

The Vital Force

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Justin Stone: In His Words

Justin Stone Speaks

By Justin F. Stone

I have stayed with Yogis, in the Himalayan Foothills, who are masters of *Prana*, the Sanskrit word of *Chi*. They seem to be impervious to the cold and hunger. Since we ate only once a day, about ten-thirty in the morning (which was not enough for me), one would expect an eagerness to get to meals. However, such was not the case. One time I asked my friend, Mararaj, why he was not at the meal that morning. He replied that he had been meditating. "When will you eat?" I asked. "Oh, tomorrow morning, if I'm not in meditation then," he casually replied.

Most of the Yogis bathed in the narrow section of the upper Ganges at about four-thirty a.m. I have seen the Yogis leave the water, ice-cold at that hour, and not even bother to dry themselves, relying on their inner heat to keep them warm. One newly-arrived Yogi, who had been a lawyer in Bombay before renouncing, tried to do this and became seriously ill; he wasn't ready.

This mastery of *Prana* and the development of the *Dumo Heat* are the basis of Tibetan Yoga. Some Yogis, deep in Kundalini practice, meditate in water to stay cool while developing this terrific internal warmth. I spent two years in developing this internal heat, and the first success was just like turning on a faucet. The overwhelming energy made sleep impossible, but it did not seem to matter. Unfortunately, I was doing this without a teacher and there were some bad side effects, such as internal bleeding. This is all described in **Meditation for Healing**, with instructions. **I would not advise one to practice without instruction.** We have all read how an advanced Tibetan Yogi can melt the snow for many feet around him, just using this inner heat, and I know of a Zen Master in Japan who used to stand under an ice-cold waterfall at midnight, in the dead of winter, **to test his discipline and practice keeping the concentration in the *tan t'ien*.** Neophytes who have tried this have invariably fallen ill.

I mention all this because the circulation of the *Chi*, and the balancing of the *yin* and

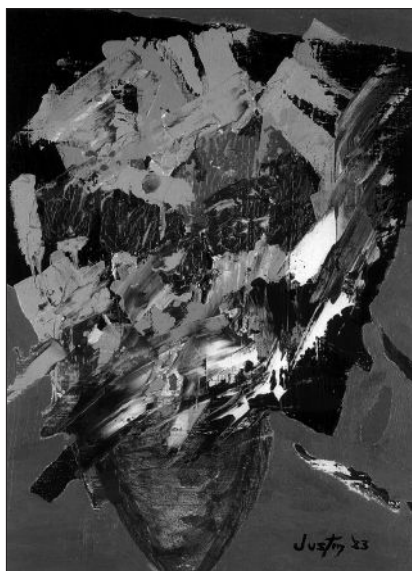
***yang*, are the primary goals of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and T'ai Chi Chih.** To just think of these disciplines as exercise is to place them in the same category as aerobics, jazzercise, and so on. Wen Shan Huang spoke of *Chi a Priori* and *Chi a Posteriori*, that is, the *Chi* with which we came into this life and that we accumulated (and stored) during the lifetime.

This is not "our" *Chi*; we are a product of this *Chi*. In Chinese Cosmology, from the ineffable *Tao* comes the *Yin Chi* and the *Yang Chi* (the beginning of dualism). This is before there is a Heaven, an Earth, or Man. They are products of the *Yin* and *Yang Chi*. To unite with this *Chi* and to balance it is to return to the *Uncarved Block*, and this is what is meant by *Centering*. **In this sense, TCC practice becomes meditation.**

The ancients have stated that the technique of the form is the least important item, yet we continually hear emphasis only on the outer physical aspects. Contests in combat and tournaments only strengthen this emphasis. How can you look inside the practitioner and see his accordance with Reality? Just as there are Hatha Yogis in India who do incredible things with their bodies, without a shred of spiritual progress, so can emphasis only on the outer keep the student from real fulfillment. **Real adepts well understand the relationship between the Mind and *Chi*.** For each state of mind, there is a corresponding character of *Chi*, and, in turn, each aspect of *Chi* influences the state of mind. If one will study the Buddha's great Sattipathana meditation, or the Yasenkanna of Japanese Zen Master Hakuin, one will see how the *Chi*, the State of Mind, and Spiritual mastery are tied together.

It is my hope that TCC instruction will not just be physical. TCC teachers are told that the important thing is *teh*, the power of inner sincerity and integrity.

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At left: By Justin's own account, his favorite painting.

LOVE IT OR HATE IT

Facebook is undeniably one of the world’s most influential platforms for connecting people. Whether you play in that sandbox or not, it’s important to be aware of how many teachers are building communities – and practitioners are discovering – T’ai Chi Chih on FB. These screenshots show some of the FB groups people have started. Thanks to Lisa Otero, community manager of facebook.com/taichichih (which is under the umbrella of *The Vital Force* as are the other main social media pages), for encouraging and helping others grow these sites. (Please contact Lisa if you need help starting a page for your community.) They are a testimony to TCC’s decentralized nature and one reason TCC has the potential for unlimited reach.

~ With gratitude. Kim Grant, Albuquerque, NM

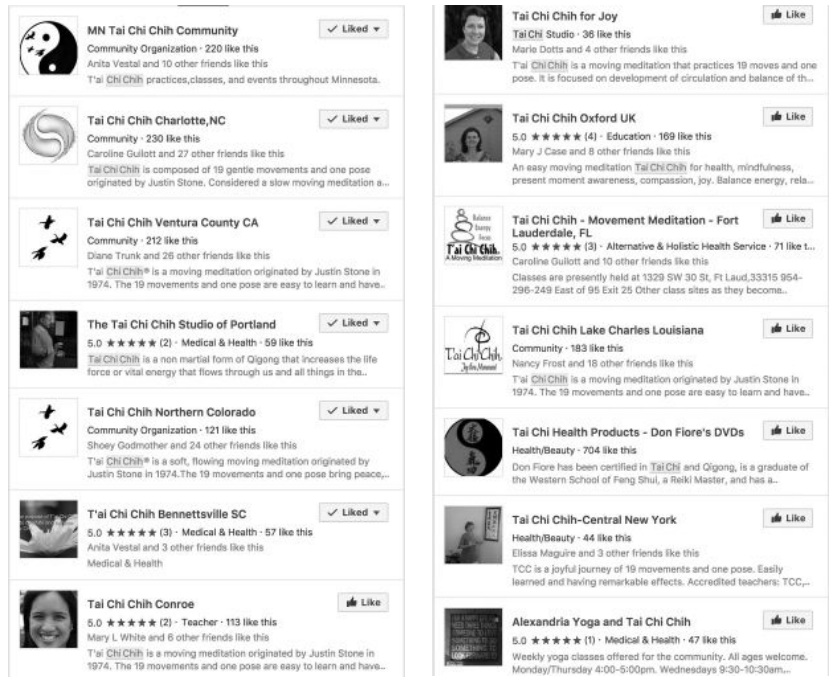


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The Vital Force

~ 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

~ Submission Guidelines ~

Please send articles as Word documents, electronically, to kim@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.

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- Produces a quarterly journal by and for its members
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- 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
- Provide free subscriptions when we have resources.

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TCC Tree

By Nancy Rolph-Johnson, Long Beach, California

The tree outside my window
is doing T'ai Chi Chih.
Gliding, sliding, arriving.
Moving slowly front and back.
Beauty in motion.

Then side to side.
Straightened spine aligned.
Left to right,
branches reaching, relaxing.
Carrying the sounds of the spring birds' choir.
Carrying the sweet song of wind and rain
and sunlight.

May I be as wise as that tree in this
April morning dawn.

Principles To Live By

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, New Mexico

- Energy follows attention
- Release and let go – Abandon Hope
- Softness and continuity
- Awareness of polarity
- Circularity makes the world go 'round
- Attention to the bottoms of the feet

One of the wonderful treasures about our discipline, T'ai Chi Chih, is its simplicity. The concepts are simple, but if we try really hard we can make them difficult. On this subject, one of my favorite Zen stories is of Tesshu, the great swordsman of Japan. When Tesshu was young his father noticed that it would not be possible to turn over the sword-making family tradition to his son. This made both of them sad, but especially the sensitive Tesshu, who knew it was a disgrace to the family.

Tesshu was determined to find a Zen Master to teach him the art of sword making. He received many rejections. Tesshu shared his plight, that his father was old and didn't have many more years left to pass the art on to him. Finally, one Zen Master said he would be willing to get him ready. Tesshu would have to do everything he asked of him, without question.



Tesshu asked how long it would take. The Zen Master said 10 years. Tesshu responded, "But there isn't much time, what if I work extra hard, then how long will it take?" With a shake of his head the Zen Master upped it to 20 years. The lessons continued. The Master asked Tesshu to clean the house. This went on for several years with seemingly no formal teaching. This made

Tesshu angry and disappointed, feeling that the Zen Master was wasting precious time. He confronted the Master. The Master simply said, "I see." The next day while Tesshu was washing dishes, the Master came up from behind with a large stick and repeatedly smacked Tesshu on the back and shoulders. Tesshu looked at the Master in disbelief and confusion – after all he had done everything the Master asked – and he ran away. The next day and then next day were the same. But Tesshu grew more aware, and this time the Master only got in one good smack. The next day, Tesshu felt the Master approaching and ran away before the Master could beat him. Tesshu went on to become the greatest swordsmen of Japan.

The clues about why Tesshu was not ready to receive his father's art form were apparent from Master's first meeting – when Tesshu was told not to question the Master, and he immediately did. **Tesshu could not see what was in front of him.** His attention was not directed to inner wisdom, but rather to his problem (much less how to solve it).

The list at the top includes principles we use daily in TCC practice – and in our lives if we have been paying attention. They are universal principles. Can you find them in the story of Tesshu and how they apply? In becoming aware of these principles we move into a pliable state, one that leads us to love and share the *Chi*.

Amazing Results

By Lorraine (Lorry) Marcketta,
Lakewood, New Jersey

My doctor's office called to share results from a recent bone density scan. Two years ago tests indicated that osteopenia had begun to morph itself into osteoporosis. Per the doctor's suggestion, I tried a medication with side effects worse than the issue at hand. An over-the-counter herbal suggestion has equally bad side effects. I decided to continue eating healthily and taking vitamins – and made one change. Over the last 19 months I've practiced TCC, rarely skipping a day.

The message this morning was, "Keep doing whatever you're doing because the osteoporosis is getting better." What? **Not only has degeneration abated, but bone is building.** While I'd done TCC on and off for years, I've been doing a daily practice since retiring and becoming accredited to teach. This is the tip of the iceberg of amazing results from our precious mindful, meditative TCC. Just saying... Thank you, Justin Stone.



Thankful

By Sue Bitney, Richfield, Minnesota

I recently purchased a calendar entitled, "A Year of Thankfulness," with spaces to add what a person is thankful for each day. Just a single line, to be succinct. I recalled Justin's encouragement to live in gratitude. In reflecting on what it means to be thankful, I believe it's the same as living a life of gratitude.

