



Linda's T'ai Chi

Weekly Handout June 21, 2020

We often end our sessions with a moment of gratitude. We place this thought into our open palms and breathe deeply. Long soft arms hang softly and loosely at our lower dantien (below the belly button and the source of qi in the Chinese understanding of body.)

Research demonstrates that thinking and feeling gratitude from time to time is good for our health and wellbeing. This may take conscious effort to count one's blessings. It may seem Pollyanna amidst the strife in the world but making this conscious effort has the power to generate a climate of positivity that both reaches inward and outward.

There is not much in the T'ai Chi literature about gratitude but we do know the goal of T'ai Chi is inner and outer harmony; harmony within that extends to harmony with the outside world.

Research suggests that feeling grateful can boost our physical and psychological health. Curbing negative thoughts is good for our sense of wellbeing. It can reduce stress and encourage better self-care.

Here are some tips to feel gratitude

- Keep a journal of or in some way note big and little joys of daily life.
- Write down "three good things"—identify three things that have gone well for you and identify the cause.
- Write thank-you notes to others.
- Engage in "mental subtraction." Imagine what your life would be like if some positive events had not occurred.

The one I use at the end of our sessions is calling forth a name of someone who believed in you. Someone who thought you were special and had faith in you. We all have that one person who gave us the confidence to succeed. That person becomes part of your posse. We all need a posse; people who are with us in good times and bad.

I have told this story before but I will tell it again. When I was about 10 or so, I am not even sure. I was at a summer camp and after lunch we always went swimming in the lake. I loved this part of the day. Lakes are calm and still and this lake was no exception. Surrounded by tall trees, the sun was warm. But, on this one day, I had a stomach ache. So, I went to the camp nurse and asked her if it was okay if I went swimming. She was very wise. She said, "What would your mother say". I could hear my mother's voice and the answer was, of course, don't go swimming. I learned two things. First, the nurse was a masterful teacher in asking me to use my own inner voice to decide what is right. This was the beginning of my developing my intuitive ear. And, I learned that when I am uncertain, I call on my posse to guide me. My parents are part of my posse. There are others but when I am in need of inner counsel, I hear their voices guiding my judgment and decisions.

This is not to say that having moments of sadness, or worry or the "blues" during this time or anytime, is unhealthy or wrong. In fact, it is normal. We should not despair when these moments come upon us. At the same time, we can also bring forth moments of gratitude as well.

In 2003, I was told that I was going to lose my kidneys within one year. I was diagnosed with a genetic kidney disease in 1967 but it took a long time for them to fail. I was facing a life of dialysis if I could not find a donor. I grew up with my mother on dialysis and I knew it was a difficult life. My brother-in-law came forward and offered me one of his kidneys. I am eternally grateful; the gift of life. One week before scheduling the surgery, I got a call from the transplant center that they had decided to refuse my donor because he had a small kidney stone. Of course, they knew about this 6 months prior, but for whatever reason, they decided to refuse him at the last minute. I was devastated. It was

a dark day and deep despair fell upon me. I was very ill and would need dialysis almost immediately. I will tell you the end of the story- another transplant center accepted both my brother –in-law and me and I got my transplant. But, that is not the story. The story is that in my depression and defeat, my husband said to me, “how would you be feeling if we were not together?” In the despair, he was letting me know that we had something to be grateful for. We had each other. Together we could get through. That was quite a lesson for me.

I hope you find these stories helpful as each of us face these difficult and uncertain times.

My wish is that as we perform T'ai Chi we can find moments of gratitude to lift our spirits and quiet our soul.

Peace,

Linda



From the mud, a Lotus grows to seek the sunlight,