

Tai Chi provides balance in my life

by Carol McCready

I was diagnosed with a rare aggressive form of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2005.

After four months in the hospital - remission

Treatment was so intense it required being in hospital for four months. I was allowed home for only two weekends over the entire treatment regime. It was no surprise that on discharge I was only able to walk across the room and only with a cane. The big surprise was I was in remission .

Prior to my diagnosis, I had been faithfully attending Saturday morning classes at The Tai Chi Centre in Halifax for five years. The Centre is the colloquial name for The Atlantic Regional Centre located at 2029 North Street in Halifax. This Centre serves all four Atlantic Provinces and is owned by The Taoist Tai Chi Society.

I had finished a Beginner course in 2000 and was hooked from the beginning on the "Chi" of Tai Chi. I loved the calm, relaxing feeling I experienced when the 30 or so people in my class moved silently together through the 108 moves. It was a given I would return as soon as I could walk unassisted, except with my cane, from the car to the front door of The Centre.

Health recovery class

It was about three weeks before I presented myself to the Health Recovery Class. This class offers a modified version of Tai Chi for those who don't have the balance or coordination to do the regular set. It was there I met a lot of people with various diagnoses; Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Multiple Sclerosis, severe Arthritis and more.

The one thing we all had in common was we wanted to improve our quality of life. Tai Chi did it for us in so many individual and common ways. I attribute my gradual improvement in my balance, my coordination and in my brain to these classes.

Physiotherapy was a necessary chore, massages were always welcome but nothing compared to the friendship and support I gained from Tai Chi. I faithfully attended these classes for two years until my former instructor said "You are ready. You can do it."

Beginner's class - and beyond

He meant the regular set so I chose to redo the Beginner course. Then and only then did I feel confident enough to return to regular Tai Chi classes. The set was a challenge; I could not keep up at the pace of the class but I could do it!!

I continue going to Tai Chi now four years later because my 66 year old body likes and needs it. When I go regularly (twice a week):

- My arthritis eases,
- My back doesn't hurt,
- My balance is better,
- I sleep better,
- I feel more relaxed.

I also enjoy the social aspect and the opportunity it offers to give back to the community.

Tai Chi is a part of my life now and I am confident it will stay a part of my life for many years to come.