’ai Chi Chih be sustained if it is frequently interrupted? To family members who are live-in caregivers, it can seem like there are only interruptions. I am a caregiver. My loved one is an elder.

When on duty, I am on constant alert; routine things need doing. Urgent and emergency situations arise, requiring full, grounded attention. Duty can be 24/7, whether in active assistance or on standby.

How do you sustain a TCC practice under these circumstances? It is best to have regular time off. Then time is your own and exterior concerns can slide away. Also, I am part of the TCC community. That support and grounding are important to me.

When duty calls, what to do? TCC has prepared me for this. It lets me find and get to know how to stay in that still, calm place within myself. Let go. Embrace Seijaku: “Serenity in the midst of activity.” The *Chi* knows what to do, even if it is a little bit of the practice spread out over time.

Rocking Motion.

Eyedrops.

Bird Flaps Its Wings; Around the Platter.

More eyedrops.

Around the Platter Variation; Bass Drum.

Yet more eyedrops.

Daughter on the Mountaintop; Daughter in the Valley.

A shower.

Carry the Ball to the Side; Push/Pull; Pulling in the Energy.

Put on compression hose.

... and on it goes.

Be present this moment. Let go. Do the practice. Feel the *Chi*. Feel the Flow. Be serene of mind. Let your joy shine through. Join the TCC community. Then caregiving can be a gift of love, coming from a place of grounding and calm when duty calls.

Clouds Move

By Christine Moore, Fridley, New Jersey

The year before my accreditation was filled with all sorts of challenges. I had signed up for an intensive and just days before it was set to begin, I started experiencing incredible hip pain. I thought I had dislocated my hip, but it was tendonitis and bursitis. I made my way through the April intensive and was determined to heal by November in time for accreditation. I did physical therapy religiously and by August started to feel better.

Then came the second challenge: I fell on my knee. Initially the doctor thought I broke my kneecap, but after a closer look by the radiologist, I was told I had a birth defect called bipartite patella. In short, my kneecap bones never grew together when I was a child. My knee was very badly injured, and it was months before the pain would be gone. I had to tell both my T'ai Chi Chih instructors that I would not make it to accreditation. "It's going to be okay," I told my teachers. "I will continue my practice seated and go to accreditation when I am ready."

During the ensuing months, I came to know TCC in whole new ways. I learned seated TCC, watching Sandy's tape and learning from my teacher to make all my arm movements smaller. There were several wonderful surprises. As I made smaller circles for Daughter on the Mountain Top, I actually felt more *Chi*. I practiced TCC mentally. The softness and stillness of mental TCC brings an inner serenity that words cannot give voice to. It was a deeply healing time. My love for TCC practice grew and grew.

For several years I had two words written on a paper hanging in front of my desk. Clouds Move. I got the phrase from Justin Stone. He wrote, "The sudden squall is neither good nor bad, and when felt in its absolute value that brooks no duality, it is merely what it is. When the storm is over, the clouds break and the sun shines once more. We know that behind the clouds it has never ceased to shine." (*Climb the Joyous Mountain*)

I tell those injured or disabled that there is more than one way to practice TCC. Each of the ways to practice (standing, seated, or mentally) is beneficial and healing, and it is an experience one can only benefit from through regular practice. I encourage them to picture those two words: Clouds Move.



The TCC Touch

By Joy DeHarpporte, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Under the warmth and beauty of August,
a soaring eagle shows us the way
to glide, sway, curve and feel
our generous earth, the breeze, the sun.

We gather and follow Vanjie, follow Carol,
We leave possessions, concerns, strivings,
and listen to our present existence –
listen to nature's greeting of today.

We listen to the silence of our movements,
Listen to peace expand with the breeze,
Listen to the fullness of meditative motion,
Listen to the Mississippi's murmur as we gently lean and dip, step and stretch,
Arms circle, knees bend, hands settle,
With deliberate, simple motions
we calm our bodies and minds.

Instead of dominion, we have communion,
Instead of alone, we join together
to sooth and strengthen our spirits,
And we will return refreshed and ready
to help heal a tattered world.