Five years ago my husband Jim was recovering from surgery to save his life from cancer. We were so thankful that imminent death was no longer a threat. We talked about reorienting our lives and living with gratitude for having a second chance. His recovery was short lived, and he died three months later.

I have been paying attention to my life's new direction. I have three fabulous children married to wonderful people. I have four amazing grandchildren who fill me with joy. I am thankful for what I have in my life and that I continued to live. Now I have the opportunity to refocus, and live purposefully with a discipline of gratitude, finding the good in life. It is my responsibility to **bring**

light where there is darkness, healing where there is pain and joy where there is sorrow.

TCC is a central part of living gratitude and having energy to live as I am intended. It is exciting to move into a deeper focus for my life. It is a good time to look to the future.

Students Flowing From Emptiness

Compiled by Donna McElhose,
Wildwood, Illinois

I asked my advanced students to write about the theme of next year's T'ai Chi Chih conference, Flowing from Emptiness. These are some of their thoughts:

"In *Heightened Awareness*, Justin Stones writes: "For one to follow the methods of this book in working toward heightened awareness ... it is necessary to 'empty the cup.' A full cup will hold no more." I consider what I'd like to remove from my cup (fear,

worry, envy, resentment, anger, disappointment, busyness) to make room for gratitude, love, sharing. Then I realize my error. Again, my cup fills, this time with anticipation, expectation, a prelude to disappointment. By seeking, I may miss what (if anything) comes. Better to be empty." – GLORIA G.

"No thought, no mind, no problems. Focusing on the soles of the feet. *Yinning* and *yanging*, one leg in emptiness while the other leg full. Emptiness of weight. Weightlessness in the forward and back movements. Flowing from the *tan t'ien*. No effort, a slow steady swim through air." – KATHY L.

"Before I begin a practice, I take a few moments to clear my mind, let go of preoccupations of the day, be completely present and empty my thoughts." – TRACY I.

"From the state of emptiness, each man's body is a body pervading the universe, his voice is a voice filing the universe and his life is a life without limit." Living and acting without clinging, without compulsion and without a seeking heart, is the task of Zen practices. Maybe Justin means doing TCC without thought, just flowing." – NANCY L.

Silence, nothingness
Void of thought
Searching for guidance
Grounding
Surge of energy
Bursts into softness
Movement begins
Ignited by intention
The body responds
Sensing the Joy of Movement
The flow of gratitude

– JAN K

Personal Reflective Narrative On TCC

By Sharon Sullivan



Rocking Motion ~ Extend hands and arms in greeting the dawn or noon or eventide or cycling cosmos – open and welcoming. Each cycle brings in more light, awareness, star dust.

Bird Flaps Its Wings ~ After greeting the dawn, embrace all living beings in relationship; three by three: air, earth, water.

Around the Platter ~ Imagine the platter is the chalice for a cosmic Eucharistic celebration. Cleanse, honor, revere the chalice – around and around the rim, touching, blessing all who have partaken with each circumference. Feel in your hands the slight irregularities that speak of the embrace with which each has partaken over the millennia.

Around the Platter Variation ~ And now fill the chalice. Bring or offer through its conse-

crating symbol the cares and joys, fears and love, emotions and doubts that we carry; offer from or through our hearts.

Bass Drum ~ The feast is being prepared. Extend a welcome to all; invite all to come. All who seek god’s solace, god’s love, all who would share in the sacred Thanksgiving. Through a full 360 degrees, each cycle opens the pathway for all to come.

Daughter on the Mountaintop ~ Reach out to the top of the mountains, to bring all down, bring them in, mountains and vistas and of inaccessibility, of commerce and of lonely remoteness. Remember, an invitation is often not enough; bring them in as well.

Daughter in the Valley ~ Bring them up from the valleys – all from the verdant valleys and the desert valleys, the valleys of ease, and the valleys shadowed by darkness and isolation.

Carry the Ball to the Side ~ All have been invited but many still remain. Offer hospitality; reach outward to bring in all who remain.

Push Pull ~ The feast is ready, and all have been brought in; it is time to ring out praise to the loving god. As all are gathered, it is right to give praise.

Pulling in the Energy ~ From the circle of all life gathered, open your hands to receive the consecrated energy from the overflowing chalice.

Light at the Top of the Head / Light at the Temple ~ As we have received the energy (the gift-the Love) so must we permit it to shine forth. Bring the light above and to the temple, sending forth from head and heart.

Joyous Breath ~ The celebration nears conclusion and unites with the breath of spirit.

Passing Clouds ~ Recognize the immensity and unimaginable nature of our god, our faith, the spirit, making the infinite symbol with our hands.

Six Healing Sounds
And proclaim our amen of peace and praise.

Roots

By Donna Deffenbaugh, Prescott, Arizona

“Nothing could be more important than storing the Chi below the navel and in the bones of the body (when doing T’ai Chi Chih)”

– JUSTIN STONE

Ever tried to pull a weed?

Take the weed.

Tug and tug to get to the root of the matter...

Off come the leaves, out comes the stem!

But the roots down below?

Oh my no.

Those roots hold fast in shallow soil, rocky pathways, desert sand.

It’s not complicated, for even a weed knows:

In order to survive it must ground itself exactly where it is...
Locate its footing, remain steadfast even in the searing summer winds.

Then take us.
Waves of worry
Gusts of grief
Tides of temper

To render us unstable.
To take away our grip.
To tear us from our shallow safety.

Roots.
Feet.
Confidence.
Stability.
Grounded down below.

Roots.

Good Teachers Guide Us In Discovery

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

Why do you do T'ai Chi Chih? Do you actually feel the energy flowing? Do you feel the balancing of this energy within the body as you do a TCC practice? Does it matter to you that this practice is steeped in ancient Chinese philosophy? Maybe some practitioners can answer yes to all or some of the last three questions.

Most of my students would say no, they do not feel the energy or balancing of it, or care about the background or philosophy of the practice. They do it because it makes them feel good, physically and emotionally.

Do we need to know how and why it works, for it to work? No! I have heard many teacher's stories about a student who has had only one or two lessons and the student tells them that they love the practice and how it has already helped them sleep better, lessened their pain, stopped headaches, or lightened their mood, lessened their stress, and many other such comments.

We know that the flow and balancing of *Chi* can happen even when we do not do the movements well, but we endeavor to refine our movements in order to bring about a deeper and more thorough flow of *Chi*, increasing the rewards of the practice. Refining the form is important – doing the movements with our best understanding of how Justin developed them – but often the refinements that increase the flow of *Chi* are not about the hands and where they turn over in a movement or where they end up at a certain point in a movement or how high or low they should be, but following the principles of softness, continuity, and awareness.

The heart of our practice is to soften, and let go of trying, effort, and perfection. We let our mind feel its way through the practice rather than think our way through it. And I am afraid we are killing the spirit and joy of the practice by our rigidity and trying to make it perfect. We are suffocating our own and our students' experience and the unfolding process and by have-tos, rules, intimidation, and nit-picky adjustments.

Teachers have a responsibility to help their students find the softness and flow of the practice. And sometimes a small adjustment can be helpful for more openness in the body, but insisting that there is only one way that is correct is shortsighted.

There are teachers who no longer participate in community events because they felt the pressure to have to conform or were corrected by another teacher in a harsh way. Is that what we want, to turn good teachers away, teachers who only want to give the gift of TCC to others? I am not condoning the teaching of TCC that strays from the form that Justin developed. I am asking for tolerance, and less ego that we know what's right. I invite teachers who have felt intimidated or marginalized to come to conference this year with an open mind and heart and know you are welcomed!

We are each on our own path and what works to guide me on my path may not work to guide you on your path. We follow the general basic rules but must adjust and adapt for our individual journey/essence. And what serves us at one point in our journey may not be of use later.

As we grow in understanding and experience in our practice our form changes. But the changes that are true and lasting are the ones that we discover for ourselves. Teachers help us on that path of discovery.

Justin gave us the outline for TCC. He wrote about the principles we apply as we perform the moves. His explanations and descriptions of the moves lack detail though. By limiting details, he has allowed us to find our own way. He was not ridged and exacting about how the form was to be done, with a few exceptions such as really straighten the back leg in the forward and backward weight shift, no leaning, and a few others that come to mind. When pressed about whether this way or that way is correct, several times I heard him said, "two inches here, two inches there" with a shrug. A couple of his writings state that a good teacher does not give the same teaching to all students.

Justin, like all of us, did his own TCC practice, moving along his own path. I am not on his path and my energy and essence are not shaped like his, thus why would I want to exactly copy the way he did his practice - why would I want to do his practice? Yes, I can listen to his words of wisdom and learned experience which can help shape my own practice but it must be my practice. I cannot parrot him and expect it to be my practice. I must feel my way through the form, honor the form he gave us and follow the principles that guide the form.



TCC was developed as a tool to benefit the growth and development of human beings and to make our lives more enjoyable. Have we lost the spirit of the practice in order to comply with dogma or perceived correctness of the practice? Rigid adherence to ideas and concepts is not the way. A free-for-all is not the way. Love, respect, ego-lessness, acceptance, the bigger picture! Moving beyond the personal to the bigger picture. Just like in our practice, less is more, when we let go we receive more.

The Power of Letting Go

By Pam Towne, Oceanside, California

While visiting my son on Maui in December, on my birthday, I went snorkeling with friends at a place nicknamed Turtle Town. Lots of sea turtles hang out there, mostly on the coral about 10 feet below the surface. After swimming out about 50 yards, we saw quite a few turtles of varying sizes resting beneath us. Then one huge old turtle rose up to the surface right in front of us and hung out with the five of us for several spellbinding minutes. What a gift, being in the presence of such a magnificent creature.

After leaving the beach, I started picking up texts and voicemails from friends and neighbors back home: the Lilac Fire had sprung up suddenly near my home. Whipped by Santa Ana winds and very dry conditions, it was raging out of control and my neighborhood's evacuation was expected.

That gave me pause: what I would ask my neighbors to take out of my home if necessary? The top priority was my cat, Claire, but I thought of all the other things: pictures, paintings, books, mementos, clothing, legal papers and more. That was all just stuff that could be replaced or let go.

It was very freeing to come to that realization. Americans tend to accumulate a lot of stuff. Do we own it or does it own us? I feel certain that the practices of T'ai Chi Chih and especially Seijaku have greatly contributed to coming to this point of letting go and being at peace with whatever happened.

I called my neighbor to ask if she would take Claire. And after making peace with letting go, additional fire crews kept the fire from spreading to my neighborhood. When I returned home, I was grateful to have a home to come back to. Many were not so fortunate. Let's all be grateful for the gift of life, and for our life enhancing practices of TCC and its advanced form, Seijaku.

TCC & Spiritual Redemption

By Daniel Pienciak, Howell, New Jersey

At this new year, the words from Dickens' classic of the dying Marley to his partner Ebenezer Scrooge, "Save yourself," remain in my ears. To which Scrooge replied, "Save myself? From what?" ... From what, indeed.

Among the heightened awarenesses that emerge in my T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku practice, two stand out when contemplating the new year with its possibly new approaches to thinking, perceiving and living.

