

The Vital Force

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for teachers & students

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Justin Stone: In His Words

Vital Force Greatest Hits: Excerpts from Justin

taichichih.org/teacher/justin-stone

~ Impermanence ~

Most suffering comes from failure to accept impermanence. Relationships change, health changes and we grow older. Yet we tend to cling, as though pleasant circumstances can extend indefinitely. When things are too *yin*, we are happy to see them change to *yang*, but we never anticipate the positive becoming the negative. So we live our lives in a pleasure-pain continuum, trying to preserve and resurrect what is pleasant and seeking to avoid its inevitable opposite, the painful.

“The only thing permanent is change,” says the *I Ching*. The leaves will fall in autumn; there will be new leaves on the tree in springtime. But is the tree itself permanent? Enduring, yes, but infinite, no. What we do and think will influence the future; flowing with the *Tao* in its ceaseless progression is wise. In the words of Professor Huang, “The Sage wants spring to follow winter.”

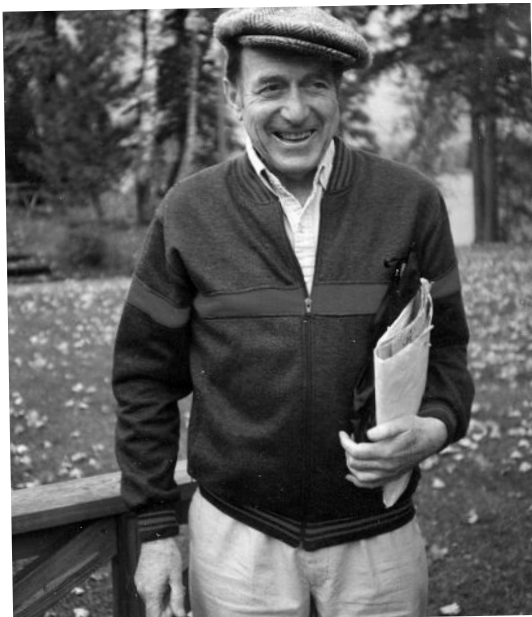
– Summer 1986

~ ~ ~

~ That is Love ~

Your task is not to find someone to believe in or some doctrine in which to take refuge (though this is very comfortable). It is to realize Who and What You are (and I don't mean a name). Then you manifest Who and What you really are; that is Love.

– Summer 1988



Archived editions of *The Vital Force* are available at
taichichih.org/free-archived-past-issues.

~ Flow Slow Motion ~

T'ai Chi Chih teachers should remember that the most important thing with beginning students is to see that they move correctly. Once they learn how to flow slow motion in a dream, there is no problem in teaching them the movements. I hope teachers keep this in mind and concentrate, in the beginning, on getting the students to flow with softness and continuity. – Winter 1986

~ ~ ~

~ Energy and Wisdom ~

Empty space seems to be a vast continuum of Energy, and that energy is Wisdom. Energy appears in many forms, including “matter,” and it's always there for us to use in re-charging ourselves – hence, T'ai Chi Chih. When we do, our intuition seems to be greatly sharpened, and this is understandable as Energy and Wisdom are just different words for the same thing.

~ ~ ~

~ More is not Better ~

I am not at all happy when two or three T'ai Chi Chih teachers write me that they have originated new movements and are teaching them to their pupils. More is not better. First of all, in a relatively short time there would be fifty different versions of TCC being taught in the world if this practice was followed. Second, until the teacher fully understands the underlying principles and has practiced for a long, long time, such activity is just an ego-stance. To assume that you have attained the “mind of no Mind” in such a short time and can use the “sword of no sword” to pierce to the heart of matters is just an assumption. After 35 years, I am still a beginner. T'ai Chi Chih, as it is, gets wonderful results – it delivers. Sink yourself deeply into its practice and taste the full benefits; do not be satisfied with quick, surface results.

– Summer 1988

Stories and a Request about Justin

Teachers Donna McElhose and Nancy Werner-Azarski were talking the other day about their experiences with Justin at conferences and other events. As they said, many teachers who knew him best are gone and or getting older. Their stories will be lost if we cannot capture them soon. Donna’s students got to know Justin from sharing stories that were important to her. As Donna writes:

“At a conference Justin yelled ‘stop, you’re doing it wrong.’ Teachers near him in front froze. I’d never heard him do that, so knew he was upset. He described what teachers were doing wrong during Daughter in the Valley and then how to do it correctly. I tell, show and explain Justin’s way to my students. Stories big and small help them feel closer to the originator of our form. Imagine, my students are only two generations removed from Justin; students of teachers I have guided to become teachers are three removed. They may not be hearing **any** stories of Justin.”

Hopefully teachers will step up, capture memories to share and save part of TCC’s heritage.

Student Testimonial

I have been a TCC student for almost 30 years and learned using the DVD. As an international flight attendant, I did TCC in the airplane’s galley. At the time I skied, and after two months of TCC, my skiing and balance improved tremendously. Recently, though, I lost use of a quad in my right leg during knee replacement surgery so it was impossible to do TCC. After a really bad fall, I’m now doing TCC mentally with great benefits. – JANET JONES, LARKSPUR, CALIFORNIA

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~ With gratitude. Kim Grant,
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Table of Contents

Justin: In His Words	1
May The Vital Force Be With You	2
Features	3-4
Principles & Poetry	5
Guiding Thoughts	6
Trainer Tips	7
Dispatch from Northern California	8
By Teachers, For All	9-10
Students & Teachers Together	11
Justin Stone: Climb the Joyous Mountain	12-13
Justin’s Closing & Poetry	14
By Students, For All	15
Nature & Healing	16
By Teachers, For All	17
By Teachers	18
Air, Instruction & Conference 2021	19
By Teachers, For All	20
Events & Dementia	21
Events & Community Growth	22
Elaborate, UK Dispatch	
& The Lighter Side	22
Community Calendar	24

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The Vital Force

~ Web Site Updates ~

The online 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:

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- Gift stocks to maximize their tax-efficient, year-end contributions
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The Chi as Teacher

By Caroline Guilott, Lake Charles, Louisiana
taichichih.org/teacher/caroline-guilott

Feeling the underlying movement principles takes time, sometimes a long time, very likely a whole lifetime of tuning in. While learning the T'ai Chi Chih movements is not so difficult, **it takes diligence to arrive at the essence of their simplicity.** It is not just about a movement itself, of where to place the feet and hands. And yet that is precisely what brings each of us to the subtleties of each movement.

There is no need to change or add anything. Justin gifted us a discipline of simple, natural movements so that we can find what is already inside of us all – by going in. Mindfully done, it gives way to the bigger realization of the internal power it carries.

Practicing TCC over the years has been a journey of discovery on many levels. At first, this discovery happened in the movements themselves, on where and how to place the hands and feet, on how to stand aligned, mindful of the principles while keeping the hands and feet synchronized with the *tan t'ien* to eventually arrive at an effortless flow.

How well I remember those bursts of energy through the body, the sporadic shaking inside, the intense heat crawling up from the feet, the hot, the cold, the tingling in the fingers... I also remember feeling and then not feeling. I know now the glimpses of the *Chi* moving inside me were not balanced. I also realize that I didn't know how to ground properly. I was more in my head although I thought I was very much in my feet. **One thing I knew: I wanted more!** I wanted to feel this surge, not just at one point in the movement, but all the time.

That thirst led me on another journey, the journey of listening from the inside. I would observe my movements in the mirror and would check for clues. The minute I felt this flow, I would again check to see what I had done differently. And then I realized it had to do with releasing tension. So the *Chi* and I started to play a great game of hide and seek. I learned to soften enough so it could manifest itself in a flutter. The movements remained the same on the outside, although an incredible transformation was happening inside of my being. I liked it.

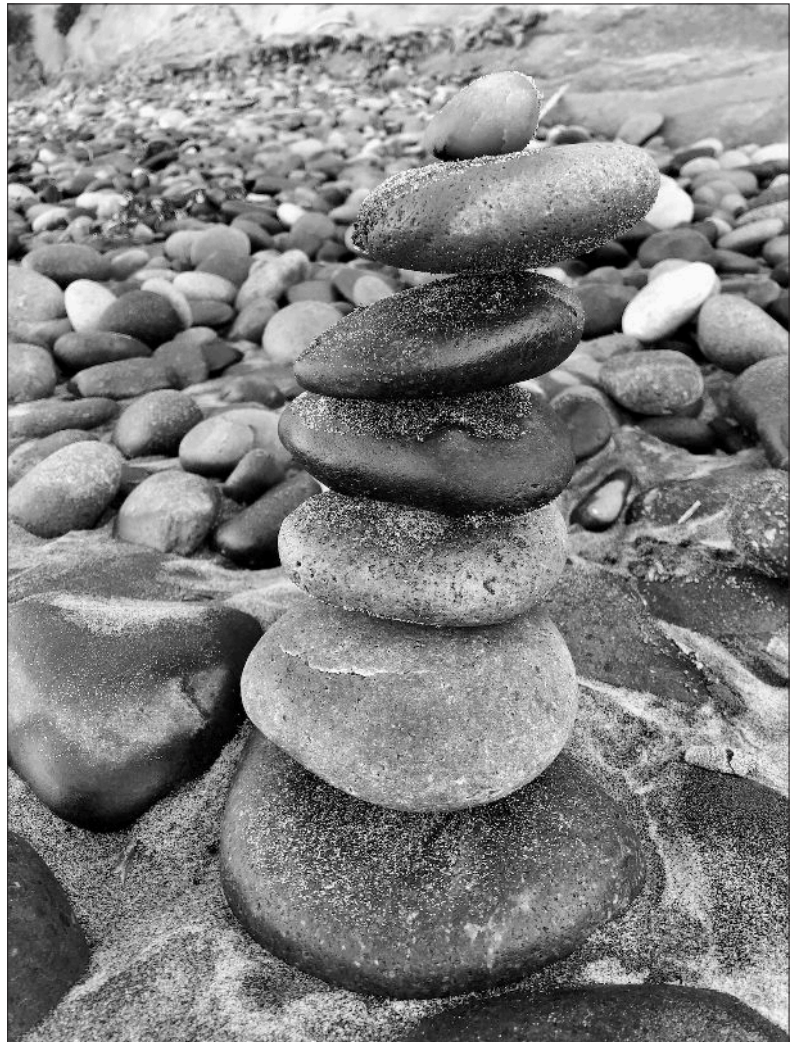
Once you have felt energy flow throughout the body, you want this again and again. We have to welcome it from the very beginning, take our stand and take the first step, paying close attention so that another door may open and more learning may begin.

