

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: In His Words

Heightened Awareness

Visualization, Chih-kuan & Great Circle

While all meditations can be helpful [in achieving an expanded awareness], some types that lead to trance, deep immersion and otherworldly feelings do not fit our idea of what we are looking for in the quest for heightened awareness. [Here] we will give instruction in *Chih-kuan* meditation and the Great Circle Meditation. First, however, I would like to offer a visualization that can precede practice of either meditation – one that is healing in nature and can be very helpful in attaining a heightened awareness.

A Russian woman I knew went to the hospital with a mysterious ailment and found that it was sapping her strength. Later in life the ailment was diagnosed as coming from the kidneys, but at the time, doctors did not have any idea why she was steadily growing weaker.

While she was in the hospital I spoke to her by phone and explained a simple visualization to her, giving her two versions of it so that she would have a choice as to what appealed to her. She practiced the “waterfall” version continually and later told me it helped her gain the necessary strength to fight off the debilitating ailment. What is interesting is that she had some important realizations during this period in the hospital practicing the visualizations, and these influenced her later life.

Duck’s Egg

I told her to imagine a small duck’s egg balanced on the top of her head. This was to slowly crack open and the nectar from inside the egg, cool and delicious, was to slowly trickle down through her head, through



Tenrikyo in Kyoto, Japan, 1960s. Justin, second from left (top), middle (bottom).

the neck, then spread out to flow through the torso, reach the waist and continue at a slow pace down through the legs until it reached the soles of her feet (the so-called Bubbling Spring), where it would rest, cool and comforting, while she luxuriated in the delicious feeling that pervaded her body. The trip from the top of the head down was to be imagined in great detail, and the progress of the cool, invigorating nectar was to be slow and even.

As the nectar trickled down through the chest, lungs, liver, stomach and other internal organs, there was to be a faint sound like that of trickling water. After the nectar had rested

in the soles of the feet for a short time, it was to gradually rise and fill up the bottom half of the body, from the waist down. The bottom half would begin to feel pleasingly warm. At such time, I explained, it was possible that a pleasant fragrance would become apparent to the nose, in harmony with the perception of warmth and comfort in the lower half of the body.

Waterfall Version

This version, which she practiced, is largely the same as the Duck’s Egg version. She was told to imagine standing under a great waterfall, cool but not cold, with the water cascading over her (slowly) as it came down from the top of her head to the resting spot at the bottom of the feet. Then it was to rise and gradually fill up the lower half of the body as she rested and luxuriated in it.

Either of these versions is valid and can be helpful and healing. They can be practiced from time to time in the privacy of the home, in the office or even while sitting on a plane or as a passenger in a car. There are ways to make the visualizations more complicated by taking the nectar up from the soles of the feet through the meridian channels of the body, and then down again, but there is no need to do so. Either the Duck’s Egg version or the Waterfall version should have a beneficial effect on the body and on the awareness of the mind. As it heals ailments, it removes clouds from the mind, making heightened awareness a distinct probability.

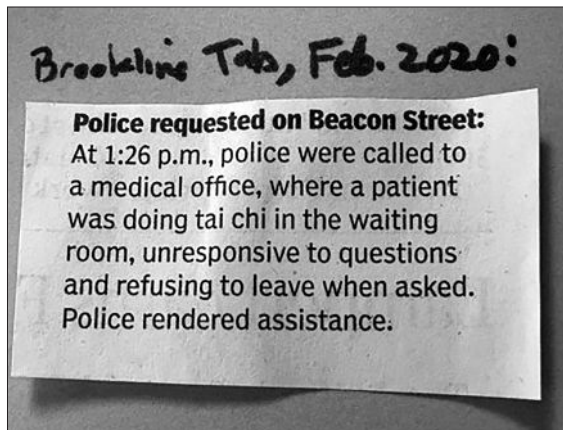
CONTINUED ON PAGE 12-13

Excerpt from
Heightened Awareness,
available in print and in an e-book from
justinstonetccc.com.

This “Coronavirus” Issue

This issue is the strongest (IMO) since the Justin Stone Memorial Issue from May 2012. The synergies and “coincidences” throughout are delightful. Hannah and her student Charles both wrote (pg. 17), with Charles adding: “I believe that I had help getting to where I now live. I’m really grateful for Hannah and all that she is sharing with me. What I’m learning from Hannah can’t be found anywhere else. All I had to do was get here.” Sound familiar?

Sound was referenced by Carmen (pg. 4) and Connie (pg. 16). Quantum physics was mentioned by Ann (pg. 6) and Parker (pg. 11). Zoom was referenced throughout by Annette M, Lisa S, Ann R, Amy T, Jessica L, Parker R and Judy C. Is it any surprise that the Lighter Side returned after a hiatus (as seen at left and on page 19)? And in reaction to being homebound, the issue is peppered with *Where in the World* photos.



~~ With gratitude. Kim Grant,
Albuquerque, NM

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The Vital Force

~ Web Site Updates ~

The on-line teacher listings (for www.taichichih.org) are now maintained by teachers themselves. Teachers: please email Kim or see taichichih.org/teacher-listings for instructions.

~ 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 text, Word or Pages 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.

What Does The Vital Force Do?

- Produces a quarterly journal by and for its members
- Creates and maintains taichichih.org for everyone
- Innovates with ways to connect teachers and students
- 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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A Bag of Beans, a Pound of Rice & Chi

What's in Your COVID-19 Pantry?

By Denise Emanuel Clemen, Minneapolis, Minnesota

I began preparing my pantry when the newspapers began advising us to do so. Not a fan of canned goods or prepared food, I didn't have much of a pantry. It was so deficient the first thing I bought was a set of stacking cubes to serve as additional shelving. For the past few weeks every shopping trip has included a handful of pantry items.

Back when I was a Californian I put my faith in my emergency backpack with its batteries, hand crank radio and phone charger. Also stuffed into that red pack was a flashlight, headlamp, first aid supplies, toiletries, tinfoil blankets, poncho and a nice wad of cash. Other than a few pouches of water and some nuts, I didn't pack much food. I figured I could crowbar my way through the earthquake rubble and pay cash for a meal or a bag of groceries. When California exploded with the worst fires in its history two years in a row, I added smoke masks to my pack.

This afternoon with everything in Minnesota cancelled, a national state of emergency declared, and my inbox jammed with bad news about things I'd been looking forward to, I moseyed to the neighborhood Trader Joe's for another round of pantry stocking.

Wait. There were no canned goods. Except green jackfruit – whatever that is. No eggs, no bread. A meager supply of nuts. Even the produce bins were empty, except for sweet potatoes and some bags of blood oranges. Shoppers shuffled through the aisles like Stepford wives, staring into the distance or into their phones, texting, *Uh...Should I get some cans of green jackfruit?*

Somehow, I left the store with a bag almost too heavy to carry. My pantry now has all the usual stuff plus dried blueberries and canned hearts of palm. My freezer is a pantry too – homemade soups and broths, and a few jumbo packs of TJ's smoked salmon and way too much butter. Living in a building with 375 condos, I'm confident that neighbors will look out for one another. I should be able to trade that butter for something.

What I'm most happy to have in reserve are my practices. Practicing T'ai Chi Chih daily, and yoga almost as often, I feel prepared for the stresses that may present themselves. I begin my TCC practice in my pajamas as soon as I get out of bed. Often yoga follows. Without having already stocked up on that routine, I doubt that I could muster my attention away from the crashing stock market and rocketing virus graphs. **When I invariably wake at 3:00 a.m. to worry about everything, it's the Nei Kung, I pull out of my emergency backpack of practices.**

We have at the ready the things we made ready. You can't buy a can of beans or a can of peaches when the shelves are empty. **T'ai Chi Chih – learned, practiced and at the ready – is an endless bounty.**

It Is

By Susan Kenney, Carmichael, California

It is the practice. Our practice. The one we share each week. In the park. In the church.

It is the practice that connects us with the *Chi*. The *Chi* within each of us. The *Chi* among us. The *Chi* all around us. Moving us. Moving all that is.

It is the practice that has comforted us in times of loss. Celebrated with us at birthdays and retirements. Healed us from illness and injury. United us in ways that are wordless and profound.

Over the years, we have each grown in the practice. Softening. Slowing. Deepening. Strengthening our connection with one another and with the mystery we gently hold.

It has allowed us to come home. To ourselves. To our world. It has encouraged us to live softly yet boldly. To care for each other. To care for creation.

And now a pandemic has separated us. From the park. From the church. From one another.

But the practice survives. We create new ways of being together, of sharing the *Chi*. Of sending it out. Out to the people and places in need of renewed energy and fresh hope.

Over the years,
we have
each grown
in the practice.

Softening.
Slowing.
Deepening.



Each day we commit ourselves to the practice and remind one another, encourage one another. And, in different places, we join energetically to touch one another and our uncertain world.

It is the practice.
Our practice.
Namaste.

Learning to Live – Chi

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, New Mexico

This is a time of great reflection. We are being given time to reflect on our lives, not just the personal but also the impersonal. Our stay-at-home orders are clear; this is a time to go deeper in knowing ourselves, how and what we think, feel and do. We have never been faced with this new way of looking at ourselves as a nation and a world. What is important, from where did these ideas, feelings and actions come? Do these ideas unite or separate us?

A story comes from long ago about a man on the road meeting “the Plague.” He asked the Plague where he was going, and the Plague said the name of the city from which the man had just come. The man asked how many people would die from the plague, and he was told 250. Months later the man was returning to his city to be of help as 500 people had died. Again, he met the Plague, this time coming from his city. The man asked the Plague what had happened that he took more than the 250 that he had planned. The Plague answered that he was true to his word, only 250 had died from the plague. But he had two companions – Fear and Doubt – that he met on his way into the city.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Ode to COVID-19’s Demise

By Annette McNeil, Brick, New Jersey

Perhaps you came from outer space,
With intentions to annihilate the human race.

First suspected in a wet marketplace,
A slippery, jumpy mutation,
Hell bent on widespread ruination.

With membership in a coronavirus gang of bugs,
You invaded China and Italy like a band of thugs,
The world implores you to cease and desist your lineup of mugs.

Flu-like symptoms, cough and high fevers,
Leaving so many alone to live as grievors.
Respiratory ailments invading our lungs,
Politicians attempting to thwart you by speaking in tongues.

In the UK, Spain and the USA
mounting numbers serve as an epidemic.
Your wish was granted reaching higher status,
the W.H.O. now declared you a pandemic.

As novel as a first date,
Who would want you as first mate.

You thrive in our air and on surfaces too,
You destroyer of unity
proximity, and physical care,
Attempting to create a schism of unrepairable tear.

Sequestered to shelter-in-place,
Knowing very well you are a social disgrace.

We gathered indoors to flatten the curve,
Hoping and Praying to outwit your incredible nerve.

Many among us refused to comply,
Preference, regrettably, to believe the lie.

Hoarding bizarre household items became their right,
Stockpiling food with no end in sight,
Thinking all this greed would increase their might.

Doctors, nurses, postal workers ... all working so hard,
Immeasurable hours of dedication by the yard.

Where are the needed masks and ventilators, we ask?

To decrease the anxiety about their tasks.

Teachers creating virtual lessons in record speed,
Utilizing technology, old school classrooms take heed.

