

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: In His Words

Important Points on Moving Correctly

taichichih.org/teacher/justin-stone

Editor's Note: Justin's T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement Photo Text is chock full of significant writings about the essence of TCC, its benefits and how to move. It is not merely a series of time-lapsed photographs for each movement. If you practice TCC and don't own it, it's available in print and in an e-book from justinstonetcc.com. Most teachers I know have a copy that's all marked up with their notes.



Excerpt from *T'ai Chi Chih Joy Thru Movement Photo Text*, available in print and in an e-book from justinstonetcc.com.

For the beginning student the most important aspect is to learn *how* to move. It is of utmost importance that T'ai Chi Chih be practiced correctly in accordance with the principles of *yin-yang* so that results will be maximized. Knowing where to place the arms and feet will come easily, but eager students often try too hard and use considerable effort, causing tension when TCC must be tension-free. Any tension will keep the *Chi* (Intrinsic Energy) from flowing freely through the meridian channels.

The student must not think of TCC as "exercise." In truth it is the best exercise I know, since it exercises the internal organs and does not tire one but tends to increase energy. However, it is all-important that TCC be done *softly*, without effort — what we call "the effort of no effort."

If you will remember to think of yourself as moving slow motion in a dream or slowly swimming through heavy air, yet without exertion, you will have the idea of how to move. The movements are not done rhythmically like a dance. Long, sweeping, "graceful" movements are apt to be all *yin* or

all *yang*, thus negating the practice. Rather, the motions are performed almost leisurely as though the relaxed student is more of an onlooker than a participant.

The correct posture is that of standing with the tailbone pressed slightly forward, and the *tan t'ien* (two inches below the navel) compressed against the backbone. The shoulders are relaxed and drooping, and the hands and wrists (more than the arms) move in soft, circular motions. "Softness and continuity" are necessary. Nice and even, like the chewing of food, is one description the ancient teachers used. Breathing is natural.

The [practitioner] must keep his or her concentration in the soles of the feet (easy) or on the spot two inches below the navel (more difficult) while doing the movements. The "Heart Fire" (the *yang* of the heart, corresponding to the *yang* of the sun) should be brought down; otherwise the *yin* of the kidneys (corresponding to the *yin* of the moon) will rise. It is not desirable to have the water section floating upward. The great benefits in health, increased energy and serenity come from bringing the Heart Fire down as the *Chi* circulates. When the reader

becomes familiar with the practice, these points will become clear.

There are three confirming signs in learning and practicing TCC: first, the [practitioner] will note that his or her fingers begin to tremble a bit while moving; perhaps friends may call attention to this. It means the Intrinsic Energy is now flowing freely.

Secondly, after some time, the student may be doing TCC one day and suddenly notice that nobody is doing anything, that TCC is doing TCC. (This first happened to me in a Japanese garden, and it is a joyous experience.)

Thirdly, after some years of practice one may notice that he or she can do the form mentally. With eyes closed one can visualize the movements and will feel the flow of the *Chi*, the Vital Force, just as though there were physical movements. So you can be sitting on a plane or attending a boring lecture and, with eyes closed, be enjoying TCC. This will take considerable time and faithfulness in practice.

To say that practice, preferably daily practice — early in the morning seems the best time, but some people also do it late in the afternoon — is necessary is to point out the obvious. But that practice must be done softly and continuously, preferably at a slow pace. If you rush you will cut the movements short. The *yinning* and *yanging*, the bending of the knees and the shift of weight to the bent knee (a slow, steady shift) is all-important, but it must be done softly and evenly.

To sum up: softness at all times, slow and even movements, and no effort; these comprise the "musts" of TCC movements. Try to observe them at all times.

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"T'AI CHI CHIH IS A SERVICE TO HUMANITY. IT IS A FORM OF LOVE." JUSTIN STONE, ORIGINATOR

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Taichichih.org/events

Reminder to Teachers: If you are offering a daylong or weekend virtual (or real life) event, you may have it posted on taichichih.org and on the back page of *The Vital Force*. Simply send details to me.

Vital Force Subscription Auto-Renewals

Since the subscription renewal rate for *The Vital Force* is about 95%, and because the administrative time to contact every subscriber each year is huge, we thought it was safe to move to auto-renewal. What? When you subscribe online (which we highly encourage because that also saves us having to deposit checks), your subscription will renew automatically on that date each year – unless you tell us otherwise. I suggest you note that date, just in case you want to cancel your membership. Of course, we hope you never cancel 😊

Time Is an Illusion

As Justin Stone wrote and said: “Time is an illusion.” As practitioners know: T’ai Chi Chih is done in 40 minutes, but it’s timeless.

“Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.”
~ T.S. Eliot in ‘Four Quartets’:

The Vital Force, the Voice of the People

Please also see my thoughts on page 15.

Year-End Tax-Wise Giving Tips to a 501(c)3

Special incentives to encourage charitable giving in 2020 are set to expire on December 31. A temporary 100% AGI deduction for cash gifts when itemizing allows especially generous donors to reduce their 2020 federal income tax to zero. If you don’t itemize your deductions, you may reduce your taxable income by \$300 above the federal standard deduction for your contributions of cash to public charities

A gift of appreciated securities provides the giver with an additional advantage of avoiding capital gains tax that may be incurred if you were to sell the securities. The more highly appreciated the security, the more capital gains tax you will avoid.

~ With gratitude. Kim Grant,
Albuquerque, NM
taichichih.org/teacher/kim-grant

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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 1st for the February issue
April 1st for the May issue
July 1st for the August issue
October 1st 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.

~ Giving ~

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

- Bequeath assets to The Vital Force in their estate planning
- Gift stocks to maximize their tax-efficient, year-end contributions
- Contribute monthly (aka our “sustaining members”) via taichichih.org/donate
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- Donate by credit card via taichichih.org/donate
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What Good Is Your TCC Doing?

By Carmen L. Brocklehurst, Albuquerque, New Mexico
taichichih.org/teacher/carmen-brocklehurst

I received a letter from a friend who had more than his share of problems lately. He said he'd been doing his T'ai Chi Chih practice when he could, but it didn't seem to change the pile of problems he was facing. Sometimes it does seem that way. But our job isn't to do our practice so that it can fix our problems, but rather **we do TCC so it can open our hearts and eyes**, so that we may see the good that is happening in our lives in the midst of problems.

Louisiana residents experienced Hurricane Rita blasting through recently. Rita's destruction would be quite visible if you lived there. But if your heart was open you would know that you were not Rita's target. Many of your neighbors would have had hurricane cleanup problems, some of which would have made yours seem mild in comparison. You could focus positively on the sun shining, the wind and rain finally having stopped slamming into your home. Birds might not be singing from trees (because most trees had been ripped apart), but you know trees will grow again and birds will return to sing.



February TCC Retreat in Lake Charles, Louisiana, hosted by Caroline Guillott (left) and taught by Carmen Brocklehurst (right)

As the clean-up continues, though it might seem to move slowly, take note that neighbors are helping each other. This togetherness could lead to stronger community bonds. The question always comes up, "How are you coping?" One friend said she was so grateful to have TCC in her life, and when she mentioned it to neighbors, it seemed helpful because it changed the focus.

The pause that TCC creates often helps with letting go of damage, loss and pain. It can lead to focusing on the new, coming out of destruction. It leads us to a higher view of ourselves and everyone and everything around us. It allows us to grow in our lifelong unfoldment of learning to love and share the Chi.

There's Nothing To Do

By Caroline Guillott, Lake Charles, Louisiana
taichichih.org/teacher/caroline-guillott

It is funny to see old pictures and glimpse corrections you've made in your own practice. Evolution, release, different understanding.

I have been watching Justin a lot lately. Those early videos when he was stepping forward are interesting and fun to do, but they wouldn't allow a large group to remain in a circle. (It would be more like T'ai Chi Ch'uan in the sense of moving forward from one point to another.)

I was also looking at Colorado photos when I was near a pond doing Rocking Motion. I didn't bend much at the elbow (Carmen had mentioned it) so I went back to watch Justin and, yes, he barely bends at the elbow. With a soft elbow, your hands don't go as high and you make the turn more with the wrists.

I have been working with the wrists, enjoying the heavy air against the hands, using the *tan t'ien* and totally quieting the shoulders. It is incredible how solid I become in the soles of the feet. There is no more leaning forward or backward because the *tan t'ien* is in charge. You become totally aware of the *yin* and *yang* legs and the movement unfolds in perfect harmony without hurry. It is fun paying attention to the flow that happens, letting the whole movement be.

I remember visiting the TCC Albuquerque Center in 2004 and practicing next to Justin in the circle. He turned to me and said, "**There is nothing to do.**" I didn't say anything and thought, "Nothing to do?" He probably saw the puzzled look on my face.

I am so glad I finally have a glimpse of what he meant. I love the fluidity of this practice. **To do nothing at all you have to be completely aware.** Aware of all principles, of the movement unfolding from the *tan t'ien*, letting go of the wrists against heavy air, feeling circularity and polarity while being solid in the soles of the feet and tall and relaxed in the body—every time. Sigh... What else to say?

Students Speak

By Dorene Krause, Midland Park, New Jersey
taichichih.org/teacher/dorene-krause



With some encouragement and a lot of help, I set up a Zoom class in April. A very dedicated group of students attends each week ... it was a wonderful experience for all of us.

I invited them to participate in my “STUDENTS SPEAK” project, an opportunity to reflect on and share their personal T'ai Chi Chih experiences. The *Chi* must have been flowing as they put their thoughts into words. They were formatted into a printed booklet. Here are some of their writings:

CYNTHIA G DELEON ~ TCC is a very potent complement to my energy technology practice of Pranic Healing and Arhatic Yoga.

The special system of TCC facilitates the gentle, smooth flow of *Chi* all over the body through active structured repetitive awareness-enhancing movements that can flush out our inner noise, invite stillness and bring in a strong sense of peace and bliss. The soothing circular flow of energies from the lower energy centers to the higher centers activates the physical and psychological functions of these centers. The flowing *Chi* nourishes

the physical anatomy systems, opens our loving hearts, activates our creativity centers, hydrates our brain to maximize what it can do, and enhances our crown to invite in spiritual connectedness, divine guidance, faith and hope in our life. What a marvelous way to affirm and truly enjoy life's gifts to us.

LINDA MULCAIR ~ Spoken in class one night: “I feel like I have no hands.” I feel as if I am transported (along with our group) to a place of serenity where my motions for the practice just flow. Practicing in a group affords a wonderful spirit of community and calmness.



G. McHALE ~ I came to TCC class because it was something I always wanted to do. After experiencing, and sharing, many classes with Dorene, I realized

that TCC is not something you “do,” it is something you are, something you feel and experience. Doing is a minimal part. When we are together in class, we are connected by the energy that flows from each of



us, to each of us. There are some people who say, “I do not feel anything.” I know, I was one of those people. Then I found just my presence in class shares an energy particular to me. It gives of itself even if I do not “feel” it. Coming to “do” TCC was a wonderful decision.