Can you soften and let go of control while being strong enough to welcome this enigmatic *Chi*? Can you let the *Chi* express itself without holding back? Can you let go of tension in your

shoulders? And what about those wrists? Can you let the *Chi* reveal itself all the way to the fingertips? Justin called this flickering of the fingers one of the confirming signs of the *Chi* moving in the body. You become very conscious of your own body and how this *Chi* affects the unfolding of the movement. **Although the energy is flowing anyway, it will show you another way of how to be in harmony with it.**

The body stands tall like a strand of pearls, light and alert. It is ready to engage with this revealing *Chi* inside. The knees soften and the *tan t'ien* leads. Feel its anchor, its power. You are ready to let go of the effort. You are now soft and powerful all at the same time releasing the flow all the way to the fingertips. The wrists are pliable against the heavy air. You feel strong in each foot while moving and when stepping back into a graceful conclusion.

Once again, you open yourself to the possibility of the moment, you open yourself to the “same movements” and once again you listen. **Do you hear? Do you feel the music inside?** Let yourself become an instrument of the manifested *Chi*. Embrace it, and in that instant become love. Who wants to join in the play?



The Gain in Surrendering to the Practice

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

An essential aspect of doing T'ai Chi Chih is the precious benefit gained in the practice. It is a stillness of mind. There comes a cessation of striving as we lean into the present, attentive to the right now and the right here.

The 19 movements are perfectly designed to move the conscientious practitioner from their head-fullness, with its over-thinking, to the focal point of the practice: this moment, this shift, this *yin yang*. When we yield our intellect to the simple form and practice of each of the 19 movements, our busyness and cluttered thinking dissipates into the gentle flowing rhythm of each form through each repetition.

We live in an overstimulated world. Thoughts can collect like dust bunnies in the corners of our thinking, enticing us with “what-ifs” and “how-comes” and “how-about” and “just-three-mores.” It is such a great temptation to overthink the practice rather than yield into it. Like glittering baubles in a store window, meandering around in our labyrinthine thoughts can pull at us, distract and bind us away from truly noticing, attending to, participating in.

To feel the need to add to the practice is such a symptom of this over-produced culture and is essentially ego thinking. It is a form of distrust of the practice to achieve all that is needed, and so American of us: “if one is good, five more with a twist is better.” It reminds me of the story of Adam and Eve who had to give to themselves the one thing not given. To this day it is human nature to distrust, feeling a need to add some new angle. But do we really gain more when we do?

It is the being of not being that takes hold in the simple practice. To be present to the present is not something we do as much as it is an opening up to what is already here. Rather than struggle to be present, we allow ourselves to yield into the present; to flow into each repetition, to notice the now-ness of pressure upon the foot's sole. It doesn't take great understanding. It takes a letting go of understanding. Just notice.

Now is right here. Nothing more is needed. **Nothing more to give to the practice than our conscientious willingness.** The gain comes in the yielding. We allow one thing to occur to us at a time. We surrender as if surrender is most needed. No need to wrestle with notions, conceive addendums or produce reasonings. The here and now hungers to be noticed, lived in, embraced, befriended. It is already right here. It is we who just need to show up. TCC, as given, becomes a vehicle of settling in the now.



Now

By Christa Keller, Albuquerque, New Mexico
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Editor's Note: This powerful piece was inspired by Seijaku practice.

Now is the time to write. To Right the moment now. There is nothing more than this moment here and now that revealed the Ultimate Source. The Breath of Life Breathing in the infinite. The infinite that is unstoppable. The layering of energy and movement that ripples the water's surface while life exists beneath the water line below the sky that expands into forever. There are no boundaries for the breadth of Life. Every little thing is the fullest expression of the Supreme Ultimate. Right here, right now, allowing, simply open is being complete. Completely open and trusting the movement with softness. The motion is steadfast through the difficult times. The breaking through the

perceived hardness of life. It is not to harness the power but rather move through it with awareness and surprise. Life is a surprise as each moment is now. Being present now is being in the surprise of each moment that reveals the next opportunity. Being still in the moment is what propels us into the next moment, aligning us to receive the next gift. The motion after motion is the organic shift. Being in the presence of Life is Life. There is no other place to be but in the moment so that the next moment can occur.

What is the Goal?

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

How often have we ended up somewhere different than where we thought we wanted to finish. One thing amazing about Justin (and there were many) was how clear he was about the T'ai Chi Chih movements. He had an inner sense and knowing about what was important about TCC, and the part it played in our lives and the spiritual growth of life in general. It was not just a sense of what it would do in his life (as it did so much), but rather that it was an integral part of everything else. To this end he continually made the statement, "TCC has so much to offer if we don't change it." It is interesting to me that in spite of hearing this, or hearing it, that many people do change the movements in subtle ways. The goal is to do the movements as Justin told us and showed us, but somehow when it comes to doing it, we miss things. And if we are a TCC teacher; we then share those changes.



Above: Carmen Brocklehurst, pre-Covid-19 teaching in Lake Charles, LA.

One of the principles of TCC is balance. What we do on one side of the body, we do on the other side. On the movements where we move forward and backward, we move into a bent knee going forward, and we straighten the back knee, keeping the back foot parallel to the ground and lifting the heel only a slight amount. We do this nine times and close that side. Then we move to the other side and do the same. It seems like a simple move and it is. I think many of you would agree with me. Recently, I saw a video of a TCC teacher doing the movements. I was startled to see that the teacher started out by putting the left leg forward slightly bent and then shifted the weight forward by further bending rather than gradually straightening the back knee. **By doing this the teacher ended up with two bent knees, making both knees yang. This goes against the principle of balance; it changes the movement.** Instead of creating strength, the teacher will create weakness. And the teacher will share this erroneous movement, thus spreading weakness rather than strength.

Justin as left us many ways to check our movements. He left us video recordings on DVDs (now streaming), books and CDs so that what we pass on will greatly benefit us and our students. We have been gifted with TCC, Seijaku and Fast Track, which (when done correctly) carry the possibility of great healing and strength for the practitioner. It is up to each of us to do the movements as Justin asked. The movements truly are a healing gift if done correctly. With time and practice the movements will begin to share many secrets with us that go beyond the physical and take us to our goal of learning to love and share the *Chi*.

Beach... Gneiss... Feet...

By Verla J. Klassen, Shoreview, Minnesota

Thriving while reviving
So much more than surviving
As *Chi* revitalizing
Beginning
With T'ai Chi Chih
And Seijaku
Leading from the *tan t'ien*
Grounding
In the soles
Of my feet
While walking
The Pacific beach
During Rocking Motion
While standing barefoot
On Morganite Gneiss
An ancient millennia old rock
Found in Minnesota
While peering
Into the cerulean sky
Drinking in its beauty
While striding
Down a path
Between giant pine
While skirting a nearby lake
Up a trail
Awestruck
By the elegant white swans
Swimming down the stream
Earth's energy
Coursing through being
Entering
Through the soles
Of my feet



Dissolving Hinderances

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

When we are grounded enough and connected enough to the flow, life does just that: flows without hinderance. And what may seem to be hinderances have a way of dissolving or transmuting.

I realized I had that experience when teaching my very first T'ai Chi Chih class, although I didn't know it at the time. It is only in reading about my experience now that I have a new perspective on what happened. While clearing out some old files I came across an accounting I had written about teaching my first class. I do not journal or usually write about my experiences, so I was surprised to see this and don't remember having written it.

This is what I wrote a few days after teaching my first TCC class:

I remember having such a mixture of feelings that I was amazed one person could have so many emotions moving inside at once.

I had spent a fair amount of time during the preceding week preparing as best I could and then spending a couple of hours before class going over the teacher's manual (again), just to keep as much information foremost in my mind as possible. I also spent some time practicing TCC hoping this would calm me and clear my mind.

I surprised myself at my lack of nervousness. I was feeling very calm driving to class when I noticed the feeling of butterflies in my stomach, but I thought of them more in the realm of excitement than nervousness. Knowing that I had prepared the best I could gave me confidence not to be nervous, only excited.

Then I was standing in the room. Fifteen students had signed up for the class. They began to enter, and enter, and enter until 21 students filled the room. Just for a brief moment fear passed

through me, but then quickly changed to curiosity. I was curious if I would make it through the night. No, actually, I was anxious for the night to get on, wondering how things would go, would I lose my balance, would I get tongue tied, would I not be able to answer a question, knowing all of these and other unexpected things could happen. Yet I didn't fear them happening, I only felt curious, wondering if they would and how would I handle it.

