



CELESTIAL TAI CHI COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

Term 3

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May 2018

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World Tai Chi & Qigong Day 2018

Park Lessons

Saturday 16th June Time: 10:00am to noon Malvern Central Park Malvern Cnr Burke & Wattletree Rds	Sunday 24th June Time: 10:00am to noon Fairfield Fairfield Park Cnr Heidelberg Rd & Fairfield Park Dr
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Don't forget that the Park Lessons also offer a free introductory lesson for anyone who is interested so tell a friend, bring your family

Other Dates

- June 2nd Philosophy Lesson – A 'Questions and Answers' Session
Venue Ashburton Primary School, Performing Arts Centre,
Fakenham Road, Ashburton

Please refer to the calendar on the back page or the College website

<http://www.celestialtaichi.com.au/college-dates/> for other dates.

World Tai Chi & Qigong Day 2018



This year we celebrated World Tai Chi and Qigong Day in the natural treed setting of Ruffey Lake Park, in mild autumn weather, with wattles beaming upon us from the gentle hill behind Senior Master Chin Min. We enjoyed some new (to us) Qigong sequences before moving onto the Tai Chi form and some very clear instruction and explanation of parts of Level 2. As the session ended, a large flock of white cockatoos showed their appreciation with raucous applause, which became subdued as they settled to enjoy the offerings of the park. We were also treated with delicious offerings prepared by Zenaida - tasty spicy savouries, cakes, shortbreads and teas.

Ruffey Lake Park (Melway Map 33 Grid Reference F9) is a delightful setting with an adventure playground for children, a lake and several walking tracks. It is most certainly worth visiting.

John Schutz
Brighton

12 Step Daoyin Health Qigong Workshop Conducted by Senior Master Chin Min

The 12 step Daoyin Qigong is a series of breathing exercises formulated by the Chinese Health Qigong Association.

The exercises combine limb exercise and mental cultivation and graceful movements that are easy to learn and suitable for all ages. Its aim is to maintain good health and prolong life.

“Movement and breath should follow each other which means reconciling and harmonising delicate, consistent, deep and long abdominal breathing with slow gentle movements. This requirement of breathing regulation is to circulate the qi to the navel every time, inhaling and exhaling like an immortal turtle”. (12 Step Daoyin Health Preservation Exercises. Dao Yin Yang Shen Gong Shi Er Far, Foreign Languages Press)

The venue, Ashburton Primary School was warm and welcoming just like the weather and over 50 of us came together for the workshop. S.M Chin Min warmly and expertly introduced us to the benefits of the 12 step Daoyin qigong saying “running water never gets stale and a moving door hinge will never rust.” In other words movement keeps us from premature aging.

S.M Chin Min performed a graceful demonstration of each of the Steps and then broke it up into the vital moves. We were then invited to follow him, first isolating the arm movements before combining them with the leg movements. Thus we progressed through the 12 steps. Next we broke off into smaller groups working together to try and remember the moves. S.M Chin Min moving between the groups to remind and refine our moves.

The Steps all had interesting and evocative names. Step 7, for example, ‘lotus flowers appear above the water’, tested not only balance but lower body strength. We now appreciated the benefit of practicing scissor squats at the commencement of the workshop. Step 9 ‘White geese land on the beach’ required us to rise up and down, again challenging our balance.



Step 4 'Ji Chang shoots the louse' incorporated movements of using a bow and arrow. The story behind it emphasises what can be done when you concentrate your mind. Ji Change gazed day after day at a tiny louse until the creature appeared to him to be the size of a cartwheel. Then he could shoot it with his arrow.

Thank you Zenaida for the wonderful tasty treats!

Comments:

"Walked to the workshop expecting a chill easy lesson, thinking what will S.M Chin Min reveal from his silk sleeves? It was a pretty hard work out, but another great day of learning and stretching. Looking forward to the next one."

"Arrived not knowing what to expect. Came away feeling invigorated, at ease and more confident with my strength and balance. Thank you S.M Chin Min."

Chris Cain - Brighton and South Yarra

If you meet the Buddha on the Road Kill him

The title of this article is an old koan (Chan/Zen riddle) attributed to a 1st century Zen Master named Linji Yixuan (died 866 AD). It's obviously not meant to be taken literally but like many Zen koans it has shock value and it is meant to jar us and make us not only think with our mind but understand with our heart.

My interpretation, and this will probably change over time, is that we need to keep a curious mind and an open heart. A useful attitude for life in general, and tai chi in particular. This stance helps keep tai chi infinitively interesting and challenging. Even if we think we have all the answers, i.e. we know the moves; those "answers" must still be questioned. This is the urgency inherent within the koan. A true person "achieves" enlightenment, "kills" it, and then keeps meditating/practising tai chi. She or he does so in order to keep learning, to keep enlightening. Indeed, it reinforces the journey truly being the thing.