Seeking immunity boosters, we consulted a reliable friend,
In our moving meditation, T’ai Chi Chih, we knew we could mend.
A soft practice hardwired for such times,
The teh gently and intuitively defines.

Justin’s words indelible in our minds,
A legacy allowing us to be intertwined.
Sinking into our practice to keep our sanity.
T’ai Chi Chih, indeed, a service to humanity!

Gathering virtually in order to Zoom,
All incredibly feeling the Chi in each and every room.
Yinning and *Yanging* all 19 movements and one pose,
Collective healing energy to our world thus arose.

Our workforce instructed to log in online,
Working hard to meet many a timeline.

Social media our only salvation,
Who knew we had to be apart to grow in our humane re-education.

Dolphins frolicking in our canals anew,
Improved air quality and swans emerge, to name a few.

Nature’s resurgence not holding a grudge,
Disregarding our undeniable smudge.

Children playing with siblings indoors,
Hopefully soon to emerge at our shores.

Which Twilight Zone episode did you emulate?
Requesting a Disney movie ending to populate.

Are you something of our own making?
Indestructible, calcified; there is no faking.

We resurrect as a nobler bunch,
Just expressing my hunch.

To regenerate a kinder, more compassionate world,
Mother Earth reclaiming her rightful place,
Trying to curb the rat race.

Amidst the horror of your making,
We defy you to continue the taking!

Never. Until Now.

By Elizabeth Ebrahimzadeh,
Sacramento, California

I met T'ai Chi Chih in a park 18 years ago. It called out to me. "Hey you, with the brisk stride and tense shoulders, come over here." "You talking to me?" "Yes, you. What's that worried look and furrowed brow about?" "Dunno." "You need me." And thus began a love story that has sustained me through the years and through many trials and tribulations.

I've always been a worrier. I can outdo anybody any day. It must be in my DNA. I worry if a loved one arrives late, or a text goes unanswered, or the phone rings late in the evening or the flowers bloom too early. I would have said that I knew everything about worrying, in all its manifestations, from its depths to its heights and everything in between; and maybe I would have been right. Until now.

Never before have we all had occasion to worry about all our loved ones at once, no matter their age and their state or country of residence. Never before have the postman and the plumber and the printer all posed a risk. Never before have Clorox and rubbing alcohol been on our minds more than coffee and wine. Never.

The daily news breaks our hearts, the stewards of our blighted benighted planet fumble in desperation and we strive to hold ourselves together. **For a born worrier like me this time we are in would have been impossible without a powerful grounding daily discipline.** Now, more than ever, I am grateful for my good fortune of having such a discipline. T'ai Chi Chih has a magical way of calming the mind, soothing the soul and warming the heart. Morning practices give us strength to weather the rest of the day and evening practices give us something to look forward to. And from TCC comes the delightful community of kindred spirits, which, in its own right is as magnificent a blessing as the practice itself.

Thus it is that repeatedly every day I say, "Justin Stone, rest in peace."

Reorient with TCC

By Lisa Stroyan, Fort Collins, Colorado

Recently I've felt as if I'm living in the early chapter of a science fiction novel, the shell-shocked heroine of my family's survival story. There is a feeling that something momentous is coming, but I, as the character in the book, cannot see what I cannot see.

My mind quickly points out that my life hasn't been impacted all that much, not nearly as much as others' have. As of this writing, tragedy hasn't hit my family, though I was saddened to hear that seven died at the rehab/nursing home where my dad stayed for more than three months last year, and that 23 more are infected. It feels closer and closer to home, and I know it is still early in this journey. I hesitate to write, knowing how I might look back on my own naivete. The scientist in me wonders what we will lose, and the optimistic former hippie-child envisions what we will gain and heal, what wonders will emerge in our path of human transformation.

Somehow, time still flies by. I try to stay grounded and in my feet through a mental litany of worries and 'shoulds.' I resist doing/acting on them, and in doing so, give them more power. I tune out with books, articles, TV dramas and email news updates. I am fatigued from fear, too much media and thinking too much. Time seems to be distorted, which is an odd layer on top of my often relatively normal day. "We are all disoriented," a friend pointed out the other day.

Thank goodness I have T'ai Chi Chih. I have a powerful tool that I have been honing, perhaps just for this moment. TCC is a wonderful teacher. All of the principles seem amplified in importance in life as it is now. The need to flow softly and without effort, to tune into our center and listen to our feet, to stay grounded in this moment, are all being called forth.

I have been doing many practices on Zoom,

and connecting with people all over, as well as practicing here and there on my own. I'm pulling out Justin's *Spiritual Odyssey* and *Meditation for Healing*, which seem written for this time. Soon I'll return to David Parrish's new book, *Dying to Live*, and see what new insights it brings. The *Nei Kung* comforts me at night.

I have a place to rest, to escape the fear. I have a tool that flows with me, supports me, and reconnects me to myself. TCC reorients me. Thank you, Justin.

BROCKLEHURST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

As we practice T'ai Chi Chih, we often find that because of the peace and calm we experience that we become clear on the mental, emotional and physical levels. We are offered ways to face fear and doubt, and to face the problem itself.

In Justin's essay, "A Great Bonus" from *Spiritual Odyssey*, he points out that we often try to think our way through things. This takes a great deal of time and effort. He then offers a better way: "TCC works ... not from Mind but from the *Chi*, which affects the Mind.... But TCC also affects the health, through circulation and balancing of the *Chi*—this is the great bonus." This is particularly important as we do Six Healing Sounds.

In the photo text *T'ai Chi Chih, Joy Thru Movement*, Justin writes of healing sounds made by monks living in the wilderness in ancient times. "According to legend, they evolved a method of repeating certain sounds, synchronized with a motion resembling TCC, in order to ward off illness or cure any indisposition ... while slowly uttering the correct sound in a long drawn-out whisper." He often spoke of how the sounds were to be made using the strength of the *tan t'ien* and that we would know if we were making the sounds correctly if we practiced by putting our hand on the *tan t'ien* and feeling the hand pull in toward the abdomen. The sound was not a soft whisper, but a strong one. As we are strong in the *Chi*, we heal and learn to live, love and share the *Chi*.

Imagine

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California

During the first couple of weeks of “lockdown” or “shelter-in-place” due to the COVID-19 pandemic, music has become a solace for many people. Folks sing from their windows and neighbors join in, some stand on their front porches and serenade neighbors and passersby. Through social media musicians play for us from their homes, either to raise support for those on the front lines or just to uplift our spirits. One musical interlude that went viral and was profoundly felt by many was that of two doctors at the Mayo Clinic taking a brief time out, one signing while the other accompanied on a piano, John Lennon’s *Imagine*.

This song resonates with many people at this time of upheaval and uncertainty. There is hope in many of us that when our world uprights itself again it will be a better place:

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one*

While some may think this is a dark time, I see light; I feel light even

though my heart is heavy for others. I have a secure home but know some may lose theirs. I have plenty of food while some wait in long lines at the food banks. I have lost no one to the virus but some are not so lucky. I do not live in fear but feel I have surrendered to whatever is to come, yet upon further scrutiny I realize it is a false surrender. It is backed up with shelter, food and health.

In Justin’s view “there are three things to be done (realized): To recognize, deeply feel and accord with Impermanence.” I think we are all being given that opportunity right now whether we want it or not. “Then, and only then, is it possible to find out Who and What we are (transcending Impermanence).” This is a very interesting time of self-evaluation; what are our values, beliefs, emotions, motives, what kind of a human being are we, etcetera.

I am heartened by the T’ai Chi Chih teachers who are reaching out with Zoom to support their students and connect teachers. This is certainly a time of extremes without a lot of balance. **Now more than ever the practice of TCC is needed to soften the hardship this virus is creating.** This is a vulnerable time for all of us and it is important to reach out in whatever way we can with generosity and openness of spirit, especially so after the pandemic is over.

Across Space & Time

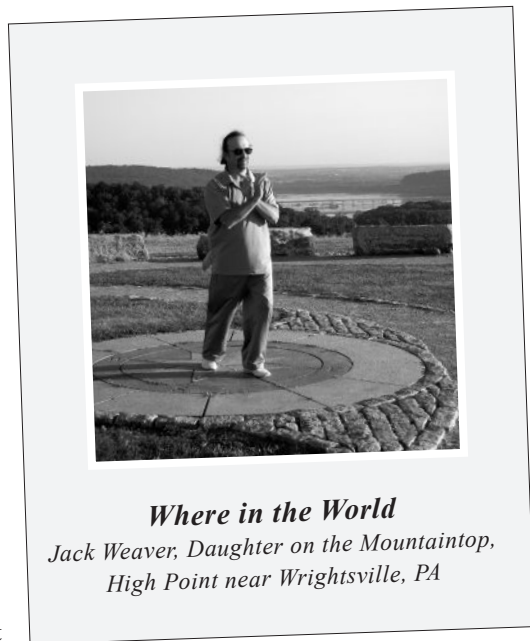
By Ann Rutherford, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Justin Stone was an intuitive quantum physicist. He understood and experienced the Energy Sea we all swim in when we practice T’ai Chi Chih and Seijaku, which is why he sometimes instructed us to move “as if swimming through very heavy air.” This Energy Sea, he knew, was composed of the great Potentiality of Everything, and thus, was without boundaries. This Energy Sea, conscious and alive, we access when we practice. We feel dissolution of our fixed body boundaries and expand into and merge with those we normally see as other. Normally, we are in the same room with each other when we practice, but due to the national health emergency, we have had to go quantum in our practices.

Our three times a month the TCC and Seijaku Review practice group discovered all of the above Energy Sea truths when our New Mexico Governor commanded we all remain in our homes. We keep to our normal Review Class practice times, but we can no longer gather at the TCC Center. Even though we no longer see or hear each other practice, we experience each other as pulsating vibrations, as we merge with the Reality, the Energy Sea. It has been a profound pleasure to experience the central truth of quantum Reality: **Everything is enfolded within everything else, so space and locality are arbitrary constructs.** To practice together, all it takes is the Intention to practice TCC or Seijaku at a given time.

We had contemplated trying Zoom, so that we could see and hear each other as we practiced, but we learned from another practice group, who was using Zoom with a screen they looked into, that they were having difficulty grounding their *Chi*, which is the absolute foundation of TCC practice.

All it takes to practice TCC in this “quantum” manner is to maintain a firm concentration in the soles of the feet, and to expand awareness beyond our fixed boundaries and merge with our fellow practitioners, wherever they reside, consciously generating feelings of love, gratitude and universal oneness.



Where in the World
*Jack Weaver, Daughter on the Mountaintop,
High Point near Wrightsville, PA*

Finding Our Center

By Daniel Piencki, Howell, New Jersey

Is there anything more valuable in times of difficulty than discovering our center? When I think about the Original Face of the Nei Kung practice, or Justin Stone's reference to "your face before you were born," that center comes to mind.

In doing my T'ai Chi Chih and Seijaku practice, I often become very aware of expansion and contraction in the movements and in my body. It seems as energy rippling outward and then retreating inward again.

In forward and back movements, the ripples expand while the weight is given to the front leg, and the ripples draw into the center while the weight is given to the back leg. In the turning movements, the drawing into the center happens in the middle of the weight shift with the weight on both feet. I feel the *tan t'ien* as if gently blowing up and then shrinking inward.