My class ended with only a few minor glitches. A woman approached me and thanked me for the class and preceded to tell me she was under a lot of stress and didn't realize how much she was tied in knots until we began moving and she felt her insides unwind and her whole body relax. She will never know how much that meant to me to hear that after teaching my very first class.

Having confidence that I had prepared as best I could and confidence that what I was presenting had validity turned nervousness into excitement and fear into curiosity.

~ ~ ~

Reading this years later it sounds as if I was detached, somewhat, from the outcome, as if I was only curious as to how the evening would unfold and how Sandy would respond to events; let's see how she will handle this, let's see what she will say about that. I have a hard time believing I seemed so cool. That was 35 years ago. Where did that cool go? Where did that detachment to outcome go? Maybe I am not doing as much TCC or maybe the force was with me that night. I was wrapped in the flow, allowing me to let go.

It feels a bit narcissistic to share this personal experience and my feelings about it, but it demonstrates what Justin often referred to as Entering the Cosmic Rhythm. When we are deeply immersed in our TCC practice we can let go of all our conditioning and assumed expectations. The essence of our being, that which was before we were born, can truly express itself.

I am glad I had written my thoughts of that night. Not only did it bring back a good memory, but in reading it 35 years later I see what unfolded that night it in a different light. There are several other experiences over the years that I wish I had noted, ones that didn't make logical sense or seem noteworthy. If I could read about them now, I might see them in a different light.

I suppose it is not necessary to find meaning in our experiences or even understand them. But sometimes it can serve to shine a light on our path's journey. It may help us realize that things are happening on another level than what we may perceive in the moment.

May we move with confidence that this practice is a vehicle to removing not only energy blockages but conditioning, emotional and social restriction or blockages. As in my story it changed fear into curiosity and nervousness into excitement.



It's Not About the Hands

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

Did you know that T'ai Chi Chih is done primarily below the waist? Do you move as though this is true? Justin Stone emphasized this regularly. I've come to appreciate it more and more over the years of practice. It simplifies how we move, reduces muscular effort and encompasses most of the basic principles of how to move for increasing *Chi* flow.

The *tan t'ien* is about two inches below the waist, so if we flow from that center, we are moving primarily below the waist. As the *tan t'ien* moves forward, the weight shifts forward, moving the hands along with it. It's as though the hands and arms have no power to move on their own. They can only move with the *tan t'ien* and the shifting of the weight, forward and back, side to side, or even up and down in a few movements.

When first learning TCC, it is natural to pay more attention to the hand movements. However, at some point we discover that the hands are powered from below the waist. Even though most people first feel the flow of *Chi* in their hands, it comes from below. The *Chi* is rooted in the feet, comes up through the legs, is distributed by the waist and manifests in the fingers.

As we relax, moving with softness and continuity, the *Chi* flows smoothly through the meridian channels of the body. Letting go of muscular effort allows the hands and arms to be moved by the *tan t'ien* and weight shift.

We focus on the soles of the feet, feeling the weight shifting slowly and gradually from one foot to the other. At the end of the full weight shift, there is a moment when you are no longer moving forward, but haven't yet started moving backward, a moment of stillness. **It's like when you throw a ball straight up in the air, there's that moment when it's no longer going up, but it hasn't yet started coming down.**

Next time you practice TCC I invite you to really feel your way through the movements in the soles of the feet. Instead of moving the hands and arms yourself, let the weight shift move them for you softly, effortlessly. May you enjoy doing TCC primarily below the waist.

What Will Your New Normal Be?

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

After a year of teaching no in-person TCC classes due to the pandemic, I wonder if the old normal will ever return, or what a new normal might look like. While this world crisis has definitely upset the apple cart, it also has forced change and the need to think outside the box.

I would never have imagined teaching via the Internet while viewing my students on a TV screen. Yet now, after leading a few events in this way, I can report that it has been a good experience, one that enhanced teaching and learning, primarily because Zoom asks for and demands a keener focus and heightened level of awareness.

It has been a lesson in according with impermanence, which is one part of the twofold purpose for following a spiritual path (as so taught by Justin Stone). Most people resist change and therefore bring about unnecessary suffering. Adapting to Zoom provides a path to moving forward. This adopted resiliency expands our potential for good.

Fearing a changed future will not serve us. A deep knowing of who and what we are (the other part of the aforementioned twofold purpose) will motivate us and direct us forward. "Barn burned down. Now I can see the moon!" This is the true beauty and benefit of the TCC practice (and more so in integrating Seijaku and meditation).

How can you assist in this self-evolution? Increase your awareness through faithfulness to your practice and through attending available programs on Zoom. Clinging to the normal or familiar in our practice can result in becoming stuck.

We benefit by inviting new awareness which points us to an ever-evolving new normal. This is the path that will carry us and move us forward. Practice. Attend a program. Sign up for the teacher conference.



Above: Ann Pia and crew warm in 30-degree temps, after shoveling snow before practice

Surprise... Why, How, What

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

Much to my surprise I have found teaching T'ai Chi Chih on Zoom enjoyable! **Why** was I surprised? After all, sharing the *Chi* – teaching or practicing – anytime anywhere is enjoyable, joyful and joyous, isn't it? I was aware that I had resistance to teaching remotely with all of the technical issues with computers, software and whatnot. I overcame those practical obstacles and thought I was done. Surprise taught me otherwise.

How? Surprise arrives offering two potential gifts: 1) the gift of seeing with new eyes, and 2) the gift of wonder which always comes with the possibility of insight and inner growth.

The first gift of surprise sends an immediate spark, at times accompanied by a satisfying “ah ha” moment. One can take delight in it, but then... slip right back into the routine of living through the filtered stronghold of the *vasanas* and *samskaras*, our habit energies and patterns. These paths of least resistance, the “high-speed rail” of neural pathways, become even more chronic as a result. The new is not sustained. The patterns remain ingrained. The spark is gone.

Or, the gift of seeing anew can provide a second gift: the spark of surprise evolving into the sparkle of wonder. How does wonder manifest? *Seeing with new eyes*, if acknowledged consciously, can interrupt an assumption or a habitual belief beyond the “ah ha,” offering an opportunity to study the subject at hand, in this case the self; self-study (i.e., gaining insight into the thoughts and ideas we hold). These thoughts and ideas percolate to the surface and beg for examination. This process begins with humility and sincerity – *teh*. One must be interested – self-interested – and touched with humility to gain access to introspection. Justin spoke of the habit energies and encouraged us to examine them through introspection. **Justin said that if we would practice TCC regularly our insight would continue to develop and deliver us to the Truth.**

What did I learn about myself and **what** changed? I discovered that I believed my teaching would not be received, that the *Chi* would not communicate directly with the students through me, that the barrier of remote learning would be too vast. My arrogance posed as insecurity as if in secret. Through this wonder-filled moment of surprise I saw the Truth and Love of the *Chi*, and the Truth and Love of me. I have come to understand that there are no **real** barriers in sharing this Truth, this Love, this *Chi*.

Consider Continuity

By Bill Nakao, Bainbridge Island, Washington
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Softness and continuity are among the principles of how to move in T'ai Chi Chih. Softness is discussed often; continuity is not mentioned as much and might get overlooked as a key to a quality practice.

There is continuity within a movement, and continuity from movement to movement. I want to discuss the latter. (I will use continuity and continuous somewhat interchangeably, although they are not identical concepts.)

Caroline Guilott wrote an excellent article in the February 2014 *Vital Force* titled, “Hovering or Landing,” in which she asked Justin about holding the close, to which he replied, “It is all continuous, dear.” This somewhat cryptic reply indicates how all parts of a practice need continuity and are joined together. Justin has also described the need for a continuous connection from the start of Rocking Motion all the way through Cosmic Consciousness Pose. He described this as a thread that runs through an entire practice, joining all the movements together, from beginning to end. With this thread, we make our practice an integrated whole, and not just 19 separate, unconnected movements.

How do we make this thread in our practice? I suggest that an important part of a practice is the spaces between the movements, the intervals when we return to the rest position as we make a “graceful conclusion” and pause before the next movement. As we finish a movement, we keep a quiet mind and remain in the moment. As we do this without conscious thought, we let go of the completed movement and allow the *Chi* to lead the body naturally into the next movement. The ending of one movement is the beginning of the next. By doing this, we flow from one movement to the next. Even though we stop at rest, our feeling is continuous throughout the entire practice.

Try doing a practice paying particular attention to the spaces between the movements. Give them as much importance as all other parts of a movement.

Below: Browse featured teacher profiles at taichichih.org/teacher/teacher/featuring/

ler-	Joan Roulac	Mary White	Jungmin Lee	Dennis McCann
Verified Listing! Yes	Verified Listing! Yes	Verified Listing! Yes	Verified Listing! Yes	Verified Listing! Yes

What Makes a TCC Practice so Amazing?

By Dora Wiemann, Albuquerque, New Mexico
taichichih.org/teacher/dora-wiemann

What makes a T'ai Chi Chih practice so amazing? If we ask ourselves this question before we practice, we can usually come up with a multitude of ingredients to make an amazing recipe for practice.

We start with the principles of TCC, such as shifting the weight fully (allowing the body to stay upright), loose wrists and waist, being grounded, etc. Following these principles and focusing on even just one of them will take us far in deepening our practice. Our aches and pains might subside or even disappear for some time. We're more relaxed; the stress of everyday living is forgotten for a bit.

We can also add feelings, attitudes and awareness to our recipe. It changes everything to entertain openness, connection, sincerity (*teh*) or letting go (while staying grounded). Our awareness of our connection to all of life increases in a beautiful way. We become more comfortable with ourselves and more in harmony with the world.

