



Linda's T'ai Chi
Weekly Handout November 29, 2020



“Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude.” -- A.A. Milne

Gratitude has been a theme of many of my letters. We often end our classes with moments of gratitude as a way to acknowledge that regardless of the difficulties we experience particularly this past year there is goodness in our lives. It is easy to forget this when we are faced with adversity, loss, separation from our loved ones and perhaps illness. Gratitude may not erase all of the pain or anxiety but it can help.

Gratitude came to my mind when I read an interesting article by Bill Murphy, Jr, a writer for INC.com. (See reference at the end of this piece) His perspective on gratitude is very different from most articles on gratitude in that it reflects on the concept of yin-yang, the foundational principle of T'ai Chi. I don't think the author had T'ai Chi in mind but he captured the complimentary opposites and dualism that is the hall mark of this ancient martial art.

The first yin yang in the slow set occurs in the third posture. Ward-off is the expression of yin-yang. As our left hand moves forward, the yang, our right hand counter balances by moving in the opposite direction, the yin. From that point onward, all of the postures express both yin and yang.

The concept of complimentary opposites or dualism is the idea that we cannot appreciate the sun if we do not have the moon. We cannot appreciate happiness if we do not experience sadness. Nor can we appreciate warmth if it were not for the cold.

Yin is characterized as slow, soft, yielding, diffuse, cold, wet, and passive; and is associated with water, earth, the moon, femininity, and night time. **Yang**, by contrast, is fast, hard, solid, focused, hot, dry, and active; and is associated with fire, sky, the sun, masculinity and daytime. All of the postures in T'ai Chi including Shibashi use complimentary opposites to create motion and energy.

With that introduction, here is a summary of the article by Bill Murphy, Jr. He titles his article, "You need these to get through the year." I trust you will find the principles of T'ai Chi, the complimentary opposites, in his approach to gratitude.

Be grateful that you're alive.

Be grateful that your parents met. Be grateful that *their* parents met. Be grateful for whatever strange, against-all-odds things had to happen.

Imagine, not only did we get to be born, but we were born in the 20th or 21st centuries, we speak the world's most common language, and we're walking around with small devices in our pockets that can connect us to almost the entire history of human knowledge. Even though there are more than 7 billion people alive on the planet, that doesn't make this gift of life less unique. The gift of life is worth our gratitude.

Be grateful for pain and longing.

Out of pain and longing comes appreciation for life, positive relationships and personal growth. But it's also about learning, growing, and moving forward to fix the pain in our own lives.

Be grateful for your needs.

Be grateful for your needs that are being met. That is the first part. The second part is being grateful for needs unmet. It is the unmet needs that motivate us and puts a fire in our belly. Unmet needs often lead to creativity and setting us on a course of progress toward a goal.

Be grateful for forgiveness.

Being forgiven and forgiving others is such a gift. Being human means we will make mistakes and others will make mistakes as well. Holding onto good relationships even when feelings are hurt or we have hurt someone else is essential to our overall wellbeing and contentment.

Be grateful for your failures.

We rarely learn from our successes. We learn when we fail. No one likes to fail but failure is important. It is a sign of ambition and creativity. They're also learning opportunities--not just a chance to learn from our mistakes, or the times we fall short--but a chance to learn *how to fail*. We learn that there is really nothing to fear, that we can succeed as long as we keep going. The goal of T'ai Chi is not perfection but progress. We keep going and get better over time.

Be grateful for your people.

Our lives are largely the sum total of our relationships. So we need to be grateful for the people in our life. People like our family, our friends, our coworkers, acquaintances and people we meet along our pathway. And while we're at it, the author puts our animals in our life in this category. Our relationship with our pets is important. And, they're worthy of gratitude, too.

Be grateful for hope and faith.

Hope and Faith are certainly foundational beliefs of most religions. But, these can be secular outlooks as well. But hope and faith go hand in hand. They're prerequisites to optimism. When we work hard for an ideal, an outcome, a mission or purpose, we can then express hope and faith that things will turn out for the good, for example. It is said that optimistic people are some of the most successful and content people. When we have moments of hope and faith, it is something to be grateful for.

Gratitude as a habit

Creating space and time on a regular basis to express gratitude is a good habit to develop. That is not to say that during difficult periods in our life, being grateful takes a lot of effort. That is only human. But, when we can, being grateful for even the small things is good for our health and wellbeing.

Interesting article, yes? Did you discover the concepts of yin and yang? Met needs versus unmet needs; pain and longing versus happiness and contentment; failure versus success; forgiving and being forgiven and hope and faith in the face of despair and hopelessness. All of these are complimentary opposites.

The purpose of T'ai Chi is to use the natural flow of energy within our body to improve our inner harmony and to find balance in our life. T'ai Chi is based on nature and the natural world. Since everything in nature exhibits varying combinations of both yin and yang, we use imagery and total focus on the present to bring our mind, body and spirit into homeostasis. . For example, the morning fog (yin) is dissipated by the heat of the sun (yang); the forest fire (yang) is extinguished by the rainstorm (yin); the darkness of night (yin) is replaced by the light of day (yang)

I am grateful for your support and continued participation in our zoom classes and your appreciation for my weekly handouts. Sometimes a narration hits a chord and you let me know. I am grateful for that. Finally, like most of you, I am looking forward to the time that we can come together in our in-person classes.

Peace,
Linda

Reference to article by Bill Murphy, Jr.

Inc. is an American business media property founded in 1979 and based in New York City.^[2] It publishes six print issues annually, as well as daily online articles and videos. Inc. also produces several live and virtual events yearly.

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The magazine's print edition has a total audience of 1.4 million, and Inc.com receives 33 million monthly page views