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A Newsletter from the Guide of T'ai Chi Chih



Greetings to all T'ai Chi Chih Teachers and Students,

HOLDING ON TO SERENITY

In the opening words in the [T'ai Chi Chih Photo Text](#), Justin shares with us the possibility of dwelling in the experience of serenity. You'll find the words below between the Chinese brush painting of Cherries by Ou Mie Shu and the Tao symbol with explanation of yin and yang:

"The peoples of the crowded Orient generally know the feeling of "serenity in the midst of activity." It is not by refraining from action that we achieve it, but by maintaining a firm, unchanging center in the midst of disturbance.

When we do the measured movements of T'ai Chi Chih, while focusing our concentration on the spot two inches below the navel, we feel the surge of Vital Force and experience a pleasant tingling -- yet, when we are quiet again, that center in the solar plexus is filled with power and we feel at rest. This serenity should spill over into our everyday lives, making possible a calm and joyous interior even during the most hectic times."

~ Justin Stone

I believe that each of you have experienced this serenity, otherwise you would not be teaching. Some other descriptive words and experiences for serenity may be: centered, peaceful, an inner calm, tranquility. It has been my experience that I do not always maintain that constant peaceful state. There are times when my serenity is thrown off center, and I know it. Overall, there is tranquility at my deepest core. In meeting with Teachers, they often ask how I am doing, and ask that with deep concern. When I respond: "Things are going very well" then their expression is even more quizzical. To which I then respond, "Maybe I'm missing something?"

We are not always aware of our accumulated serenity! In the midst of life's

turmoil remember that we all have an inner reservoir of serenity. Do you ever respond to something and know that response isn't your usual one? It's no secret that there is a lot of road rage on our major highways and local streets. How do we respond to this "outer chaos"? Do we simply allow people to go ahead in serenity, rather than reacting with road rage; or do we surprise ourselves by reacting in a manner that is not our usual way? Where inside us does that sudden urge to lash out come from?

In trying times, people who manage to manifest peace internally still have chattering thoughts and troubled feelings, as we all do. The difference is that they do not lend them their energy, so those thoughts and emotions can simply rise and fall like the waves of the ocean without disturbing the deeper waters of peacefulness within.

We all have this ability to choose how we distribute our energy. Through our T'ai Chi Chih practice we grow increasingly more serene. We begin choosing the vibrations of peace over the vibrations of conflict. We begin seeing our thoughts and feelings as tiny objects floating on the surface of our being --that pose no threat to the deep inner stillness that is the source of peacefulness.

When we spend time moving in the deep waters of the Chi and less on the tumultuous surface of our thoughts and emotions, we discover a lasting relationship with serenity -- one that lets us inspire peace beyond ourselves. We help the world most by daily choosing to nurture the Chi within through our practice of T'ai Chi Chih.

When I did my silent-directed retreat several years ago, I practiced the entire T'ai Chi Chih form twice a day -- what a luxury! At the retreat house there is a set of steps that are used to gain access to the ocean. After my practice that very first morning on my way from the ocean to the retreat house, one of the other retreat participants sat at the top of the stair case where she was taking in the view of the ocean. She also took up most of the space that was needed to get by. I immediately thought: "Does she think she owns these steps?" ... That thought left me steaming for a few minutes afterward. The next morning, after my T'ai Chi Chih practice there she was again, only now she was standing at the top of the steps... with even less space for me to pass by. But this time it dawned on me: She must think I am skinny enough to get past her in that small space! Probably neither of these thought patterns were correct, but I would much prefer the second to the first response.



Justin writes of the *"Reciprocal Character of Mind and Chi"* (Prana in Sanskrit).

"The character of the Chi greatly influences our State of Mind, and our State of Mind greatly influences "our" Chi. How can we break into that circle to change influences for a more desirable effect? We do T'ai Chi Chih, circulating and balancing the Chi. As the Yin / Yang elements are brought into better balance, this not only balances the Chi but it also

influences how we think. Ultimately we are what we think; this creates our Karma."

~ Justin Stone - [Spiritual Odyssey P.49](#)

And on P. 69 in the same book, Justin makes a bold statement:

"Remake your Chi and remake yourself."

We can allow this to happen through our regular T'ai Chi Chih Practice.

"But that practice must be done softly and continuously, preferably at a slow pace."

~ Justin Stone ~ [Photo Text P.21](#)

So, how do we drop the "I" in TCC practice? These reflections began with a quote from the T'ai Chi Chih photo text in which Justin uses the words "measured movements" when referring to the serenity which develops with our practice. When talking about the 6 Principles of Movement in the T'ai Chi Chih form, we never talk about "measured movements" as such, so I'd invite us to consider what measured movements may be. The move originates in the T'an T'ien with wrists, not arms, creating circular patterns, moving slowly allowing hands and weight shift to be synchronized.

There is no I, no self.

There is only *softness and continuity*.

Our "I" enters the experience only when we desire to control!

Control makes us try too Hard...

Control creates Tension...

Ego demands Control.

...This article will continue in the May 1 Newsletter.

I'd like to express my sincere thanks to all who read these messages. It is the best way I know of to fulfill one of the responsibilities Justin had entrusted me with ~ To Unite the Teachers.

Teachers, we want to get the news out about T'ai Chi Chih! You are welcome to forward these articles to your students, or to print and distribute them as well. All that is asked is that you refer to the source: Monthly Newsletter from Sr. Antonia Cooper, OSF, Guide of T'ai Chi Chih, and include the month and year. Past newsletters are archived and can be viewed at:

www.tcccommunity.net/Newsletter_Archive.html

It is also good to see the free T'ai Chi Chih Logo being used in various ways in printed form -- another great way to spread T'ai Chi Chih and to support the Teachers.

Wishing you Peace and All Good in these transformative days of Spring... with blessings in abundance,

Sr. Antonia