But wait, there's more. Here's where our recipe's ingredients are written in invisible ink. We can take the more subtle approach of not trying, allowing the movements to express themselves through us. All we have to do is be present (grounded) and allow. When we are just being present in our bodies and allowing the movements to express themselves – we are flowing with the movements. No thinking, no trying – just being present and experiencing the flow of the energy that is always happening. This is the effort of no effort that Justin Stone expressed so often. We have let go of our perceived limitations and dance, so to speak, in our true nature: joy.

As we finish the movements, we become aware again of our relationship to our everyday life with its details. We might feel as though we have had an internal bath, as Justin has written in the TCC textbook. After such a deep TCC practice, we allow the experience of peace and wholeness to express through the world of the 10,000 things. We have no words to adequately describe the experience because they would not encompass the fullness of the practice. And all we can say is, "That was amazing!"

TCC, Awareness, Balance & Life Itself

By Ivonne Begue de Benzo, Rochester, Minnesota
taichichih.org/teacher/ivonne-begue-de-benzo

When I decided to pursue teacher training in T'ai Chi Chih, I was driven to embrace heightened awareness, not just in the movements but also in my life. I was consumed by being more present moment-by-moment in my daily life.

After becoming a teacher, working with a mentor, teaching and practicing regularly, I came to a realization: it is hard to embrace the heightened awareness of TCC in daily life. Balance has to come in the context of the flow of daily life; it is messy and challenging.

I am a graduate student in a Masters of Positive Psychology program and as part of my program, I have to conduct a research study. I challenged myself again: I want to explore the impact of TCC on eating awareness. Losing weight or/and maintaining a healthy weight is extremely hard.

Mindless eating is one of the main factors reported by science to explain the growing epidemic of obesity. It's been an unhealthy coping strategy during stressful periods: reacting to events and looking for comfort in food. Being in school, studying Positive Psychology and disseminating helpful ways to process emotions also informs my experience.

There is a knowledge gap about interventions to increase awareness, and I am persuaded that TCC is a great candidate for awareness of satiety and mindful eating. I welcome the opportunity to use TCC principles in daily life, including simple stuff like the way I eat.

I plan to do a qualitative study interviewing TCC teachers to craft an awareness intervention for mindful eating. I hope to find greater understanding of the TCC practice too. Utilizing TCC to help cope with daily life's challenges will bring even more joy and fulfillment in the practice. I hope this new adventure will raise my own awareness in my relationship with the food and life itself.



Jing(le) All The Way

By Annette McNeil, Brick, New Jersey
taichichih.org/teacher/annette-mcneil

“As one progresses, he begins to live more and more intuitively.”

— JUSTIN STONE, *HEIGHTENED AWARENESS*

This story unfolds through a series of interconnections within the flow of *Chi*-inspired events. I was hospitalized in January 2020 for a chronic condition and unable to attend Sr. Antonia’s retreat that year. I gratefully received a get-well card initiated by Mary Cerullo, a dear friend and fellow TCC teacher, and signed by some participants in good will.

The card, “Drinking deeply of God,” was illustrated and illuminated by Sr. Antonia Cooper and is now proudly displayed in my home. Over the years as a TCC student and then teacher, I would periodically attempt to engage my husband in learning the practice I found so life affirming.

Ed preferred his pursuits of music, art and sailing as his bliss; I learned to let it go. When we both finally retired, we bought a camper van to explore the country. I named it, Jing, in honor of life’s essence and Justin’s gift of Seijaku to TCC teachers. And I cherish my TCC/Seijaku morning practice while on the road wherever that may be.

Like any union there are topics of disagreements; getting a spare tire for our Jing was one of them. Nevertheless, the tire was mounted and a cover, designed by Ed, was ordered. He was rather evasive about the design so I let it go. When the cover was secured, I casually walked by it and was totally caught off guard as it depicted Sr. Antonia’s design with our van’s name, Jing. It was then that I realized *Pranja* was working. It’s magic all the way.



Backyard TCC: A Silver Lining

By Marija Hillis, Berkeley, California
taichichih.org/teacher/marija-hillis

After my accreditation in November 2019, I was excited about expanding my sharing of T’ai Chi Chih beyond the volunteering I had been doing twice a week at a senior housing facility. I continued attending TCC classes offered through a local senior center but was exploring ideas for a class of my own. Then came COVID-19, and my volunteering was put on hold. Several friends encouraged me to teach an outdoor class in a local park, which was not ideal since the surface was uneven, and the noisy grass cutting tractors came every other week. After a few weeks, the city health department clamped down further and discouraged any kind of group exercise. Not to be thwarted and denied, one friend offered his backyard for our meetings, and soon there were three backyards, four weekly classes and 24 students, some attending more than one class.

We have followed safety protocols by wearing masks and maintaining distance as recommended. We only canceled class when the air quality was unhealthy due to the California wildfires, or the occasional rainy day. However, after getting a laptop, the demand for TCC on rainy days compelled me to learn how to teach via the Internet, as so many other teachers have been doing during the shutdown.

The most gratifying thing about teaching TCC is how dedicated and committed the students become so soon after starting. I shouldn’t be surprised by this because I experienced the benefits of TCC even during my first class seven years ago. Now that I have a commitment to lead four TCC groups a week, my own practice has deepened, and I have learned better ways of teaching and inspiring my students.

After several months of teaching backyard TCC it is hard to imagine going back to indoor practice. They are a little slice of paradise and a silver lining to the many hardships of the pandemic year. The sounds and sights of nature are a perfect accompaniment to the gentle rhythms of TCC movements. Birdsong, the fragrance of jasmine and flowering fruit trees bring all the senses to the present moment as we join together in mindful movement.



Our Experience of TCC

By Loretta and Gil Weimer, Saskatchewan, Canada

Donna was teaching T'ai Chi Chih at Queens House, and I'd always been interested in learning the practice. Because the class began on my 68th birthday; I decided it would be a perfect time to begin.

After the session I didn't practice any of the movements. A month passed and Donna came to our home to go through half the movements with my husband and me. It was enough to get him hooked and enough to get me through a practice confidently. We found some practices we could follow online. It took a while to flub our way through all the movements. The handouts were very helpful, too, especially the one that lists all the movements in order.

We were still having difficulties doing the four Pulling Taffy movements and Passing Clouds. Donna asked if we wanted a DVD. She shared it and went through an extremely helpful practice with us. Now we are quite confident. Since then we have been doing TCC almost every day. The movements are graceful, centering, peaceful and calming.

My husband and I are trying to find some common interests in our retirement. And we very much enjoy doing this together. We have also found the DVD very easy to follow. My husband's balance is better, his sleep is higher quality and the circulation in his legs has improved. We have only been doing this for a month and are looking forward to more benefits.

When my hips, knees or legs start to ache, the pain goes away by the time I have completed a practice. That's also making me more peaceful and serene, which is my daily goal. This is a wonderful tool to improve the quality of life; mind, body and spirit.



The New Normal; Thank Goodness for TCC

By Donna Aldous, Dorintosh, Saskatchewan, Canada
taichichih.org/teacher/donna-aldous

With all the changes in life, we have at least one constant: our daily T'ai Chi Chih practice. I'm not sure where I'd be without the grounding, the energy, the joy and the peace of knowing we are in the cosmic dance.

We sold our property in August in Mesa, Arizona. After 13 years of being snowbirds, it was over. Our sale was swift and worry free. Now what to do? By mid-January we had a permanent suite in a co-operative building with all the amenities we wanted. Five other applicants had to decline it for us to get it. We have loved our time in our new city, and I have started TCC classes at Queen's House Retreat Center and a Monday morning class at our Manor. We are now getting ready to move back to the lake for the summer and more TCC on my dock.

Yesterday Justin Told Me to Turn my Waist

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

I always looked forward to Tuesday mornings with Justin. After becoming a T'ai Chi Chih teacher, I re-arranged my work schedule to attend those TCC teacher practices. Twenty other teachers, most working full time, would often be there. I knew I needed to be there. I was joyful and grateful while driving to practice. Justin was smiling as we entered the TCC Center.

I had the intention to deepen my practice, to be open to learning. What did Justin do on Tuesdays? He did a TCC practice; he told us to bend our knees and turn our waist. And it was tremendous. He did not have new teaching methods. He did not have new material. He corrected us.

I watched Justin closely, and now realize that I focused on his feet – very helpful for grounding. I still watch him on DVD often and still find it helpful for grounding. Watching the video of Justin, I hear new things all the time. Yesterday he told me to turn my waist, and it was wonderful.

The Grand Plan and the I Ching

My first trip to Japan took place because a newfound friend, let's call her Dr. C., suggested I accompany her to Kyoto and teach English at Kyoto University. It wasn't until just before the boat was to leave that I found out that the teaching job was fiction, and that she was not going to Japan as planned. I took the freighter anyway and was its only passenger.

Expecting to arrive in Yokohama (the port for Tokyo), we docked instead in Kobe. Somehow I made my way to Kyoto and was delighted to be able to stay in a Zen temple within the week. I was determined to use that week to travel to Tokyo and find my friend, Paul Reps, who was living in Japan.

At the time no express trains ran between the cities. My old-style train car was half-empty, and I decided to spend the five-hour trip practicing my limited Japanese with homemade flash cards.

A Japanese man entered the car soon after I. He hesitated a moment, trying to decide which empty seat to take. Then, on impulse, he sat down next to me. He later told me the flashcards had interested and amused him.

