



Linda's T'ai Chi

Weekly Handout April 19, 2020

The Deep End



For thousands of years, sea going indigenous cultures used flotation devices to traverse deep water ways. Early mankind may have used inflated animal skins, animal bladders or sealed hollowed out gourds to help in crossing rivers. Goat hides as flotation devices can be dated to 800 BC. Life savers, life buoys, life preservers, and more currently, personal flotation devices (PFD) are names for the devices used to prevent drowning. Peter Markus invented the first inflatable life preserver in 1928, receiving U.S. Patent although there is some controversy about who was the actual first inventor. It was nicknamed the "Mae West" in reference to the buxom entertainer, whom wearers of inflated vests were thought to resemble. The main purpose of the life preserver is to keep the head above the water while the wearer is conscious or unconscious. They work. They save many lives each year.

Norwegian seamen were the first to build life-preserving devices using blocks of wood or cork-stuffed vests. Because of its buoyancy properties, cork was the first material for modern life preservers, followed by kapok fiber, a naturally buoyant fiber from a tropical tree. Introduced in the early 20th century, kapok was subsequently banned for being flammable and losing buoyancy. The life preservers used on the Titanic were made from linen and cork. But, cork was hard and uncomfortable as seen in this photo.



Life vest made from cork

The idea for my musing about “The Deep End “ came to me last week after teaching a series of T’ai Chi classes on line. I was doing okay, probably as well as everyone else; staying safe, finding meaning in the new day to day life, creating structure, staying healthy. Teaching T’ai chi is a grounding fulfilling experience for me and I found that I felt a bit out to sea without it.

I think our society is in the deep end. COVID-19 has brought us there. We are in the deep end culturally, physically, emotionally, economically, socially, politically, and psychologically. We are treading water with the hope of some kind of rescue- a vaccine? cure? How soon?

Until that happens, we need life preservers to keep us safe, healthy, sane and hopeful. Teaching T’ai Chi again and “being” with you is one of my life preservers. It is an important one for me and I thank those of you who can participate for being part of this with me.

I have a few life preservers that I rely on most days. Here are some:

1. Read a really good book
2. Weed my garden and rake leaves
3. Coffee
4. Call a friend
5. Talk with my family
6. Stay informed
7. Say hello to my neighbors and talk about their day
8. Watch good movies
9. Listen to music

10. Play music
11. Be grateful for my health
12. Have a cookie
13. Dust
14. Star gaze at night and observe the clouds during the day
15. Take a walk or a long drive around town
16. Practice T'ai Chi and deep breathing
17. Thank my husband every day for his care and love

I am sure each of you has life preservers that are keeping you safe and well and I welcome hearing about them should you decide to share.

T'ai Chi is based on the concept of complimentary opposites. The yin yang of life.

So, for every deep end, there is a shallow end.

Be well and safe

In Peace,

Linda