One of these is the darker side of human nature – the negative ways that I sometimes react to people or situations. Would I rather look away and not acknowledge these darker parts of myself? In my practice is there a movement or aspect of moving that I would rather ignore than confront directly to look to improve?

The second of these awarenesses is that the state of the world and people around me can inspire fear (false expectations, evidence appearing real). If I don't know that I don't know that this is happening (state of unawareness), it will become destructive to my thinking, acting and decision-making. Fear is the opposite of love, leading to a state of mind harboring bigotry, intolerance or hate, and acts of offensiveness and violence. In my practice, do I allow fear of what will happen if I let go or if I really trust my leg to support me without tensing up, crippling my progress (and blocking the flow of *Chi*)?

Worst of all, these unawarenesses and fears can paralyze my evolution as a human being. What would happen if every serious TCC student allowed the fear of not being a good enough teacher prevent him or her from becoming a teacher? Is it possible that I begin to fear how the practice is changing me, my behavior, decisions and life (albeit, most likely for the good)?

In this new year, let's **allow our confidence in TCC to grow** by practicing daily and attending available TCC events (plan ahead) – maybe an ongoing class, retreat, workshop, Intensive, conference, auditing an accreditation or getting together with locals to practice together more often. Be confident that TCC and Seijaku will bring out the best in us. A recent Chinese fortune cookie contained this message: "If I let what is within me come forth, what is within me will save me."



What's LOVE Got To Do With It?

By Diana Bahn, New York, New York

How many times have you put on the CD, *Justin Stone Speaks*, to soak in the teaching, get saturated in the T'ai Chi Chih way? If you are like me, the part at the end where Justin quotes the Lotus Sutra, "From the state of emptiness, man's body is a body filling the universe, man's voice is a voice pervading the universe, man's life is a life without limit," gives you chills. In Eastern spiritual speak we are getting a "transmission" from Justin.

What does this have to do with 2018 teacher conference in Philadelphia? A great deal. Consider Philadelphia's history: William Penn, born into a wealthy family in England, a student of Oxford, gets the spiritual bug that leads him to become a Quaker. He wants peace and friendship; his ideals (circa 1682) get him kicked out of Oxford and sent to prison.

Fortunately, the king commissions William to take a ship to the New World to found a colony based upon freedom of religion. That place was Philadelphia, "the City of Brotherly Love". If it hadn't been for the king owing Penn's father a big favor, Penn would not have made it to the site of our next conference.



Penn had some major protection going: from his father, from the king and, most definitely, from the Universe. Yet, his seeking spirit led him to become more than he appeared to be.

"What's love got to do with it?" sang Tina Turner, a practicing Buddhist. Take a look at the Philadelphia LOVE icon, the symbol for the conference. Tucked into the O is a *yin/yang* sign. We will *yin* and *yang* in the first capitol of the United States, the home of the Declaration of Independence.



The love generated during TCC practice is shared by all. Someone new to TCC feels it the moment he starts moving. Or she may feel it from being in the field of others moving. At the end of the day, no one has more love than anyone else. We all share it. That's the emptiness we talk about. The more we move we can empty, the more we can feel the love. It is always there. We have to open up to it. Tina figured this out in her own way.

Philadelphia is known for its Liberty Bell, which received its crack when it was cast in England in 1751. It's fair to say that many of us feel cracks despite our best efforts – to practice, be of service. I imagine that bell perfectly aligned, with all of us flowing around it, allowing the sound to pervade us. We become the sound that fills the universe. The emptiness in the Lotus Sutra brings us to love; we forget about the cracks or, better yet, we absorb them.

Nine Reasons to Attend the 2018 TCC Teacher Conference July 26-29, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Flowing From Emptiness

1) Justin: We honor Justin's vision of creating a global, ever-expanding and inclusive T'ai Chi Chih community that comes together annually.

2) Mentoring: We need you. Through sharing experiences and wisdom, we encourage, support and inspire each other. We become refueled with enthusiasm.

3) Reunion: Sacred bonds are formed during accreditations, retreats, Intensives and classes. Take time to be together; enjoy each other and raise your vibration.



4) Growth: The synergy of blended ideas when we gather will renew your outlook for growth when you return home.

5) Unity: We feel more wholeness and balance when we come together as a group.

6) Joy: We celebrate unique experiences both large and small by sharing stories from our individual corners of life.

7) Emptiness: Consider and release habit energies disguised as judgments and expectations in order to enhance Flowing from Emptiness with an unhindered mind.

8) Sound Healing: Experience an amazing concert that grounds, uplifts and transcends the mundane.

9) Community: This is the only TCC event in which you can meet, learn and practice with such a large group of teachers coming together as one TCC lovin', like-minded community. Find complete conference registration information at taichichih.org/conference-2018.



What's Happening At Folsom

Compiled by Julie Heryet, El Dorado, California

Justin's was a life of service, of sharing T'ai Chi Chih with as many people as possible. When he came to Folsom Prison in 1999, he spoke of transformation, of being part of the One, and that is what the men have experienced. Here are some of their experiences:

I've been at Folsom three years and time has gone by quickly. I have found a calmness and peace here in this class. Something is different about me. A burden is lifted and physical stress is less. On Thursdays I get two hours of quiet. When I concentrate on the movements, it slows down my mind and gives me an inner peace that I'm grateful for. – STEVE R.

I work for the Sports Department, and one of my jobs is being a referee, which is really stressful. There are guys yelling at me all the time. This class is my sanctuary, where I get a sense of peace, calmness and harmony. I feel grounded, feeling the earth and sky, harmonizing, like music. I meditate and find my center. Here I can think clearly, without all the chaos. I take my time and now feel the energy in my hands. It's been a slow process, but now I believe in myself. When I practice, I am free. – ROBERT C.

Rocking Motion

By Nancy Rolph-Johnson, Long Beach, California

A rocking chair in every room.
Some rooms have many rocking chairs.
Their presence, even when still, is comforting.
Some glide, and slide. Some rock.
Rocking motion.

They are for pleasantness and rest.
They gently hold you and encourage soft movement.
The chair supports you gently and offers comfort.
Sheltered in the wooden arms of many giving trees.
Connected again to mother earth.
Rocking motion.

The chairs bring balance and harmony - no sharp edges.
A womb-like movement with little effort and many benefits.
Colorful cushions, some soft plaids and patterns of flowers or blossoms.
Signs and songs of nature.
Rocking in silence, rocking softly.
Rocking motion.

Soothing my mind, thoughts gliding away.
A moving meditation that brings appreciation.
Rocking and resting - a simple, silent lullaby.
Beauty bubbles up within and sends you back into the world -
inner peace, outer peace.

Enjoy this gift of
Rocking Motion.

I feel tears of joy and gratitude today. This practice is hard to put into words. The change taking place in me is not happening in words. It feels like there is no longer an offensive or defensive part of me. I put myself in harmony with the energy of the universe and with other people without conflict. When I do the moves, it does something on a subliminal level, like magic. Life gets better and better the more I practice. I do TCC on the yard, on the tier, anywhere I can. I'm too big to do it in my cell though. In class, when we hit that right momentum, the universe stops – what's in my head, the universe is taking care of me. Being in harmony with the energy, everything always works out. What a gift. – LAWRENCE H.

Franky Carrillo is the one who got me into this class. He was my cellie before he left here for good. I've been before the Board 10 times and denied parole each time. Before I didn't really care, but this last time I was really upset. This practice helps me release my anger. It took my Dad 20 years to recognize the changes in me. I'm grateful for this class. – SAM S.

I've been taking other classes recently, but have been missing the TCC energy. Even after 10 years, this energy is still a mystery – how it moves around and through – it's amazing. I have so many thoughts on my mind all the time, but when I leave here I leave transformed. I'm not the same Gilbert. I feel a lot of peace – I feel it in my gut. There is this complete transformation that's hard to put into words. You just have to experience it.
– GILBERT S.

I've been doing some kind of meditation all of my life. It's good to be with people who are like-minded, centered and peaceful. This class is life transforming. Coming here and filling up on the energy is beautiful. Even when I can't make it to class, I can feel the energy coming from this chapel. – TABU S.

Teaching Ongoing, Mixed-Level Classes: One Perspective

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

Mixed-level classes are held once a week throughout the year without a beginning or ending date. They are advertised as T'ai Chi Chih with no level of proficiency designated. The student's TCC experience may range from 17 years to one day and everything in between.

We always begin sitting in a circle. I start by asking if anyone has "good news." This gives students an opportunity to share a bit about themselves. This often starts a conversation that I am able to bring around to TCC – a principle, a concept of movement, how it makes us feel, the benefits. **Building community and a connection between the students is important.**

If there are new students I welcome them, say a few things about TCC, and then turn it over to my students. I ask them to share with the new students their experiences of when they first came to the class and began learning TCC. They are so encouraging, accepting and welcoming, and take the new students under their wings. After class I often see the regular students giving words of congratulations and encouragement to the new folks.

After the initial welcome, I start with a prepared or impromptu discussion relating to TCC or we begin with movement. The first 10 minutes of standing we review something: weight shift, grounding, a particular movement, a principle. Then we do a full practice. If there are new people in class most likely I review weight shifts. Even if I go over something very basic, long-time students tell me after class that they learned something new too.

I teach mostly facing the class. I do not teach in a circle unless all the students have been taking the class for several months and have a basic grasp of the movements. I only "mirror" on side-to-side movements. If I notice some students are finding it difficult to follow me while I "mirror," then after a few reps facing them, I turn around and move with my back to them. For Around the Platter, Around the Platter Variation and Pulling in the Energy, I face sideways so I don't have to "mirror," and also for Working the Pulley so they can see the shape of the arm/hand pattern. I keep it consistent and simple. New students stand where they are comfortable, as long as they have a direct view of me.

When there are new people in the class I change a few things in the practice. For Carry the Ball, I do all nine circles staying in place (not using the three steps to the side). This is the first movement with a side-to-side weight shift. By staying in place for nine repetitions they are more likely to get the feel of the movement. For Pulling Taffy I go very slowly, having them follow me one piece at a time – sinking into the weighted leg, turning and very slowly bringing the underarm into place, then placing the heel and making sure the arms/hands are correct, then shifting the weight as the arms open, then closing. Even though it sounds like I am doing it in pieces I try to have continuity and flow throughout. We usually do six repetitions. Doing only three does not give them enough practice, especially if it is new for them. If some of the newer students are struggling with the "Taffies," I may not do the other Taffies but gradually add one every couple of weeks. For Working the Pulley, I have students do *only* the left hand with the left forward weight shift, then do *only* the right hand with the right forward weight shift. If the class has brand new people this might be all we do. Or, we do the one hand practice for six repetitions each side then do the complete movement for six to nine repetitions. The one-hand-only practice is good awareness for students doing it for a long time.

I usually end the class one of two ways: Before Cosmic Consciousness Pose (CCP) we form a circle and do one or two front and back weight shift movements together and then close with CCP. Or we do CCP and then sit quietly for a few minutes, focusing on grounding.

After class I follow up with new students: What was their experience? How are they feeling physically? I acknowledge their efforts, reassuring them that it takes time to feel comfortable with the movements, that we each learn in our own timing and to enjoy the experience. If the student leaves feeling successful they are more likely to return.