JOAN S. ~ I took a TCC class about 10 years ago. I did my practice religiously every day for many years. It helped me navigate through life's challenges. Then over time I drifted away from practicing. When the pandemic hit, I was cleaning out a drawer of papers and came across my TCC notes. What perfect timing. From the first breath I could feel all the calming feelings come flooding back. When I began Rocking Motion, I felt at peace and the tingling in my fingers returned from years ago. I felt like a warm blanket had been wrapped around me. That was my “aha!” moment.



Dorene graciously offered the Zoom classes and I feel centered once again. I am grateful for being guided back to the TCC community. I am grateful to Dorene for allowing me to practice in the Zoom classes. The notes are so helpful and show me how much more there is to learn about each move. I am grateful and look forward to the one and only entry on my calendar each Thursday. Thank you for this special opportunity.

ANONYMOUS ~ You finish the TCC practice and say ‘AH.’ And then listen to what it brings out inside of you. And what it is is not words. It's silence. Silence is the source of so much of what we need to get through our lives. It allows us to reach places of greater depth – calling up something in us and turning us back into ourselves. That's why my practice – doing it alone and silently – takes me someplace where I can't get ordinarily. TCC opens me to an otherness that exists within.



*Where in the World —
Dorene Krause, Pulling Taffy,
Cape Cod, Massachusetts*

Mindfulness, Zoom & TCC

By Barbara Kristoff, Corte Madera, California
 taichichih.org/teacher/barbara-kristoff

Walking on the Old Tiburon Trail in California, needing to move this heavy energy, these life-draining thoughts. Walking, allowing my mind to move into Justin Stone’s “*Satipathana, Mindful Meditation*” from his book **Meditation for Healing** (and excerpted in the August *Vital Force*). I pay attention to my breath, noticing a smoothing out; then I notice my body sensations, a heaviness moving more into an open emptiness; then I notice my thoughts, and it’s a relief to just watch them and let them go. Then sounds enter: birdsong, wind whistling, human voices soft with laughter. I enjoy putting these four elements together into my conscious awareness while walking.

I sit and think of the wonderful Zoom class I co-teach with Linda Prosche and Tom Rothenberger. We have such amazing, dedicated student practitioners. I love our on-screen mosaic as we meet for our T’ai Chi Chih practice in gallery mode. After greeting each other this way, we usually ask everyone “pin” the teacher who is presenting/instructing. (When you “pin” someone on Zoom, they become large on the screen and everyone else is seen in a small picture.) On Zoom, we can choose how we want the screen to

display. I find it fun to change who I have in “pin” mode.

Our students offer such richness to our shared practice; together we are all exploring our present and our presence. Students graciously share their experiences of how TCC has affected their lives. A few examples include thoughts on **Mind** (“to chatter less, allowing me to focus clearly”), **Soul** (“a sense of place and role in our infinite universe”) and **Chi** (“to share my joy, passing the energy to others). The biggest gift is the complete letting go of tension, the deepest relief of letting go. TCC is pure gift. We respect and trust one another; this enables us to completely relax into the practice. I love how we three teachers project our love of TCC. Each shows the TCC principles in their unique way, which gives us permission to find our own way.

I can imagine Justin’s joy to experience TCC being Zoomed around the world. In April, we happily added a practice in our local park. And from this creative place we crafted the pyramid poems below:

grass green blades soft carpet for tai chi chih hands gently passing clouds	wind blowing shadows leap across the grass chi flowing tranquil trance	breathe my life my dear ones all together in this place we are now
plums canning is not fun but when you’re done it turns to yum, yum yum	szu chui can you hear using no ear sound round me love peace chi	joy moment alive with a sense of peace carries a feeling love
still sitting hidden glade leopard lit woods cluttered mind let’s go ahh	feet we move it’s quiet our hearts connect centers know no words chi	joy tai chi in the park gentle movement refreshing peaceful gift

COVID-19 & TCC

By Eric Schoenfeld, Sarasota, Florida
 taichichih.org/teacher/eric-schoenfeld

When asked “How has COVID-19 affected my world of T’ai Chi Chih,” I didn’t have to think very hard or for very long. My fondest TCC memories are those at The Franciscan Spiritual Center in Pennsylvania, which has been sold, and so our time there may be lost forever. But the building didn’t make my memories special; it was a spirit of oneness with, and within, everyone there. A bond developed during these short, intensive sessions. We came from different places and different life experiences. But we shared a common spirit of energy and peacefulness that will dwell in my heart forever.

What does all that have to do with COVID-19? Every Tuesday at noon, I experience that same warmth of spirit and energy with dozens of teachers thanks to an invitation from Sandy McAlister and Zoom. Thank you to Sandy and all teachers holding virtual classes. The Internet can channel positive TCC energy and much welcomed companionship



Intensives: Required for Teacher Accreditation

By Sandy McAlister, Hayward, California
taichichih.org/teacher/sandy-mcalister

TEH (pronounced deh) is a Japanese word Justin ascribed to teachers. Translated it means *inner sincerity*. When Justin was asked several times over the years about setting up courses for teachers to receive continuing education he said “no.” He felt teachers had enough integrity or inner sincerity to take it upon themselves to continue their own exploration and delve into the practice without making it mandatory in order to keep their skills up to date.

One opportunity for teachers to continue their exploration is to audit (without a course fee) Teacher Accreditation. Years ago, teachers attended an accreditation course with the main focus to support and help the teacher candidates attending. Now that candidates are arriving better prepared, the focus has changed to teachers attending for their own continued learning.

Why are teacher candidates coming better prepared to accreditation courses? Twenty years ago, Ed Altman, who was the only teacher trainer at the time, felt candidates could be better prepared by implementing two things.

One was to have teacher candidates work with two teachers to prepare them for the accreditation course. Both teachers would be responsible for signing the candidate’s referral form.

Ed also created a 3 ½ day teacher prep course – aptly named “Intensive” – taught only by a teacher trainer. Ideally this course is attended by teacher candidates four to six months before attending Teacher Accreditation. The primary focus of the Intensive is to work with teacher candidates to help them understand how to apply the principles of the form to the movements and to recognize where their strengths and weaknesses are with regards to the movements. In the intervening months between the Intensive and Accreditation, students continue to work with their teachers using the feedback received at the Intensive.

As more and more teacher candidates took advantage of the Intensive it became evident that it was making a difference. At Teacher Accreditation courses it was obvious those candidates who had attended an Intensive and those who had not. Usually nine out of 10 had attended. The quality of how the new teachers moved began to affect the quality of the whole TCC teacher community. Daniel Pieniak remembers Justin commenting on this at one conference,

noting how teachers were moving much better than in the past.

The purpose of the Intensive has expanded to include serious students who may not want to become teachers but who want to take their practice to another level, and teachers who want to review, refine and receive feedback on their own practice.

It is always an inspiration to teacher candidates to see teachers working on and examining their own practice at a course. It is a perfect example of what Justin expected of teachers, to take it upon themselves to continue their own learning rather than having to be made to take courses to keep their skills up to date.

Intensives have always been strongly suggested when someone is preparing to take Teacher Accreditation but they have not been mandatory. I do know teachers who, when preparing their student for Accreditation, made it mandatory as part of their working with that student because they knew the value of an Intensive.

I facilitated the first online Zoom Intensive this August, with tech and hosting support by Pam Towne. Much to my surprise it was a success. I had my reservations as to whether I could communicate effectively through this media, and would I be able to evaluate attendees moves. It has become apparent that this is the perfect solution for folks who would like to attend an Intensive but who may not be able to travel or who are limited in funds.

We will continue to hold Intensive and Teacher Accreditation courses via Zoom until we can meet again safely in person. We also see the advantage of offering an Intensive every year going forward, online for those who cannot attend in person. Intensives have proven their worth in supporting teacher candidates to be better prepared when attending Teacher Accreditation. For this reason and because they can now be attended online, **starting in 2021 teacher candidates will be required to attend an Intensive taught by a Teacher Trainer prior to attending Teacher Accreditation.**

We teacher trainers (Pam Towne, Dan Pieniak and I) feel this will only enhance the experience of those attending Teacher Accreditation. Being prepared as best as they can ensures they will enjoy their experience.

It is my wish as Guide of the TCC Community that we continue to explore ways to expand our community, accrediting teachers who understand the full beauty and power of Justin’s gift, and that teachers take Justin’s wish to heart that they continue their journey of exploring the TCC form and all that it embodies, knowing it is a never-ending journey for personal growth.



Teacher Lisa Vander Villet says “We don’t often have clouds in St George, Utah, so we have to break out the passing clouds.”

Zooming into the Future of TCC

By Pam Towne, Oceanside, California
taichichih.org/teacher/pam-towne

Justin Stone taught that *Chi* operates outside of time and space and therefore is immune to their limitations. This explains how people have felt a strong flow of *Chi* in online T'ai Chi Chih classes, workshops and retreats even though participants are miles apart.

During the TCC Intensive that Sandy and I led on Zoom in August, thousands of miles separated people from the West Coast, East Coast and the United Kingdom, from where Lesley Nell joined us in spite of an eight-hour time difference. Participants were surprised to feel as connected with each other and just as strong a flow of *Chi* as if we were in the same room.

Each time I've led a TCC class or Zoom event I've learned something new. Participants are always willing to help out and share what they know. Taking five- to 10-minute breaks every hour helps relieve Zoom fatigue, especially for day-long classes.

Zoom Breakout rooms were a delightful discovery, as people love working on a movement with partners or in small groups. (Hosts must activate a switch, buried in the Zoom video settings, for participants before they can access breakout rooms.)

Have you taken or taught a TCC class on Zoom yet? I highly recommend it. The platform is easy to learn, even for technology-adverse people. During COVID-19, it's an ideal platform to gather to practice TCC while sheltering in the safety and comfort of our homes.

Are you resisting being online more? I can relate. Yet the benefits of sharing TCC via Zoom while so many teaching venues are shut down outweighs our personal preference. And who knows whether there will be more COVID-19 spikes and shutdowns over the coming months.

I'm following my advice and leading online TCC classes, a monthly workshop, Seijaku, retreats and our first online Teacher Accreditation in November. I encourage you to support yourself and others by participating in TCC on Zoom. You can do more good than you know by practicing and sharing TCC.

Panic in the Time of the Pandemic

By Daniel Pienciak, Bradley Beach, New Jersey
taichichih.org/teacher/daniel-pienciak

With the COVID-19 pandemic, I have experienced raised levels of anxiety and a few panic episodes. The fear of what might happen removes us from the present moment. It can become a constant and unhappy distraction from our activities, a deterrent from regular daily functions. The resulting chronic hypervigilance can be crippling and is often unseen or unrecognized.

As this and other health concerns continued in the early months of quarantine, **my health was positively affected by implementing a daily regimen including all the elements of Justin Stone's "Maximum Chi Program"** (those who do not know Seijaku need to take a course to learn about this) and 40-minutes of meditation, using one of Justin's recommended meditations and *Turiya* method.

Some of my current medical conditions can have debilitating health consequences. With Seijaku and meditation, I have reduced pain and discomfort, and avoided extreme treatments commonly prescribed. One of my conditions affects the immune system.