Down By The Riverside

By Carol Mockovak, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The wheel of seasons is turning and Minnesotans are looking ahead to snowy days and frosty nights. But warm memories of summer mornings practicing T'ai Chi Chih outside by the Mississippi River stay alive even as temperatures drop.

Since 2005, Minnesota teachers Vanjie Bratt and Carol Mockovak have led a free practice of TCC during the summer months on the banks of the Mississippi in St. Paul's Hidden Falls Regional Park.

The beauty of the location – with birds flying overhead, the river flowing past, herons keeping watch, fish jumping, and dogs patrolling the shores of the opposite bank – creates a feast of the senses.

Joy DeHarpporte, one of many who came to the practice throughout the summer, was inspired to write a beautiful, descriptive poem of her experience. Don Darnutzer, another faithful participant, took the photo by the flowing waters.

Experiences All TCC Classes

By Adabelle Rychtarik, Simpsonville, South Carolina

I read from *The Vital Force* in my classes, sharing with my students articles from people of all ages from all over the world who practice T'ai Chi Chih and describe the many benefits they receive. This month I asked my students, some of whom have practiced for two years, to share why they practice TCC and what benefits they have received.

"I was in China in 1987 for two weeks and saw large areas filled with hundreds or maybe thousands of Chinese people doing T'ai Chi, and I thought it was unusual for an exercise. Now, attending this TCC class since it started, I know what it does for my whole body inside and out. It has improved my balance very much. I hope you try the class for a few weeks to see if it helps your body and balance."

– Carolyn White, Fountain Inn, SC

"Attending this TCC class since it started has helped my balance and helped me relax. My family doctor said, 'Do not ever stop the class.'"

– Marcelle Garrison, Fountain Inn, SC

"For many years I have enjoyed the benefits of a sitting meditation, however, I sometimes find it difficult to sustain focus or find a comfortable physical position. For me TCC offers a perfect blend of movement and meditation. I have gained the centering and grounding benefits of meditation along with the comfort, balance, and clearly-defined process that the movements provide."

– Mary Sigmann, Fountain Inn, SC

"I have been practicing TCC for more than a year, and notice that it brings serenity to my spirit and leaves me with a peaceful feeling. It is a way to meditate while doing movement. TCC also helps with concentration and balance."

– Marie Conroy, Fountain Inn, SC

"Like another student, I saw T'ai Chi practiced in Hong Kong in 1977. Fascinated by older people strong enough to do such exercises, I've had a desire to do it ever since. I believe that my legs, especially the thighs, are quite strong as a result of our practice. I was recently at a home with several other women. One woman could not get out of a low chair after several attempts; someone had to assist her by pulling on her arms. I was in an identical chair and rose from it with ease. I read somewhere that the ability to get up off a floor with no or little help is a predictor of longevity. So I also think that TCC will lengthen my life. I am grateful for you, Adabelle, and all the other dedicated ladies that practice twice weekly at the Mauldin Senior Center."

– Jean Anderson, Mauldin, SC

Where in the World? Sandy Roerig, Glacier Lagoon, Iceland

"I like the movements; this calm, continuous movement is beautiful. Being in the moment, turning inward, and trying to achieve relaxation is challenging and amazing. While practicing, as I move toward feeling peaceful, I find myself going to a place of gratitude. It's such a good place to be.

– Lorrie Gaido, Mauldin, SC

"I have practiced with Adabelle for several years and rarely miss a practice. I was initially drawn to TCC by its innate beauty, but quickly came to prize the improved balance, increased ability to focus, and the sheer joy of the movements. Gradually, I found that meditation had replaced concentration and peacefulness was its byproduct. Recently, I was trapped in hospital waiting rooms and patient rooms for huge amounts of time caring for a loved one. Anxiety, fretfulness, and panic threatened to overwhelm me, but I reverted to mental TCC practices. I am unabashedly convinced that TCC allowed me to remain calm and prepared in the face of dire circumstances."

– Martha Studer, Simpsonville, SC

"Today I noticed a clearing of my thoughts. I felt revived and ready to take on the day."