Where in the World
Linda Worlton and granddaughters,
Bass Drum, Sorrento, Italy

In Asia it is said that one can chase their shadow all day long, but if one stands still and upright at noon, one's shadow will become one with them.

In the practice, I feel my shadow as lengthening on the ground in late day sun, and then slowly shrinking until it is only beneath my feet. I recall a favorite childhood movie, Peter Pan, whose shadow had become lost, then found, and sewn back on ... to the feet! Ah, the place of grounding, the place of rooting of the *Chi*.

When tree leaves blow off during a storm and branches snap off, the trunk remains upright and immovable if the tree is rooted deeply enough. **And so it is in our practice, if fully aware, we can discover and know where we stand.**

I've recently discovered that I suffer from a mild case of PTSD and have discovered its source. Being aware of it, and the great benefit of TCC-Seijaku practice to combat its absolutely jolting inward affect, has been a lifesaver in this most difficult time. The awareness and feeling of expansion and contraction in the practice helps us find, feel and stay in our center. This is our True Home.

Practical Help in Stressful Times

By Pam Towne, Oceanside, California

We are so fortunate to have a simple, enjoyable, extraordinarily effective daily practice that promotes our health, serenity and longevity in the best of times and the most challenging of times. Of course I'm referring to T'ai Chi Chih.

Teaching TCC for more than 35 years, I've heard plenty of anecdotal evidence from my students that TCC relieves stress and strengthens the immune system. I've certainly experienced those benefits myself, especially in this time of COVID-19.

Now there is research to back up these benefits. Studies have shown that bi-lateral rhythmic movement (which certainly describes TCC) **calms the amygdala of the brain**. The amygdala is part of the limbic system of the brain that is involved with emotions, especially fear and anger. It is what gets triggered in post-traumatic stress disorder – and from watching too much COVID-19 news!

It's no wonder we feel calmer after TCC practice. Even taking a slow deep breath when starting to feel uptight and settling into the soles of our feet as we do over and over again in TCC, makes a difference in our inner equanimity.

In a *Harvard Health Letter* article entitled, "Tai Chi Gives Immune System a Boost," UCLA researchers conducted a 25-week study involving 112 healthy people whose average age was about 70. Results showed that T cell activity levels for the T'ai Chi Chih group rose significantly more than the control group.

TCC might have a strong effect on the immune system because it manages to "bring exercise, relaxation and meditation together in one behavioral intervention," the researchers said. They theorized that TCC enhances T cell activity by quieting the nervous system's "fight or flight" response, which can interfere with the immune system.

When we practice TCC, it is much more than theory. We feel the very real results in our body-mind and come away feeling more peaceful yet energized and empowered to do things that are ours to do. As Justin often reminded us, we do more good than we know by practicing TCC.

Flying Blind -

ZOOM TCC Classes in the Time of COVID-19

By Amy Tyksinski, Albuquerque, New Mexico

Yesterday I taught my very first Zoom T'ai Chi Chih class to families at my school. Having attended a fair amount of Zoom meetings by now, I figured the participants would show up and I would be able to see them in the little Zoom tiles through Gallery View (shared screen) even if they had me on Speaker View (full screen). How wrong I was! Instead, the "people" (possibly ranging in age from 6th grade to adult) all joined the class with just their name plates instead of a live view. Who was in my class?

Onward! I taught the class pretending I was Mr. Rodgers. I caught myself offering encouragement as I often do: "Wow, you're doing great!" and then would self-edit aloud, "Even though I can't see you!" and then surprised myself as these words flew out, "But actually, I can feel you!" Mortified at that utterance, my internal dialog shared as well: "This must sound crazy to a brand-new practitioner, especially some of the highly intellectual parents we have at our school!" Because I had no idea who was there, I couldn't adjust appropriately the languaging of my teaching to a known audience. I couldn't read faces to discern confusion. I couldn't observe bodies to offer refinements in service to better *Chi* flow. And yet, I started to feel some awareness of the group so that appropriate T'ai Chi Chih teaching came through and learning was invited.

What I have discovered so far in these early days is that **the most important aspect is feeling my own groundedness during the practice.** I need to not be afraid to listen and receive information as it comes internally rather than through other senses. In talking with other TCC teachers who have been offering Zoom practice sessions, I've learned the following tips:

- It is helpful to have some of your own "observer" friends in your Zoom TCC Class along with your students. They can offer you explicit feedback after the class. What worked well? What didn't? Before starting, if you can see your students, ask them to give a thumbs up or down as to whether they can hear you. Then ask everyone to please mute their audio and put their screen on Speaker View, so that the screen doesn't flip back and forth to whatever noise might pass through a student's screen.

- We know it is important never to fixate our gaze in T'ai Chi Chih. Rather it is best to encourage students to blink their eyes and look around a bit as they do the movements. This awareness is even more important in Zoom classes. Students should be encouraged to listen more to the words (so teachers need to be even more explicit and clear in their explanation of the movements) and use the visual on the screen as a support. We need to be aware of the tone of our voice, too. If it is soft and whispery, we can know that we are not properly grounded in a helpful way for our students. The voice should be strong and well-projected. Once students get familiar enough with the movement by watching, they should be encouraged once again to look up, look around. This will help them feel the flow of the energy much better. (Thank you to Judy Hendricks and Dora Wiemann for your wisdom in observing this.)

- It is difficult to see the foot placement and the weight shift properly if you are facing the camera. Consider wearing socks that are a different color than your pants and even roll up your pants so your ankles are visible. Be aware of whether the floor is dark or light and chose pants of a contrasting color. Make sure also to turn to the side to demonstrate movements because this also allows viewers to see that the back heel comes up slightly on the forward weight-shift as the back leg straightens.

There is an element of trust that accompanies this new model of seemingly blind teaching. The trust comes first to our own felt sense of connection. If the connection to the bottoms of our feet feels strong within ourselves, and awareness of "swimming through very heavy air" is experienced in ourselves as teachers, I believe we can tune in to our virtual students effectively. If you are considering online teaching, please trust you will find your way. The teaching will come through and the gift of TCC will continue to provide healing-wholeness support to our fellow humans in such great need of comfort right now.

I need to not be afraid
to listen and receive
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The Stillness ... Within the Stillness ... Amidst the Chaos

By Gail Terriff, Edmonton, Alberta

Justin taught us that Seijaku was finding peace and tranquility within a busy life or chaos. The practice of T'ai Chi Chih is the same. I found that special sunbeam in my home at the lake today, where I entered into my TCC practice. As I fell into that special place, I dropped into each movement. Ah, that familiar stillness that I appreciate and love. You all know ...

Even though I felt the energy of the movements, the *Chi* calmed and brought me into silence. The *Chi* moved through me, around and about me in its familiar way. After my practice, I sat for a few minutes. Another level of stillness. I marveled at how the simplicity (or the innate complexity) of these repetitive movements brought me into this stillness.

Every nuance and movement when we practice is sent out from us and into the world like a blanket of love – protecting and supporting the health of our own bodies and rippling out to our families, community and planet.

It soothes my mind to know that we respect and recognize the importance of self-isolation that's required at this time, another degree of stillness.

Stillness within more stillness during the chaos of this time. What a gift. Justin always reminded us that TCC is not only a wonderful personal gift, but it is also a gift to humanity. **Isn't that the perfect teaching for this present time?**

Humankind Faces Its Own Divinity

By S. Becky Shinas, OP, Fremont, California

"Humans Are Not Statistics; Within Us Lies Divinity" – Justin Stone, Spiritual Odyssey

This is at the root of it all. The time is now. We have each been given the extraordinary gift of time, but it's not the normal sequential time we are used to, and many of us find ourselves in a state of uncertainty, unpredictability and even daily disequilibrium.

Welcome in Kairos time, which invites an extraordinary opportunity for our global community as One to do something new, to do something so different, so amazing – like believing in our own Divinity, as Justin so boldly proclaimed. I believe that the daily practice of T'ai Chi Chih embodies the form and formless in a joyful union of praise. (As Justin wrote: "Joy becomes our natural heritage.")

Right now, whether we know it or not, every person on this planet is changed; all have a chance for a new experience of the Supreme Ultimate, a new experience of themselves as Divine, and thus a new experience of seeing every person in this world as Divine.

We hear and feel so much gratitude, graciousness, generosity and sacrifice happening. Let's look at the root words for sacrifice: "one who makes sacred" everything around them; by every prayer, touch and word that they send out into this forever changed world. They are not afraid to own and live their Divinity, to live into their Essence with humble acts of compassion, forgiveness, singular unity through sacred diversity with unconditional loving all around. (As Justin wrote: "Right in the midst of the turmoil one must rest in the Essence...")

What does it mean to be Divine? The secret is tucked into our name: humankind. To be human is to be kind, and to be kind is to be Divine. That's it. Your kindly-ness, your divinely-ness is what you see and experience with joy all around you as you move through your ordinary, or now not-so-ordinary, day. (As Justin wrote: "Properly seen, every incident in life points to the unseen Essence.")

So if you are yet to believe in your own Divinity, next time you: do TCC; simply smile; say hello; give an encouraging word; change your plans; pass the remote; cook a meal; pet the cat or dog; make a long-needed telephone call; shelter in place; help carry a load; wash your hands; help with the dishes; do something creative; listen attentively; say "excuse me," "I am sorry," "please forgive me," "I love you," "thank you;" and send a heartfelt prayer into the world. Know then that you are simply Divine.



The Dance of One

We're All in This Together

By Jessica Lewis, Claymont, Delaware

It's the most common phrase out there these days. But if recent events haven't irrevocably proven to all of us how much we're connected, I don't know what will.

I've been swamped with work since Delaware went into a state of emergency on March 12, transitioning all my classes over to the Zoom platform and trying to jump on as many potentially profound opportunities as possible (some unexpected things are starting to bubble up). Sometimes I feel more attached to my phone and computer than ever before (which is stressful), so from time to time I make the conscious decision to turn everything off and walk away. Like everyone I'm struggling with many things. But in general, I also see several amazingly bright sides to this completely unprecedented situation.

For instance, in the last two weeks I was thrilled when two of my oldest friends (who live far away) were able to enroll in my intro-level T'ai Chi Chih class. Plus, some of our wonderful teachers and two teacher trainers popped into some of my T'ai Chi for Veterans and Guided Practice classes. What a gift to spend time with some treasured friends while so much in the world seems completely topsy-turvy.

I've also shifted gears dramatically in my marketing: never before have I repeatedly hit home the value of TCC as clearly or as vehemently. If you are looking for language that works, here's what I've been writing or saying at every possible opportunity.

I cannot overemphasize enough that the easiest yet potentially most fun way we can all stay healthy is by practicing T'ai Chi Chih. If you're not already practicing daily here are a few compelling reasons why you "should":

- All T'ai Chi has repeatedly been proven to **boost immunity**, plus it's instantly analgesic, **elevates mood** and, most importantly, just **"gets you out of your head"** for at least as long as you're practicing.
- All T'ai Chi qualifies as **exercise** (which also boosts immunity), but TCC's are the softest T'ai Chi movements of all so they cause **no physical stress** whatsoever.
- Hard science has proven that practicing **any style of mindfulness** also boosts immunity and TCC counts. TCC specifically has been labeled a moving mindfulness practice by Mayo Clinic, the American Medical Assn and the Arthritis Foundation. Cool, huh?!
- TCC may be the only T'ai Chi style (or "exercise," frankly) **that literally anyone can do**: there are only 19 movements and one pose, no rules about doing all of them or in any particular order, and the entire practice can be performed from a chair or even mentally/intentional-

ly. (I've been blessed with the opportunity to teach a quadriplegic.)