Teaching a mixed-level class takes awareness on the teacher's part, watching the students and gauging their progress, deciding how to adapt the movements or what movements to leave out of a practice, and giving positive reinforcement and feedback during and after class. It is an opportunity to be creative in teaching.



Teaching Ongoing, Mixed-Level Classes: Another Perspective

By Lisa Otero, Port Hueneme, California

Every class I teach is a “drop-in” class, attended by a mix of students who have been practicing TCC for months or even years, first-time participants and folks who join us from time-to-time.

I teach ongoing classes at a couple of fitness centers, a church and in a public park. I advertise that “Beginners are welcome in every class” and that everyone is encouraged to “learn at their own pace.”

One might think it would be difficult to teach a mixed-level class, with new folks joining in week-to-week, but I assure you, it isn't. Continuing students look forward to seeing each other and expect to do the whole practice each time we meet; **beginners are pleased to leave their first class having experienced the beauty of the full form and to know what they will gain if they commit to consistent practice.** I have taught hundreds of people in this manner over the past ten years – four of my students have become accredited to teach and now teach their own ongoing, mixed-level classes.

When you start teaching an ongoing class, the instruction is the same as in a beginner-level class, but once the original students learn the form, they continue to attend and help welcome new students.

Students inspire each other. When new students see others moving effortlessly and with confidence, it seems to banish reluctance and fear. New students are able to “ride the coattails” of experienced students and pick up the practice much more rapidly.

We do the whole practice in every hour-long class. When there are beginners in the room, I give a few pointers on movement basics at

the outset, and a few tips while we rest between movements. Mostly, I let the practice speak for itself.

One of the most important considerations is **where to place the students in the room.** I face the students and “mirror” the movements. If first-time participants join us, I ask the students to stand in rows and invite the most experienced students to come forward to stand in the front and middle rows. I ask beginners to stand in the back row and position themselves where they can see me and also follow the students in front of them. New participants are usually relieved to be in the back row.

I ask beginners to concentrate on moving forward-and-back and side-to-side in tandem with the person in front of them, focusing on the feet and hips. I encourage beginners to relax and go with the flow and assure them that they will pick up the finer points little by little by attending as many practices as they can manage. I try not to correct beginners; instead, I offer general instruction to the group and observe the beginners: do they favor one side; do they go too fast or too slow; do they have tight wrists and waists...? This gives me a sense of how to tailor instruction.

Teaching this way also provides an opportunity for the more experienced students to shine and become aware of all that they have learned. My continuing students know they will be called on to assist by standing in front, and they are happy to help.

After class, I give new participants a Q&A sheet I have crafted explaining TCC's origins, Justin Stone, the benefits of consistent practice and where they can find online information resources. I often send new students home with my lending-copy of *The Vital Force* so that they can learn about the TCC community of teachers and students.

My continuing students love circle practice, so we do it whenever possible, but not unless everyone in the room has a good grasp of basics. When we do practice in a circle, **I use a “circle within a circle” formation:** my most experienced students are in the inner circle and beginners are in the outer circle. I place some experienced students in the outer circle as well, flanking the less experienced. I encourage all students to open up their peripheral vision and also to be aware of the person directly in front of them. I am in the outer circle to keep an eye on everyone. I designate the experienced student opposite me in the inner circle to be my co-leader; that person follows me. The inner circle knows to follow the co-leader and everyone in the outer circle follows the inner circle. I count and announce movement names.

This circle within a circle formation works well for large groups: you can do a circle within a circle within a circle *ad infinitum*. We use this formation for our annual *World T'ai Chi and Qigong Day* practice and our annual holiday practice where we have had 70 people with various experience levels practicing together in a large hall by candlelight. It takes a little effort to arrange people but is worth the effort.



Heightened Awareness: Chi & Prana

By Justin F. Stone

Nothing could be more important than the circulation and balancing of the *Chi*, the Vital Force or Intrinsic Energy. *Chi* could truly be called the Staff of Life – when it stops circulating, we are dead. When the positive *Chi* and the negative *Chi* (*yang* and *yin*) are out of balance, sickness results, and often the circumstances of our lives suffer. Literally, we are the product of this *Chi*.

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It may be difficult for some to understand how **the outer and the inner are related and how the circumstances of our lives can be affected by the quality of the *Chi***. But unless one feels that all life is an accident and all events coincidental and without cause, it would be relatively simple to comprehend when *Hwa Yen*, the deepest of all Buddhist philosophies (so profound that it has virtually disappeared except for the effect it has had on other sects) speaks of the Buddhism of Totality. It uses “Indra’s net,” in which all things are intertwined, as an example of the interrelatedness of all life. Zen says, “When the horse in Szechwan catches cold, the cow in Hunan sneezes.” The highest philosophy in India is that of *Advaita*, Non-Duality or Not Two.

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China’s *T’ien T’ai* Buddhism had a great master who was asked to demonstrate enlightenment to the empress. He placed some mirrors on the surface of a table, others on all sides, and some up above pointing downward. Then he lit a candle and placed it between the mirrors. Not only did each mirror reflect the flame of the candle, but also every mirror reflected every other mirror reflecting the light, on to infinity. It was mind-boggling. **It is said that the empress achieved a sudden insight by this example.**

Finally, let me give the instance of the Zen master who was asked to deliver a discourse on Reality to a ruler of state. He ascended the platform, took a flute from his sleeve and blew one sharp, piercing note on the instrument. Then he descended and walked out of the building, leaving the ruler and his followers speechless and bewildered. **Could anything have been plainer?**

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**So the quality of our *Chi*, which makes us what we are, determines our world.** There is no reason to think any two of us see the same world any more than to think that any two of us share the same fate. What we see and what we experience is determined by what we are; that is the

law of *Karma*. Isn’t it true that one person sees the world as being filled with darkness and misery, while another person experiences it as joyous and purposeful? Are there two worlds? The difference is subjective.

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***Chi* does not belong to us individually; rather, we tend to share in this universal energy.** Wen Shan Huang, the great Chinese scholar, spoke of *Chi a priori* and *Chi a posteriori*, meaning the *Chi* with which we came into this life and that which was accumulated during our lives. The Chinese, who have used this knowledge of the “life stuff” so well in their ancient medicine (even doing major surgery without anesthesia – something the West does not understand as yet) believe that the degree of longevity (length of life) depends on how we circulate and balance the *Chi*. Those who have seen spry 90-year-old *T’ai Chi Ch’uan* masters can well believe that this is so.

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There are quite a few disciplines that deal with how to circulate the *Chi*, and we will study several of them in this book [*Heightened Awareness*].

When *Chi* first comes into manifestation, it splits into *yin Chi* (negative, female, contracting, cold) and *yang Chi* (positive, male, expanding, warm). In moving meditation (*T’ai Chi Chih* and *T’ai Chi Ch’uan*) we feel this circulating force very strongly, usually beginning with the fingertips. Nobody who does these practices properly



has to be convinced of the flow – it is readily felt.

When we begin the moving mediation, the *yang Chi* and *yin Chi* split from each other and are circulated, so it is necessary to have a brief period of rest at the end of the movements so the two can flow back together again. Both moving meditations are constructed so as to balance the *yin* and *yang* elements of the flowing *Chi*.

In nature, electricity is *Chi*, just as a thunderstorm manifests an accumulation of it. The great sage from Pondicherry, India – Sri Aurobindo – said that if the universe were to be abolished, the *Prana* (Indian word for *Chi*) would be capable of building a new world in its place. Sex energy, naturally, is the product of *Chi* and, as a T'ai Chi instructor, I have run across cases where the male potency has been restored by the circulation of *Chi* due to the practice.

When the *Chi* becomes too *yin*, ill health usually follows. Eating too many sweets brings about an accumulation of *yin*. Ancient Taoist practice says that it is much better to take the *yang Chi* down from the heart rather than having the *yin* of the kidneys rise. A friend, George Ohsawa, devised Macrobiotics to try and balance the *yin-yang* in food, though some of the theories are dubious.

Those who practice meditation regularly take for granted the shimmering field of violet blue light that appears before their eyes. This is the color of the *Prana (Chi)*, and it is a sign that the *Chi* is flowing in meditation. Also, experienced meditators usually hear a persistent ringing in the right ear, a sign of the vibration of the *Chi*. After going to ear doctors for several years (they said nothing was wrong), this writer asked the great Indian teacher, Rammurti Mishra, what was going on. He said, "It means that you have been chosen for introspection."

"Chosen by whom?" I wondered.

This ringing in the ear, which does not signify that anything is amiss, changes in intensity as time goes on. The sounds are frequently described in Yoga treatises, progressing from the hum of a flock of bees to the roar of the ocean waves. Shabda Yoga has a meditation in which nine sounds are successively experienced over a period of time, and progress is detected by noting the change in sounds. I believe Mishra teaches this meditation.

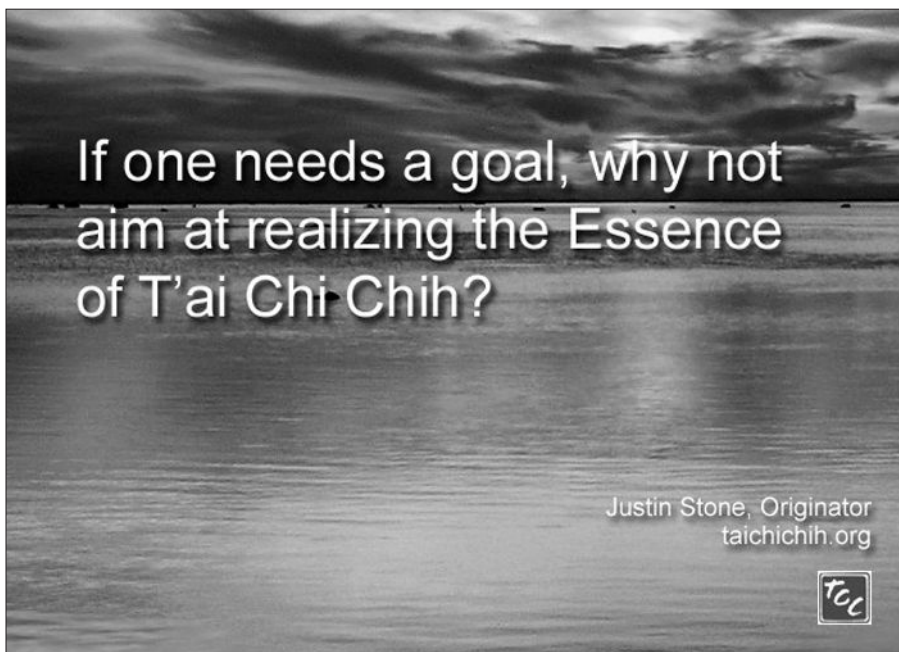
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It would be possible to go on extensively about the role of *Chi* – and its sible to go on extensively about the role of *Chi* – and its emergence to conscious awareness – in Far Eastern spiritual disciplines. Long periods of Zen meditation (*zazen*) are usually followed by the drinking of tea, not for social reasons but because the intense circulation of *Chi (Ki* in Japanese) brings about a great thirst as it dries up the aqueous excess. (Because of the caffeine, the tea also makes it easier for the monks to stay awake during long periods of sitting.) This is how the Japanese Tea Ceremony (*Cha No Yu*) first came about. It used the bitter green tea that came in caked form – the bitterness causing drinkers to place a sweet in the mouth before drinking. The stimulating effects of this tea are tremendous; if one drinks it at night, sleep will probably be impossible.