This turned out to be one of the most significant meetings of my life. In future years I often stayed at Tenrikyo Church in Kyoto, where Reverend Takahashi, my new acquaintance, was a minister. Today we call each other *kyodai* (brother). Perhaps I have had some small influence in bringing their church to this country. Largely because of their kindness and hospitality, I still think of Kyoto as my home as much as any place in the world – all because of some crude flashcards with Japanese characters on them...

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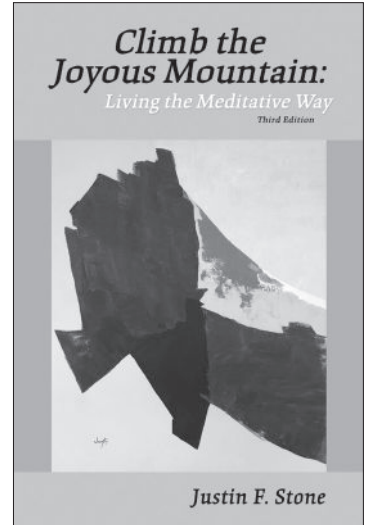
All this is preliminary to the story I really want to tell, however. It involves the *I Ching*, the ancient *Book of Changes* that has played such an important role in building Chinese culture.

When the ship on which I was traveling had put into Hong Kong harbor for repairs, we were tied up in Kowloon for a few days. This gave my new friend, Mr. Liu (whom I had met through a letter from Paul Reps), a chance to show me his fine art gallery, do an amazing reading of the lines on my hand, and arrange a dinner with some old Buddhists who crossed over from China. (Mr. Liu was a fine and knowledgeable Taoist.) By the time the boat was repaired and we were underway, I was much indebted to the kind Mr. Liu.

Our dinner took place at an old restaurant near the art gallery on Cameron Road. We did not

eat downstairs with the other diners, rather, we had a special table upstairs from where we could see the gambling room behind open curtains. I had no idea if the gambling was legal, but there was certainly a lot of action going on. Well aware of the Chinese propensity for gambling, I was not surprised to see several young mothers playing with infants in their arms. (Wealthy Chinese living on the English side of Hong Kong, though unable to speak English, peruse day-old stock market tables of the *Wall Street Journal* and are remarkably well-informed.) I had no idea what kind of gambling was taking place, but the pace was feverish.

When our party was seated, we began to drink quite a lot of warm Chinese rice wine, which is very mellowing. It soon became apparent that Mr. Liu and his erudite friend, Mr. Tung, were the only ones who spoke English. But this didn't seem to dampen the conversation, which was on an increasingly deep level and mostly about Taoist concepts. A steady procession of tasty dishes appeared at our table and we speared them with our chopsticks in the Chinese fashion. No dish was on the table more than a few minutes – just long enough for a taste before it was gone, replaced by a seemingly endless stream of delicacies.



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



I remember thinking, “These ‘ascetics’ really eat well.” There was a pleasant haze from the wine, a feeling of well-being from the delicious food, and a heightened sense of awareness as we leisurely explored the cosmos together. I remembered what another Chinese host had once said to me, “You have come a long way. The least we can do is offer you good food and good company.”

When the evening regretfully ended, **Mr. Tung took me aside and said he had something to give me the following day before my boat left.** I was surprised but arranged to have tea with him on the balcony in the giant terminal next to our ship’s berth.

The next day Mr. Tung arrived exactly on time, carrying a slim red book under his arm. He handed it to me with a triumphant smile.

“Thank you,” I said somewhat hesitantly. A quick glimpse revealed a book written entirely in Chinese (which I do not read). “This book contains a mathematical discussion of the *I Ching*,” he explained. *The Book of Changes* can be used for divination, as a work of deepest philosophy, or as a source from which to study three thousand years of Chinese culture.

“I want you to take it with you,” he continued in a kindly manner, “You will have need of it.”

“But I don’t read Chinese,” I protested. “And I have such limited space. Traveling across the world for a year, staying in snowy countries, in jungles, and in big cities, I have had to throw out everything extraneous so I can get by with just one bag. Forgive me for seeming ungrateful, but ...”

He shook his head decisively. “Take the book,” he commanded. “You will see.” With that he rose and was gone in an instant, through the dense crowd packing the terminal.

I stared at the book, which seemed useless to me. Nevertheless, it was not large and had many fascinating diagrams, which I thought I might examine at another time. So I placed it in a pocket of my carryall bag and promptly forgot about it. This was probably in November.

Almost a year later, I returned to Los Angeles by plane from New York, having completed my swing to the West through India and Africa. One of the first people I phoned upon my arrival in Los Angeles was my good friend, the eminent scholar, Professor Wen-Shan Huang.

“I am glad you arrived back today,” he exclaimed in a delighted tone of voice. “This afternoon I am giving a talk to a large audience on the *I Ching*, and I would like you to come with me to hear it.”

Something clicked in my mind, something I had forgotten for so many months. Asking the professor to wait a moment, I went to my unpacked bag. Sure enough, the slim red volume was still there.

“Professor Huang,” I spoke into the phone, “I have a book about the *I Ching* which I have been carrying around the world for almost a year. Would you like to see it?”

I could visualize his indulgent smile at the other end. “Thank you, but I think I am familiar with all the *I Ching* commentaries. The only book I would be interested in is a rare volume of mathematical calculations on the *I Ching*, which I once saw many, many years ago in Shanghai. But that book was written in Chinese.”

I hastily explained that this book, too, was in Chinese and contained a mathematical system of the *I Ching*. I begged Professor Huang not to move, that I would come as quickly as traffic would allow.

When I arrived, **Professor Huang took one look at the book and stated, “I have waited thirty years to find this volume.”** He then opened to the first page, on which Mr. Tung had evidently written a fitting inscription, seemingly aware that the book would find its way into the Professor’s hands.

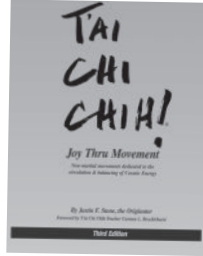
A broad smile filled the older man’s face as he read the long inscription, written carefully in beautiful Chinese characters. He did not attempt to interpret the message, but it was obvious that Mr. Tung’s message had hit its mark. Seldom have I seen the professor smile so brightly. Then, placing the book under his arm, he walked briskly to the car with me, and soon we were on our way to his lecture. I have often wondered, whether Mr. Tung might not have been the author of the mysterious book.



Closing

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

Editor's Note: Excerpted from Justin Stone's (Blue) Photo Text available in print and in an e-book from justinstonetcc.com.



- “To close, we raise the arms nearly to the chest, then lower them to the sides (not to the front) in a graceful finishing pose, with our knees slightly bent.” (pg. 27)
- “We finish, stepping back, slightly bending the knees and holding the rest position for four to five seconds to let the *yang* and *yin* energies flow back together.” (pg. 28)
- “The hands return to the chest and then drop gently down to the closing position... and our hands are spread with the palms down and parallel to the ground.” (pg. 30)
- “We step back so the feet are together and we lower the hands to a graceful close and relax in this position for 4-5 seconds.” (pg. 32)
- “From the chest position we gently drop the hands to the sides as we step back.” (pg. 34)
- “With the wrists loose and pliable, we step back and drop the hands gently from the chest position and then come to a graceful close.” (pg. 36)
- “The hands come up and then down to the sides... as we step back so that the feet come together.” (pg. 40)
- *Daughter in the Valley*: “Upon completion of the movement, the feet come together and the hands are slightly apart at the shoulder. From there they gradually come down to the rest pose.” (pg. 44)
- “To close, the feet come together and we make a gradual descent of the hands until we reach the position of rest.” (pg. 54)
- We must do all the movements slowly and evenly, with no tension at all.” (pg. 56)
- *Pulling Taffy*: “We finish in the position of repose by bringing the insubstantial left leg to join the right.” (pg. 60)
- *Light at the Top of the Head / Light at the Temple*: “The palms proceed up to chest level, turn both downward and come down to the position of rest.” (pg. 76)
- *Joyous Breath*: “Then bring the hands into the rest position.” (pg. 78)
- *Passing Clouds*: “We close by bringing the feet together (the right foot comes over to the left) and coming to the rest position.” (pg. 80)
- *Six Healing Sounds*: “We then bring the hands to the sides in a graceful conclusion.” (pg. 86)
- *Cosmic Consciousness Pose*: “We look through slightly spread fingers.... This might be held 30 seconds or more, then the arms are lowered slowly to the sides.” (pg. 91)

Untitled

By Cindy Nelson,
Minnetonka, Minnesota

Vibrant energy of the Universe
Active waves of life
Always transforming
With the gold shards of experiences
Calm blue center
Supported by Tai Chi Chih



The Secret to Having it All is Knowing You Already Do

By Victor J. Dougherty,
Kansas City, Missouri

There is a special silence,
That comes with the falling snow.
As if every flake has a secret,
It shares only with the cold.
And still there is a part of me,
That knows this quiet song,
That falls with grace,
Like a snowflake, from heaven's open palm.
And comes to light on ledge or leaf,
On field or freckled face,
And here I sit... amazed,
That neither is ever in the wrong place.

Beginner's Mind

By Bryan Fain, Fort Collins, Colorado

My T'ai Chi Chih teacher moves with grace, balance, strength and stability. She's the promise of healing, energy and calm. I imitate her and slowly progress. She shows me how to move. The movements begin to come, but there's a lot to do without doing. Empty the mind, focus attention on the soles of the feet or just below the belly button, left and right weight shifts, *yinning* and *yanging* legs, loose wrists making circular arm motions, fingers spread apart, slightly cupped hands, polarity, waist turns, continuity, relaxed effort, softness swimming through heavy air. Practice, practice, practice. The weeks go by.