- Live T'ai Chi classes are not an option at this time, but more and more virtual options are popping up all the time (including my TCC classes). What have you got to lose – except stress?

Let's say you want to give virtual classes a try yet the whole concept seems mysterious. No worries. Most of the time all you need to do is click on a link I'd email you once you register and answer yes to two simple questions.

You can also watch and learn the entire series broken down into chapters on my website, which also includes a complete, silent, mirrored practice by my wonderful teacher April and me. Follow along, stay healthy and do your part to flatten the curve.

Justin envisioned a time when something would propel TCC into the public eye. Last summer when the T'ai Chi for Veterans program was created I wondered if I was witnessing the very vehicle Justin foretold. But even just two months ago I wouldn't have imagined a time when all internal Veteran's Administration classes and activities would grind to a screeching halt. Yet several TC4V teachers switched gears to continue meeting veterans' needs. (As of this writing only a few of us within the TC4V program are only teaching our treasured form.) Perhaps the perfect pebble has just been tossed, the ripple effect we've been hoping for has finally begun, and the TC4V program is simply the leading edge of what will one day become a tsunami of public health policy transformation. Can you imagine TCC being included in everyone's definitions of "health" and "wellbeing"? I can.



Where in the World
Jessica Lewis, Working the Pulley,
Segesta, Sicily

Thank You COVID-19

By Parker Reynolds,
Strongsville, Ohio

Mulling over “TCC in the time of COVID-19,” I started thinking about how this pandemic has changed TCC. I quickly realized that TCC doesn’t change. It is “the Real,” the never-changing constant. What has changed is how we share this gift with others. This led me to compare how I may have conducted myself before and since the pandemic.

BEFORE: I held classes in my own little world, and my students were primarily instructed only by me and didn’t have much other connection.

AFTER: Many teachers offer Zoom classes and Justin’s video collection is newly streaming. Now my students are getting instruction in different ways, different words and word pictures – sometimes bringing on the “ahhh, that’s what Parker has been trying to tell me.”

BEFORE: By attending conference, I deepened my practice, teaching techniques and made personal connections. It is a major part of my TCC life. Many of us will miss that.

AFTER: Virtual practices with other teachers has filled that void to a large extent. In early April, Sandy McAlister held the first of her Zoom classes for teachers. More than 80 teachers attended. It was such an energy-filled practice, a blessing, and almost like being at conference.

What does this all mean? At the International Medical T’ai Chi/Qigong Association’s inaugural Conference in Boston in October 2018, Dr. Greg Fricchione of Harvard Medical School addressed the benefits of T’ai Chi, “Separation is the most painful human condition.”

He was speaking about **how joining in Mind-Body activities promotes human connection.** I remembered this after a particularly energy-enhancing Zoom practice this week. As we practiced, the leader mentioned to connect our *tan t’ien* to hers. I immediately felt a rush of *Chi* for the remainder of the practice. I was connecting from hundreds of miles away.

Bill Douglas, originator of World T’ai Chi/Qigong Day, in his book *The Gospel of Science* says, “Quantum Physics has discovered something called Entanglement, or what Einstein referred to as Spooky Action. What they found will sound like some kind of science-fiction, or some cult leaders’ nonsensical imaginings – at first. Physicists found that when two atomic particles are connected in an atom, they remain connected forever. Here’s where it gets weird. Even if those two particles are on opposite sides of the universe, they are still connected. Physicists found that if they affected a particle’s spin, the entangled other particle, no matter how far away it is, changed its spin in a complimentary way at exactly the same moment. It happens instantly, so there is no way a communication could have happened, it happens too fast. The only explanation is that the universe is connected.” **The rush of energy I felt was confirmation of that connectedness and easing of the pain of separation.**

I now set my intention that group practices and online instruction will continue after COVID-19 is gone. Call me crazy but thank you COVID-19 for helping me realize the realness of what we do.

we
sheltered
with our fear
thank you covid
now we share
our light
zoom

Expansion & Contraction

By Connie Krumrai, Fort Collins, Colorado

*“How much more glorious the trip to inner space –
and how much more vast.”*

– Justin Stone

My husband and I walk daily. As I look around at the earth, donning her wondrous Spring season, she is in expansion. Recently, the world shut down in a slow-moving wave. When it reached Fort Collins, it felt like contraction, a big exhale. Waiting for the expansion/inhale to return, I feel called to rest in the pause, a sabbatical.

Resting in this pause, I’m learning about letting go – of commitments, ego, anticipation, the illusion of control, judgments, thoughts and seeking (fill-in-blank) externally.

I find myself experiencing heightened awareness. With nowhere to be, nothing to anticipate, I am free to be, to experience the joy of living in the present moment. Chopping vegetables, spreading pizza sauce, cloud gazing, tadpole hunting, savoring a homemade turtle sundae slowly, planting seeds and pulling weeds. (The latter reminds me of my habit energies: some have short roots, some long, and some are so tenacious they keep returning until I get the entire root.)

I witness expressions of love and beauty all around. Chalk art, neighbors talking over fences or from driveways, wolves howling, bear hunts for children, public offers of assistance to anyone in need and the list goes on.

I have broken through my resistance to a daily T’ai Chi Chih practice.

Though I miss friends and family, I continue softening into what is. I’ve not been to Asia to study as Justin Stone did, yet I see this moment as an opportunity to be the “small hermit” (which I can feel when camping), but I’ve not yet experienced being the “big hermit.”

I feel blessed for this opportunity to rest into the pause, exploring my vast inner space with loving kindness. Maybe when the world’s inhalation comes to Fort Collins, I’ll be a wee bit closer to being a big hermit.

Heightened Awareness

Visualization, Chih-kuan & Great Circle

Chih-kuan

This meditation deals with Chih as the cause of *dhyana* (meditation) and *kuan* as that which brings about (uncovers) Wisdom (*Prajna*). It is deceptively simple to practice, though there have been literally thousands of pages written about it and Zhiyi has elaborated on ten steps leading to enlightenment based on *Chih-kuan* practice. It is not necessary that we know the philosophy behind the meditation, only that we practice it. Nor do we have to deal with “the ten means of repentance” that *Tiantai* monks practice. We are not dealing with the *Chih-kuan* meditation in the religious sense but only as a tool to help us attain a greater awareness. It is very efficacious in that respect.

In teaching the *Chih-kuan* meditation, Zhiyi was very careful to point out to monks that which must be gradually eliminated in order for true enlightenment and *Nirvana* to be attained. It is interesting that the passage on rooting out faults that hinder progress began with attention to taste, the Buddha having specified that the craving for taste (gluttony) is one of the hardest desires to be eliminated and that it definitely blocks the way to realization. He also stressed that hatred was to be done away with and stated that the rooting out and banishment of hatred was the way to happiness. (This would include annoyance, envy and jealousy.) “Hatred is the root of poison, and elimination of it is ‘moral excellence,’” was the Buddha’s teaching. Repentance was very high on the list of necessary disciplines in *Tiantai*.

Practice of Chih K’uan is as follows:

We seat ourselves in a desired position, careful to keep the back straight, and place the tongue against the roof of the mouth, where it will stay during the whole of the meditation. We then choose one of two spots, either the place two inches below the navel (*tan t’ien*, pronounced *dantieme*) or the third eye spot, between and slightly above the eyes on the forehead.

Fastening our concentration on the chosen spot, we breathe naturally in and out and sit quietly. Our thought is the point we have chosen, and since we can only have one thought at a time, continued concentration should theoretically be simple. In actuality, however, it is easy for the mind to lose its concentration and begin to roam around. In this busy world the mind does not take readily to one-pointed concentration.

At first, when the attention begins to waver, we are able to easily bring it back to the point of concentration. However, when extraneous thoughts begin to intrude rather heavily, we put aside the point of concentration and just watch the passing show, the thoughts flitting through our mind. Where do these thoughts come from? And where are they headed?

When we scrutinize them this closely, they will tend to disappear. Then, as the mind empties, we resume concentration on the chosen point.

Thirty minutes of this meditation – grasping the point of concentration

and then letting go – (*Chih-kuan*) – is a good deal. Thirty minutes a day would be a splendid practice, and if we kept on, results could be expected. This alternate holding and letting go is true of all life, the expansion and contraction that is also day and night as well as life and death.

There is deep meaning to this “simple” meditation, which is powerful enough, when consistently repeated, to lead one to an enlightenment experience. In order to point out a little of the profundity of the practice, I am going to quote from my own writing, a passage in the book, *Meditation for Healing*:

There is nothing that does not change, so there is no permanence. What is not permanent is, ultimately, not real. Buddhism says that the transitory is simply a transformation, as the seed becomes the tree, the tree becomes timber and the timber becomes ashes. Even names and forms of impermanent things are not real. So what we see, what we feel and what we think is really empty – empty of any enduring self-nature. Thus we contemplate the Void, or Emptiness of Things.

Then we shift our contemplation to the world of phenomena, which Tiantai knows as the “seeming.” Although the nature of mind is empty (Void) as we now know, still conditioned by circumstances and karma, it can produce all the things of the world, including ourselves. So, knowing full well that these perceived things are, at bottom, empty, still we see the mountains and rivers and have thoughts. Knowing the true nature (which is no-nature) of things is empty, we, for the first time, really perceive the green of the grass and the brightness of the stars. There is no attachment to cloud our vision.

However, we do not stop there. We have realized all things as empty, yet we do see and feel the phenomena of the world. The two together – the Empty and the Phenomenal – are but symbols, arrows pointing to the Mean. Then we can truly live in this empty, phenomenal universe, playing our role in what is essentially a show of phantoms. We do not take “no” as answer, and we do not take “yes.” Knowing the Mean, we perceive Truth and can live our lives meaningfully as both common men and sages.



I believe it is helpful to read the above and to attempt to understand the deep meaning behind the simple *Chih-kuan* meditation. The one who chooses this as a permanent practice will not be mistaken.

~ ~ ~

The Great Circle Meditation

Practice is as follows:

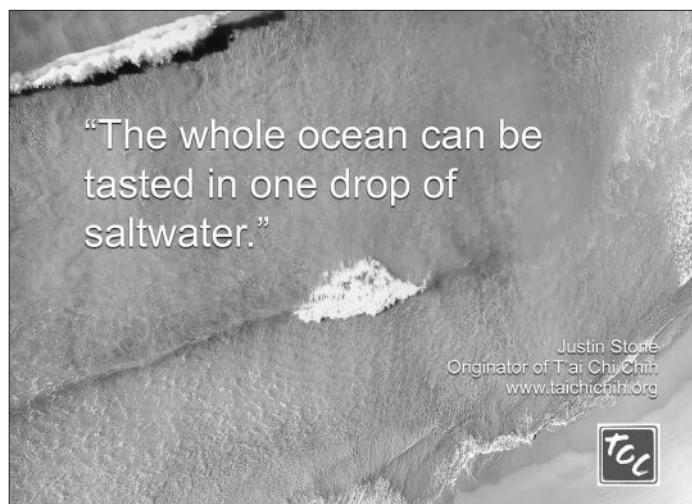
The version of the Great Circle Meditation taught here is a simplified one and slightly different from what I have taught in other books. Nonetheless, it should be helpful in heightening awareness, as well as having other benefits. The objective is to make it easy to do, as a supplement to the various disciplines that have preceded it.