Practically all Eastern disciplines deal with this *Chi* force in one way or another. In parts of India it is worshiped as Shakti (the energy that is also the female consort of Shiva). Gopi Krishna speaks of *Kundalini* (a form of *Chi*) as the agent that brings about evolution. From all this, the part the flow of the *Chi* plays in heightened awareness should be obvious.

I am waiting patiently for Westerners to realize the role that the heightened circulation of the *Chi* can play in weight control

since it dries up the aqueous excess (the *yin* overabundance of fluid in the system) and tends to bring weight to an optimum level. One early *T'ai Chi Chih* student of mine lost 75 pounds over a period of four and a half months' practice while remaining the biggest eater I have ever known. A female *T'ai Chi Chih* teacher from Oklahoma, a former cancer patient, says she lost 100 pounds through *T'ai Chi Chih* when she was counseled by her doctor to reduce her weight. Judging by the looks of her old skirts, she was telling the truth. It should be obvious that cultivation and circulation of the *Chi* can bring rewards in almost any direction, not the least of which is the attaining of a heightened awareness.



From *Heightened Awareness*, excerpted and reprinted with permission from Good Karma Publishing

Workshop: That Which Knows

By Lisa VV, Fort Collins, Colorado

In Spring 2014, I found Marie Dotts' beginning T'ai Chi Chih. In the first class, I knew I needed the practice, the people and the peace. I didn't know that was *prajna*. Six months in, when Marie explained accreditation and talked about conference, I knew I needed to attend conference, meet teachers from beyond our local community. I didn't know that was *prajna*.

Accreditation came in June 2016; my first conference was just two months later. The first new person I met was April Leffler. I was standing with Marie, and April walked up and was so excited about the birth of the Northern Colorado community. She used words like *teh* and *prajna*; she seemed mystical. The next day she gave a presentation about teaching at a university. One evening, she joined a conversation about next year's conference. Her suggestions came from something I now know to be *prajna*. It would be another year until I saw her again in Boulder.

Following Seattle, I spent some time with Caroline Guilott and Lisa Otero. Right there, I made plans with Caroline for her to teach a workshop in my home studio a couple months later. I also spent the following year on weekly conference calls with Lisa Otero, planning the 2017 Boulder conference. Was that *prajna*?

After the Boulder conference, I had made plans with Caroline to play in Boulder for a couple extra days. When we headed out, Caroline asked if April could join us. It was more than okay; I wanted to ask April to lead a workshop in early December. She agreed and suggested the theme: "*Prajna* and Heightened Awareness."

Once word got out to the Northern Colorado community, the number of students wanting to attend was more than my home studio would hold. Just one week prior to this, another area teacher found a restored barn that served as a community center just one mile from my home. I didn't have a flyer prepared, but I knew there would be enough students for April's workshop. I immediately reserved the barn. *Prajna*? I wasn't sure yet.

Thanks to April's teachings, I can now tell you it was all *prajna*. I am learning to listen to and trust the heightened awareness that TCC helps me tune into. Experienced teachers – April Leffler, Caroline Guilott, Carmen Brocklehurst, Amy Tyksinski, Judy George and the trainers (Sandy, Pam and Daniel) -- who have all shared their knowledge in Colorado -- have truly enhanced the community that Marie dared to dream of just a few years ago. Forty teachers and students came to our Holiday Community Practice earlier this month. How is that for a dream come true?

I look forward to meeting more teachers at conference and hosting more workshops in Northern Colorado. *Prajna* tells me that is my current role and for that I am grateful.



Heightened Awareness In Northern Colorado

By Mary Buirgy, Loveland, Colorado

"Dear Universe, amaze me." April Leffler's latest prayer was at the center of her teaching throughout. As a new student, I was delighted to be in the company of so many experienced teachers and students, including several who have studied with the *kata*'s originator, Justin Stone.

Four teachings resonated and I continue to ponder and allow them to integrate between T'ai Chi Chih practice and daily life. The first is **the nature of who we are**, that we are filled with innate wisdom. April likened this *prajna* to our own inner guidance system or GPS. The second teaching is that **there is a reciprocal nature between mind and *Chi*** that reflects my own spiritual experience of "as you believe, so it will be." We practiced bringing our awareness to the present moment, accepting what is, neither clinging nor resisting, and knowing we can consciously, mindfully raise our vibrational channel. We were invited to dream, think and believe in the realm of limitlessness. What is possible in the mind is activated with our *Chi* and becomes our reality. This led to the third powerful teaching: **name things you would love to experience**; trust your intuition, your *prajna*; and say, "Yes!" When stymied by our self-imposed limits, and the question arises, "How am I going to [fill in the blank]?", April's enthusiastic answer is "Now, is how!" And finally, **lean into your community for inspiration and support**. This fourth teaching, that we are not having this "earthsuit" experience in isolation, is pure gold. We are surrounded by like-minded souls who readily see our potential. Allow family and friends to "supersize" your dreams. This web of interconnection and oneness reminds me of the Buddhist metaphor, Indra's Jewel Net. We are sparks of life force, vastly built with potential and are inextricably connected to all beings.

There are so many ways my TCC practice enlivens all of the above teachings, from trusting and acting according to my inner knowing, to letting go of efforting, and to allowing the unfolding of my life experience. I am grateful to be welcomed into the TCC community of Northern Colorado. Let's continue to build this life-sustaining, compassionate community, together. Come join us – you will be amazed!

Waking Up To Truth, Awakening To Prajna

By Connie Krumrai, Fort Collins, Colorado

Who looks outside, dreams;
who looks inside, awakens.

– CARL JUNG

I just spent the weekend with April Leffler, who led 25 students in the exploration of *prajna* and heightened awareness. I could say the food was tasty, participants awesome and I learned some new things. Yet that wouldn't reveal anything about my experience.

I've been to other workshops and learned tips for tweaking my practice, which I now know as heightened awareness. This workshop was different. I was encouraged to **explore it through experiential exercises**. We meditated, played follow-your-partner with eyes closed, shared experiences of *prajna*, super-sized others' dreams and practiced being limitless and aware of orders being placed with the universe. April led a guided visualization into awareness of sacred contracts made with one another on this earthly journey. I enjoyed the aftereffects of sitting in meditation. I found myself focusing on the soles of my feet, a lot.

At home reflecting on the first day, I read about *yin-yang* energies, habit energies and about how to ground. Often when searching a topic, I was led to the TCC website to read an article or blog. Then, it happened, I felt a shift. Not like an earthquake, but a subtle shift. I struggled to put it into words but I felt it. I sat with the shift. I let myself be, went to bed, and slept deeply and peacefully.

Awakening Sunday morning, I knew – not from my head but from my *tan t'ien* – that I had **found the true path to healing if I wanted to be healed**. Writing this, I'm reflecting on years of saying, "I know it up here [pointing to head], but making the connection from head to heart is challenging, even though it's only 12 inches away." And I laugh. I only needed to take a 12-inch journey from heart to *tan t'ien* to discover innate wisdom, truth, *Chi*, healing.

I learned to be silent, listen, heighten my awareness and awaken to my innate wisdom. I choose the path of healing through TCC.

"I can't believe I was so asleep!
How did I ever forget the truth?!"

– RUMI



Renewable Energy

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

In T'ai Chi Chih practice and in life, I feel several helpful concepts I've collected from other teachers coalescing. (April Leffler likened facing our habit energies to training a puppy, reminding it over and over to **"Come here. Sit. Stay."**) I pondered this. *Come here* is an invitation back to the present. *Sit* reminds me to let go and stop anticipating. *Stay* feels like a call to connect, to anchor in the feet and *tan t'ien*, and engage at a (new to me) level of *prajna*, rather than letting the mind drive.

We are like plug-in hybrid cars. When the mind is in control, the gas pedal is the flow of adrenaline. It's quick and packs a punch. Adrenaline is great when needed, but not inexhaustible; I've learned the hard way not to be a lead foot on that pedal.

Carmen Brocklehurst reminded me not to go away when I practice, and to stop trying. Marie Dotts talked about staying connected and plugging into the feet. Caroline Guilott demonstrated that in Bird Flaps its Wings, you plug into the two points at the front of the foot, like prongs into an outlet, providing stability to the center while the wrists circle. I could finally let go and enjoy the movement. The last gem was hidden in Anchor Taffy: April's suggestion was to "fully sink before you shift your weight; let go more." Sinking lower and plugging in anchors me in my body and allows my center to be the engine, the power source.

When I engage the *tan t'ien*, it's like running on electricity, on *Chi*. It's quieter, more efficient, with less fumes. It's regenerative. I get better mileage and can go farther. However, batteries for electric engines need recharging or the power source will run empty.

To plug in, I need to practice with attention. I must regularly disengage the gasoline engine and

charge the electric battery. My mind makes excuses and sees limitations. I'm learning to shift from a mind in gear (always on guard and ready to act) to neutral (ready if needed, but without hovering over the accelerator). "You're fine, Lisa. You're okay. Don't go away. Come. Sit. Stay."

The List: Clear The Clutter

By Rebecca Paulson, Loveland, Colorado

The workshop with April Leffler brought an opportunity to increase our own inner wisdom seated in the *tan t'ien*. April led activities followed by discussion and sharing. When she challenged us to list ten things that would bring happiness, I jotted down three. Then she elaborated, "What would blow your socks off?" Several more items popped into my head including, "Clear out the clutter in every closet and cupboard in your house." I was abashed when it came time to share because clearing clutter isn't exactly a deep spiritual jump. But I was wrong. I was surprised at how many old and new friends shared similar stories and encouragement. "You'll be amazed by the energy that is released into your life after doing this."

I went home that night and took an armload of magazines to my trash bin. It was a beginning. The next morning my out-of-town houseguest asked me to take her to a local thrift store. From the checkout line, I saw a rack where magazines I have hoarded for years sell for a dollar each. We exclaimed, "Clearing out a closet after the workshop and contributing to a meaningful charity ... that's what April would call *prajna*."

A Step In A New Direction

By Bob Poland, Fort Collins, Colorado

I am 84 years old, widowed and living at *Independent Living for Seniors* with about 100 residents, mostly widows more than 80 years old. At the Rigden Farm Barn, it's 24 women and me. I am still new to this adventure, have only been practicing for a year and it's somewhat overwhelming at times.

I'm a quiet person. This will be the first of many steps in my journey to become more sociable and, with much help and encouragement from Marie Dotts, I am looking forward to growing and becoming accredited. Everyone where I live could benefit from T'ai Chi Chih.

While getting a nametag, I was told (in jest) that I wouldn't need one; I would be the only man. The first person I meant was Carmen Brocklehurst, who offered a very warm welcome. It was great talking to her.