She flows effortlessly in serenity. I try and try. I learn it's not about trying. It's about being the movement. My mind is everywhere: memorizing the order of the movements, the principles of how to move, self-conscious awkwardness. Mental distractions and daydreaming disconnect me from my practice. Sloppy habits come with disconnectedness. My teacher invites me to a weekly group practice including several other TCC teachers led by Marie Dotts. The group practicing together generates positive energy and motivation. Marie shares her practice, experience and the knowledge, wisdom and joy that her practice brings her and through her to all of us. The months go by.

A weekend workshop is organized and brings Bill Moore to us. He embodies the balance, strength and serenity of my teacher, Marie and the other TCC teachers. He highlights the wisdom of our bodies and the power of the movements to circulate and balance the Intrinsic Energy. Along with Marie he emphasizes the connection and wholeness of mind, body, spirit and the animating *Chi*.



I go back to Justin Stone and to emptying my mind. Focusing attention on the present moment of each movement. Allowing the movement to circulate the *Chi*, remaining attentive to the flow and continuity of each movement in each moment. Aware that a deep and profound stillness remains when my practice is complete and the next present moment is here. The breakthrough comes with our capacity to stay connected with each present moment, with whatever it brings and the power of TCC to circulate and balance in us the Intrinsic Energy. But disconnecting habit energies return. Practice, practice, practice.

Struggling Times & a Choice?

By John Marquez, Antioch, California

This last year has been challenging. Having this community, the practice of T'ai Chi Chih and meditation has helped me to endure. Being in the moment is intriguing yet difficult with our busy minds and lifestyle. So, I practice and practice. Hearing people talk of such things as "How things used to be" ... "When or will we be back to normal" ... "Is this the end of the world" is concerning. Dwelling on memories of what was and fantasies of the future can be stressful and unhealthy.

The Zen question comes to mind: "What is this moment lacking?" Each moment is pure. Nothing is lacking. Be in the "now" comes to mind. As I practice, my awareness is developing, and I experience strong feelings of joy. It makes the "now" very pleasant.

In TCC we learn of *yin/yang*, the opposites. As we enjoy the feeling of joy and happiness, we also visit sorrow, grief and doubt. This can draw you into a dark place of confusion and sadness. I know this place and have visited there recently. **The difference this time is that I am aware of it.** The practice of TCC and the wisdom of Justin's words have given me the tools to recognize it.

During my practice I feel the stillness and quiet within. Coming to the resting position, I breathe and feel the vibration of the *Chi* energy. My higher self says to me, "Choose. It is your choice." So, I choose to discard that dark place, put it on the shelf and take joy back into my life. As I write these words, I hear Carmen's voice, "Smile," and naturally I do. Making conscious choices is a responsibility we have to ourselves. Choosing to embrace life's struggles, we have the opportunity to transform and to grow. Live in this moment fully and enjoy. Make each day better than the last. Gift yourself choices that enhance you, and the world around you will flourish.

High in the Desert

By Laura Star, Duluth, Minnesota
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Under the brilliant starry sky before daybreak, I softly close the door of our RV and walk through cacti, palo verde, brittle bush, cholla, iron wood and mesquite to my special place, my energy vortex. A few gentle stones, randomly set on the edge of my circle. The sand is softer here, with the larger pebbles moved to the sides. Facing east toward Golden Gate Mountain with the sky brightening, I sink in and focus on my breath as I center myself.

I begin Rocking Motion slowly, not counting. Bringing my attention to my feet, I rock and move the *Chi* through my meridians. I become aware of the doves calling softly, cactus wrens joining in. As I get to Pulling Taffy, the resident pack of coyotes begin their song and I smile. Joy. Joy through Movement, joy through awareness of the vibrant life surrounding me. When I get to Cosmic Consciousness pose, the sky is pink at the horizon.

I have practiced in this same spot for several years here in Tucson, where my husband and I have been campground hosts. From November through April the temperature in the morning has averaged around 50 degrees. On many mornings I wear the same clothing that I would wear in the northern Midwest where

we have a home - wool socks, wool jacket and gloves, hat and neck gaiter. When it is warm enough I practice barefoot to feel the earth beneath me.

Before COVID-19, I taught T'ai Chi Chih classes every winter here. This is the first year that I was not asked to teach. I did practice TCC with a woman who has been part of every class I've taught there since 2016. I miss the classes and the students. Hopefully next year will allow a freer atmosphere.

We return to the Northland this week, trading cacti and coyotes for birch trees and loons. There I practice at dawn at the edge of the front lawn next to the bank, looking out toward the lake, facing east. Chipmunks skip across the stone border at the top of the embankment a few feet away from me. Occasionally a brave one will pause and, as if on a dare, will dash within inches of my feet. A loon in the middle of the still lake will create a bit of magic with a beautiful echoing song.

TCC has offered a remarkable connection to Nature and Self. I become so much a part of the natural world. TCC brings a heightened sense of our mutual connection to all of Life. Raising our awareness through TCC practice is the greatest gift we give to ourselves and to our world. I remember that as our outer world gets crazier by the day, and as we lose freedoms. I focus on light, love and *Chi*. May we all have the best year ever.



Healing

By George Zimmerman

By the time I went to live with Nicole that year, it had been a few years since she had received her ALS diagnosis. She had gracefully adapted to her changing body. She had started taking T'ai Chi Chih classes at the Y. I went too. She practiced daily preferably outdoors. With great determination she would get up and do a standing practice. With the grounding, balancing effects of TCC, she began to rely less and less on her wheelchair. She moved for about three years without it.

Inevitably the disease progressed. The last three years of her life she was confined to a deluxe motorized wheelchair. Eventually only her right index finger responded to commands from her brain. She directed four plays a year, two in a minimum-security prison. She did not invoke pity. She'd wheel into a room and beam. She embodied joy.

Nicole continued her daily practice. She would recline in that chair, feet raised. She'd close her eyes and do the practice in her etheric body; she imagined herself going through the movements. Her face would take on a beatific smile and her feet would go from blue to pink. Energy follows thought. Form follows energy.

Eleven years after doctors gave her one year to live, she passed peacefully. She held on until we were all there: three best friends and all three children She had raised them to be strong and independent.

TCC supported Nicole's healing, more strongly connecting her to spirit. Sometimes the ultimate healing is transition. Nicole was an inspiration to a wide circle of people. Everyone who met her shined a little brighter for having known her.

The Cosmology of TCC

By Rita Otis, Omaha, Nebraska
taichichih.org/teacher/rita-otis

Many years ago, I was on a group river rafting trip and offered to teach some T'ai Chi Chih before breakfast. As I talked to the group about the polarity of *yin* and *yang*, I had them playing with an imaginary energy ball between their palms. Suddenly a retired gentleman shouted: "I feel it, I feel it." He was laughing in delight. That's joy through movement.

I also remember a student taking a private lesson. As she did the movements she began to almost giggle. She said they made her feel so happy. At the time I was a bit envious. I was trying to do it right and she was having a joy ride with Spirit.

I have often thought I needed to reach some meditative state while doing TCC. That somehow if I did the form correctly and let go of monkey mind, joy and peace would settle on me. There are definitely times when my practice is relaxed contentment, but I want that joy of movement that bubbles up and spills out in delight.

I am getting glimpses of it as I give myself more and more permission to do TCC as TCC wants to be done with me. Doing Bass Drum I am turning the wheel of life. Around the Platter is stepping into a flaming hoop of vibrant energy. The "Taffies" are heaven and earth energy that flow around me in a figure eight and extend to infinity. Each movement affirms my place and immersion in the universe.

TCC is also a meditation that allows the body/mind to settle into "no thought," a resting in Source. But at this time, I need to play and co-create with Source energy. The magic is in the Cosmology of TCC, aligning with the generative loving energy that creates life.

The Music Within

By Bruce Lee, Havertown, Pennsylvania
taichichih.org/teacher/bruce-lee

I believe that there exists within each of us a unique vibration that exists as a harmonic of the One, universal vibration. We tune into that vibration when we shift into "the zone" – when we are one with our moving meditation.

Our practice stimulates that vibration and that vibration expresses itself as "music" – music of the soul, the music within. And the power of *teh*, our inner sincerity, moves us to express that music – harmoniously sharing our unique vibrations. Doing so contributes to making our collective resonance even more beautiful and vibrant. As we do so, we enter into the Cosmic Rhythm. The vibration within each of us honors and resonates with the vibration within each other.

I believe that it is our duty and ultimately our destiny: to uncover and express our divinely unique vibration and to share that special music within.

Seijaku

By Carolyn Pogwist, Bloomingdale, New Jersey
taichichih.org/teacher/carolyn-pogwist

I experience Seijaku on several levels. Sometimes I feel like I am "Polarity in Motion." I am simultaneously being held back and moving forward for a moment until I feel myself free and flowing. I can visualize any obstacles in my life holding me back, and in the process of encountering them, I pass through them to resolution.

Attending the Seijaku retreat reminded me of the importance of using meditation as a tool to fully experience the principles of T'ai Chi Chih/Seijaku. Sharing thoughts and feelings with others is invaluable in prompting some "ah-ha" moments that I might have missed if not for hearing something somebody else shared. It's not about the words; it's about the experience.