Once again seat yourself comfortably, in a chair or in meditative pose, holding the backbone straight and placing the tongue against the roof of the mouth. Close the eyes and relax.

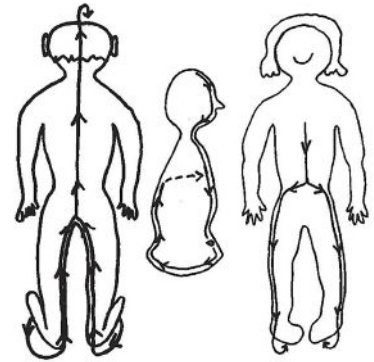
We are now going to use the breath and the eyes to lift a warm, golden current of energy from the soles of the feet (the Bubbling Spring) up the backbone to the top of the head, then down the front to the waist, under the crotch to the tailbone, and back up over the heart level, crossing through the center of the body to the front, down to the waist (where it will separate, going to the right and left sides), and down the outside of the legs again to the soles of the feet.

The closed eyes are focused downward as we start, and they gradually are raised as the current comes up. By the time the current reaches the top of the head, the eyes are gazing upward, slowly being lowered as the current comes down, then rising again as the current comes up the backbone over the heart level, and being lowered as the current crosses to the front of the body and goes to the soles of the feet.

As we raise the current from the Bubbling Spring, we gradually inhale. By the time the current reaches the top of the head, our chest is fully expanded. As the current comes down, we breathe out in short out-breaths (like letting air slowly out of a tire). Then, when the current



goes between the legs and starts up the back, over the heart area, we again breathe in but not as deeply as the first time up the entire backbone. When the current goes down again, after having crossed over to the front of the body at the heart level, we breathe out in sections, slowly deflating until the breath is fully exhaled when the current reaches the bottoms of the feet – and there we rest without breathing as long as is comfortable.



The sequence of the Great Circle Meditation and direction of the current

Instructions are as follows:

1. To begin, we focus on the feet, then bring the current up the inside of the legs, to the crotch, through the space between the legs, to the tailbone as we breathe in, and we gradually raise our gaze (eyes closed). From the waist we continue up the backbone to the top of the head.
2. As the current starts down the front, pouring through the head, neck and torso, we gradually lower our eyes and let our breath out.
3. Taking the current between the legs to the tailbone and back up over the shoulder blade area, we again breathe in and raise our eyes, though not as much as we did the first time.
4. Having crossed over to the heart area (in the center of the body), we take the current, breath and eyes down the front of the body.
5. Reaching the waist, the current branches out to the right and the left (at the belt) and continues down the outside of the legs to the soles of the feet. The breath and the eyes also come down as much as possible, and we rest at the bottom (in the Bubbling Spring) with breath out.



Heightened Awareness and Meditation for Healing
are available in print and in an e-book from
justinstonetcc.com.

Fallow Field or Pregnant Pause?

By Judy Chancey, Canton, Georgia

Often our greatest gifts in life emerge from our darkest moments and experiences. Silver linings within sinister storm clouds might not reveal until sunlight re-emerges. Blessings emerge from catastrophes. The yin-yang of life occurs naturally, without pausing, as opposites flow from and into each other, an essence replicated in T'ai Chi Chih weight shifts.

TCC replicates Nature's circular flow in repetitions of the seasonal cycles of Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. What season are you in? Are you experiencing the new beginnings of Spring? The lushness of Summer? The release of Fall? The fallowness of Winter in which landscapes appear to sleep in barren stillness?

Fallow ("plowed and harrowed but left unsown for a period of time to restore its fertility") can look and feel like nothing is alive. Always, Spring arrives with buds miraculously popping through tree bark and blades of grass pushing up through asphalt. Have you ever experienced a fallow season? Is Winter's stillness better described as a fallow field or pregnant pause? Do we experience only one fallow season in a lifetime?

My "Life So Far Crops Fields" began going fallow, again, in Fall 2018. My husband was diagnosed with Stage 3 colon cancer. His healing process involved significant dietary changes, best supported by my choice to step away from my eight-year-old cake business. The decision was a no-brainer, even though my decision created an unanticipated psychic shift.

In the *yin* is a touch of the *yang* and vice versa. Raymond's cancer, surgeries and optimum health protocols invited me back into a more consciously committed relationship with my TCC practice and our TCC Community.

My fragile sense of identity reached a tipping point when my "baby" sister Ankie (Ann Carol) succumbed to ovarian cancer in October 2019. Death is natural to life. However, this one was different; she was the youngest of five siblings and the first to die. Until Ankie's passing, I'd never wailed in grief. I'd never sat silently inert in a chair for three consecutive days with no desire for movement. Days turned into weeks, weeks turning into months, of feeling lost and stuck in darkness.



Where in the World
Caroline Guillott, *Rocking Motion,*
Olivers Gulch, off I-70, Colorado

Like a fallow field, there was no trace of any previous crops with any of the defining features of my garden. No cotton, no corn, not lettuce, no lilies and no ability to comprehend the complexity of the moment.

Eventually an urge emerged, recognizing the necessity of surrendering to one of life's most profound processes and disconnecting from the self-defeating need to be in control – like releasing wrist tension in TCC practice. I was ready to release all desires to direct my life's path and yield to the *Chi*'s flow during movements and in any residual need to know, understand or anticipate future weight shift.

Depressive inertia shifted with the opportunity to attend Amy Tykinski's Intensive with Sandy McAlister. In-person presence with our TCC family is the best medicine for healing grief. In Albuquerque, *Chi* percolated like carbonated bubbles infusing my veins with new friendships and much appreciated reunions within our TCC family.

Like a wave imperceptibly shifting, the inaction of "allowing" revealed a series of *Chi* "dots" leading to unanticipated connections with three Whole Body Integrative Health physicians at the Atlanta Veteran's Administration Hospital. Coronavirus-induced brakes brought my VA security clearance process to a screeching halt, preventing on-site volunteering. Surprisingly, VA counselors and cancer care staff at the Medical College of Virginia requested for themselves weekday mini-TCC sessions on Zoom.

Allowing my fields to be stripped bare proved necessary to discovering the truth of Who and What I am as an Uncarved Block. Letting go of every hat, role and expectation that's ever been a part of how I've identified my ego created a deep, dark hole. Might that have been the yin, with a drop of yang resting in stillness, waiting to align and flow into perfect balance and wisdom at the perfect moment?

A full and complete weight shift can be an indescribably sacred gift.

As I write this, we are a nation and planet of mostly homebound people, each having different experiences of an unseen foe. **More than ever, practicing *yinning* and *yang-ing*, connecting with breath and *tan t'ien*, and flowing with *Chi* remains the best way to protect our mental, physical and spiritual health.** Fear cannot infiltrate our precious serenity in the midst of chaos.

We might be forever changed as a result of our collective fallow fields. Yet from the stillness, from the *yin*, the creative, positive expansion of *yang* flows ... and carries us from what was, to what can be, to what is possible within the Uncarved Block.

PS: Raymond's post-surgery CT scan was clear!

Paying Forward the Benefits

By Nan Nelson, St Paul, Minnesota

Isolation gives rise to many emotions. It is also a time of reflection – on gifts I’ve received from teachers and how I’ve carried those teachings, the shared wisdom, into this time of COVID-19.

The sage Shantideva says that the way to repay the kindness of our teachers is by being patient with others. It is only through the wisdom and patience of others that I’ve learned the larger perspective of this practice. I’m thankful for teachers who taught me to be bigger than I am, often by watching how they put their wisdom and teachings into the daily practice of life. I’m reminded of the moment T’ai Chi Chih became important to me. It was one of those moments where the bigger perspective comes into a manageable gift that changes or solidifies the path. You realize it’s the one you want to take.

I began learning TCC in a community education class. I was intrigued but not taking it too seriously. One evening before class our teacher relayed an incident about driving to class and encountering an angry, raging driver. My anger escalated as I listened. She then exhibited a patience and compassion I couldn’t understand at that time. Her words included concern for this person and his level of anger. That was my turning point. I was so impressed that I committed to earnestly practicing until I personally understood her response. **This was practice in action, carrying the benefits of practice into the world.**

Reflecting on these gifts immerses me in gratitude. I’m reminded to reach out with patience and compassion to those I don’t agree with. Our community is filled with remarkable teachers sharing their wisdom. As Shantideva states, “By helping others we repay the ones who gave themselves for us... Should beings do great harm to me, I’ll strive to bring them only benefit.” That benefit is paying forward wisdom as a way to honor our teachers.

TCC & COVID-19

By Neal Roy, Portland, Oregon

Our lives are on hold during this pandemic. I am considered a non-essential worker and will be unemployed until my governor says it’s ok for me and other non-essential workers to return. So, I find myself with time on my hands. I decided that practicing at the same time every day would make it feel like a normal day. No longer setting an alarm, I find my sleep pattern has changed, so I practice when I wake up. TCC has helped me stay grounded and present during these uncertain times.

I focus on grounding and really feeling the soles of my feet during practices. Some days I feel really grounded and connected to the earth and other days not so much. I practice without expectation and wait to see what I feel. I started noticing while *yinning* and *yanging* in the forward and backward movements, that when the weight of my body was in the substantial leg that sometimes I felt more pressure/weight toward the ball of my foot and even toes in my front foot. When my back leg became substantial, I noticed weight in my heel sometimes, but that foot felt more evenly balanced between the ball of my foot and heel than did my front foot.

I didn’t try to make adjustments at first; I wanted to focus and feel what I was noticing. Did this happen all the time? Not as grounded as I thought with my wondering mind, back to my feet. With each repetition I focused on my feet. If I softened my knees and sunk down a little more in my stance, I could feel the weight even out. It was subtle, not a big difference but enough to allow me to feel more balanced between the heel and ball of each foot.

When I felt the weight even out, my movements felt more effortless. Coming back to rest, feeling my weight balanced between the left foot and right, the heel and ball of each foot, letting everything settle and sink beyond my feet into the earth. I thought, yes, that feels more grounded.

TCC practice is just that, practice. I learn, observe and feel. Sometimes it’s all wonky and sometimes it’s amazing. **I keep coming back because no matter what I feel at the beginning of my practice, by the time I finish I feel good.** With all the seemingly endless chaos I read about and see daily, I like knowing that by practicing I will feel much better. It lasts a while, maybe not all day, but if I need a boost I can practice again.