April Leffler's Saturday talk: The value of attention. Some exercises demonstrated unspoken communication. She relied a lot on quiet time, to think, be aware. Saturday lunch was silent, which was nice. April's talk included a million ways to say, "Don't try just do."

Hence my writing this.

New experience. I am most comfortable following someone else while practicing, so I had trouble following someone with the most active finger movements. I still mess up with mirroring, but standing behind Carmen was comfortable.

Sunday talk: *Prajna*. April shared unexpected events and actions that seemed to happen at a good time – sort of like intuition. It helped me find my way home in the dark Saturday night.

Four full practices. Saturday morning was outdoors in a very large circle on a sidewalk area. Saturday afternoon was indoors in a somewhat tight circle. Sunday morning was indoors again as it was cold outside. Sunday afternoon was a grassy area, so uneven that I had trouble walking. (Doing the movements was a real challenge.) At the end, my knees were so tired Marie insisted on helping me to my car.

Prajna: Night driving is difficult with my poor vision, and my first turn upon leaving was wrong. But I wandered and ended up home. Somehow.



Self-Love

By JoEtta Heck, Windsor, Colorado

The greatest gift from the Pranja and Heighten Awareness Workshop was to show self-gratitude. This may be expressed with a gentle kiss on the back of the hand. It may be an affirmation recited daily. In expressing self-love, I became more aware the importance of imagining those dreams coming true without any limitations from my ego. April Leffler asked us to create a list of 10 things we would love to [fill in the blank] before leaving this physical world. This list became part of my New Year's resolutions and my life plan. I now

imagine each of them coming to fruition. And I understand Justin's "play within the play" metaphor because of this experience.

The image above, from a 1939 calendar from my grandmother, reminds me of the simplicity children have for loving themselves. Titled "Dear Me," it captures a self-love expression. May you expand your self-love so all your imagined dreams come true.

TCC Retreat: Deepening Our Practice

Santa Barbara, California; September 2017

By Michele Peterson, Santa Barbara, California

With a blessing from Mt. Calvary Monastery's Brother Tom, who explained with reverence and humor his vision of community, the mood was set for entering into community. By our last night together, it was clear that we had reached our highest potential and that Brother Tom would have been delighted. We shared meaningfully, sang playfully and laughed so hard we nearly cried.

Pam invited participants to talk about retreat benefits. One of us viewed the *Chi*, "generated with so much practice," as transformative emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Another marveled at what she witnessed: the depth of letting go, sense of palpable joy and "vastness" in practicing together. One group member especially liked experiencing the group's joy and healing laughter. Everyone at the early morning practice with Dixie found it special, "peaceful, calming and energizing." It was clear that group practice enhanced individual practice. A benefit for another was exposing "bad habits" and the opportunity to improve. She plans to take the time to practice adjustments "over and over" to "build muscle memory" until they become the new norm.

When someone reflected that it's easier to understand T'ai Chi Chih movements by breaking them down, everyone nodded in agreement. Another saw TCC as a "path to mental wellness, a path to reintegration capable of restoring pieces of ourselves we've lost." She said, "The practice can be part of who we are." One of us observed the deepening she saw taking place "one step at a time" and described being connected to the *tan t'ien* as "richer than breath." Dixie reflected on her belief that individual and group practice each have equal merit, both having helped her "find the place of joy and stillness inside." She has come to appreciate Justin's awareness that the inner landscape is richer than the outer. One group member said her retreat experience convinced her TCC is the proper vehicle for reclaiming what's been lost. She sees how, with regular practice, the *Chi* will illuminate her path and lost joy will return. "That is the magic of TCC," she smiled. Another teacher knows she no longer has to worry so much about getting right the slow even weight shift forward and back or the counting. She said, "I imagine now that everything will be slow, soft and continuous right up to that last grounding moment."

TCC Intensive: Life Lessons

Albuquerque, New Mexico;

November 2017

By Gail Nieto, Wrightwood, California

We took away vital lessons from Daniel Pienciak, guiding us, offering advice, encouragement and constructive criticism. It was more than learning the correct way to place feet, hold hands, lower shoulders and tilt the pelvis. It was a reminder to stay grounded as I focused on my feet and felt their connection to the earth. It was a reminder to slow down and be mindful in all aspects of my life. It was a reassurance to trust my body to support me and to let go of past traumas. **It was a reminder that I can find balance in my life if I focus on what is important and what feels right.**

Each movement became more than a physical activity; it became a reassessment of my life, purpose and inner being. Lessons learned in our TCC practice are lessons that help live a more full and authentic life. While detailed deconstruction of movements was informative and constructive, the deeper lessons are the ones I value most – balance, trust, being grounded, mindfulness and slowing down.

Nineteen Movements & One Pose

By Nancy Rolph-Johnson, Long Beach, California

T'ai Chi Chih is good for you for harmony and balance.
Stimulate and circulate your *Chi* and hidden talents.

Rocking Motion starts us off along the way to healing.
Benefits will come along and foster calmer feelings.

The Daughters and the Taffies we'll meet along the way.
Softly move the ball along when you come here to play.

Around the Platter, 1 and 2, trace circles in the air.
Push Pull while shifting weight, we move with lots of care.

Pulling in the Energy from the farthest star.
Our fingers get all tingly; the *Chi* flows from afar.

The pulley glides us back and forth; the drummer passes by.
You'll feel release of tension – all you have to do is try.

The lights appear around your head to set your mind at ease.
Soon you will be so relaxed your life will be a breeze.

With a sigh our Joyous Breath will heal our inner flow.
Sounds of healing welcome us; the cosmos shines and glows.

We're grateful for this practice, watching passing clouds go by.

Each day we're getting lighter, like birds flapping in the sky.

So gather round for T'ai Chi Chih – I hope you will participate.
We'll meet again next Tuesday – and start at 10:00,
Now don't be late.

TCC Teacher Accreditation Rochester, Minnesota, October 2017

Compiled by Bonnie Sokolov, Course Host

I remember my own accreditation as if it was yesterday, even though it was 16 years ago. My life changed that week and I am forever grateful to those who shared it with me. When I agreed to host this course I had no idea what it entailed. I have hosted retreats and an Intensive but this was a lot more work than I expected. Every bit was well worth it.

It was a privilege to host this accreditation, watching Pam guide students into teachers; working with dedicated auditors; meeting candidates who will spread the joy of T'ai Chi Chih; listening to phenomenal presentations. Candidates worked hard, shared, supported one another and, in the end, all became accredited. How did participants feel? Read on.

This is a whole new experience. What a marvelous way to end this part of my journey of finding my *teh*. I let go more and start trusting myself thanks to the love, compassion and flowing of Chi from all who shared this wonderful, magical time. – DANA CLINE, SC

There will always be something new to learn in my TCC Practice. That is a gift; it is ever evolving. – ANON

TCC is like Mom – softly, gently disciplining, correcting my bad habits with unconditional love. – JAMIE ERICKSON, MN

I came to teacher accreditation with an empty cup but it wasn't big enough. It overflowed with tips and tools; with laughter, tears and new friends; with the patience and skill of the leaders and auditors; and mostly with gratitude. Gems from Justin, pearls from Pam and baubles from Bonnie, strung together in a precious treasure meant to be shared.

– LINDA MINOR, OR

TCC came to me, suddenly, because of suffering. Now I come to TCC because of Joy Through Movement. I learned grace, kindness, gentleness and compassion to share with those ready to embrace the unready.

– JUNGMIN LEE, MN

I felt comfort as we progressed through practices and corrections – comfort knowing that each leader had confidence in our ability to guide new students into joy, Joy Thru Movement.

– LOREL MAPLE, WI

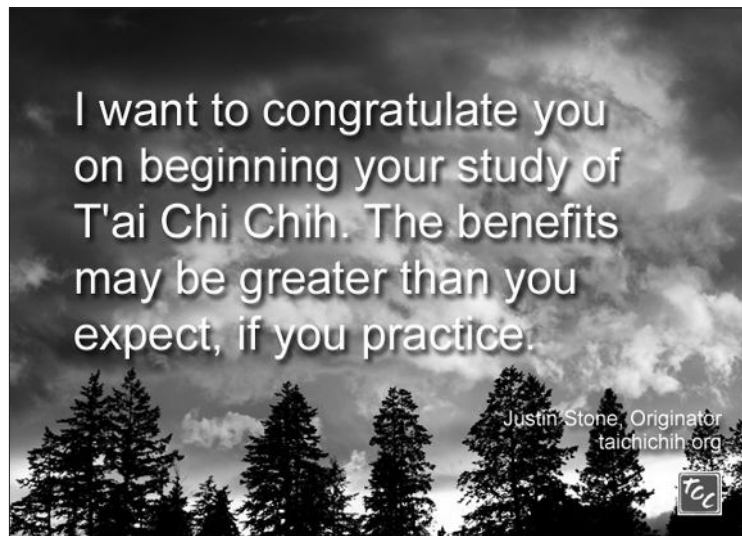
Although I was a nervous wreck giving my presentation, I am glad I had to do it. The compassion, support, encouragement and loving kindness radiating from my classmates was palpable. I have never experienced anything like that before; that feeling of complete acceptance will stay with me forever. – TRACY IMMORDINO, WI

It was easy to be a student of TCC: learn movements, reap benefits and bask in *Chi*. But to transform into a teacher... I didn't know the changes in store, accomplishments followed by frustrations, the dread of a presentation and then the privilege of hearing everyone else's. We all worked and practiced, and worked and practiced more. We were always supported and nurtured by Pam and her gracious and dedicated guidance; by auditors and their tireless patience and understanding; and by Bonnie and her inexhaustible attention to every detail. As I depart, some trepidation of the future is assuaged by the knowledge that I am still supported. I am part of a remarkable, incredible TCC community and I am humbled. – JULIE HYGH, CO

My wife, Lorel, and I are driving to accreditation. I am anxious and a little fearful because even though my teachers have taught me well, my movements need improvement. I'm also excited to see distant friends and learn how to teach the practice that has benefited me in so many ways. At the end of Tuesday I'm mentally exhausted, but feel a warm glow because subtly moving the wrists enhances the Chi flow. I can especially feel the difference in the Pulling Tai□y movements. It's Friday and I'm working on the umpteenth change for my afternoon presentation. I keep thinking about my new, incredibly talented friends who have endured so many challenges to become teachers. We all made it to graduation! The joy and warmth are indescribable. I feel determination settling over me – a push to share this wonderful practice with others. – JIM MAPLE, WI

One intention this week was to expand my "circle of Chi" by meeting other teachers. I've learned TCC mostly at a distance since there have been no active teachers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Although we were nervous, I was impressed by the presentations given. Almost every audience was covered – from church choir, cancer patients and care partners, to retirement community residents

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and retired special education teachers. Presentations were heartfelt, creative and professional. They incorporated an impressive variety of TCC movements, not just Bass Drum. I am so grateful for the gentle suggestions on moving and guidance on teaching. Since I had never taken TCC classes it was wonderful to hear from auditing teachers how to break down movements and what to say to guide new students. The best advice I heard was “keep it simple.”