A Perspective on Moving

By Susan Corey,
Ridley Park, Pennsylvania
taichichih.org/teacher/susan-corey/

As Justin Stone reminds us in the T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text, when moving "... energy appears to be flowing and, we are just shaping it." We can also similarly shape time, a luxury that can vex or energize us. From a movement analysis/description perspective, I've been shaping time to play with the concepts of effort and flow in order to clarify instruction language and enhance the practice and teaching of TCC (especially with beginners). **Some thoughts follow about the art and science of teaching, movement analysis/description and folding those into TCC instruction.**

Through the work of Rudolf Laban, Irmgard Bartenieff and others, a method for the systematic description of movement and movement patterns known as the Effort/Shape Method was developed in the 1940s. Flow, weight, time and space are known as Effort Factors. Qualitative change in each factor occurs in a range between two extremes. It looks like this:

Flow / Free ----- Bound

Weight / Light ----- Strong

Time / Sustained ----- Quick

Space / Indirect ----- Direct

Movement at any point on these continua is neither good nor bad. Simply, these are descriptors to help us understand how we move and what characteristics of movement are a part of our profile and our students'. People are often characterized as having a soft or loud voice, but we frequently pay no attention to individual characteristic movements.

Being aware of these factors may help us in teaching the movement aspect of TCC. And while this understanding may assist in clarification and enhance instruction with students, it by no means takes away from the richness of metaphors that most teachers already use when teaching, e.g., moving is like the effort of no effort, moving through heavy air, luxuriate in the movement.

A few examples:

Free flow reminds us of relaxation; bound flow engenders tension – but not tense muscles as with gripping. Quality of flow is determined by the relationship of the muscles that are tensed. With all movement there is some muscular tension. Free flow is frantically waving hands trying to get a friend's attention; bound flow is carrying a hot cup of coffee across a room to that friend.

Lightness within the weight factor may look like gently guiding a toddler by the hand to a seat, a strong movement stopping that toddler from running into the street.

Sustained movement is taking your time



walking down a street smelling the roses; quick is running to catch the bus.

When considering space, indirect is like driving a car when you need to be aware of many points of focus at once, what is behind you and on the side of you as well as having eyes on the road. Direct movement is pure focus, putting the finishing touches on an elaborate cake decoration.

In terms of movement, the Basic Effort Actions of weight, time, and space will suffice for this discussion. TCC is more light than strong, more sustained than quick and more direct than indirect. This in Basic Effort Action is known as a glide: light, sustained and direct.

When students enter the TCC safe learning zone, we meet them where they are and along with the practice of TCC take them where they need to be. For instance, by understanding that a student's movement profile is more characteristic of quick, strong and direct movements, an "aha" moment is revealed. This student will need time to learn how to moderate quickness and strength so that those movements become more sustained and light. Less work will be necessary with regard to space. This approach to movement may be most applicable with beginning learners; it also may be better used when assessing who among students may need the most assistance. Simply having an awareness of what students bring to us regarding their personal movement style may guide us to consider a different perspective in our teaching efforts. In addition, you may want to consider your everyday movement style within the paradigm of Basic Effort Actions.

Movement is fascinating in all its aspects. Teaching TCC as meditation through movement is indeed a treasure. Hopefully the above provides a consideration of where individual students may be on the continua of weight, time and space – and may then clarify where students need more of our instructional guidance.

At left: World T'ai Chi Day in Northern Colorado (NoCo)

A Short Practice of Three

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

Between this, that and the other, a day will slip away without finding time to do a full 45-minute practice. But what about a practice of 15 or 20 minutes? Or a practice with only three repetitions for each movement. Just three? Yep, but what a three!

Daniel Pienciak laid the groundwork when we were running out of time before lunch at his Intensive event. Daniel asked us to make each movement the best we could, since we only had time for three or four of each.

Then there's what Jim Hecker wrote recently in the *Vital Force*. When he asked Justin why nine repetitions, Justin responded, "If you do nine, you may get one right."

Then there was a workshop with Bill Moore. During a break, he had me gently hold onto a pine needle on one of the nearby pine trees. "What did you feel?", he asked. Interesting.

Putting it all together: I can't do what many can; I don't have the Carmen Brocklehurst gift of feeling when I've completed nine repetitions. I keep a running count in my head to reach nine. But three I can do without counting. So now I'm out of my head and more into my weight shifts.

Moving

By Trish Winger, Melbourne, Florida
taichichih.org/teacher/patricia-winger/

Moving Towards Smooth Movements

Reflecting on my instructions to the class to keep the torso still except for the turning of the waist, I mimicked my older sister, who learned to walk regally with a book on her head. The book certainly kept extraneous movements to a minimum. I tried a couple of movements at home before carrying a hardcover book with me to class. I spoke about the need for quiet, calm movements like a predator stalking prey, or simply being more meditative which comes with TCC. I then put the book on my head and began the practice. To my surprise, it only slipped off once. More amazingly, everyone empathized with my effort, and their heads were higher, backs straighter and the movements more smooth, harmonic and meditative. If you try it, I recommend using a smaller paperback.

With Rocking Motion, I always do more repetitions to loosen up my tight shoulders and knees and feel the "playground swing."

After that, my sets of three are slow and soft, and they allow me to let go of the upper body, and slowly feel the weight shift in the feet, and softly feel what's "right." With three, we can take the time to feel every nuance, and then interesting things happen. I feel what I felt flowing through that tiny pine needle.

I used to think that the hands just replicated the weight shift, just went along for the ride. But now I feel the hands interact with and express the *Chi*. They sometimes move through *Chi*. Sometimes they gather and form *Chi*, and sometimes they let go of *Chi*. While your feet and lower body also do this, and your hands are moving along with your lower body, what your hands are doing and feeling is somehow different.

Sometimes there are other interesting insights. In Pulling in the Energy, you're gathering energy from the farthest star. But in Around the Platter I feel I am also gathering energy, energy directly below me. Maybe weird? Maybe not. In any case, that's where I am now. In another year or so, who knows?

Below: Browse featured teacher profiles at taichichih.org/teacher/teacher/featuring/



Dixie D Adeniran

Verified Listing: Yes

Teaching: Featuring and Tai Chi Chih

- Teaching specialties:
 - Beginner Classes



Chris Endres

Verified Listing: Yes

Teaching: Featuring and Tai Chi Chih

- Teaching specialties:
 - Ongoing Classes
 - Business Classes



Donna Aldous

Verified Listing: Yes

Teaching: Featuring, Seijaku, and Tai Chi Chih

- Teaching specialties:
 - Beginner Classes
 - Intermediate Classes



JJ Johnson

Verified Listing: Yes

Teaching: Featuring and Tai Chi Chih

- Phone: 970-686-6262
- Email: jjhyperman@msn.com



Kent Jarratt

Verified Listing: Yes

Teaching: Featuring and Tai Chi Chih

- Teaching specialties:
 - Ongoing Classes
 - Business Classes

Untitled

By Denise Alire, Media, Pennsylvania

Recently I have been honored to help my mother-in-law as she quickly fades into dementia. With a biting tongue, Momala was never very easy to be around. But she has become a new person in her new world: loving, thankful and easy to love. As we sit together talking, I often invite her to practice TCC with me. “No. That’s not for me. But you go ahead. I’ll just sit here.”

One time she began to say T’ai Chi Chih over and over and asked me again what it is. In response, I stood and began my practice, explaining TCC after selecting some meditation music and remaining close to her. She watched and I suggested she could join me even while seated. No, she said smiling, while repeating T’ai Chi Chih, putting the stress each time on a different word: **T’ai** Chi Chih, T’ai **Chi** Chih, T’ai Chi **Chih**. And so it went until she fell silent.

As I continued my practice, I heard her talking to herself. She lifted her heel and then her toes, whispering T’ai Chi Chih. She explained how I was moving my arms. Arms go in a circle like this, she said, drawing in the air. Then it was back to repeating T’ai Chi Chih. Momala seemed to be in a trance, repeating T’ai Chi Chih quietly, softly and then nothing.

I glanced over at her, sleeping so peacefully. She has completed her very first practice, and my heart is full of love for her.

Seijaku & Meditation Zoom Retreat March 2021 with Daniel Pienciak

This retreat was full of surprise encounters and moments of awareness at unexpected times with what I had forgotten from first learning Seijaku with Ed Altman in 1996. I particularly enjoyed the Meditation on the Duck’s Egg, helpful for physical healing and to help others.

— TERRY JENNINGS

I was introduced to Seijaku from Justin’s video in 2012. Now my understanding and experience with Seijaku has been enhanced exponentially. Earlier when “pushing through a wall,” I focused more in the upper body and arms. What a relief to resist now with the flattening of the feet and from the *tan t’ien* to the soles of the feet. I also have a clearer understanding and experience using the outbreath and foot flattening to feel the Seijaku principle. I feel the benefits knowing that it doesn’t have to be “hard” but rather “resistance.” — ANITA VESTAL

It took five years after accreditation to meet Seijaku and I am hooked. The principle of “holding fast, letting go” has already deepened my TCC practice. I move against the wind, *tan t’ien* softly contracting, feet firmly rooted to the earth, an outbreath and then, release. Meditation was also incorporated and I think I’ll be able to meditate easier now with the tools shared. — JULIE ANONGOS

When doing a TCC movement like Rocking Motion, as my hands and wrists move forward effortlessly and are carried along by the *tan t’ien*, they encounter “no thing.” The Seijaku principle is one of surprise: Oh, there is something of substance here, something with density that my hands and wrists are traveling through. I experience this thickly, and I’m holding fast, holding steadily until I discover that I am through that density.

Oh, it’s “no thing” here; there’s no trace at all of the thick density I was just experiencing.

— KAREN KAELIN

I experience encountering the Seijaku principle as if I’ve been moving through heavy air (perhaps fog) but suddenly (without warning) encounter air almost as dense as pudding. This “encounter” absolutely requires me to “hold fast” to being soft as I continue moving through. Otherwise, the entire vitally important life lesson is lost on me.