Where in the World
SophieAlamachere-Wadi, Rum Desert, Jordan

Quantum Chi Adventures, Part I

Deep Listening: Returning to Center Through the Sound of the Chi

By Connie B. Shaw, Johnstown, Colorado

How many T'ai Chi Chih students awaken each day vowing to stay centered, to be mindful and to stay fully present to ourselves and others, only to veer off through the distractions of family emergencies, workplace pressures, to-do lists, commuting and relationships? All of us. But rejoice – help is at hand. There is a way to start the day with inner peace and to maintain tranquility (or at least calm connectedness) throughout the day so that we don't end up flat, drained and unfulfilled at day's end. Further, we need not wonder where the time went, why we are so tired and how we could have been so unproductively busy, without the expected satisfactions. How do we stop this frustrating cycle?

Where does fulfillment come from? It comes from being fully in each moment without day-dreaming about the future or lamenting the past. It comes from noticing the breath, from appreciating the person in front of us and noticing their mood, appearance and essence and conveying that we accept them as they are now, without expectations. It comes from **doing a task to our highest ability, each time**. When we are present to each moment, to our Inner I AM Presence (Atman, Shekinah, Spirit), we can eventually hear a **clear tone that is the sound of the Chi, or our own unique signature sound or homing signal**. It can sound like a high-pitched television oscillation noise, or like tinnitus (though it usually isn't), or like a hum heard in the head, near your ear or in the heart, with attention on the *tan t'ien*. **Paradoxically, the Chi sound can be heard in the head when we are focused not in the head but on the belly.**

If you **fix on the tone**, or clamp your attention onto this wonderful available-for-life homing signal, you will make several delicious discoveries:

- **All things will be revealed**, and your questions will eventually be answered, inside yourself.
- **Life is a series of ongoing revelations** that become more profound and comprehensive.
- **You will like yourself more** until you truly come to love yourself.
- You **realize that you are not the body, the mind, the emotions, your TCC practice, your titles or attainments**, and in fact, that who you are is invisible, and that **you are the vastness of being**, and connected to all other beings everywhere.
- When you **veer off of center you can easily return** by listening for the tone, which is called, in Sanskrit, the **Sacred Pranava**. **Everyone has one**, just as everyone has a heart. But not everyone has ever stopped to listen to their own heartbeat or to listen to their signature sound.
- The **tone is a treasure** that will help us to discern whether someone is trustworthy, whether our teenager is telling the truth, or whether our colleague has a hidden agenda. It can save time by letting us know in which grocery store aisle we can find the brown rice, or which way we should turn when we are lost. And that is just the mundane beginning. Am I in the right job? Is this the right mate for me? Should I register for this upcoming class? Every answer is available within when we form the habit of deep listening and **reap the endless rewards** that present themselves.

Some people may not be able to hear the tone immediately, but after practicing for ten minutes at a time, over a few days, **every TCC student should be able to have success in finding the sound** and staying attuned to it. For the next week, every time you awaken, listen for the tone, keep listening until you can hold the focus on it for five or ten minutes, then an hour, then a day and even in your sleep. Embrace your *Chi* and let the sound of the *Chi* nurture, guide, direct you. Luxuriate in it. Marinate in it. Discover that you are indeed love itself, walking on two legs, expressing as unobstructed *Chi* ... a gift to all.

Your Cup

By Patricia Winger, Melbourne, Florida

I heard this in a church service: "You are at a party. You fill a cup with coffee. Someone jostles you from behind, and the coffee spills all over you, those around you, the carpet, everywhere.

Why did you spill the coffee?

Because that was what was in your cup.

You are the cup. Whatever you have inside WILL spill out whenever life jostles you, and life WILL jostle you. It is up to you what you have inside that spills out."

With Tai Chi Chih, I am more confident about what I have in my cup.



Where in the World

Charles Sasa,
Light at the Top of the Head,
Hawaii Volcano National Park

Reducing Expectations & Judgments

By Hannah Hedrick,
Mountain View, Hawaii

A recent issue of *The Vital Force* explored various approaches to achieving the maximum benefits from our T'ai Chi Chih practice. I immediately noted on a scrap of paper that in my experience, the ratio between the type and duration of the practice and the benefits received is relative, not absolute.

Several years ago, *The Vital Force* published an article expressing my belief that people practicing TCC with *teh* received 100% of the benefits available. My years of teaching at Life Care Center and more recently teaching participants in an Easter Seal program have reinforced this belief.

Justin admonished us to watch our breath and posture without trying to change them. I believe he was encouraging us to let go of expectations and judgments, not only about our breath and posture, but also about our TCC practices and our lives.

After 34 years, I still deal with ego issues related to my TCC "performance." These issues arise more prominently when I am at conference or another gathering with TCC teachers. They also surface now that I am attempting to prepare a teacher candidate.

I have never had a period of doing a full practice seven days a week beyond the first year. I see other teachers almost apologizing for not being more dedicated to receiving the full benefits of TCC.

Yet Justin repeatedly said 15 or 20 minutes once or twice a day is enough to circulate and balance the *Chi*. At 81 years of age, I prefer to do smaller sessions throughout the day, more than twice a day.

And I prefer to do TCC with others, regardless of the duration or level of competence. For example, I get an inexplicable feeling of joy and contentment from my class with people in wheelchairs, most of them with very limited cognition, at Life Care Center. While many of them cannot move anything but their arms and upper body, they are experiencing Joy Through Whatever TCC Movement they can do. They literally light up when doing Light at the Temple.

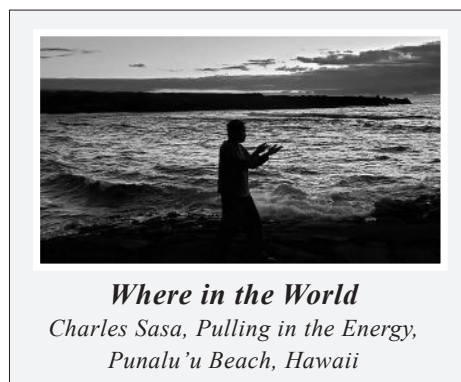
I'm always satisfied with my TCC practice and sometimes amazed at the benefits I receive from the weirdest practice. I was recently standing six feet from other customers in line at the bank, fearing that the notary would not notarize something that needed to go out in the five o'clock mail. The morning had been filled with one mishap after another. The libraries were closed so I could not use the printer there. I did not know if OfficeMax could print the document after the notary signed it.

I was trying to go with the flow, as is my usual intention, but I could feel stress beginning to arise. With the notary documents and a pen in one hand and my purse over my shoulder, I began to do Rocking Motion. I almost immediately felt as if I had done a full practice. I continued for about 15 minutes

without a care in the world. (And I got my document in the five o'clock mail.)



Where in the World
Hannah Hedrick,
Light at the Temple,
Mountain View, Hawaii



Where in the World
Charles Sasa, Pulling in the Energy,
Punalu'u Beach, Hawaii

Connecting to the Sea of Energy

By Charles Sasa,
Mountain View, Hawaii

For as long as I can remember I was involved with or learning different forms of martial arts. Most of the time it was for self-defense and discipline. It helped me develop a strong body and mind. In 1999 I received a black belt in Okinawa weapons and was introduced to Chen T'ai Chi Ch'uan, internal energy and healing.

I was introduced to many ways of cultivating energy, referred to as *Chi* or *Ki* depending on the discipline. In the end I could describe it but never really felt it. This changed when I started taking a yoga and stretching class where I lived. I felt my core strengthen and my muscles begin to relax.

One day, teacher Hannah Hendrick asked if I wanted to learn T'ai Chi Chih. I was skeptical as to what she could teach me, but I went along with it and quickly learned the 19 movements and one pose. Some movements were similar to others I'd already learned. Nothing to it I thought.

Through daily practice, I refined my movements oftentimes without supervision. I ended with my own modifications, and with direction I was brought back into the fold.

One day while doing Passing Clouds, I began to feel the energy. Excited to share this with Hannah, I said that Passing Clouds was my favorite movement. She replied that **whatever movement she was doing at the time was her favorite**. Slowly, with practice, I began to feel the energy in other movements. Each time I was amazed and excited. When I felt the energy in everything, I finally understood what Hannah had meant.

I practice TCC every morning wherever I go and have many special places to practice on Hawaii's Big Island. As I begin, I am connecting to the sea of energy with others around the world in whatever discipline they practice. **It starts me on the path to do the best I can each moment of the day.**

A Story of Coming Together...

TCC in Edmonton, Alberta

By Gail Terriff, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

It all began on June 5, 2019, with an email from Shelley Stasiuk, a Recreation Therapist at Edmonton Hope and Wellness Center at Alberta Hospital, which hosts activities for community members experiencing mental health issues.

I had been doing an “on and off” T'ai Chi Chih class with her and this clientele for more than a decade. Prior to that, Margo Carpenter had shared TCC with this clientele. And Garret Henley continues to work in this field, specifically with an addiction population and introduced TCC with them before that.

Shelley asked if I'd consider teaching TCC again. I immediately responded yes and questioned for how long? 4 weeks? 6 weeks? 8 weeks? She simply and emphatically said “forever.” She had seen the tremendous difference TCC had made in the lives of her clientele and she wanted it to be a full-time program.

At the time I was on a long trip through California, Oregon and Alaska, and my husband and I had already made plans to continue traveling for many years. How would I share that it's impossible for just me to do because I am away a fair bit? I took a breath and listened.

She had to run it by her supervisor, write the proposal and request funding for TCC forever. “Oh, okay, I will wait to hear from back you. I will be back in Edmonton mid-August.” I wondered if it would get off the ground. Meanwhile, I continued my personal TCC, singing, meditation and reiki.

In early October, I received the next email: “I have very good news! After a lot of legwork, I secured funding for our TCC class. I hope you are still interested.” Since I was teaching a community TCC class at that time, I suggested starting in January and told her that I needed to enlist help.

This had been on my mind, the *Chi* working all around and all the time. Then the most important and significant thing happened. I reached out to Max Wan, my original TCC teacher and we had a long, positive and exciting discussion. I sent out an informative email update to every active TCC teacher in Alberta: Max, Tamara Zujewskyj, Margo Carpenter, Garret Henley, Chery Ann Hoffmeyer, Maureen Purves, Leslie Keith, Lois Broome and Sharon Melvin.

The email was clear on the program, clientele, potential options and need for TCC teachers. I asked each for their thoughts or commitment. The absolute beauty of it all? Everyone responded with personal tidbits, suggestions, and a yes, no or maybe when it came to the final answer. It was wonderful to share, reach out and ask for help. And it was touching and most powerful to receive, to move through and forward in this.

Max stepped forward right away and brought his positive personality. He said that Justin would have been so pleased to see us come together and make it work. I smiled and knew in my heart that this would indeed come to fruition.

Our initial group meeting in January included Max, Sharon and myself. Despite other obligations, we would be the primary teachers. Chery Ann stepped up as a committed teacher and as support. Tamara was supportive and would help if we were in a bind. It's difficult for Garret who is still working. Leslie might be able to drive a couple hours if absolutely needed. Lois lives far away too, and Maureen had stopped teaching. It was coming together. It puts a smile on my face; everyone was so supportive. Isn't that who we are as TCC teachers? We are small blessings in people packages.

Max's wife, Maria, created a spreadsheet with every Wednesday for 2020 on it. The TCC teachers signed up and we were on our way. The five of us (Max, Sharon, Chery Ann, Tamara and I) drove to Alberta Hospital and met with Shelley in late January. We had a great discussion and saw our beautiful room where we would teach TCC. The program began on March 11 with smiles and hugs all around. It was a *Chi*-full day.