– JUDY KISTLER-ROBINSON, TX

7:15 AM – 9:00 PM for five days

We worked so hard

We dug deep

Bone tired

What seemed impossible –

Possible!

In stillness

The pulse of distant ocean waves

Here – a wildness

That will not be tamed

Living mirrors together

Reflect what is soft and small

Yet an expansive universe

Gratitude

Is enough.

– ANON

- Up and down, round and round, fear and trepidation melting and transforming in the presence of grace.
- The sweet, soft invitation on opening night to let go and let be, to simply come with an empty cup.
- Instant calm and easy courage can only emerge with this simple instruction: “Be present and receive.”
- Healing words spoken with love from a teacher with the widest smile, radiating the immense beauty of the universe and her own self.
- Sitting next to her, grounded and sure, with ocean blue eyes shining the diamond light, with arms extended in warm embrace, holding steadfast as tiny tears sneak out to be released.
- Encounter the mystery of *CHI*.
- This is just the beginning.

– DYMUNA McCONNELL RADFORD, ONTARIO, CANADA

Back Row L to R: Pam Towne, Patti Popovich, Jungmin Lee, Judy Kistler-Robinson, Jim Maple (slightly behind), Mary Strom, Linda Minor, Cathy Burton, Dick Dye, Tracy Immordino, Bonnie Sokolov

Front Row L to R: Jamie Erickson, Julie Hygh, Dymuna McConnell Radford, Linda Zelig (kneeling center), Laurel Herman, Teresa Sonier, Laurel Maple, Dana Cline **Front Center:** Sammy (Laurel Herman's service dog)



Trial & Transformation

By Nancy Rolph-Johnson, Long Beach, California

T'ai Chi Chih teacher training.

A week of my life spent in geographical beauty –
rain and sun, green and grey.

Surrounded by nature in a castle of learning and encouragement.

Fulfilling my desire to teach T'ai Chi Chih.

Meeting new friends and teachers, a little scary, even a lot scary.

Fear turning to concentration on improving

19 movements and 1 pose.

Each day filled with practice, practice, practice –
early mornings and late nights.

Wanting to do my best, I surrendered and
left my ego and arrogance outside.

I was given loving support from strangers who became diligent taskmasters.

Teaching me, helping me, training me, applauding me.

I learned a lot, improved a lot, determined a lot to succeed as much as possible.

Lots of information. I'm on overload.

And so the days went by – practice, practice, practice.

Practice, eat breakfast, practice, eat lunch, practice, eat dinner, practice ...

Presentations – tell my personal story.

TCC Workshop: Going Deeper Glenwood Springs, Colorado; October 2017

By Eliza Fulton, Host

This Fall workshop came alive. Our fledgling community was welcomed with open arms and open hearts into the larger community, and the results were magical. As Carmen Brocklehurst led us in practice and refinement, everyone clearly had several “ah-ha” moments. Each of us chose a particular move that really spoke to us in a new or deeper way, and we shared our inspirations.

Rocking Motion became a way to really let go – let things fall as we sank and then once again gather new energy and lift

ourselves – only to release and let go again and again. Deeper and deeper we went.

Push Pull was also an exercise in letting go, releasing and then allowing the nurturing energy to be called, and to come “over the mountains” into our hearts. As one participant noted: why is it we are always the lover and never the beloved? This movement, bringing the love into ourselves, allowed us to feel what it as the beloved; and to recognize we are all worthy of being loved.

Another realized that practicing Daughter on the Mountaintop was not better than Daughter in the Valley. Yes, being on the mountaintop is wonderful and yet, from the valley one can go in any cho-

sen direction. One must come down from the mountaintop to share the *Chi*. Being in the beautiful valley has its own rewards.

As we practiced joy and experi-

enced camaraderie, it became clear that it’s okay to be who we really are. It is okay to be like we were as a child – open, loving, playful and authentic. We do not have to wear masks; we are worthy just as we are to love and be loved. It is okay to love ourselves.

It never ceases to amaze me how, just by grounding, just by being present in the body and just by doing the practices, we seem to become so much more – more comfortable with ourselves, more loving of others, more filled with gratitude and more willing to be of service.

Just as groves of aspens are produced from a single root of origin, it is the same for we who practice TCC as Justin taught and as Carmen so generously shared. A quotation from Justin rings true as our little community became part of the larger one: “*T’ai Chi Chih and integrity (teh), the power of inner sincerity, are one and the same. All things proceed from one Reality, which remains the same. The leaves fall to the ground in autumn, but there will be leaves on the tree again in springtime; the root remains the same. Seeing the trees against the sky, we sense a spiritual power.*” (Spiritual Odyssey)



Pyramid Poems

On Chi and the Lotus Sutra, from Carmen Brocklehurst’s April 2017 TCC Retreat

Chi
expands
limitless
empty yet full
let thoughts go
power
comes
– LISA STROYAN

trust
the void
the joy that
juices us all
coaxes our
essence
wow
– AMY TYSINSKI

all
voices
rising till
the one merges
with many
being
one
– CONNIE HAPP

Chi
being life
Chi being all
the universe
all that is
is the
Chi
– LEYA

joy
patience
the safety
of nothingness
emotion
release
safe
– VLF

Chi
inside
unhindered
in the depths of
my being
strong soft
free
– CAROLINE G.

share
the *Chi*
emptiness
knowing the void
connected
with heart
now
– JUDY

blank
but full
of what could
be -- really be
why limit
yourself
now
– JERRY G.

Chi
circles
universe
pervades expands
joyfully
creates
life
– M.R.

know
beauty
feel the love
of creation
always love
sparkling
now
– ROBERT

Chi
reveal
your constant
presence to me
through your love
I am
full
– CR

this
flowing
energy
that I so love
is present
within
me
– MONICA CEJUDO

we
evolve
along our
current journey
as the *Chi*
brings forth
peace
– SANDY R.

one
is all
fulfilling
universal
connection
all is
one
– J. VEERKAMP

voice
wisdom
from inside
deep within me
energy
healing
Chi
– PAULINE
QUIMSON-MILLER

Blessing Or Curse?

By John Van Der Geest, Albuquerque, New Mexico

A college friend I was visiting in Albuquerque in the late 1970s mentioned morning T'ai Chi Chih in the park. But nothing came of it. Fast forward to today: after an active life and recent injury, I noticed a TCC class at the gym. After several months of practice, the injured hip was much better. It was an inconspicuous beginning.

Over the next six months Kathy, the class instructor, introduced me to this "meditative art." The reading materials she often brought peaked an interest, and on one occasion we spoke about being an instructor. Eventually, after a class Kathy said, "You have to go to the Intensive," so I got in step. Two weeks passed; I purchased the *TCC Photo Text* and had Kathy's copy of *Spiritual Odyssey* in hand. The morning highlights at the Intensive were the participant introductions. That afternoon we jumped into reviewing and practicing. The first day was good.

Day two commenced with high energy. We worked on basics including set-up mechanics for each movement, employing pairings for constructive feedback. Lunch was fruitful, getting to know people and making friends. Day two passed without too much confrontation.

An unforeseen evening conversation at home left me deflated and it carried into day three. Being there was a challenge. Trying to hide during freely given feedback carried me through to lunch. Do breakdowns lead to breakthroughs? My fancy car had fancy dead batteries but Guy had jumper cables, so I was back in business. The rest of the day went better. We learned about SSHH (sink, shift, hands, heel) and the pelvic tilt. Life is good. The next morning, seeing wandering predawn stars, the energy woke me up for a 30-minute practice before breakfast. The energy was high in class too. We shared takeaways, said our goodbyes and then we were free ... at last.

Now the real work begins. Since the Intensive, things are really changing. Understanding the practice through *Spiritual Odyssey* took the practice to a whole new level. Habit energies, tendencies and Karma are playing out in real time. Breakdowns revealed arrogance, showing off, a drama queen, anger and a host of other tendencies. The child puts these in place while creating the survival identity of life's formative years. **All the curses and soul searching in these discoveries are revealed with TCC.** Being down in the dumps is the pits. Making change is not for the soft at heart. But the being, benefits and becoming that accrue are a blessing. Seeing Karma work is a blessing. Just passing through.

Seijaku Accreditation

Rochester, Minnesota; October 2017

By Bonnie Sokolov, Course Host

I was accredited in 2004 to teach Seijaku, taught it briefly but never "got it." So when I learned I would be hosting this accreditation I was dismayed; I remembered so little and understood even less. What a difference three days makes! Other participants agreed:

This accreditation encouraged me throughout each movement to repeatedly ask, "Where can I be more soft?" – ANNA VAITH, RACINE, MN

Inspiring us with Justin's teachings of working through resistance, letting go and accepting impermanence, we can experience joy, peace and healing.

– EVANGELINE BRATT, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

It has been helpful to gain more clarity about Seijaku's elusive, almost mysterious "resistance." With practice I can move through tensions I encounter and create in my life, letting go more completely and quickly into softness and calm.

– SUSAN SOBELSON, MINNETONKA, MN

Studying the gifts that Justin gave us is like peeling an onion (without the tears): Each new layer has new insights. I keep finding hidden gems.

– DANA DILLER, PRESCOTT VALLEY, AZ

Pam said, "Don't underestimate the power of letting go." We all experience personal loss, and we need to graciously let go of it. Much of our world seems out of (our) control, so there many things we need to let go.

– NAN NELSON, ST. PAUL, MN



Back Row L to R: Nan Nelson, Mary Weddle, Dana Diller **Front Row L to R:** Bonnie Sokolov, Evangeline Bratt, Susan Sobelson, Monica Campbell, Anna Vaith, Pam Towne

Thoughts Post-Accreditation

By Monica Campbell, Minnetonka, Minnesota

- My body responded to Pam's toning speed. I had been rushing it and never felt good afterwards. By slowing down, this vibration was smoother.
- I'm trusting the *Chi* to guide me. It is more enjoyable to focus on softness in the *tan t'ien* rather than the feet. The *tan t'ien* knows what to do. I feel much more centered and grounded as I allow my *tan t'ien* to work through the resistance so the field of energy, *Chi*, spreads throughout my being.
- As a kid I remembered and felt my dreams, but this slowly went away as I grew older. Seijaku practice has brought them back.
- During restless evenings, focusing on the soles of the feet brings the most benefit. It calms the energy and allows me to fall into a deeper level of peace

T'ai Chi Chih Xinshén

By Whit Schweizer,
student of Faith Isaacs

Wu chi is the lifeless state of no polarity, nothingness, void before the universe was created; tai chi is the animate state of supreme polarity (energy), contrasts, distinctions thereafter.