Justin spoke of T'ai Chi Chih as a Qigong practice, not a martial art. TCC movements activate, balance and circulate the *Chi*. Incorporating the Seijaku principles into our practice enhances this even more so. After the initial two months of quarantine, unconsciously I had become distracted from my daily regimen by stress, worry, fear and situations on the home front that had become increasingly challenging. By the time I realized what was happening, it was almost too late: I was reaching a point of no return.

TCC and Seijaku help us live and stay in the present moment. It is life-changing to realize that time is an illusion. There is only the ever-present now. Remaining in that center is difficult when our world is turned upside down as it has been by this pandemic.

Words from Justin in the TCC Photo Text speak of the practitioner making their own program. This advice has been lifesaving for me. I expect that the health benefits of TCC and Seijaku can be unlimited when we learn how to apply, on a consistent and continual basis, what Justin has taught us.



Passing Clouds with Lisa's St. George student, Jil.

“There is No Place like Home”

By Diana Bahn, New York, New York
taichichih.org/teacher/diana-bahn

Editor’s Note: This article brings to mind a Zen parable Justin was fond of telling about a farmer whose horse runs away (“bad” news) and then returns with other wild horses (“good” news). When the farmer’s son rides the wild horse and gets thrown off and breaks a leg (“bad” news), he’s then not healthy enough to be conscripted (“good” news). When the villagers comment on each turn of events, the farmer always responds, “maybe.”

My story starts pre-COVID-19.

I was feeling jumpy and my practice(s) — T’ai Chi Chih, meditation and chanting — weren’t offering the serenity that usually spills over into my everyday life. I think some of us pick up messages about shifts in the universe way before they become substantial. Because of this, I felt prepared when I got an early morning call from Michael, the husband of my teacher, Carolyn Perkins. He told me that Carolyn had just had a bad accident and I was needed to cover her two classes that day at the Quest bookstore.

I had taken to wearing a cool necklace gifted from a friend. It’s a mollusk from South America; it’s basically a spiral. Since every time I put it on I felt better, I wore it to teach those TCC classes. Afterward, Carolyn’s classes were cancelled until further notice, as she had broken her neck.

That was February 19th. The world spiraled for Carolyn and Michael who had to prepare for a challenging surgery to save Carolyn’s life. Carolyn had to wait almost a week as the team was put in place, and she was confined to being on her back in stillness.

By the time COVID-19 penetrated my consciousness and disrupted any normalcy, I had already been connected to the trauma and developments of Carolyn’s personal difficulties. I noticed feeling that “surge of Vital Force” and even sometimes that “pleasant tingling” Justin mentions when we practice TCC. The surgery was a success. Carolyn survived and wasn’t paralyzed; she was a fighter! I was encouraged when I saw her and when we spoke on the phone. Is it any surprise that during that first month of recovery she was practicing TCC mentally to keep herself centered and ready for anything? I kept wearing my necklace because life was getting wonky and I needed it.

Justin writes in the T’ai Chi Chih! Joy Thru Movement Photo

Text (Epilogue): “the eminent teacher, Professor Huang Wen-Shan says: ‘We seem to realize that, in the universe, there is an ever-active, ever-creative life, and an inexhaustible source of energy-life and energy, which are made available to mankind when a fitting stage of development is achieved. It is particularly significant that it has a great reverence for life.’ So we discern a spiritual basis for this great *Chi*

energy, which is not ours alone but belongs to the cosmos. (We manifest it individually when we do the necessary disciplines to develop and focus this great power.)”

When visiting Carolyn at the hospital one Sunday, Michael learned that their insurance wouldn’t cover the rehab facility affiliated with her hospital. Complications. She was to go home instead. Of course, over many years of TCC practice, Carolyn had been “building a silent and imperturbable center while active in the disappointments and triumphs of our busy lives — this is real fulfillment,” as Justin has also written. Carolyn had certainly been doing her ABC’s — activating, balancing and circulating *Chi* — for more years than I can remember. Nevertheless, we were angry and disappointed that she wasn’t going to rehab.

She went home the next week, about two weeks after her life-saving surgery and she immediately started doing everything possible to rehabilitate her hands, which seemed to have suffered the biggest impact from the accident.

After NYC went into major lock down, COVID-19 cases started infiltrating the hospital where Carolyn had wanted to do her rehab. She would have been a sitting duck for the virus. **Like Lao-tzu, Carolyn, even with a broken neck, walked safely away from danger.**

After NYC went into major lock down, COVID-19 cases started infiltrating the hospital where Carolyn had wanted to do her rehab. She would have been a sitting duck for the virus. **Like Lao-tzu, Carolyn, even with a broken neck, walked safely away from danger.**

Be like the Tao.

*It can’t be approached or withdrawn from,
benefited or harmed,*

honored or brought into disgrace.

It gives itself up continually.

That is why it endures.

~Tao Te Ching (as translated by Stephen Mitchell)

Carolyn’s years of practice and teaching TCC gave her a storehouse of energy and mental-emotional resilience to overcome the most excruciating unforeseen circumstances. She is a living representation that TCC works. She reminds us that it is up to us to practice if we want the benefits. Carolyn told me she resumed her daily, physical practice only one month after her accident.



Student Comments

From Linda Robinson, Seattle, Washington
 taichichih.org/teacher/linda-robinson

T'ai Chi Chih is such a nourishing, energizing and healing way to meet obstacles that come our way. My classes and Sandy's teacher practice on Zoom have kept me afloat during these challenging times. I have had a lot of discomfort with my hip and knee and was tempted not to teach. **But when I start to move, softness and ease appear out of nowhere.** My gratitude overflows for the appreciation and dedication my students have demonstrated in showing up for practice via Zoom. Their questions and interest in TCC inspire me. Below are comments from some of my students:

SHELLEY ~ Doing TCC remotely during the pandemic has shown me how the practice fits the different circumstances of my life. It's also made me feel more connected to my TCC group because all of us switched to remote practice. It felt like a big sign of shared appreciation for TCC and our group. The energy and calmness from these sessions are invaluable in these stressful times.

BARBARA ~ Our Monday morning TCC sisterhood long has been a grounding force in my life. The sweetness of seeing everyone (on Zoom) moving together, meditating and sharing our new reality elevates my spirit. The buzz of *Chi* has intensified. It's as if the energy is making its presence known. The life force is here, keep going!



KAREN ~ I appreciate the warm support that our Monday morning TCC group provides, especially during this time of isolation. Doing TCC each morning before

breakfast has helped me establish some sense of calm for the day. My mind still wanders but there is always something I can do to remind myself of the existence of calm. Thanks so very much, Linda, for providing the instruction and motivation remain connected with TCC. And thanks to everyone for welcoming me into the group; it's been a lifesaver.

JEAN ~ I developed two healthy habits at the beginning of the lockdown in March: daily flossing and daily TCC. I have rarely missed a day of either. Flossing cleans my teeth and TCC cleans my soul. I feel so grateful for our Monday morning TCC Zoom practice. It is truly life-affirming during this challenging time. Kudos to our teacher, Linda, for her dedication and steady presence.

Let Peace Begin With Me

By Trish Winger, Melbourne, Florida

I was having difficulty with the last verse of a hymn: *“Let this be my solemn vow, to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.”* To me that meant never standing up, never creating waves. That was a hard vow.

How could take a vow without any chance of honoring it? My minister shed new light on it: “Christian peace is understood from the Jewish word *Shalom*. *Shalom* is the peace in the midst of the struggles of life, the peace to speak up, to fight for justice, to love the unlovable, to be grateful and enjoy the blessings poured upon us daily.”

That is the same definition as Seijaku: Serenity in the midst of activity! The purpose of T'ai Chi Chih is not to create peace on the outside; it is to balance the internal energy, thereby bringing peace within. When there is peace within, we can better know when and how to act. It may not bring “peace,” but the peace within will see us through. I am now happy to take the vow, to the best of my ability, to *“take each moment and live each moment in Peace eternally. Let there be Peace on earth, and let it begin with me.”*

Pyramid Poems ~ By John Marquez

Author's Note: About a year ago when I subscribed to The Vital Force, Kim said she'd be looking forward to an article from me. At that moment, I thought, "Yeah, right!" Never in my lifetime did I think I'd be writing these words! TCC has changed me!
 (Editor's Note: See also John's article on page 22.)

self	steps	grace	doubt	rise	life
alone	pavement	teachers	unknown	moonlight	rebirth
pandemic	a new day	conductive	let it go	the new day	transition
the world changing	feeling vibrant	paving the way	transformation	aware of breath	recognition
tai chi chih	awareness	absorbing	feeling free	and share it	clarity
grateful	in out	belief	unlock	oneness	freshness
smile	breathe	shine	joy	peace	new

Return to Seijaku: COVID Blessing & Invitation

By Jeneth Rundle, Portland, Oregon
taichichih.org/teacher/jeneth-rundle

Many years ago my husband and I were in a small shop. We were in search of statuary for the yoga studio I had recently purchased and found success with the purchase of two beautiful bronzes — Ganesh, the remover of obstacles; and Nataraja, Shiva as the divine dancer, the source of all movement, remover of souls from the snare of illusion and complacency, assisting all to come to reside in the center of the universe within the Heart. They were the perfect choices, and they have spoken to many who have entered.

As we were leaving the shop an image of a large wooden sculpture of Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Compassion, captured my attention briefly, and we left. A few weeks later she started showing up in my thoughts: I could see her; I could feel her presence. I was drawn to her; she invited me in. . . . We went back to visit her, took her picture and went home.

Later that year I found her “spot.” It was a granite countertop on the landing between our loft space where we practiced T’ai Chi Chih, yoga and meditation; our living space downstairs; and our bedroom upstairs. I imagined that we could see her from almost anywhere as we moved through our home and would be under her watchful eye and guiding influence, nudging us to express more kindness and compassion. We said yes to her. We celebrated by purchasing her for my birthday that year. She had been waiting for us and fit perfectly!

We both fell in love with her and acknowledged her each time she drew our attention. Her influence was present and profound. With our move to Portland she has, yet again, her perfect place from which to watch and inform and remind us to pause and examine ourselves. Her influence is calming and life affirming, her knowledge of human suffering, the collection of the tears of our suffering, the washing away of those tears. . . . all without judgement, only compassion.

I recently became strongly attracted to a six-foot tall buddha statue, *Amitabha* or *Amida Buddha*, whose head is surrounded by a circle aflame in radiant Light, hands in the *Abhayamudra* (right hand up, left hand down), the



At left: *The Buddha on the boat arrived!*

gesture shown by the Buddha immediately after attaining enlightenment, symbolizing fearlessness, strength and inner security. Exactly the traits necessary to meet this moment, this time. He speaks to me! He invites me. Desire, desire, strong desire to have that Buddha standing in our entryway greeting all who enter and to remind me of who and what I really am. Of how to really live this life, boldly. ***This Energy Sea this Tanden, from below the navel to the soles of the feet, full of the Amida Buddha of Heart and Body. What sermon would this Amida be preaching? (Nei Kung)***

~ ~ ~

I have spent hours recently reciting and meditating on the *Nei Kung* during the day. And I have spent hours practicing T’ai Chi Chih as I work my way through each of these challenging days. **Then, suddenly an urge, uncloaked, unfettered, struck: the desire to return to Seijaku.** Out of the gentle and soothing “touch” of the *Chi* in my TCC practice there lay the smoldering ember. . . the fire, the *agni*. . . the fire that is me, the cleansing fire of the *Chi*. The powerful peace of Seijaku breathed life into the fire, and the constant flame of the eternal enshrined in the heart of all human beings, *Angustha Matra Purusa* . . . blue . . . still . . . smokeless . . . took residence in the mirror of my consciousness. “Practice!” it called. And so I do.