– Sharon O'Neal, Mauldin, SC

"Living in the moment has been my theme for 2016, and TCC has been a wonderful tool. TCC has helped me be more alert to my body's alignment and, therefore, sensitive when it is out of balance. I can quickly readjust, removing the stress a particular body part is experiencing. It is gentle, user-friendly, and seems to get better with each practice. I am thankful to have a teacher who mirrors the benefits of joy through movement."

– Erin Green, Mauldin, SC

Thank you, Justin, for the gift of TCC.



European “Connecting” Weekend Workshop With Sandy McAlister

Hosted by Tina Wells, Wheatley, Oxfordshire, UK

It was a privilege to host this connecting weekend workshop. It brought together French, German, Italian, and British practitioners living in the UK and Italian friends who flew over to be with us.

The theme extended to our movements, especially connecting with the ground. One of the “Aha” moments that Laurin, Francesco and Claire all mentioned was the “glide and arrive” focus when *yinning* and *yanging*. In the forward weight shift, it’s being patient as you glide weight across both feet, fully connecting with the ground until the back leg straightens ... Then lifting slightly in the torso so the hips and *tan tien* shift a little further forward ... Then feeling the weight arrive fully in the front foot. It is this final weight shift that peels the heel off the ground in the back foot. It’s softening the back knee so you can glide back again, keeping the connection of both feet flat on the floor for longer, which requires more patience until the front leg straightens. Then we arrive again as the weight sinks fully and the toes of the front foot lever off the ground.

In Working the Pulley, Charlie noticed that gliding forward or backward, with feet grounding and swivelling the hips (not the waist) towards the *end of the weight shift*, gave a different feel to this movement. Lesley noticed that allowing a slight toe or heel swivel as the hips turned really helps the torso, hips, and knee align. She (and many others) found that expanding the *tan tien* across the front of the body like a band, and with invisible threads from the wrists to the sides of this band, helps keep the arms alongside the body rather than them sneak diagonally across in front as you turn around a central pole.

Claire liked feeling the rolling of the hips in seated TCC, and how it can help connect you more with the *tan tien* when standing, as it’s then easier to appreciate the expanding and contracting of the *tan tien*.



For Alessandra, softening the wrists in Light at the Top of the Head/ Light at the Temple allowed them to be much more flexible and changed the feeling of this movement. I sometimes find moving my hands near the temple makes me feel dizzy (in spite of focusing on the soles of my feet). So Sandy suggested that I try moving my arms a little further away from the temples, which has worked for me.

Nicola appreciated being reminded to focus on bending and straightening the knees in Rocking Motion to really help balance. Laurin and Charlie noticed that straightening the knees fully, as the weight shifts forward to the balls of the feet, helps peel the heels off the floor (rather than emphasizing coming up on the balls of the feet). Similarly, straightening the knees (without locking them) as the weight shift backwards across the feet, and just lifting the toes at the end, helps avoid the unbalancing effect of the hips moving too far back.

In addition to immersing ourselves in the practice, there were many other moments of connecting over the weekend. I was grateful for Tracy Gibbons (the other accredited teacher in the UK) for her support and encouragement in planning this weekend. We acknowledged Ev Hanson’s kind monetary legacy to help spread TCC in the UK upon her return to Minnesota. Finally, eating a delicious meal prepared by Silvia was a lovely bonding time for all nationalities present. We could feel that TCC crosses all boundaries; our underlying common energy is present despite differences in culture, language, and more. Thank you Justin for giving us a gift that unites us across the world, and to Sandy for her guidance over the weekend.

TCC Intensive October 2016, Aston, PA

Compiled by April Leffler, Prospect Park, Pennsylvania

Hosting TCC events continues to be an honor and privilege each step of the way. I enjoy having contact with participants well before their physical bodies actually make it to the destination. This particular group seemed to gel instantly during our first meal together on a Sunday evening. People openly shared their concerns about “being ready” and not exactly knowing what to expect. They were reminded that an intensive can be as intense as one wants it to be. There is no pass or fail in an intensive.

The group began softening, deepening, and understanding the nuances with each day. They began to sink into and appreciate the essence of T'ai Chi Chih and often noticed how shifts and changes were also taking place in their lives as a result of practicing. Below are thoughts submitted by some of the participants.