— JESSICA LEWIS



TCC Teacher Retreat March 2021, with Pam Towne

Transition: A passage from one state, stage, subject or place to another: change. How are transitions going in our lives? How are there transitions in each of T'ai Chi Chih movement? When I slowed down and thought mindfully about this, I noticed so many beautiful transitions in each movement – like how wrists and hands or feet transition from one point to another. How can I possibly take any part of a movement for granted? Each movement or passage into a new movement is sacred and precious. – DEBBIE REED

New for me was the transition of the palms turning around in Rocking Motion and Push Pull. The turning of the palms is not separate from the arm movement; it starts just before the weight shift and arm movement is fully forward and fully back.

– JUDY KISTLER-ROBINSON

Every nuance of the practice is a transition. We grow in the TCC practice and throughout life by really feeling and letting go. – KARIN

The balance between senior and new teachers, Sandy's guidance and Pam's support was deepening, grounding, refining, connecting and intimate. I so admire and am inspired by the newer teachers. I've observed through practicing online this past year that each offers delicate nuances of style through expressions of teaching, moving and feeling TCC. The freedom from which you ask questions and share your movement instruction is refreshing.

– LYNNE ROBERTS



TCC Student Retreat March 2021, with Pam Towne

I did the entire retreat seated, which helped me finally learn that seated TCC is the equal of standing. And the Joy song – what a hoot! Everything is just passing clouds. – NANCY

I learned from Justin's writings that one's posture impacts one's thoughts and outlook. There is a circular process from thoughts to physical body, and from physical body to thoughts. Practicing TCC enhances this process and improves both. The idea is encouraging and challenging: letting go of control and fostering a spirit of trust.

– PAULA

My four takeaways include: 1) Letting go of muscles, thought and effort; 2) Shifting weight, *yinning* and *yanging*, and practicing the softness to feel more of a rounding motion; 3) Paying more attention to the speed or pace; slower is better for completing full movements; and 4) Better understanding the *tan t'ien* and how moving with it moves the body where it needs to go. – KRIS

"Glide, Glide, Arrive" reminds me to stay in the soles of my feet, as *yin* and *yang*, forward and back. Lead with the *tan t'ien* and everything else will follow. Posture begins with softening my knees, which tucks my tailbone slightly, and keeping my shoulders relaxed. – DAVID

TCC is so much more than a series of movements; it's holistic and healing for body, mind and spirit. – KATE

My practice focus was to maintain the same level while shifting my weight from front to back, without a dip. I learned to use the 45-degree angle as a guide for the waist turn while moving side to side, and I learned to synchronize the arms during Working the Pulley. – NEL

A new word in my TCC vocabulary is organic, which captures the wholeness of TCC in form and spirit. It's soft, round, grounded.

– KAY

A Plan

By Lisa, Southern Utah
taichichih.org/teacher/sandy-roerig/

Our teacher, Marie Dotts of Northern Colorado, suggested that the *Chi* had a plan for Sandy Roerig and me when we moved to Southern Utah from Northern Colorado. I'm happy to report that we are now an official group with a page on our neighborhood's website. We are teaching an eight-session class series in May, and about 40 showed up to watch or participate in our World T'ai Chi Day Practice. (More than 30 followed along through the entire practice.) Right after we finished, a man in his 80s asked if he could bring wife to class; she'd just gone into hospice. Of course! And we'd also lend her a seated DVD. During the practice we did a little shout out to our NoCo community. It was a great day.



The Lighter Side

By Sharon Sirkis, Columbia, Maryland
 taichichih.org/teacher/sharon-sirkis
 taichichih.org/articles-by-teachers-and-students/lighter-side-sharon-sirkis/

1. **When I announced** the next movement, Daughter in the Valley, one of the ladies at the Senior Center started singing “Down in the Valley.” This resulted in the whole group singing along! (Except for me, I didn’t know the words.)

2. After a discussion of how habit is the enemy of old age, I encouraged the members of Aspenwood Senior Living Community to try something new. “I’m going to keep poking at some of you to try new things,” I said.

One spry lady lit up and said, “I’m reading a book about how they’re poking an elephant and making it bleed.”

“Does that mean I need to stop poking at you?” I asked.

“No,” she said, “You need to bleed us some more!”

3. A student called and said she couldn’t attend tonight’s class. She confessed that she hadn’t done her practice that day (she practices regularly), and that she could really feel the difference it made. As she went on to share how edgy she felt, she suddenly broke into laughter. “I just felt my neck,” she said, “And I just noticed I’ve put my shirt on backwards!”

‘Agree, Disagree, Clarify, Elaborate’

To be submitted by TCC Community Members

Share your thoughts with the community. Email us a 100-word missive (at kim.grant@taichichih.org) about an article you read in this Vital Force issue and we’ll include three or four comments in the next issue.

Your words here.

All’s Well with TCC in the UK

By Laurin McDonald, Oxfordshire, UK
 taichichih.org/teacher/laurin-mcDonald/

Who would have thought in early 2020 that we would find ourselves today with a well-established, online community of students in the UK? **COVID-19 brought growth in directions we couldn’t have predicted.** Since the start of the pandemic, Lesley Nell and I have been offering regular online guided sessions to our established students and teaching new students. We have a loyal following. Lesley is also working with a group of students interested in becoming accredited to teach. Zoom classes have been a lifeline for our older students, many of whom live alone and had very little social contact outside our sessions.

Whilst most of us will be delighted to get back to face-to-face classes soon, Zoom has allowed us to strengthen and broaden the reach for our UK T’ai Chi Chih community. Zoom was also a personal lifeline when I unexpectedly lost my husband in early November 2020 (not COVID related). My students were surprised that within a couple of weeks I was back to my Zoom guided sessions. **Frankly, teaching gave me an anchor in the storm of bereavement.** My husband practiced TCC with me and would have wanted me to carry on, and I felt him alongside us when we practiced. Not what I would have predicted or expected, but a great gift.

I have learned this last year not to plan and do so much – but to simply be. To be in the moment, in the practice, in the emotion, in the community. I have taken the quiet times during the UK lockdowns to read and revisit Justin’s teachings, and Lesley and I join Sandy on as many Tuesdays as we can. For us it is 5pm, so a lovely way to close our day. I look forward to traveling freely again across the pond and seeing my North American TCC family in person. Stay safe and go with the TCC flow.

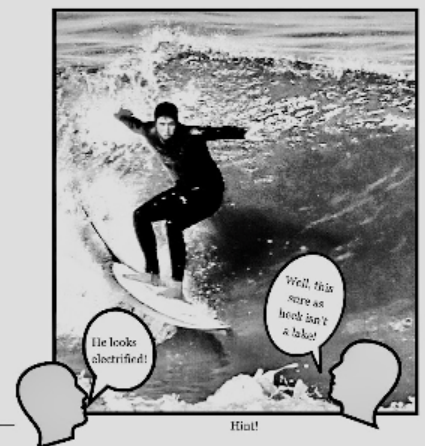
T’ai Chi Chih® submitted by Jeneth Rundle

JUMBLE

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Using the enclosed letters fill in the blank:

This _ _ _ _ _



(Hey folks that's Donovan!)

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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.

May 6-9 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Prescott, AZ or Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com
June 4-6 | Seijaku Intro-Review w/ Daniel | Zoom | wakeupdaniel@aol.com
June 19-21 | Online Seijaku Teacher Accreditation w/ Pam | Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com
June 24-27 | TCC Teacher Conference | Zoom | <https://taichichih.org/event/2021/conference/>
July 22-25 | TCC Intensive w/ Pam | Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com
July 30-Aug 8 | TCC Teacher Accreditation w/ Daniel | Zoom | lirpaleff@rcn.com
Sept 23-26 | TCC Retreat w/ Pam | Zoom | pamtowne@gmail.com

~ MORE ZOOM WORKSHOPS & RETREATS ~

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

All Times Eastern

Monday @ 11:30am | TCC (ongoing) | Lisa Stroyan | lstroyan@gmail.com
Monday @ 11am | TCC for Veterans (ongoing) | Jessica Lewis | jhtl0521@gmail.com
Monday @ 11am | TCC (beginner or review; 6 classes) | Daniel Pienciak | wakeupdaniel@aol.com
Tuesday @ 11:30am | Guided Seijaku Practice (ongoing) | Carmen Brocklehurst | 505-450-8944
Tuesday @ 3:30pm | Guided TCC Practice (9 weeks) | Jessica Lewis | jhtl0521@gmail.com
June 8-July 20 (six Tuesdays) @ 3pm | TCC Teacher Prep | April Leffler | lirpaleff@rcn.com
Wednesday @ 7:30pm | Guided TCC Practice (ongoing) | Carmen Brocklehurst | 505-450-8944
Wednesday @ 3:15pm | TCC for Veterans (ongoing) | Jessica Lewis | jhtl0521@gmail.com
Thursday @ 11:30am | Seijaku (ongoing) | Margery Erickson | maverickson0@gmail.com
Thursday @ 3pm | Guided TCC Practice (ongoing) | Lisa Stroyan | lstroyan@gmail.com
Friday @ 11am | TCC (ongoing) | Margery Erickson | maverickson0@gmail.com
Friday @ 11am | TCC (six classes) | Daniel Pienciak | wakeupdaniel@aol.com

~ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ~

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

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Teacher ___ Student ___

Teacher Accreditation Information

Date you were accredited as a T'ai Chi Chih teacher _____
Date you were accredited as a Seijaku teacher _____
Name of the teacher who taught you T'ai Chi Chih _____

Name of "second signature"

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