Every day now, I am drawn to that fire, *agni* in the Heart, the power of that stillness in the midst of activity that Seijaku offers. The essential triad of practice — soft, continuous (TCC), hard — holding fast, then soft — letting go (Seijaku), neutralizing (Fast Track.) *It breathes me. . . .* The entire practice, a profound *pranayama* of relationship to the Divine through breath. *From the State of Emptiness, each man’s body is a body pervading the Universe, his voice is a voice filling the Universe, and his life is a life without limit. (Lotus Sutra)* The doors and windows of my heart swing open and life is good, right here, right now. I am invited to share in all of this goodness, fullness.

I don’t know if a six-foot Buddha will end up in my entryway. The one I first mentioned now resides in a local Buddhist temple. There is one traveling from China in a crate on a ship right now. From photos, he is beautiful. We will visit him when he arrives and see if he’s the one. But even if he’s not and even if I never do find “the one,” I have been invited to share in this power that Justin points to through Seijaku, offering fearlessness, strength and inner security — through *teh* (sincerity,) acquiescence and love. I say yes and thank you to Justin through my practice. We are all invited.

Zooming through Time & Space

By Benjamin Brisjar, Pittsburg, California
taichichih.org/teacher/benjamin-brisjar

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, our T'ai Chi Chih class in Pittsburg, California, was a community of isolated senior citizens. For my students, Carmen Brocklehurst was their TCC grandmother seen only on a YouTube video. Albuquerque was miles away; the journey was costly in terms of time and money. They stayed home while my partner, Jeannette Stotts, and I attended Carmen's classes to deepen our TCC practice and to bring the learning home to them.

In the second month of the pandemic, when it looked like we would shelter in place indefinitely, **we stopped waiting and start living**. We consciously looked for blessings that the pandemic could bring. We discovered Zoom and the rest, as they say, is history.

The barriers of distance, time, space and money have all but disappeared today. Our community has grown as we have become connected to each other and the outside world.

No longer constrained by distance, my students and I practice TCC six times a week and I teach four mornings a week. We attend classes with Carmen and with Lisa Stroyan of Colorado. Meeting Carmen and other teachers inspired two of my students to attend a Zoom Intensive, just as intense as the one Jeannette and I attended in person two years ago. Those same two students have also begun practicing with Lorraine Lepine of Kansas, whom they met during the Intensive.

In the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic that threatens to shut down our world, we find new meaning in "social distancing" as we use Zoom to connect across time and space.

TCC & COVID-19

By Nancy Rolph-Johnson, Long Beach, California

I began teaching T'ai Chi Chih five years ago and held classes in my backyard, parks, the senior center and Curves Gym. TCC is pure joy to me and I love my students. Life had a great rhythm with TCC five mornings a week.

Then COVID-19 showed up. What to do? What could I do? What more could I do?

I kept teaching, following all rules and mandates. I moved to two local parks and taught five mornings in Long Beach and one afternoon in Bellflower. The parks were closed but the grass and the mature growth trees were open and welcoming. We had plenty of space and a beautiful atmosphere in which to practice.

Students, mostly from my previous classes, wore masks and kept 10 feet from one another. The police approved and as the days passed more people joined us, all experiencing joy and healing.

The opportunity was rewarding: we kept contact and had a safe place to practice. We were out in nature and dedicated our practices to harmony and peace in the land.

Students wanted to share their impressions with you: this class saved my life ... we're doing something bigger than us ... we're not isolated ... we're moving and still learning ... we make a community of caring souls ... we are greatly rewarded and are in this together ... we show progress and learn about ourselves and each other ... we are part of the peace process.

TCC in the Grand Canyon

By Amy Moody, Durango, Colorado
taichichih.org/teacher/amy-moody

I rafted through the Grand Canyon recently for an incredible 11 days and covered 200 miles. The canyon is a truly special place and its energy feeds the soul. This was my first trip there, and it was difficult to return home. (I kinda want to live there now.)

I practice T'ai Chi Chih regularly, my fingers fluttering, and was looking forward to practicing in the Grand Canyon. **The Chi was so strong in the canyon that all I had to do was stand and center and the fluttering started.** I just needed to get grounded (and even gounded myself once while standing in a raft, which worked!) Carmen once told me you don't need your feet on the ground to get grounded, which is true!

Several passengers wanted to learn some movements, so we practiced together when time allowed. They all felt the joy. My Grand Canyon experience was all the more special because of my joyful connection with *Chi*, accessed through practicing TCC. Gratitude to Justin Stone. Namaste.



Amy Moody and her group practicing Rocking Motion before launching down river.

Excerpt from "Provincialism"

Provincialism seems to be the most universal characteristic among human beings; it even seems to supplant greed for the number one spot. It isn't that we each think ours is the best way of life; we usually believe that ours is the *only* way of life. We might think that Indians and Arabs wear funny bed sheets for clothing. But it never occurs to us that if we lived in such a hot climate we would find it rewarding to wear loose-fitting white "dresses" rather than uncomfortable trousers. Modern Japanese businessmen wear western-style suits and ties, but they often change into traditional, loose kimonos upon arriving home. They feel more comfortable in the latter and wear the former only for show.

Daily costume depends upon geography and climate. Nomadic Mongolian people wear the same heavy outer clothes year-round. In cold weather it keeps out the chill, and during warm summers, it protects the body from the outer heat. Those who live in extreme tropical climes keep windows closed as much as possible to keep hot air out.

Each culture learns to adapt to its environment. So why are some Americans amused by how Arabs appear when we see them on television? We compare their garments with our ridiculous way of dressing (in hot, humid weather women wear almost nothing while conforming men wear suits and choking neckties). And since we are the judge and jury, we find their practical adaptation amusing.

We tend to judge people in the same way, estimating how much they differ from the provincial standard set up in our localities. Actually, each one of us is part of a minority; everyone is outnumbered. No one ever thinks the other fellow is the good guy; it's taken for granted that we're the good guys.

If we live in the suburbs, we try to conform to the group ideal in every way – lest our neighbors think we don't belong. Of course, if we have a feeling for all people (not merely ourselves) and have some peace and inner security (a spiritual base), we don't give a fig for such judgments. Then we are considered eccentric – unless we are wealthy and can set our own standards.

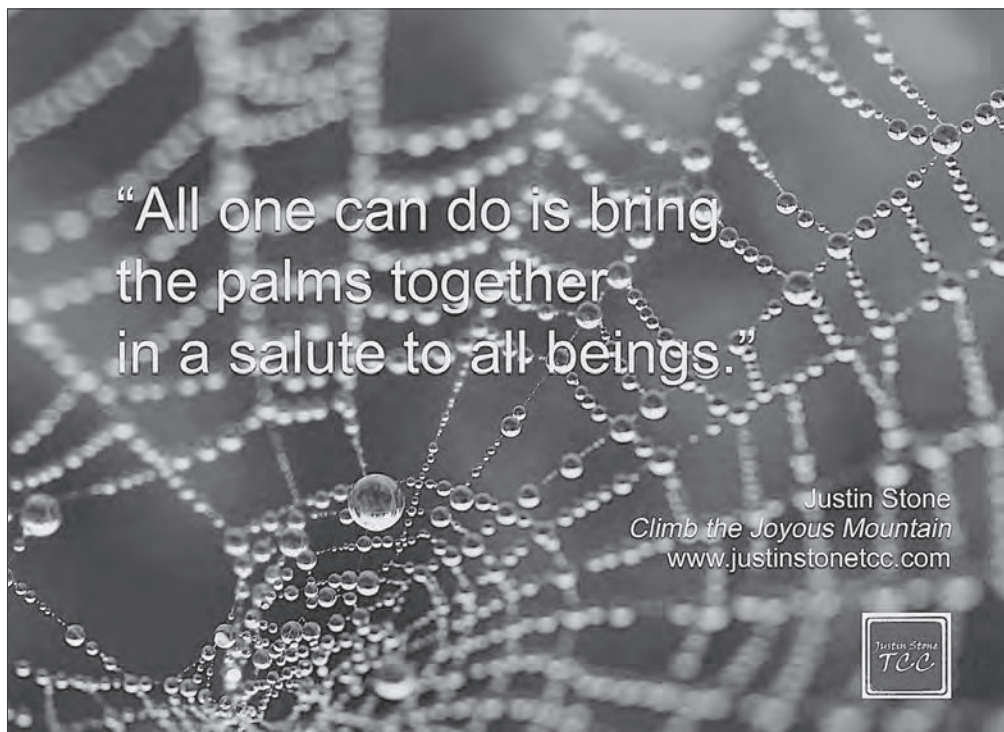
What a narrow life we tend to live in our suburban communities, where we have huddled together with others who have (or pretend to have) the same means and are devoted to the same mores. "She has very good taste," we say, meaning her likes and dislikes conform to our own. This is

natural since she has been shaped in the same aseptic crucible as we. Even protest meetings such as anti-war gatherings are peopled with others who have the same viewpoint as we.

We actually don't want dissent. We want to assume that everyone in the group votes the same way, reads the same books (if they read at all), and stands for the same things. This, despite the fact that the only way such protest meetings could expand our horizons would be if we heard all opinions together (both contrary and agreeable). Voltaire's statement, "I do not agree with what you say, but I will defend with my life your right to say it," is not the statement of a provincial man. We may agree in principle with his words, but we do not practice what those words say.

The usual thought is, "My little group is the center of the universe and all others are judged by how they compare to us." An Asian boy once walked away from me in disgust when I tried to describe that trains to New York City enter the city underground. He had asked a perfectly reasonable question about how railroad stations in large cities of the world compared with his own small town. But he thought I didn't take his question seriously and that I was offending him by spouting some nonsense. This simply couldn't be possible from his point of view; it was not within the ballpark of any norm he knew.

One time in Hong Kong, some travelers and I rented a car and driver to tour the extensive new territories. These extended to the Chinese border and were leased to Hong Kong for a long period in order to supply food to gourmet restaurants and popular street stalls. Near the loosely guarded border we were surprised to come upon a walled village. Only Chinese lived there; people shared



shelters with animals in the mild, California-like Canton climate. Adults were busy with work, and children were having a hilarious time. Little ones, wearing only tops and no bottoms, were chasing chickens and running about the countryside in what seemed to be riotous and gleeful good health.

An older German woman in our party clucked sympathetically. "Those poor children," she exclaimed with a warm and misguided heart. "They'll never have a chance to get anywhere, to amount to anything."