I. Rocking Motion

i yield to the sea
and the youth within
at play in the gentle green
between beach and breakers
she lifts me by stipe and blades
like kelp in a vertical heave
she casts her froth on the sand
as i reach behind me
the hiss of breaking foam
collides with my finger tips
her return holds fast my feet
she buoys my core
she shows me the forest of kelp
around me
rising and falling
until at the end
she lifts me by my shoulders
and sets me to rest
on her lap

II. Bird Flaps its Wings

two beats
i am a common chaffinch
in flight above a valley
glide
of rolling wheat fields
striped with wind shadows
two beats
like a sandtan tiger
lounging asleep
glide
air blows gently
against my wing-tipped fingers
two beats
sends me soaring
at the speed of wind and shadow
two beats
to rotate with wings folded
in soft air
glide
land gently in a tiger tree
of chi

III. Around the Platter

i rest my hands
on a ball of breath
roll forward toward my left
while fog-swirls move my finger tips
along the upper mist
of a point-down vaporous cone
that rolls me right and back
then eight more clockwise circle whorls
return my flowing hands
atop the wispy ball
of down
where i become a looking glass
roll forward right into the mist
trail perfect circle swirls
nine times to my left and back
my fingers counter clockwise whirl
until i return to the breathy ball
of Chi

IV. Around the Platter Variation

i stand beneath a cottonwood
that draws my hands
from a ball of down
rests them on a chest-high draft of air
then lifts them toward my right
to a ball of fluff
convened nearby my shoulder
where i gather springtime fuzz
compassionately to my softened hands
and release left
to the clockwise drift of air
that returns the fluff
to me
then eight more times
released to my left
returned to my right
and nine times more released to my
right
returned to my left
i play catch with the chi
which returns all that I release
precisely
to me

V. Bass Drum

i rest my hands on silence
then place them on the shell
of a great glass marching drum
step left foot forward
hands circle perfect vertical rounds
from low to high to low
while my core rocks forward and back
my fingers trace both invisible rims
emitting an inaudible note
two octaves lower than lowest A
from the temple between my hands
the sound passes nine times
around the earth
from the back of my left hand
to the back of my right
returning
to rest
then nine times more
with right foot forward
the inaudible Om
passes from right to left
around the globe
returning my hands
to rest on the orb
of silence

VI. Daughter on the Mountaintop

she climbs
within my inmost calm
to the emerald Hái Vàn crest
looks east along the mist-topped ridge
above the ancient gates to war
lifts her arms from sea to clouds
then eases her hands aligned edge to
edge
left thumb adjoining her heart
devouring assault with her left
and strife with her right
to dissolve within
her breast
with right foot forward
we raise arms together
our hands becoming the peak
together we continue the arc as one
until the clouds are swept from the sky
and only the mountain
remains

VII. Daughter in the Valley

she rises
faces the cleft
between the Marble Mountains
steps forward with her left foot
lifts her hands into the gorge
rocks back caressing the emerald hills
her hands rise again in veneration
cascade down the mossy slopes
lift a prayer for the earth
caress the people
lift a prayer for peace
caress the soldier
lift a prayer for grace
caress the thief
lift a prayer for virtue
caress the defiler
lift a prayer for truth
caress the liar
lift a prayer for balance
caress the obsessed
completing her act of devotion
she brings her circling hands
to rest
i rise
step in with my right foot
nine times my hands are hers
become her supplication
and each of her loving strokes
as the arcing rhythms obtain my release
from grief

VIII. Carry the Ball to the Side

a ball
of chi alights to my right
hands cupped at my shoulder
steps me left to work a circle
low to effortless high
three times chi scythes the grass
three times chi tills the soil
three times chi digs a trench
three times chi mops the floor
three times chi rakes the leaves
three times chi chops the wood
three times chi pulls the line
three times chi lifts the net
and spills itself throughout
my work
nine times three circles right
I dance as chi teaches me
my calling to carry
the chi

IX. Push Pull

a child
 steps forward with his left foot
 pretends to push the wave to sea
 soft hands reverse the ebb
 pretend to pull the flood to his
 head
 as the next wave wanders out
 i join his carefree play
 the sea transforms to chi
 and yields before my breath blown
 hands
 then allows itself to be pulled in
 after seven more times i become
 a fish
 breathing in a sea
 of chi
 i rise
 step forward with my right foot
 push out the chi inhale
 nine times until transformed
 to an undulation
 of chi

X. Pulling in the Energy

i lift
 inverted fingers
 to touch totality hanging down
 step circle left along its bulging belly
 static builds from the infrared wool
 of stars in the glow before time
 down drawn to my silken fingers
 across the gap of chance
 to now
 nine times
 my upturned fingers circle right
 the woolly mammoth
 trumpets the moment
 between the ears of my heart
 past anger and worry
 sorrow and fear
 for joy

XI. Pulling Taffy

from rest
 turn right stroke left
 a cat
 turn left stroke right
 its fur
 turn right stroke left
 a hare
 its ears
 ~ ~ ~
 a fawn
 its spots
 your arm
 your hand
 your face
 your hair
 your trunk
 your leaves
 your lakes
 ~ ~ ~
 your streams
 your earth
 your air
 turn right stroke left
 your wounds
 turn left stroke right
 the chi

**XII. Pulling Taffy,
 Variation #1 - Anchor**

flourish northward into
 clear
 cosset westward brushing
 now
 forward outward into
 chi
 rebound eastward stroking
 here
 all in all is every
 where
 where-ness dwindles to a
 spot
 self enlarges into
 we
 cosmos lives within a
 mote
 center severs ties to
 size
 moment lasts for endless
 time
 aeon spans a single
 wink
 substance is no more than
 chi

**XIII. Pulling Taffy,
 Variation #2 - Wrist Circles**

Dance, Dance, Dance
 to stars that loop the
 Turn,
 of moon around the
 Spin,
 of earth's rotation
 Round,
 the bend of space time
 Curve,
 the solar imprint
 Wheel,
 within galactic
 Whirl,
 adorns the circuit
 Ring,
 of moonlit stars that
 Dance, Dance, Dance
 the Dance

**XIV. Pulling Taffy,
 Variation #3 - Perpetual Motion**

to dance
 with joy
 for death
 with love
 in pain
 from mirth
 at loss
 and gain
 from grief
 at gay
 complaint
 for bright
 dark doom
 light heart
 and gloom
 delight
 all ways
 in chi

XV. Working the Pulley

swim
 through snow-capped peaks
 reflected marks
 along the lake
 of static time
 evolve your "now"
 from gorge to crest
 until far shore
 is won

 or
 pull the cable
 bound to nameless
 future poems
 past eternal
 self and moment
 dancing joyful
 tai chi learning
 practice

**XVI. Light at the Top of the
 Head, Light at the Temple**

stand knee-deep in reaping
 bend to harvest the gift
 lift clear with upturned fingers
 chaff and wheat together
 throw refuse to the blessed breeze
 roll pure grains between your palms
 hold to let them ripen –
 release from torch lit hands
 emancipated seeds
 of grace

bend low to collect the winnow
 gather to your temple entrance
 sow your soul with source
 massage with stout Intention
 pause while humility blossoms-
 emit your ripened crop
 of light lit peace
 within

XVII. Joyous Breath

bend low raise full inhaled breeze
 you, child, laugh, play
 lift the laughter floor to face you, teen,
 lust, laugh
 gather the laughter like a sheath
 you, ripe, laugh, love
 hoist the giggle whoop
 of chi

XVIII. Passing Clouds

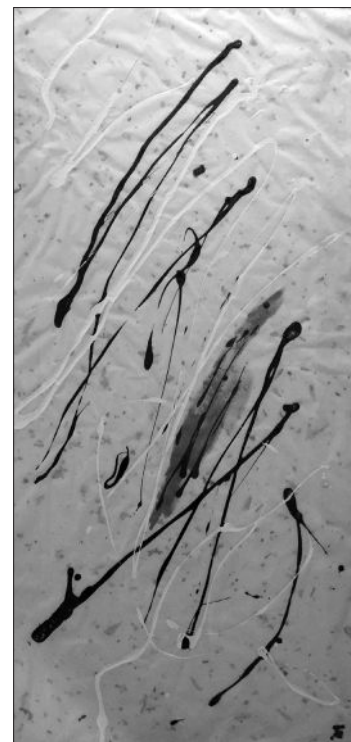
clouds
 thin at the edges
 vanish into the sky
 mountain stones
 fill the valley
 a river flows
 in transient eddies
 to the roiling sea
 only chi remains
 unmoved

XIX. Six Healing Sounds

	(Ho!)	(who?)
(t'Sue!)		(she)
(shuh!)		(chew we!)
	Ho	Hu
Tzu		Chui
Hsu	Hsi	Hu
	Ho	Chui
Tzu		Hu
Hsu	Hsi	
Chui		Chui
Chui		Chui

XX. Cosmic Consciousness Pose

yield heel and arch
 physique and heart
 to mirrored facets of Indra's net
 poses propelled to the fringe of forever
 primal reflections' inception
 echoed jewel to jewel
 identical bearing
 from beings before
 to beings long after
 tai chi to wu chi*
 wu chi to tai chi*
 Spirit sent forth
 Love received
 the worlds
 embrace



Contacts

Originator: Justin Stone

Guide & Teacher Trainer:
Sandy McAlister
24835 Second St, Hayward, CA 94541
510-582-2238 / mcalister19@comcast.net

Teacher Trainer:
Pam Towne Duncan
234 Hoover St, Oceanside, CA 92054
442-222-8332 / pamtowne@gmail.com

Teacher Trainer:
Daniel Pienciak
PO Box 231, Bradley Beach, NJ 07720
732-988-5573 / wakeupdaniel@aol.com

The Vital Force:
P.O. Box 92674, Albuquerque, NM 87199
kim@kimgrant.com / 617-901-9628

Good Karma Publishing, Inc.:
sales@gkpub.com

T'ai Chi Chih Foundation:
PO Box 517
Midland, NJ 07432

Web Site Changes:
changes@taichichih.org



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Community Calendar

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

DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

- Mar 3-9 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Mar 15-18 | TCC Teachers Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Mar 20-23 | TCC Student Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Mar 23-25 | TCC Retreat w/ Sandy | St Paul, MN | Ev Hanson-Florin | 507-289-8534
- Apr 20-22 | TCC Retreat w/ Dan | New Jersey Shore, NJ | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- May 10-13 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Prescott, AZ | Dana Diller | 928-848-0824
- May 11-14 | TCC Teacher Symposium w/ Sandy | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Jun 1-3 | TCC Teacher Retreat w/ Dan | New Jersey Shore, NJ | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Jul 26-29 | TCC Teacher Conference | Philadelphia, PA | <http://www.taichichih.org/conference-2018/>
- Jul 29-31 | Conference Seijaku Basics w/ Daniel | Philadelphia, PA | Janet Oussaty | 908-635-1822
- Jul 29-31 | Conference Seijaku Accreditation w/ Pam | Philadelphia, PA | Janet Oussaty | 908-635-1822
- Oct 4-8 | TCC Intensive w/ Dan | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523
- Oct 24-28 | TCC Intensive w/ Sandy | Colorado Springs, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955

~ 2019 ~

- Mar 30-Apr 5 | TCC Accreditation w/ TBD | Colorado Springs, CO | Marie Dotts | 970-412-9955

~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

- Apr 26-29 | Learn Seijaku Retreat w/ Carmen Brocklehurst
Albuquerque, NM | Judy Hendricks | 505-573-0820

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