Enjoy your tai chi! Tessa Sampson - Brighton

Travel and Tai Chi

So how do you practice your tai chi when travelling? Especially travelling overseas in countries that are for various reasons not tai chi friendly. Parks are not always readily available, hotel rooms can be too small, or one could feel vulnerable and exposed in foreign lands practising outside. Well you could take a break all together but what about those of us who feel the need to practice? Those of us who are reluctant to forget those hard won moves or just need to maintain our practice. So, I would like to share with you three ways I have overcome this problem.

One tai chi practitioner I spoke to in Japan suggested you practice just one move. A good way to explore the move and go deeper. Wally Wilkinson has suggested you cut out the moves with multiples like the tai chi walk (brush knee, embrace tiger) or repulse monkey. I found this an excellent way to practice on a roof in New York without going too close to the edge.

My last method is where you can have all the space in the world and it's all inside your head. I visualise the form. Lie down with your hands on

the *dantian* getting in touch with the rhythm of the breath. Then very slowly imagine what it feels like to stand in the relaxed yet alert *wuqi* stance. Then off you go very slowly going through the form. This practice has several advantages. You have all the space you need, your body has no aches or pains; it feels strong and supremely balanced. It allows you to pinpoint moves you're not sure about, mull them over, sometimes actually coming up with solutions on what to do or formulate targeted questions for your teachers. It is rather like what some athletes are encouraged to do before competition – visualise and rehearse.

So dear friends, you can see there is no reason not to practice your tai chi in some form when you travel, unless of course you don't feel like it, and that too could be good for your tai chi.

Tessa Sampson - Brighton

Mindful Breathing

Tai chi's incorporation of mindful breathing is often lost when we are learning the form. This short article is why we shouldn't forget its importance.

It is agreed by many that mindful breathing or controlled breathing improves focus, reduces cognitive decline and increases resistance to stress.

A recent study (*Anthony P. Zanesco et al. Cognitive Aging and Long-Term Maintenance of Attentional Improvements Following Meditation Training Journal of Cognitive Enhancement 28 March 2018 pp 1-17*) has suggested that the practice can keep our brains healthy and youthful in the long run — but the findings were just observational, so the study could not explain causality.

However, new research by Michael Melnychuk (*Michael Christopher Melnychuk et al. Coupling of respiration and attention via the locus coeruleus: Effects of meditation and pranayama Psychophysiology 22 April 2018*) may help us to understand the "why" and "how."

Some neurophysiological reactions that occur as a result of breathing-centred meditation practices are brought to light in the new study. This research shows how controlled breathing affects levels of a neurotransmitter called noradrenaline, a "stress hormone" that can cause our hearts to beat faster and our pupils to dilate when we're excited.

In the right amount noradrenaline creates new connections between brain cells, and the study centered on how levels of this neurotransmitter changed in a brain area called the locus coeruleus the production site of noradrenaline and a region known to be involved in both attention and breathing. When we are stressed we produce too much noradrenaline and we can't focus. When we feel sluggish, we produce too little and again, we can't focus. There is a sweet spot of noradrenaline in which our emotions, thinking, and memory are much clearer.

To examine the effect of breathing on attention, the brain's locus coeruleus, and noradrenaline, the researchers used neuroimaging techniques and measured the pupil dilation of participants while they performed cognitive tasks that required great focus. They found participants who focused better on the given cognitive tasks had better coupling between respiration patterns and attention. Additionally, activity in the locus coeruleus increased as participants breathed in and decreased as they breathed out.

In other words our attention is influenced by our breath and it rises and falls with the cycle of respiration. It is possible that by focusing on and regulating your breathing, you can optimize your attention level and likewise, by focusing on your attention level, your breathing becomes more synchronized.

Thus, the research offers one possible reason for why there is a strong connection between breath-centred practices, like tai chi, and a steadiness of mind.

Tessa Sampson - Brighton

College Dates 2018

May 8 to June 25: Term 3

June 2	Philosophy Lesson – see cover page for details
June 16	Park Lesson Malvern (10am to noon)
June 24	Park Lesson Fairfield (10am to noon)

June 25 to August 19: Term 4

July 9-15	College Break
August 11	Park Lesson Malvern (10am to noon)
August 19	Park Lesson Fairfield (10am to noon)

August 21 to October 15: Term 5

August 26	WTQA Wushu & Taijiquan Competition
September 8	Tai Chi Workshop
Sept 24 to 30	College break
October 6	Park Lesson Malvern (10am to noon)
October 14	Park Lesson Fairfield (10am to noon)

October 15 to December 2: Term 6

November 24	Park Lesson Malvern (10am to noon)
December 2	Park Lesson Fairfield (10am to noon)

Park Lesson at Central Park

Corner Burke & Wattletree Rds, East Malvern Melway 59 G10

Park Lesson at Fairfield Park

Corner Heidelberg Rd & Fairfield Park Dr, Fairfield. Melway 30 J12