I was astounded, having never seen healthier children in my life. "Exactly where would you like them to get?" I asked sardonically. But of course she meant they would never have the opportunity to enter the European status struggle, which was the criterion by which she judged. That these young ones seemed happier and healthier, with fewer discernible hang-ups, than the children she sees at home did not occur to her. Since they would never lead her life, they were naturally to be pitied.

Another time at Clarke's Hotel in Benares (now Varanasi) in India, I met a staid English couple traveling for the first time. He had just retired from business, and they were beginning to see the world. Thinking to help, I arranged for a young student friend of mine at the famed Sanskrit university to guide them through a kasbah-like neighborhood. It was filled with dark streets, thieves and pick-pockets, beggars and holy men, camels and goats, temples with ringing gongs and chanting priests, and the accumulated filth of thousands of years. It was a fascinating place in the holiest and most interesting of Indian cities.

When the English couple returned from their extended tour, they were tight-lipped and grim, not looking at all as if they had enjoyed themselves. "Those poor starving people," exclaimed the English woman. "So hopeless, so pitiful. . ." She had noticed none of the interesting sights, only the beggars and mendicants.

"Wait a minute," I interrupted. "Did you notice the faces on those 'starving' people?" She said she had.

"Did they seem any more miserable than the faces you see in London every morning?"

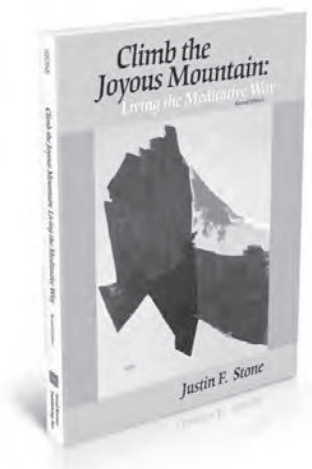
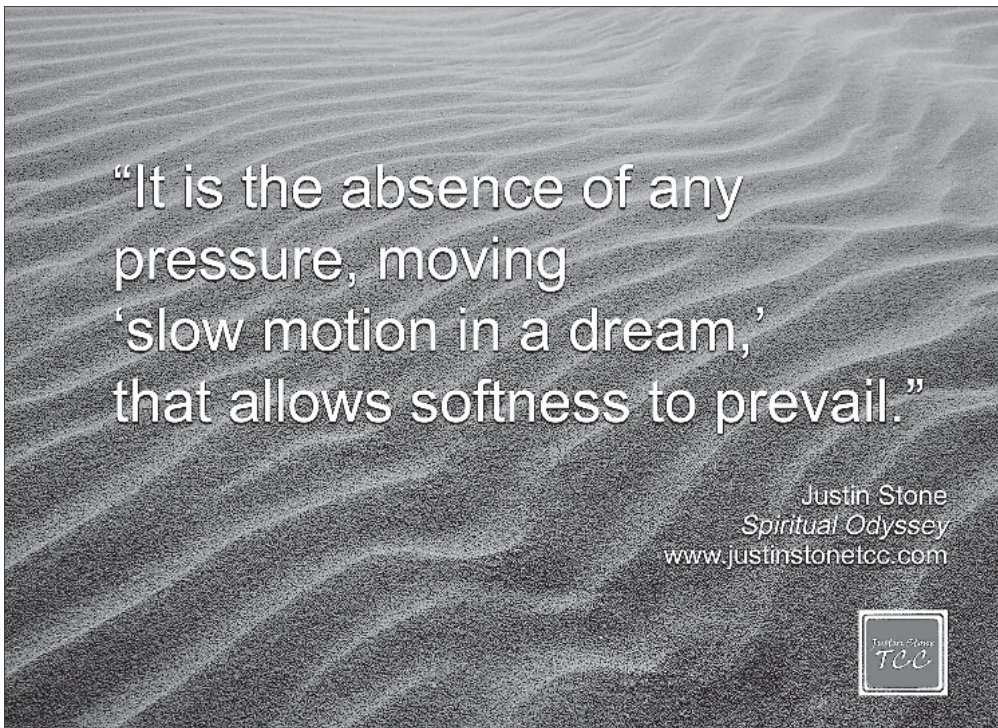
She thought for a moment and perceptibly brightened. "You know," she said, "I was astonished that the filthy beggars seemed so cheerful. After all, what have they to be cheerful about?"

This made me laugh. "Are all your London friends that cheerful?" I pressed on.

They looked at each other and then slowly shook their heads. Incomprehensibly, starving people were cheerful, and the "fortunate" ones back home often wore dour expressions.

"To be helpless is often to be cheerful," I explained, but they looked dubious. "When there is nothing to strive for, we relax and let our destiny take its course. The workings of *karma*, each man's self-made fate, are well understood in India. Why should we resent what we have brought on ourselves?"

This was too much for them to handle, so they retired to their room to speculate about the things they had seen.



Climb the Joyous Mountain is available in print and in an e-book from justinstonetcc.com.

The Chi Sound, Two Tortion-Rings & a Superluminous Bonfire

By Connie Shaw, Johnstown, Colorado

Editor's Note: Connie wrote in the May 2020 issue about phenomena that she has experienced while practicing TCC. Justin Stone always invited students to share their unique experience of TCC with him. He never pronounced anyone's experience of TCC to be "right" or "wrong," and encouraged all of us to practice faithfully, to trust our own experience and not to intellectually analyze our own or anyone else's experience.

Something has been happening in our eventful Wednesday T'ai Chi Chih classes in Johnstown, Colorado, with Marie Dotts. In January, three new phenomena occurred in the group, involving myself and another class member and friend, TheLea Brooks. (Her sharing is included at the end of this article, since it took place as the nine of us sat in our "sharing circle" directly after the day's practice, before leaving the room.)

While we were being led in Pulling Taffy and Perpetual Motion, I noticed and felt the unity of the class as One Body as I was focusing on the *tan t'ien*. Then suddenly and simultaneously, I heard the "Chi Sound" and felt a warm energy-expansion of the *tan t'ien* encircle my lower torso, which was the same size and shape as a swimming pool life-preserver; it was heated. Simultaneously, I felt and smelled a floral fragrance shoot out of my heart chakra and encircle my upper torso. It was the same life-preserver size and shape as the lower torsion ring around the *tan t'ien*. Finally, a slight hypnotic trance-like state settled over my mind and the entire length of my body, accompanied by the sensation that either levitation or bi-location was imminent, though the Subtle Body did not lift off from the physical, as has happened to me in the past.

As the thought entered my head, "Yikes, this is amazing!" and my attention left the *tan t'ien*, the warmth, scintillating energy and fragrance of the two torsion-fields gently subsided. The entire experience lasted no more than five minutes. Although I routinely hear the "Chi Sound" daily, and have experienced a fragrant torsion ring around the heart a few times (smelling like roses or lilies), I had not experienced the warm, swelling, scintillating

encirclement of a torsion-ring around the *tan t'ien*, and thus had never experienced all three at once. (See diagram.) **One wonders what other mysteries the Chi will yield as time passes and I stay out of my head.**

But that wasn't all that transpired. As we finished the practice and pulled nine green upholstered armchairs into the circle for our final sharing, our friend and newest student in the class, TheLea Brooks, began wide-eyed sharing. She reported that during the class "the central column of her body opened up." As we sat in the sharing circle before leaving, she was suddenly given a vision of each of us in the circle.

"Just now I saw all of us in this circle encompassed in a large, bonfire-like, luminous Light. Everyone was the Fire and each person was a different-colored flame, in beautiful, super-luminous, neon-like colors, such as shimmering green, yellow, orange, purple and blue. Each person's body appeared as a body-sized flame. Connie, across from me, appeared as super-luminous celery green. Marie, to my left, appeared as a (gas) pilot-light blue. We were all an integral part of the bonfire-like Light, yet distinct in our individual, differentiated, super-luminous colors."



TheLea's face was dewy and glistening with light perspiration, and her complexion was extra pale, framed with brunette hair, as she shared her experience. She had a far-away look in her eye and seemed to be in a light trance state, as I was, after both of us had accessed the Quantum Field of Universal Love while focusing on the *tan t'ien*, and being exquisitely aware of the unity and harmony of the simultaneous group movement. Words are inadequate to express the profound blessings we are being given through TCC.

Author's Note: Gregg Braden, Ph.D. — author, speaker and physicist of world renown — often speaks of the natural, circular, energetic emission surrounding the heart. He refers to it as the "torsion-field of the heart" about which much scientific study has been done. The term "quantum" is used in this article to refer to the experience/reality of simultaneously existing in overlapping dimensions. As author and workshop leader, Richard Bartlett, D.C., N.D., says, "We are not these bodies. We are patterns of light and information appearing as bodies."

Fast Track: The Essence of TCC & Seijaku

By Caroline Guillott, Lake Charles, Louisiana
taichichih.org/teacher/caroline-guillott

Hop! Light on the feet, up and down, letting loose the hips by feeling the turn of the waist, internally. It becomes the essence of both practices. It coalesces in an instant. It is the whole reduced to a single point where thoughts disappear, where the flow of the movement is focused in a single point of awareness. Or I should say: it is total awareness. And it becomes glorious! In essence, we are glorious! How much peeling-away do we have to go through, to arrive at the joy? Could the whole be essence without any peeling?



The Return of TCC

By Annie Braudy,
Brookline, Massachusetts

T'ai Chi Chih has been a lifeline and remarkable silver lining during COVID-19. I was introduced to the practice by my longtime friends Lisa Otero and Kim Grant. After Lisa moved away from Boston, I practiced faithfully with Carmen Brocklehurst's video (which, when I started learning, was only available on VHS!). There are no TCC teachers in the Boston area, but Lisa visits me from time to time and offers fine-tuning. As a pianist, I have always been good at practicing on my own, and that is what I've done for a decade with TCC. In the last year, however, Iyengar Yoga took over my interest and TCC went almost into retirement. 2020 has made me realize it was merely in hibernation.

Once COVID-19 stay-at-home orders and social distancing became the norm, group yoga classes were out. I had never cultivated a home practice and online yoga classes do not appeal to me.

Instead, **I revived my almost-daily, morning TCC**, followed by a weekday Zoom morning prayer minyan (a Jewish prayer circle) with regular kibbitzing (hanging out) afterwards in breakout rooms. My routine — TCC, prayer and a coffee klatch — has sustained my body, soul and heart through these long months



(and has made me a better housemate to my partner David and our new cat, Eevie).

Thank you, Justin. Thank you, Kim. Thank you, Lisa. Thank you, TCC and TCC community. Did I hear anyone say Amen? Amen!

Teacher Listing Pages: taichichih.org/teacher/teacher/featuring

By Kim Grant, Albuquerque, New Mexico
taichichih.org/teacher/kim-grant

As you probably/hopefully know, active teachers have been creating their own webpages on taichichih.org. It's been a mammoth undertaking and teachers old and new have risen to the occasion! We now have an enthusiastic 350+ teachers who *really* want the world to know that they are accredited in our amazing practice, to share their teaching schedules, to share the benefits they've received.