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It was such a gift to attend the intensive. It is hard to find words to describe the value of spending several days with the gentle and effective guidance of our facilitator, Daniel, as well as our host, April. I benefitted from the opportunity to interact and bond with fellow students who traveled from different parts of the country to our tranquil setting. I joined a supportive community of like-minded practitioners whom I hope to see again.

I received helpful advice about how to soften and avoid overextending my movements that helped me experience an increase in the energy flow. During times of reflection and group discussion, I began to gain insight into how these adjustments corresponded to lessons I could apply in my life. I find myself pondering the meaning of “the effort of no effort.”

As I observe the beauty of autumn, Daniel’s words encourage me to be aware of the peace that can be gained by letting go. He said, “Trees do not fight the loss of their leaves. They just let go.” I realize that I did not need to worry about an Intensive being too intense. I feel more equipped to move forward with my TCC practice now, and I am hopeful I will be ready to share it with others.

– Jennifer Chan-Gaskins

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This intensive exceeded my expectations by not only refining the movements and increasing my understanding of the practice but by affirming the roll that TCC will play in my future.

No less important was a total immersion in softness. As I watched Dan and April move with the effort of no effort, I found myself letting go and softening. I did not anticipate that their examples were softening my mental and physical behaviors as well.

I am now aware that routines, expectations, judgments, and perspectives – as well as ordinary physical movements – are becoming pliable. I am learning to bend with the wind.

– Lorel Maple



L to R: Pam Towne, Dixie Adeniran, George Anderson-Wood, Pat Brie, Shirley Cross, Cindy Pedersen.

TCC Workshop October 2016, Santa Barbara, CA

By Patricia Brie, San Jose, California

Imagine four days of peace and relaxation in a beautiful setting, with plenty of time to think, read, meditate, talk, and *most importantly* practice T'ai Chi Chih. As it happened, we were a group of only six women. Maybe the concentration of *yin* energy created a unique environment for our exploration of and reflections on TCC practice.

The openness of each participant created a sense of intimacy not expected but certainly welcomed. As we moved through our practice and discussion sessions, we experienced a rare harmony and provided mutual support with thoughtfulness and warmth. We had the freedom to be ourselves and to listen and learn from each other.

Starting from different places in our evolving TCC practice, we all felt inspired to follow our individual paths and let the *Chi* lead us to deeper awareness. With Pam’s gentle encouragement, we discovered how even small adjustments and refinements in our movements could improve the flow of *Chi*. At the same time, we were reminded of the value of letting go and just “being” in our practice. Focusing and grounding helped us stay in the moment.

One participant said she could see the long-term potential for increasingly deeper practice. We all realized that as our experience of TCC progressed, we would be able to enjoy every step along the way without needing to strive for a particular goal.

Sharing our takeaways, we focused on discovery, joy, gratitude, and peace. One person, who hadn’t previously felt any

palpable energy that comes from TCC, said that her new awareness felt like an ocean had swept over her. Another participant felt uplifted, as if “brushing the dust off of the joy of TCC”. As Pam observed, the group had a light-hearted connection of fun and love. We prepared to “re-enter the world heart first,” as Pam suggested, knowing that the changes to our inner selves had also changed our perception of the world around us.

The Birth Of The Learn Seijaku Retreat

By Judy Hendricks, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Pranja. Sometimes the wisdom is clear, other times it can seem murky. I've learned that when it is crystal clear I listen to it. Listening to the murky *pranja* can shine light on something so it becomes clear. Someone was asking me for years to host a "Learn *Seijaku*" retreat with Carmen Brocklehurst. I resisted. I host two T'ai Chi Chih retreats and one *Seijaku* workshop every year; I was thinking that was enough.

This person pointed out that people around the country would like to learn *Seijaku* with "Fast Track," as Justin taught it. Carmen is one of the few teachers that teach Fast Track. I still wasn't convinced.

Then I had a vivid dream. I was in my hometown church with Justin who turned to face me and said, "Do the *Seijaku* retreat" and I said "Okay." You can't really get clearer than that. When I woke up, hosting the retreat seemed like a great idea. I immediately called Carmen, who agreed to lead it. So the retreat was planned.