PS: Unfortunately, after Max taught the first class, the COVID-19 pandemic appeared and classes have been postponed. I expect it will be a few more months but we will be ready to share TCC with the Edmonton Hope and Wellness Center. Ready or not... we are ready!



Joy in the Unexpected

By Fran and Jim Kaib, Norwood, Pennsylvania

There have been several occasions recently that have reminded us of the power of T'ai Chi Chih. Perhaps the most dramatic was a class we co-teach at our local public library. We normally have a group of between eight and ten. The day of our fourth class in an eight-week series, the Library Director told us that a local day school for intellectually disabled adults would be bringing ten students and several of their teachers and aides to try our class. We'd never previously worked with this population.

The room we practice in is small, and we normally limit the class size to a dozen people so it isn't crowded. Since the group was en route, we decided to go with the flow and see where the practice (and a heavy dose of teh) would take us.

We were reminded of a story where a teacher encountered a class of students who did not speak English and who just said, "Follow me." That was our instruction: "Just follow what we are doing." After introducing Rocking Motion and Bird Flaps its Wings, much to the amusement of our new students, we gamely moved forward.

With few words and basic modeling on our part, our newbies soon did some semblance of the movements we demonstrated. There were smiles and giggles, as well as intense concentration on some of the faces in the crowd. When we came to Joyous Breath, one newcomer was so delighted that she laughed out loud, generating more smiles. We told the group that they got the "Joy" part of the movement.

Afterwards, our regular students pointed out how quiet and calm the room had become once we began the movements. Another TCC teacher (who came that day and had worked with this population during her career) was surprised the group lasted more than 30 minutes, their limit for a group like this. Best of all, we witnessed how TCC calms, relaxes and produces joy even during unexpected situations.



Joyous Breath

By Mary Cerullo, Morton, Pennsylvania

Yesterday during Jim and Fran Kaib's T'ai Chi Chih class, a group of 20 special needs adults from 21 to 35 years old joined our class. At one point a newcomer (although eager to do the movements) got a little antsy and stated, "I'm just not doing this," and

then sat next to Fran and Jim to watch them intently. A quiet energy built after 15 minutes; the majority of new students looked as though they had done TCC before. They liked to ground their energy; their joy was palpable. Through Jim's expert guidance and quiet demeanor, the class proceeded smoothly. The sun gloriously shone through the windows, but Joyous Breath stole the show. One young woman shouted to do the movement again, clapping and laughing with joyous energy as we all joined. Jim graciously acknowledged her request and said, "Yes, let's repeat that one." We'll never forget her gleeful response, grounded afterwards with a smile from ear to ear. I imagined Justin smiling down on the group, which certainly gave credence to Joy through Movement.

TCC On My Porch

By Mary Frances Reis, Pacific, Missouri

I stand on my porch
and unite myself with the T'ai Chi Chih community
in this simple way.

The sun touches me with warm waves.
The giant evergreens still tower
and the hillside seems almost ready to flower.
But it is not the same this spring.
A silence reigns, yet with moans of foreboding pain.

So, I open my eyes wide
and I breathe in the presence of God.
Yes, I breathe in God
along with all humankind
spread across the planet,
where faith distinctions are not there
in the vulnerability we all share.

We breathe in God.
Together we deeply inhale Love
and exhale across our planet
waves of compassion and healing.
For we are now one suffering whole
yet wield a power that can never cease
if we as one human family on this earth
breathe with God for healing peace.

Lighter Side

By Sharon Sirkis, Columbia, Maryland

~ After teaching Pulling Taffy, I asked the class, "Is anyone confused?" From the back of the room, John, a spry 87-year-old laughed and said, "Yes! All my life!"

~ Roland, who had knee problems for many years, was still having a bit of pain during some of the TCC movements. I looked at his stance, offered some tips on proper alignment and encouraged him during his home practice to find the "sweet spot" where his knee doesn't hurt. The following week when I followed up if he'd found the sweet spot, he dryly replied, "Yeah, in my chair in front of the TV."

~ Before class, I was speaking with Joe who was concerned about the corona virus and that he had COPD. At the same time Ann bounced into class, smiling, and made an abrupt stop. She had a worried look on her face after she heard Joe say, "I have all the symptoms." I immediately switched to damage control: "I believe he means he has all the risk factors." Joe agreed and Ann resumed being her bouncy smiley self.

Untitled

By Julie Buffalo, Comer, Georgia

let us rest on our feet feel the ground flow up to hold us
with our weight just settled and our bones long and strong
find the peace there can be
whether soil or sand
rock or rug

through the bumps of the back that make up the spine
let our head be suspended into the ether
dreaming
of that blue blue space
the open field full of rest and ease
let us be at home just for these moments

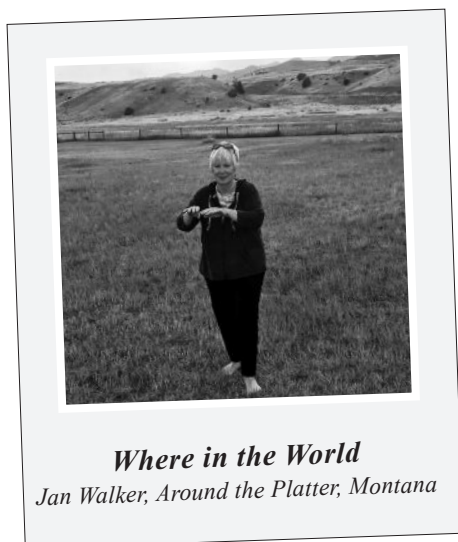
TCC Guides, Heals, Protects

By Nancy Hebert, Audubon, Minnesota

Tai Chi Chih was a miracle during a very hard time. In 2016 my mother-in-law began suffering from severe depression and anxiety and was institutionalized many times. My heart raced and my head pounded when we visited her, and so for comfort, I did some TCC movements in the family lounge area. I became more serious at Mary Wichmann's practices and noticed that the practice gave me space to breathe and allowed me to feel peaceful.

As my mother-in-law became sicker and another family member suffering from alcoholism was hospitalized, I once again relied on my practice to ground me. I worked with Mary and Christine McLain to get two referrals for teacher accreditation. Then my mother-in-law hanged herself and the alcoholic blamed me for the family troubles.

Without TCC I could never have gotten through that situation. I became accredited in June 2019 and now speak to many mental health clinics, treatment facilities and halfway homes to share TCC. My hope is to help someone choose life instead of suicide, to know how the joy of TCC can guide, heal, protect and lead to a life of peace and calm.



Where in the World
Jan Walker, Around the Platter, Montana

In Gratitude & Joy

By Rachel Rilinger, Kansas City, Missouri

As part of my job I provide evidence-based music therapy groups for adults in an inpatient acute psychiatric unit. Adults on this unit are in the middle of active episodes due to their mental health condition such as schizophrenia, bipolar, suicidal ideation or depression. Because of the acuity of the setting, patients are often disoriented, manic, delusional, dissociative or actively psychotic. One week I covered for our Recreation Therapist and offered T'ai Chi Chih. The experience was heart-warming, connecting and powerful.

I began group with a usual introduction to who I am and what I was doing during group that day. Several patients were pacing the hallway, one was huddled under a blanket talking to herself, another was muttering and babbling, and one man expressed excitement for T'ai Chi as they had done it before. Two staff members were present during group as well and verbalized enthusiasm to try TCC. I began with Rocking Motion, and within a few repetitions I had a small group of staff and patients all moving and flowing together. **One patient who had been pacing the hallways slowly joined our group and expressed with excitement how she could feel it in her hands.** The patient who was sitting and covered with a blanket began participating from her chair, moving her hands to Around The Platter and later Base Drum. Clients expressed feeling the *Chi* moving through their hands and feet. Staff reported feeling calm and vibrant – not something typically expressed by them in this environment.

I was amazed at how quickly everyone engaged, and by the end of my session the entire room had transformed. You could feel the *Chi* circulating throughout the room, bringing a group of people together in an environment that had been so disorganized and chaotic when I had arrived. I was so enthused to hear multiple patients expressing very clearly (and coherently) how they could feel the energy throughout their body. I wanted to call the doctors into the room to see the effect this practice had on everyone present. No drugs, no side effects, just pure *Chi*. I left filled with gratitude and joy, invigorating my desire to be a teacher and to help bring the joy, peacefulness and depth TCC has had in my life to others.

~ ~ ~

wait
I must
tension sits
listen, I breathe
opening
I pause
here

~ RACHEL RILINGER

(Writing this helped with self-actualization and insight.)

Translating Deep-Rooted Wisdom to My TCC Retreat

By Sandy LaBry, Lafayette Louisiana

A tree does not move unless there is wind. – Nigerian proverb

In Fall 2019, my TCC teacher began whispering her desire to host a Louisiana retreat. By December, Caroline's persuasive passion had reached gale-force strength, moving students to register for the Spring retreat.

Around a flowering tree there are many insects. – Guinean proverb

Not only did Caroline's passion and joy in her practice draw me in, but so did the enticement of learning from another highly respected TCC teacher. I had long heard her speak of Carmen Brocklehurst who, like Caroline, had learned from Justin Stone. I knew this would be a very special experience, within my reach. I was curious to interact, like a bee, with this flowering tree.

If a leader loves you, he makes sure you build your house on rock. – Ugandan proverb

Arriving at the retreat, I was greeted with a broad smiles and sincere welcomes from Carmen and other participants. Being drawn in so readily, warmly and authentically was the first stone laid in the solid foundation of my new TCC house. I felt an emotional ease with the diverse group of learners who included a doctor, engineers, teachers, a pastor, an artist and a lawyer.

The next block of my foundation was the repeated practice of TCC under Carmen's watchful eye. Though we were numerous, nothing escaped her observation. Her corrections were specific; she coached us in moving without effort, in executing each movement or pose mindfully and correctly. With a learner's mindset, I gratefully made adjustments.

Horn blowers, blow in unison. – Ugandan proverb

This was my first time to be among a large group practicing TCC. Witnessing such beautiful movement sparked magnified energy and power. In moving as one, we became a larger, connected body.

To get lost is to learn the way. – African proverb

Before closing the first evening, Carmen introduced a meditation to practice before sleeping. The following morning and each subsequent morning, I awoke feeling rested, even after the long hours of the previous day's work. While abandoning the signposts and landmarks of the outside world in favor of the practice and meditation, I felt as though I was on the right track to move forward, learning the way.

A little rain each day will fill rivers to overflowing. – Madagascar proverb

By the retreat's end, I felt inspired to renew my own TCC practice on a regular basis, even if I could not complete all movements every day. I had worked diligently during the retreat and felt the effects on my energy and well-being. Each day since, I have met my intentions – a little daily rain to fill the river for my own good as well as that of others.

Reflections TCC Retreat with Carmen, Lake Charles, February 2020

By Caroline Guilott, Lake Charles, Louisiana

What a retreat. Thanks to Carmen for saying yes. It was amazing to see the transformations in my students' movements, in how to let go and be solid in their feet. Everyone had shifts or breakthroughs. The *Chi* works on and reveals itself on so many levels in our bodies.

A Sunday morning church service in the adjacent room couldn't help but join our retreat. Congregants sang loudly and clearly. Was their joy a call for us to remain in our unwavering center? We shared our favorite movements and "ah-ha" moments while quiet inside and moving with all things external. It was glorious.