A funny thing happened along the way: Teachers are feeling more empowered to share what they know, more excited about and connected to the community, reminded of their appreciation for the practice. With these pages, the teaching community has been democratized, everyone has a voice and may share whatever they wish about their relationship to the practice.

Going forward:

- 1.) Any teacher who missed out is *always* eligible to be listed; simply contact Kim.
- 2.) All newly accredited teachers will automatically get a page; tutorials will be given at the end of accreditation.
- 3.) Teachers are encouraged to update their pages and information as often as they want; see reminder instructions at taichichih.org/teacher-listings. (Scroll to the bottom to find 'to return to your listing and edit it') or contact Kim.
- 4.) If you have a recommendation about how to improve or change these pages, please share with Kim. This is your site, these are your pages. (*The same goes for students!*)

Thank you to every teacher who created a page and/or donated, to every student who has found a teacher through these pages, to everyone practicing and sharing.

The Vital Force, the Voice of the People

T'ai Chi Chih is an egalitarian practice, anyone can do it. I've always intended that this community journal express the voice of the people: you! I've always tried to balance different voices (whether or not I agree with those voices), regions, experiences by students and teachers. If something doesn't get printed, 97% of the time it's because of space. If you wonder why you haven't heard from someone, it's because they haven't written.

TCC doesn't have an organization. So how can this publication be a further offering to a non-organized community? I've shared some of my visions and actions for growing TCC. What are yours? What do you need *The Vital Force* to be? How can it best serve and reach practitioners and attract new ones? What's needed to remain cohesive, to grow? What support do you need from the Guide and Teacher Trainers? We can ask them to address those issues in articles. Pose a question and share your own response in an article. Together we will move forward as one.

~ KIM GRANT

TAICHICHIH.ORG/TEACHER/KIM-GRANT

“One Day Your Pain Will Become the Cure”

By Mary Ann Benner, Kansas City, Missouri

As Rumi wrote, “Know that one day your pain will become the cure.” As a 73-year-old I have come to appreciate his words. Four years ago, my husband and I spent three months in Rochester, Minnesota so he could receive cancer treatment at the Mayo Clinic. Prior to going I was worried about walking the halls of a large internationally known hospital surrounded by many people with serious health issues. I have never embraced suffering and the thought of having to face it frightened me. Out of love for my husband, I was willing to try. Surprisingly, that time changed my life in a way I never expected.

I was inspired by the people I met, patients, frontline workers and health professionals. I was also impressed with the variety of programs offered to patients and their families. One was T'ai Chi Chih.



Earlier in my life I had taken a form of T'ai Chi and loved it but found it a bit frustrating because of the number of movements, and as a result I did not stay with it. I decided to attend one session to see what TCC was about. The instructor and I quickly became friends. **After the first session I experienced such peace and relaxation that I knew something special had entered my life.** Fortunately, I was able to attend twice-weekly sessions for three months.

The practice and meditations helped me deal with the ups and downs of my husband's treatment, teaching me to accept suffering and to deeply experience the joys of our time at Mayo. As the three months came to an end with a positive outcome for my husband, I was sad to leave my TCC instructor. Though I loved the practice, I wondered if I would have the fortitude to make it part of my daily routine without support. Before leaving Rochester, the instructor shared a website with certified TCC instructors in the Kansas City metropolitan area and encouraged me to contact one of them.

Within a week of our return I called an instructor to learn that she had sessions at a local church eight minutes from our home. Lorraine Lepine was so welcoming and immediately invited me to join her group. Eventually she even added a Friday session in response to my request. I have learned so much about TCC from Lorraine during the last three years, and I even joined her for an additional once-monthly Saturday session.

I was frustrated that I could not practice TCC on my own though. I often thought about it, but just didn't do it. Then came COVID-19 and TCC sessions immediately stopped. Not long afterward I received an email from Lorraine asking if people were interested in using Zoom to continue our practice. Since many of us said yes, Lorraine began offering daily sessions at 10:30 am. As usual we ended with a wonderful guided meditation by Lorraine who saved my life. The stresses and concerns surrounding COVID-19 brought deep suffering to me, confronting the possibility of dying or the death of my husband and loved ones. Once Lorraine started the daily practice, I found peace and the ability to accept the fears and (as she always says) to trust that the world will take care of me.

Lorraine now offers Zoom TCC five days a week, but I continue the daily practice on my own. TCC is now a regular activity in my daily life. Something is lacking if I don't complete a daily practice and meditation. Lorraine also recorded some of the sessions so if I need company on the weekend when we don't meet, I can bring up a recorded session. Lorraine is an angel and her knowledge and love of TCC has truly inspired me.

My suffering has become my cure and TCC has been a blessing. I experience more peace than I have ever known, and yes, Lorraine, the world is taking care of me.

Pyramid Poems ~ Nei Kung

do
Nei Kung
every night
wake up the *Chi*
inside you
while you
sleep
— MWP

sea
the blue
the blue sea
says it works well
eyes closed now
blue sea
see
— BRENDA MOUNIER

best
way to
move forward
is to keep on
finding it
your own
peace
— ANON

here
now sleep
see the sea
sink in the deep
back to me
trust it
smile
— NATHALIE MILLER

fell
asleep
instead of
writing poems
awakened
by friends
here
— ANDY MILLER

breathe
let go
trusting it
not to control
my teacher
knows that
too
— MONICA CEJUDO

time
to sleep
breathe listen
wisdom flows now
no thinking
to do
trust
— MONICA CEJUDO

breathe
believe
the sea shines
good vibration
worry goes
love your
self
— EDNA HUNTER

if
I try
T'ai Chi Chih
too hard it won't
work then I
try soft
yeah
— RENE STRAMWASSER

Finding Stability & Security

By Laurie Jacobi, Minneapolis, Minnesota
taichichih.org/teacher/laurie-jacobi

During this pandemic I have been listening to Master Waysun Liao of TaiChiTaoTV. While he is not a T'ai Chi Chih teacher, he is a Taoist master and everything he speaks of relates to our TCC practice. He says it does not matter what form we do. There are many ways of going up a mountain. The important thing is that we get to the top.

He talks about how T'ai Chi is an art form. Like any art we must work to perfect it. An artist adjusts line, color, shape, tone, always thinking about every detail, to make a masterpiece. T'ai Chi is a moving art. All the details of moving and flowing and where we put our arms and hands and feet and how we move from our center and soften and drop our shoulders, all contribute to making our practice a work of art. **We constantly work on improving because as we improve, we feel the *Chi* more deeply. When we feel the *Chi* more deeply, we experience the benefits. We don't have to think about what they are. They just come. We are never done working on the quality of our practice. It is the concentration and focus of our efforts to perfect this art that becomes our meditation.**

One detail I have been attending to in my practice is the idea of an axle, stable in the center of the circle while the wheel moves around it. When *everything* is moving that is *not* T'ai Chi. There must be some point that is grounded, stable, still while other points move. **Think about your practice and where that stability comes in.** When we do the first variation of Pulling Taffy (Anchor), the back foot is your anchor. It stays down solidly while everything else is moving, until you lift it and let the other foot become the anchor. I love that feeling of the stable anchor holding me down as everything else moves. The same holds true with Six Healing Sounds. One foot stays back and stays down while the other foot and arms are moving forward. All front-to-back and side-to-side movements employ the same principle of one foot being solid or one leg being straight while the other bends.

Experiencing the feeling of an axle in the midst of the movements, knowing that I possess a solid, grounding place to return to within me gives me **a sense of security in this time of great insecurity.** What a gift to learn that that power resides in me. The more I perfect the details of this beautiful moving art form the more benefits I receive.

Practice with Sandy: Life & Movement Lessons

By Nancy Werner-Azarski, Minneapolis, Minnesota
taichichih.org/teacher/nancy-werner-azarski

Tuesday morning T'ai Chi Chih practice via Zoom is one of my favorite things. I always learn something. The energy feels good. And I love seeing all the teachers. I scroll back and forth so I can see everyone. It reminds me of all those people out there practicing TCC. It helps me believe in amazing people and an abundant world.

Several weeks ago, Sandy stopped the practice at Light at the Top of the Head/Light at the Temple. She said, "Let's do that again and notice how your feet are feeling." Stopping to check your feet? Now? Okay, my feet are a little tense. She says, "Allow them to be relaxed, to be open, to be spacious." I thought, nope, not open nor spacious. I grounded and relaxed my toes, my soles. Sandy moved on. And my feet were more open.

Now when we practice together, I always wonder if it was her feet that were closed or was it our feet sending her closed energy? It probably does not matter but what mattered is that she listened to her body, stopped and dealt with it. Sandy was teaching us how to practice TCC. And TCC was teaching us a life lesson. **Listen to your energy — whether it is closed feet, a feeling or an inner voice speaking.**

Listen. Stop. Ground. Be spacious and open. Deal with it and move on.



Letting Go of Fears

By Sue Bitney, Minneapolis, Minnesota
taichichih.org/teacher/sue-bitney

October 4th began with frost and temperatures in the 30's. I was leading an outdoor introductory class at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in the Serenity Garden. Registration was capped at 50 participants, an excellent opportunity to share T'ai Chi Chih with a new group in a breathtakingly beautiful place.

I wasn't certain what to expect. **But I have been engaging in many new experiences this year without knowing what to expect. I just trusted.** TCC has a magical way of opening us up when we least expect it — if we are willing to let go.

I offered a buffet of movements to experience different weight shifts. We then practiced them together to experience the flow of TCC. I offered more movements which the students were eager to try. It was a wonderful way to start the morning: surrounded by nature, rooted in the earth. It offered another opportunity to let go of my fears and flow into an experience and wonderful surprise.

Why I Move Slowly

By JJ Johnson, Windsor, Colorado
 taichichih.org/teacher/jj-johnson

A proviso: What follows is what I currently perceive during my T'ai Chi Chih practice. It may not come close to what you experience, and it may not be where I'll be in a couple of years. But for now, it's my here and now.

There seems to be four stages of playing with *Chi* as we do in TCC. **Stage 1: Go through it.** When we first start TCC, we're learning the movements. I don't know about you, but I was like, "Hey, look at me go. Look how powerfully I can do these movements. I can push out. I can pull back." Dang, I'm fast. Around the Platter? My instructor is only spinning that record at 33 1/3 RPM and I'm clocking in at least 78 RPM. What's taking her so long? (A little side note: My instructor and mentor is Marie Dotts, and boy, am I lucky to have found her.) What is happening with *Chi* in this stage? We're moving so fast, with so much muscle. The *Chi* is all around us, but we're moving right through it.

With a good instructor who will guide us into slowing down and being aware of what *Chi* is doing around us, we enter **Stage 2: Play in it.** As we slow down, we become more aware of *Chi*. Why is that? What does slowing down have to do with anything? Let's think about this. If you're trying to get a drink of water out of a stream, you dip your hand into the stream, and slowly bring the water up to your lips. That's a drink. What happens if you plunge your hand into the water and rush it back up to your mouth? You probably end up splashing the water



around. And if you happen to capture some water, you end up flinging it away before your hand gets to your mouth. If going fast does that to water, what is it doing to the *Chi*?