It was amazing. Our meditation group helped hold the consciousness for it. The people who attended were so grateful. (Two people sharing a room never got towels but they made do with what they had. On the last day, they realized they were supposed to have gotten towels. Still no complaints.)

Everyone was so open to learning, and we all listened to Carmen about the importance of grounding, and then did the work to ground. One has to feel his or her feet on the ground – and to be aware of everyone in the room. It is not a floaty feeling; it is a solid state. It is strong and flowing. Feeling the love, caring, and gratitude from everyone was wonderful. I could feel Justin with us. I could feel the connectedness of everyone in the room; I could feel the flow. One needs to be well grounded to feel that flow, that universal connection. Justin emphasized grounding for an important reason: he was teaching us how to flow.

Justin said *Seijaku* is an oral tradition, and it was gently passed onto the open-hearted people at that retreat. So when *pranja* speaks, listen and take action. The universe is waiting to show you its magic.

TCC Retreat, September 2016, Albuquerque, NM with Carmen Brocklehurst

dreams
or not
like visions
more real than not
medical-
ize it
see
– D. CLEMEN

long
ago
i thought one
way now i am
beginning
to see
more
– JERRY G.

safe
place to
unmask me
sincerity
a harbor
for the
truth
– REBECCA P

come
back slow
in the bird
flap its wings and
energy
does not
bang
– PR

love
is the
source of life
living in joy
happiness
wonder
now
– LEYA

same
movement
as before
feeling somehow
different
but still
same
– JOYCE VEERKAMP

I
open
let it go
start anew now
connected
feeling
one
– MR

look
and see
different
learning new ways
of being
with life
now
– MW

warmth
vibrate
filling up
easing flowing
shining through
loving
all
– PAULINE

joy
words are
not enough
feel the fullness
be alive
come home
love
– LISA STROYAN

truth
love me
totally
when invited
resistance
fight no
more
– JENETH RUNDLE

why
the light
do you see
its awesome truth
all full of
heaven's
light
– DONOVAN

see
the far
and the near
look within now
deep deeper
sing dance
love
– CB

be
here now
come home and
join the beauty
communion
light love
joy
– DORA WIEMANN

here
listen
with the heart
feeling the flow
connected
with the
one
– JUDY

joy
let go
more joy joy
morning evening
letting go
more joy
love
– LARRY SAVA

The Lighter Side

Compiled by Sharon Sirkis, Columbia, Maryland

On the first day of my college T'ai Chi Chih class, I was waiting outside the fitness studio since there was already a class going on inside. I struck up a conversation with Jake, one of my students. He talked so fast that I found his non-stop chatter to be disturbing. When I asked him to repeat something, he responded, "Sorry, I'm always on the go, go, go." I said, "Well, you're in the right place since the class is slow, slow, slow." I laughed, but he didn't think it was so funny.

rain
droplets
in my face
feel so refreshed
singing in
the rain
Gene
– SHARON SIRKIS

rain
cloudy
foreboding
lightning it cracked
torrential
downpour
wet
– ELIAS WESTON-FARBER

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-  youtube.com/tccabq

Community Calendar

For the most up-to-date info and event PDFs, see www.taichichih.org/events

DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

Nov 4-6 | TCC Retreat w/ Dan | Jersey Shore, NJ | Sioban Hutchinson | 609-752-1048

Nov 17-19 | Seijaku Accreditation w/Pam | Albuquerque, NM | Robert Montes de Oca | 505-999-1247

2017

Mar 2-5 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Littleton, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955

Apr 1-7 | TCC Accreditation w/ TBA | Aston, PA | TBA

~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

Postings here are open to all teachers offering events wholly devoted to TCC.

Nov 5 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

Dec 3 | TCC Workshop w/ Sharon Sirkis | Marriottsville, MD | Sharon Sirkis | 410-730-1986

2017

Apr 20-23 | Learn Seijaku Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst | Judy Hendricks | 505-573-0820

Oct 18-20 | Prajna Workshop w/ April Leffler | Ron Richardardson | 662-844-6473

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