Going through the simple movements of T'ai Chi Chih fed the body, spirit and soul. It spilled over with joy for being present, being together, for sharing this incredible *Chi* as one. We left grateful for taking time to experience the immersion. Students became conscious of the specialness of our time shared together. It solidified their bonds. A woman new to the practice attended the next Tuesday evening class to be with her new buddies.

Thank you, Justin, for bringing TCC to the world so that we can glimpse what and who we really are. Thank you for the gifts that come when we decide to flow with the movements and pay attention to nuances, standing strong in our own bodies. Thank you for teaching us the way of the *Chi*, the way to our true selves.

Other retreat comments include:

ANDY MILLER: I lost a lot by not practicing for many years. To do better, I have to do it.

REVEREND RON: I learned to suspend judgement in favor of moving with rhythms that call. I learned to pay attention to small details that yield powerful connections. Brushing elbows against clothes. Leaving behind and moving forward. Hips leading Anchor Taffy.

BEN RICHARDSON: I learned about infinite refinement, the importance of staying in my feet, the power of tears.

BERT CAPPEL: Mysterious *Chi* is familiar as it liberates things you've held onto forever. Like old friends who've worn out their welcome, they are unmissable.

MONICA CEJUDO: I remain humble, open to receiving feedback and fine tuning.



Engineering Softness

TCC Workshop with Bill Moore, Northern Colorado, February 2020

Compiled by Rebecca Paulson,
Loveland, Colorado

Thirty-four of us gathered to hear Bill's perspective on proper *yinning* and *yanging*, flowing from the center and engineering softness, with a dash of Seijaku added in to spice it up. We all appreciated Bill's willingness to travel from New Jersey to share his suggestions. Thank you to Lisa Stroyan for "discovering" Bill at the 2018 teacher conference.

For me a huge take-away was embracing the '-ing' of our practice: transitioning, completing the weight shift, sinking, rising, settling. Waiting to finish the weight shift fully before anticipating and initiating the returning was transforming. You see how this goes? The '-ing' has flown through our community. One teacher shared several days later her discovery that even better, perhaps, than letting go is leaving it on the table. Without leaning forward and picking it up in the first place, there would be nothing being gripped to let go of later.

Other participants shared their responses and gratitude for our rich time:

ANON: I approached my first workshop experience with some trepidation. Bill's suggestions resonated with the way I approach

TCC. Hearing some of my instincts articulated was helpful. One very useful suggestion was to be more intentional with the upper hand in the "Taffies."

LORRAINE FROM KC: Bill is an inspiration, using language that speaks from profound experience, guided by the Source and his inner sincerity. His words deeply reflect a rich inner consciousness.

GLORIA T: I am now aware of the only two mistakes that can be made in TCC: Trying to *do* something and trying *not* to do something. I look forward to *seeking* and *embracing* the *here-ing* and *now-ing*. I'm slowly becoming more aware of my feet in my practice, using the *yang* leg to propel the weight shift onto the *yin* leg. A more effective weight shift leads to more effective softness and continuity. The only way to understand if it'll work is to try it and see how it feels. It's a great approach. I deeply appreciated Bill's use of words in guiding us through the movements: allowing instead of trying, releasing instead of lifting. The words are applicable for TCC and for life in general.

JJ: Bill is very aware that different words evoke different concepts, and that even the same word resonates differently in different people. Isn't it interesting that we learn so much from musicians (i.e. Justin and Bill) sensitive to resonance? As Bill shows us different ways to move, there's a different feeling in the air, a different feeling to our practice. Movements create resonance which communicates with the *Chi* residing within.

TERRY J: Here's what I learned: start where we are, not where we're going. Be in the moment. '-ing' suggests a state, not an end.

Grounding, feeling, sensing, circulating, breathing, softening, continuing, propelling, focusing, sinking, rising, releasing, unraveling, unlocking, healing, flowing, being, evolving. Thanks to Bill for suggesting and sharing; I'm listening.



Organic Growth & Reach

By Patricia Winger,
Melbourne, Florida

I am a T'ai Chi Chih teacher of 25+ years but have been on my own away from the TCC community and conferences for all of those years. I have taught private lessons through the years, always to friends. I have practiced sporadically, always conscious of the better person I became when doing a daily practice. **Many practices occurred while waiting:** in doctor's offices, airports, any waiting room. At first, I was self-conscious, but after my first "exhibition" in an airport, a woman approached me and said she didn't know what I was doing, but it completely lifted her stress. I then thought of my public practice as a gift to whomever was there.

It was during one such session that a resident from my 55+ neighborhood recognized me and asked if I would teach her. She then asked if I would teach a class in our community. I never refuse a request to teach an individual, but a class? Okay. She said, "When would you like to do it?" I thought of busy schedules including mine, my husband's, golfers, dancers, tennis and bridge players. **It was decided: daily at 4:30pm, weekends included. I would finally be doing a daily practice.** I had no idea how many would come, or if they would come, but I committed to being poolside daily at the appointed time. That was mid-October and I have five to 15 students daily, with some new students almost daily, and a core daily group of six. I drew heavily on instruction I remembered (better than expected) from 25 years ago. More importantly, I have reached for past issues of *The Vital Force* and the video by Justin Stone both to verify my movements and for helpful instructions. Thanks to all who contribute! I do need you.

Teacher Listings: Let's Be Ready

Note from Editor, Kim Grant: Justin used to affirm a breakout moment for T'ai Chi Chih. Let's be ready – when a big publication writes about TCC or a significant medical study includes TCC or when your teaching venues open up again.

**I'll wait to pitch TCC to a national reporter after a significant number of our pages are "claimed." Otherwise we won't look particularly vibrant.*



Teachers: Find Yourself on Taichichih.org

The teacher database has long been burdensome for this volunteer organization to maintain. Going forward we ask that teachers take responsibility for their own details.

Update Your Contact Information

It takes about 10 minutes to create a user account and then update your phone, email or town where you teach. For instructions, see taichichih.org/teacher-listings or email Kim.

Promote Yourself (& Encourage Other Teachers)

Teaching on Zoom? Teaching a 'real life' class soon? Not teaching at all? Why bother?? Because first impressions matter, and this website is the primary vehicle to show the world who we are, what we do and how to share TCC with the world.

Please take a few minutes to upload a photo of yourself and write 100 words about yourself. Don't be shy. Perhaps say what motivates you as a teacher, why you started practicing, what special populations you might teach, your favorite movement and why... that kind of thing. It's basically a mini presentation. This is the place to market yourself and tell your part of the world (in essence) why it needs you teaching TCC to them.

Include the type of class (on-going, drop-in, weekend, series of eight, etc), time/day/duration of the class, its cost, level of student for whom it's appropriate, etc. Basically, put up a virtual class flyer.

EXAMPLES

- Lisa Otero: taichichih.org/teacher/lisa-otero
- Lisa Stroyan: taichichih.org/teacher/lisa-stroyan
- Margery Erickson: taichichih.org/teacher/margery-erickson
- Nancy Hebert: taichichih.org/teacher/nancy-hebert
- Annette McNeil: taichichih.org/teacher/annette-mcneil

Students: Find a Teacher on Taichichih.org

We know it's essential for students seeking teachers to have up-to-date information. Know your teacher's name? Start typing it in the FIND A TEACHER box. Or start typing a town or state in NEAR ME box. *In both cases, let the boxes auto-fill and then choose. Click the 'GEAR' icon and search by distance.

Justin's Video Instruction – Now Streaming

By Kim Grant, Albuquerque, New Mexico



Justin Stone's T'ai Chi Chih individual movement instruction and 30-and45-minute practices (i.e. all the content from both DVDs) are now available to stream

wherever there is WiFi. Streaming was prioritized in response to the COVID-19 cancelation of classes around the world and requests by homebound practitioners.

We may now move with Justin anywhere anytime. We may easily compare our movements with Justin's and also receive transmissions that come simply by being in his virtual presence.

Subscriptions should also generate the additional revenue needed to keep the entire site available online. As it stands, approximately 80 percent of Justin's work is available for free online. (*Abandon Hope* and *Zen Meditation* are currently out-of-print but will be added as funds become available.)

Teachers, a onetime discounted payment yields lifetime access at justinstonetcc.com/jstcc-video-subscription-for-teachers.

Students, choose a monthly or discounted annual subscription from justinstonetcc.com/jstcc-video-subscription.

Testimonial

"Thank you so much for making this available! I subscribed as soon as I got the email about it. I have the DVD, which I love, but have often wished I could use it from my iPad – and now I can! I am no longer tied to my DVD player; I can take my teachers with me anywhere. This is a real blessing! Having the portability of the streaming video makes it easier to do the practice daily." – ROBERT, Albuquerque, practicing TCC since November 2019.

Contacts

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-  facebook.com/taichichih
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-  pinterest.com/taichichih
-  twitter.com/taichichih
-  flickr.com/photos/taichichih
-  youtube.com/tccabq

Community Calendar

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

DATE / WHAT & WHERE / CONTACT

- May 7-10 | Virtual TCC Retreat | Pam Towne 760-421-7589
- Jul 2-5 | TCC Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Jul 17-19 | TCC & Seijaku Workshop w/ Dan | Newfoundland, CANADA | Sheila Leonard | 709-727-7863
- Jul 18-20 | Seijaku Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Oceanside, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Aug 3-6 | Seijaku | Meditation Retreat w/ Dan | Aston, PA | Daniel Pienciak | 732-988-5573
- Sep 8-11 | TCC Retreat w/ Sandy | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Sep 22-25 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Santa Barbara, CA | Pam Towne | 760-421-7589
- Sep 26 | TCC Retreat w/ Becky & Sandy | Fremont, CA | Becky Shinas | 510-299-8635
- Nov 15-21 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Albuquerque, NM | Molly Grady | 505-280-4701

~ MORE WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

- Aug 11-14 | TCC & Meditation Retreat w/ David Parrish & Bill Moore | Aston, PA | April Leffler | 610-809-7523

~ CONFERENCE 2020 ~

Update: There will be no teacher conference in 2020

MAILING ADDRESS CHANGE?

Please email
kim.grant@taichichih.org

NOTICE TO ALL TEACHERS

The on-line teacher listings for www.taichichih.org are now maintained by teachers themselves. Teachers: For instructions on how to create a user account and update your contact information please see Taichichih.org/teacher-listings. Additional information p. 23.

Subscribe to The Vital Force

We encourage you to renew or subscribe on-line with a credit card by visiting www.taichichih.org, where single back issues are also available.

Renew subscription ____ New subscription ____

Contact Information

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone / Email _____

Teacher ____ Student ____

Teacher Accreditation Information

Date you were accredited as a T'ai Chi Chih teacher _____

Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____

Name of the teacher who taught you T'ai Chi Chih _____

Name of "second signature"

Vital Force Subscription Information

Teachers are automatically included in the Teacher Directory; please check below if you do not want this.

() I DO NOT want to be listed in the Teacher Directory or on the Web site.

Delivery within or outside the U.S..

I year at \$50 \$ _____

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Total amount \$ _____

Please call Kim Grant at 617-901-9628

or visit <https://taichichih.org/subscribe/> with your credit card.