Slowing down, being aware of what *Chi* is doing around us, taking time to play within the *Chi*, slowing down more ... and what happens? Well, I'll be darned, we're bringing *Chi* to us. **Stage 3: Collect it.** Again, by moving even slower. Why? Ever try to collect smoke? As you move your hand towards it, you invariably push it away. Bringing it back to you? Yeah, right! But you can do it if you move steadily and slowly, and even more slowly. Your hand and arm muscles are barely in play. The gathering and movement of the smoke itself dictates what your hand will be doing. And that's just trying to collect smoke. Smoke may be more nebulous than water, but smoke is still a physical thing. Is *Chi* a physical thing? Yes and no. (But that's for another time and place.) For now, let's just say *Chi* is more ephemeral than smoke. We gather *Chi* when our movements are no longer being controlled by our muscles. We float and *Chi* is moving us. Dancing with *Chi*. It's pretty cool.

So, we've collected *Chi*, played with it and danced with it. What now? If everything works out, we can move into **Stage 4: Communicate with it.** It gets interesting when you talk to your tan t'ien and it responds. How do you communicate with your *Chi*? How do you communicate with another person? You talk. You vibrate sound with your throat muscle movements, and the other person interprets the patterns as communication. How do we communicate with *Chi*? That's what TCC movements do. They set up a pattern to which the *Chi* responds. But it has to be at the pattern resonating with *Chi* (don't worry, *Chi* will guide us). If we relax and don't bring our mighty muscles into play, but instead let *Chi* move us, we'll find the proper pattern. Once we're floating in the pattern, it's: "Hello there. I feel you."

Pyramid Poems ~ Silence

calm
 movement
 in my feet
 Rocking Motion
 brings me peace
 not sad
 smile
 — JULIE DALLAS

still
 no thought
 just being
 I am with you
 perfection
 in all
 things
 — BRR

the
 silence
 my friend for
 I get closer
 to my soul
 in my
 self
 — RENE

be
 the noise
 be silent
 hear the silence
 become one
 with it
 in
 — CAROLINE

feel
 silence
 bring on peace
 constant talking
 numbs my mind
 let's move
 feet
 — STEPHEN

true
 delight
 happily
 resonated
 finally
 in my
 soul
 — NATHALIE MILLER

A New Home for the TCC Center

By Judy Hendricks, Albuquerque, New Mexico
taichichih.org/teacher/judy-hendricks

I remember walking into the TCC Center on Eubank for the first time, years ago, for a class with Carmen Brocklehurst and later attending my first Association meeting with Justin Stone. I knew the TCC Center was special; it had a feeling of serenity. I have wonderful memories of talking with Justin, going through teacher accreditation and taking amazing classes with Carmen. I recall revealing moments of knowing.

During our Association meeting last year, we decided we needed a new space with two separate classrooms and a larger bathroom outside the classroom. We have that now, along with an office, storage room and even have a phone receptionist. With two larger classrooms we envision offering more classes and practices — and the rent is about the same as our previous location. The new center is located in the middle of Albuquerque at 320 Osuna Rd NE, Building G-1, right behind the St. James Tearoom.

When walking into our new Center, I felt serenity, solidness, peace and joy. This was going to be a wonderful new home for our community, full of light.

In early September we opened at 25% capacity following New Mexico's COVID-19 guidelines. The intention of the TCC Board is always to have a welcoming place for classes and free practices. We will continue with free open practices on Wednesdays (5:30 pm), Tuesdays (noon) and on the first Saturday of the month (noon). There is also a teacher practice on Tuesdays (9:30 am) and a new teacher practice on the 3rd Saturday of the month (9:30 am). To reiterate what Justin always said: out-of-town students and teachers are always welcome to join the teacher practices.

The future is very bright in our new TCC Center. The *Chi* and serenity have relocated with us to the new place, which is filled with Justin's paintings. Justin's energy is with us, wherever we practice TCC. (While practicing TCC early in the morning in a Paris park many years ago, I felt Justin with me very strongly. I was surprised at first, since I was in a new and faraway place, but the feeling was unmistakable.)



If you are passing through Albuquerque, please give me or another local teacher a call; see taichichih.org/teacher/tccassociation. Someone could likely give you a tour if there is not a class going. Our intention is to share TCC with everyone; it is a wonderful gift. We know it is a service to humanity.

Future of TCC

By Rebecca Paulson, Loveland, Colorado
taichichih.org/teacher/rebecca-paulson

Justin wrote about “The Future of T'ai Chi Chih” in his book *Spiritual Odyssey*. During the teacher retreat hosted by Pam Towne and led by Sandy McAlister via Zoom in early July, we sampled a new future. An event originally scheduled to be held in person was reworked into a fully online format.

I tasted once again the truth shared by Justin, that the richness of the practice lies in “the quality of the people who have been led to become teachers.” Even though we didn't share meals (or restrooms) or assembling in one room to practice, listen and learn, I found that the wisdom and depth shared by every person participating proved the bond that occurs when TCC teachers are together. I was honored to have four days of exposure to every person in attendance.

Several discussions centered on imagining what the future of TCC will or can be in the next few months, years or beyond. How can teacher trainings continue? What will they look like? The open-hearted and trusting brainstorming hopefully brought encouragement and a clearer vision to the community.

I loved the extended time with teachers from all over the country (world?). My heart was uplifted by the others' courage and willingness to embrace new meeting technologies and to seek the future of TCC with optimism.

TCC, for a Good Death

By Linda Minor, Forest Grove, Oregon
 taichichih.org/teacher/linda-minor

It happened seven years before I'd heard of T'ai Chi Chih. I was training to play prescriptive harp music for patients experiencing anxiety for anything from pre-surgery to imminent death, but most often in a hospice setting. One day in an assisted living facility I was assigned to play for a long-time friend of mine, whom I had not seen recently. Her husband was away for the morning, and no staff was present when I arrived to set my intention and focus as I had been taught. Liz was asleep.



I matched my playing tempo to her breathing, and I was unselfconscious and totally one with Liz and the music. All at once I was overwhelmed with a powerful, peaceful and loving feeling, and the whole room turned a warm yellowish color. When I became so startled that I stopped playing, the feeling went away. I wanted it to come back, the most wonderful thing I had ever experienced. What was it? I had no words to describe it and didn't share it with anyone for a long time. (Liz died a few days after this occurred.)

Fast forward to one of many trips to Albuquerque to attend TCC retreats with Carmen Brocklehurst. She mentioned being asked by a beginning student as they were learning Around the Platter, "Is Chi yellow?" It wasn't until I was returning home that I remembered the experience with Liz. Could that have been some kind of union with universal Chi? I was reluctant to disclose what I did not understand.

Fast forward to 2019, when I'd been teaching TCC for two years and had become accredited to teach Seijaku. I was learning, in baby steps, the practice of letting go. I had convinced my husband to do estate planning, and I was feeling comfortable about getting my affairs in order. I even picked up *Letters to a Dying Friend: What Comes Next: Based on the Tibetan book of the Dead* by Anton Grosz.

Chapter 20 of this short book stopped me in my tracks. Grosz described the light seen in the mind's eye just prior to the cessation of breathing.

This is detailed by Tibetans and borne out by modern accounts of near-death experiences — the bright light first experienced as a pinprick grows in intensity and breadth, as though emerging at the end of a tunnel. Grosz writes:

But the light is more than just light. It is the light as in "Let there be light," the Ultimate Reality, the big bang, the pleroma, the Source of all. Those who have experienced it during both death return experiences and advanced meditation techniques [emphasis mine] describe their sensing it as a being, a consciousness, or a presence which fills them not with fear or foreboding, but with intense peace and love. They feel immeasurable power, something so strong, so peaceful, so undefinable and all-encompassing that it cannot be limited by giving it a name.... This is the power which changes our lives simply by knowing of its existence....

In *Kitchen Table Wisdom*, Rachel Naomi Remen writes about a similar experience when she was a young pediatric physician. A young leukemia patient was very frail and in the end stages of his disease. He announced that he was "going home," and packed his small suitcase. The nurses persuaded Dr. Remen to speak with him, because he couldn't possibly go home.

He looked up from his coloring and our eyes met. In that moment things changed. The room became very still and there seemed to be sort of a yellowish cast to the light. I had a sense of an enormous presence and I remember thinking wildly that we had stepped outside of time.... Perception may require a certain openness. We see what our lives have made us ready to see. This child had known that he was going home in a much more profound sense than the staff was prepared to appreciate. At that time I had no way to make sense of this experience, either, so I did the comfortable thing: I forgot it.

In a similar vein, I had forgotten my experience with my friend Liz, until TCC helped me remember.

Justin promises us in his writings that through consistent practice of TCC we experience not only a good life, but also a good death. Every time we do our practice, we let go of our worldly concerns though the balancing and circulating of the Chi. I love my life and don't feel ready to die just yet. But at the same time, I am not afraid of making that transition, ready when called upon for the ultimate letting go into "the Source of all." Thank you, Justin.

Pyramid Poems ~ Silence

I
 smile nod
 do not speak
 quiet my mind
 savor food
 cherish
 peace
 — LINDA JONES

be
 grateful
 feeling Chi
 below my room
 tan t'ien
 receives
 love
 — LINDA JONES

I
 let the
 outer me
 show what is real
 both inside
 and out
 ahh
 — STEPHEN

no
 word fills
 the room but
 the sounds are loud
 clever all
 around
 me
 — CAROLINE

love
 felt now
 tears flowed down
 grateful to all
 peace joy love
 welcomed
 now
 — BRR

Time is the Mark of Subtle Changes

By Rick Davis, Tulsa, Oklahoma
taichichih.org/teacher/rick-davis

There is something graceful in opportunities that come with new demands and unexpected challenges. Opportunities to notice something new in the often overly familiar. Mother Theresa once said, “Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.”

We gain nothing in wishing that the *now* we have been given, with all of its turmoil and pandemic uncertainties, could be somehow different than it is. This *now* is all we have with which to work. And as the given moment, it is like no other in all of creation — unique and priceless in infinite possibilities. In it we take our place and we begin. Step, shift, settle, ground, again.

Discover graceful opportunity in T'ai Chi Chih practice by embracing the *now* in which we live, breathe and have our being. With each step, position, shift and settling we move through this moment with purposeful intention, a requisite of our practice.

Justin once said that time is an illusion. Yet, as we move through our practice and experience the continual soft change of our weight shifts and returns, we mark the subtle pressure against the soles of our feet moving across the foundation and sense that there is something new in the familiar of every shift. Something has changed. And with attentiveness we mark that change. And isn't time after all marked by those subtle changes, like the clicks and groans on some wall devise? It is only in the changes that we notice one moment from another. Only by the changes that occur in motion do we sense something we call “time.” Perhaps that is why time is so relative to where we stand in the midst of life.

Mark the little changes ... as you feel your weight shift to the left as you carry the ball; as the sun's light shifts gradually across the lawn; as the curtains flutter in an afternoon breeze; as the laughter builds then fades following a casual remark; as the stiffness of scars remind us there was a past; as the heart lightens when once there was little light of hope; as the skin carries new marks and creases from past expressions. So many subtle shifts that mark one moment from the next, all reminding us of how this moment is thick with moments past.

Time is something we encounter in the gentle shifting around our core across the expanse of our stance. Something expands and returns. Breath eases out naturally into another stance. It is seen only in the marking of life's balance, shifting and re-establishing, noticed essentially in our attentiveness to the bubbling springs. It is as if time doesn't exist at all and yet has always been there, marked by each of our life's moments from the very beginning of...well, time.

The Lighter Side

By Sharon Sirkis, Columbia, Maryland
taichichih.org/teacher/sharon-sirkis

Grounding is the first thing I do with students at the beginning of T'ai Chi Chih class. I often sound like a broken record, mentioning it during and after class as well. One morning, I arrived late, as there was a bus accident and traffic was backed up for miles. I was stressed about being late, worrying about my students waiting for me. When I finally arrived, Ruth, 75 and spry, picked up on my hurried state of mind. She said, “Take your time... Get yourself grounded.” This cracked me up and definitely helped calm me down.

~ ~ ~

One playful TCC class decided to make up their own Six Healing Sounds:

OY!, ARG!, UGH!, EWW!, ACK!, PHEW!

~ ~ ~

At the last TCC class, I play Show and Tell, where students think about the best thing they've gotten from class, and then bring in an item that demonstrates it, and then tell how it relates to TCC. Howard brought in a jigsaw puzzle. He opened up the box, picked up many pieces and let them drop back into the box. He said that those pieces were like his thoughts, scattered and stressful. Then he put the lid back on the box to reveal the beautiful puzzle picture, and said that after TCC practice, he sees the big picture: “I relax more and see how things fit together.”



At left: Two new possible TCC students seemed extremely interested in joining Trish Winger's practice group in Melbourne, Florida.



Justin Stone Quotation Cards

Mary Ruiz chooses a different card each week to focus on during her TCC practice. And her Buddha holds the space.

Card sets available at <https://justin-stonetcc.com/daily-meditations/>

Reflections of August 2020 Intensive & The Wonders of TCC

By John Marquez, Antioch, California

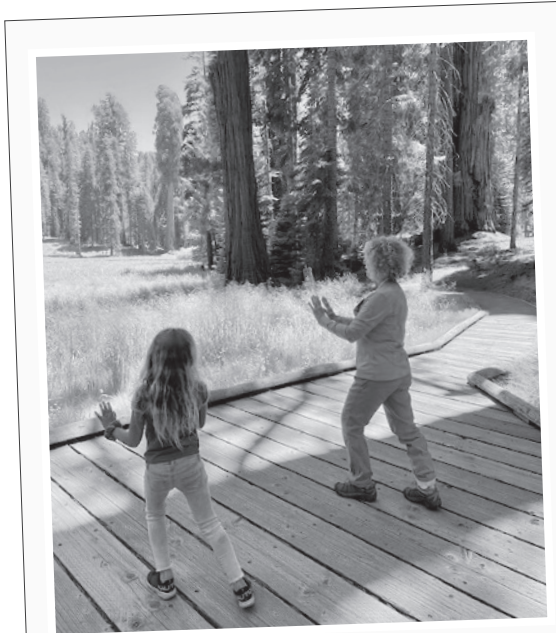
I was nervous and concerned about the four-day TCC intensive. With encouragement from my teacher, Ben Brisjar, I registered to attend. I have been enjoying a serious daily practice for 18 months and had a desire to deepen my experience.

Being a relative newcomer to T'ai Chi Chih, I had no idea what to expect at this thing they call an "Intensive." Intense I understood, which concerned me. As an introvert, the thought of all these eyes watching and criticizing my every move was frightening.

The night before, I'd read in *The Vital Force* that "TCC was practice not perfect." That was exactly what I needed to hear.

Guess who was chosen first up for intros on the first day? Yep, yours truly. Panic ... for a second. No time to prepare, so I said a few things, got it done and over with. Each day that passed got more comfortable. I was learning so much that the 10-hour days passed more quickly than expected. Ah-ha moments were plentiful; things I'd been hearing for 18 months finally made sense.

Those eyes upon me that were my worry became friendly, supportive and helpful. Pam Towne, there to enhance the teaching of Sandy McAlister, was a joy to talk to as we shared lunch one day. Sandy's teachings were so very defined and exact, tearing apart each movement and putting it back together putting it into motion. This was intense yet comfortable. She was patient and gave us plenty of time to absorb the information she shared.



Where in the World
Teacher Suzanne Roady-Ross,
Push Pull, Big Trees, California

After completing this adventure, I will now begin my practice by giving my attention to one movement before I do my regular practice. I will use mirrors and possibly video so I can see my movements from the side. I will work on the basics: weight shift, hip turn, smooth out my movements with a deepened knee bend.

As for the re-entry to the real world on Monday, I felt somehow different in my scheduled class practice. After my usual meditation, I was inspired to look into Justin's pyramid poetry to see what it was exactly. I have been creating my own pyramid poems ever since. I have never written like this before, surprising myself. (*Editor's Note: See page 9.*)

Then the kicker: I have been treated for neuropathy in my feet for months. Prior to the Intensive, my acupuncturist put low-voltage vibration against the soles of my feet and I had no feeling at full power. After the Intensive, he repeated the treatment and I jumped as he turned on the lowest setting. He was shocked and asked what I had been doing. I shared the hours of TCC just completed. He replied, **"You have opened up the meridians in your legs and the circulation has been vastly improved. Good job!"**

Teacher Retreat in July 2020

By Suzanne Roady-Ross,
Seal Beach, California

taichichih.org/teacher/suzanne-roady-ross

My attitude when contemplating my first online teacher retreat (July 2-5)? Skeptical. I've attended the Santa Barbara teacher retreat annually since I became accredited in 2007, and I wondered how holing up in my back bedroom would compare with the natural beauty and fellowship of Santa Barbara. Very well, actually.

The ease of being at home, not packing and traveling, and reduced expense were a good trade off. Pam has become rather expert at using Zoom and led us through using it to its best advantage. Several other members also shared their knowledge when we ran into tech-glitches, and we all learned patience.

Our practices were as "Chi-full" as those shared in person, which surprised everyone. Using Breakout Rooms offered the opportunity to work one-on-one with a classmate on a particular skill. Gallery View allowed us to interact with ease, like sitting in a circle together. Sharing during the evening led to deep insights and appreciations. I felt as close to the other group members as I have at the in-person retreats.

Don't let preconceived ideas about virtual meetings prevent you from participating. It isn't virtual; it's real, just online. It's a good opportunity to grow in our practice, and it's easy, especially if you get a cord to connect your computer to a TV to make everyone bigger.

A Course in TCC, with Justin — Starting Soon

By Kim Grant, Albuquerque, New Mexico
taichichih.org/teacher/Kim-Grant

So many teachers are offering practices on Zoom; it's impressive and amazing. There's certainly nothing like a real life teacher. I'd like to make a plug for taking lessons with Justin Stone. There's nothing like learning from the 'big guy' who originated the practice.

Justin left us so much original source material. It can be overwhelming. Where to start? Students might purchase one or both of Justin's DVDs or his streaming instruction, perhaps his *Photo Text* or *Spiritual Odyssey*, perhaps they dip into some of his sample movement instructions, or perhaps they've seen or heard some interviews with him. But when students are practicing at home, it can be difficult to stay motivated, to create new habits or to synthesize and embody new teachings.

So I've created a 10-day course — pulling snippets of Justin's teachings from multiple sources for every movement — that shepherds students through all the movements in a gentle way. The first five days are free, the second five are unlocked with the purchase of lifetime access to his streaming instruction. There will be a complementary, private/dedicated Facebook group for discussing each movement. We'll start on January 1, as a New Year resolution to better health and well-being. But it will be 'asynchronous learning,' i.e. learning that does not occur in the same place or at the same time.

Want to learn about the launch? Sign up for the free newsletter on justinstonetcc.com if you haven't already.

Learn with Justin, share with fellow practitioners, ask questions of your Zoom teacher. See you there!

TCC & Life Transformation

By Dr. Pauline Quimson-Miller, Tomball, Texas
taichichih.org/teacher/pauline-quimson-miller

I have been practicing T'ai Chi Chih for 17 years and teaching for 15 of those. From the moment I watched Carmen Brocklehurst's PBS video, shared by a Meridian Exercise Class student, I knew it was going to play a huge part in my life. Little did I know how transformative it would be.

I am also trained as a medical doctor, psychologist and clinical hypnotherapist, working with clients who've experienced trauma, abuse and addictive behaviors. It is significant that TCC has become part of the core foundation of the customized wellness programs I offer clients. I find that results and lifestyle shifts are better and easier when people practice TCC along with other modalities.

Justin Stone called teachers the jewels of TCC. I did not understand this until I kept seeing, hearing and witnessing the effects of our work. I see my clients and students balancing their body weight, being weaned from medications, improving rest and calmness, and experiencing more joy in life. Looking at my own life, I enjoy a conscious moment-to-moment practice and the deliciousness of the energy flow and all the gifts it keeps sharing with me. TCC, Seijaku and Fast Track keep transforming me and my view of life.

I have begun to understand more deeply how my internal Chi balance directly correlates with my non-judgment of myself and others, and with the income I manifest and allow into my life to support the work that I am meant to do. Every morning, after my TCC/Seijaku/Fast Track and meditation practice (and my evening Nei Kung practice), I ask: "Who do you want me to help today to end their suffering and to truly know and live the fullness of a joyful life"? I receive images in my mind and heart, and people often connect to me before I reach out.

We work on creating harmony in ourselves and with others. This is where I contribute my tiny part in shifting and changing the universal consciousness — by helping people be healthy and well and to live their purpose with passion and compassion. Thank you, Justin Stone and TCC Joy Thru Movement. You are the best gift I have ever known.



Above: Margery Erickson's dog Maggie: naturally yin-yang, with dots added for emphasis.

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Community Calendar

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

- Nov 12-15 | Seijaku-Meditation Retreat w/ Daniel | Zoom | wakeupdaniel@aol.com
- Nov 16-21 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Zoom | April Leffler | lirpaleff@rcn.com
- Nov 29-Dec 5 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Daniel | Zoom | April Leffler | lirpaleff@rcn.com
- March 18-2 | TCC Teacher Retreat w/ Sandy | Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com
- March 25-28 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com
- April 22-25 | TCC Intensive w/ Sandy | Zoom | lirpaleff@rcn.com
- May 6-9 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Prescott, AZ or Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com

~ CONFERENCE 2021 ~

New: Stay tuned for details for the virtual 2021 conference.

Social distancing because of COVID-19? No problem: T'ai Chi Chih practices and originator Justin Stone's writings and movements are online.



Visit www.taichichih.org to find accredited teachers offering classes and practices on Zoom, Facebook Live and other platforms.

Visit www.justinstonetcc.com to learn more and deepen your practice with Justin Stone's T'ai Chi Chih Video Instruction Subscription.



MAILING ADDRESS CHANGE?
Please email
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