



## July 2020 Newsletter

*We have been blown away by the fabulous messages and feedback over the past few weeks since it was announced that we are being presented with the Queen's Award. I am so pleased that many of you were able to join us on Zoom for celebration no1 on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our next celebration will be later in the year when we are able to all come together to physically receive the award. However, our main priority until then is to support our members who need us most for the remainder of the pandemic and transition period ahead.*

*We must commend our members for stepping up and adapting where needed to get through the last three months and continue to do so. This has been an incredibly stressful time with little respite and whether they are key workers, parents, carers or living alone many have reported their symptoms have flared and have regressed with their conditions.*

*Some members have continued to embrace technology and joined regular group meetings and Tai Chi classes. Others have been supported with phone calls, texts and emails and as lockdown has been relaxed, we have been able to meet members 1-2-1 on the park and small walking and tai chi groups.*

*I didn't want to bore you with too many photos of faces on zoom. However, the information to read along with them will tell you our story. Jane has also written part 2 of her Tai Chi blog.*

*Our new logo has been positively received and has been designed to blend the 5 ways to wellbeing.*

*Our Facebook membership has risen to 470. Our average zoom attendance over May/ June is 13.*

*Lets see what we have been up to....*

# Group Programme



## May

May was dominated with mental wellness and keeping everyone moving with qigong. Jane led the Qigong sessions and group discussions talked about individual stressful situations. We covered everything from arguments with loved ones, business decisions, noisy neighbours, resurfacing from lockdown, shopping, accessing medication, being a carer with a chronic illness, being a key worker...the list goes on.



## Awareness day



May 12<sup>th</sup> Awareness Day conveniently fell on a Tuesday, so we invited the tai chi students to join us celebrate. We started with Peter paying homage to Florence Nightingale, reading an article from the April edition of the UK Fibromyalgia Magazine, written by yours truly.

Sue from Open Minds took over and led us through a quiz and a game of bingo.

## Mental Health Awareness week 18<sup>th</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> May





Some of our active members have not been able to join us on Zoom so as soon as the 1-2-1 rule came in we were able to meet with them and go for a much needed social distancing walk around the park.

## Healthwatch



Sharon from Healthwatch joined us to find out what our experiences have been like during lockdown. Sharon also updated us with what the different services were putting in place and explaining reasons for certain difficulties.

## June

June started off on a mega high as we had celebration No 1 on June 2<sup>nd</sup> another convenient Tuesday! The planets are aligned for us this year, thank you)) We were joined by family and friends, master trainers, funders and partner



organisations to celebrate our volunteers being awarded the Queens Award. Everyone came forward and told their personal story about what Fibro Active means to them and we toasted every person. I'm so glad I only had a glass of Sloer otherwise I'd have been under the table. 25 toasted later.....

## Colour Therapy with Kath

Sorry no photo. I was so interested in the subject, I forgot to take a pic. Kath talked about colours and feelings. Choosing a colour day and being spontaneous. The colour of flowers, clothes, rooms and how they can affect how you feel. If you need a lift look at yellows and oranges. Green is relaxing and greys can be depressing. It's interesting how unconsciously colour can affect our lives.





## Nutrition

**Sophie Lester** joined us to talk about how to read the labelling on packaging which was very helpful. We went away a lot more aware of contents, nutrients and measurements.



## Sue from Open Minds



Sue was back with a discussion about mental health. We had new members joining us and old ones that had not joined us on Zoom before. The conversation got a little heavy in places but that's OK we sometimes need a little heavy to see the light.

## Qigong

The Qigong sessions have been easier for group members. They still get the same benefits, but it can easily be instructed over zoom and everyone is on the same level. Compared to our mixed ability tai chi classes.



## Cuppa and Chat

We had a lovely visit from Samantha Boland who is volunteering with South Derbyshire NHS Trust and will be assisting the OT's in running a course for FM sufferers over Swadlincote way. We had an all round chat about the key points of the support we give.

## Group Walks



The government announced that we could go to the local park in a group of 6 so we did. Each Wednesday we meet at 10.30am and if there is more than 6 of us, we split the group. Trust the weather. First walk out and it rains lol.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> walk, we found members all over the park. We started from the carpark and ran into Sue from Open Minds who was connecting with two of her ladies she was working with until lockdown.

We carried on and then this familiar voice came from behind a palm tree. It was Brian one of our Tai Chi students who was umpiring a bowls match. We stopped at the café and then Janet came up and said hello. Karen also walked by and said hello as she passed by.



It's been fabulous seeing everyone in person and being able to appreciate being back together and being outside.



A die hard few of us braved the heat and melted round the park on our 3<sup>rd</sup> walk. It hasn't been easy walking round. A few of us have had to build up again and it has taken a while to recover from each walk. Things are starting to get easier. Slow and steady.







## Projects

### Hobby Chat

Our members have been keeping themselves busy and posting their masterpieces on our sister page Hobby Chat, encouraging members to be creative and try new things. Here are just a few examples of their art projects, baking recipes, achievements, and pastimes.



### Space to Think



We are starting the Tuesday Space to Think sessions back up to continue the support Sue was giving prior to lockdown. We are also offering this service to any of our members who are struggling at the moment and just need that time out to think.

It can be a walk round the park, sit and chat in your garden or a telephone chat. Sue is currently supporting 6 members.

The Monday sessions will not resume until we have Tai Chi classes at Petersham Hall again.

### Cuppa at Cogs

Our first Wednesday in the month social meet has been temporarily renamed in homage to Janet's colourful and uplifting throw on her sofa. We have nick named it the Flamingo Club and we meet on Zoom on the First Wednesday of the month.

### Walking to Awareness

This year has been unprecedented, and we knew figures would be lower than previous years, however as well as raising awareness it is so important for us to keep moving. Keeping moving help reduce pain and stiffness which in turn helps reduce the risk of trips and falls. Thank you to members who joined in and we have collectively walked 449.92 miles.))))) well done everyone))

## Open Tai Chi Classes



The Monday 1.30pm advanced class is running as normal. The 3pm class is Part 1 principles for those still shielding.

Thursday's are moving to West Park. We have limited places as Jane, and I can only take 5 people each and split up. Priority is for students who have not joined us on Zoom. 10.30 class will be Part 1 principles and 11.30 class will be advanced. If the weather is bad, we will deliver via zoom.

We will also be charging class fees from July 2<sup>nd</sup>. £5 per class on both Zoom and West Park. Fees payed by bank transfer or cash on the day. There will be no transfer of change so please bring the correct money.

## Group Zoom Meetings

Date	11am	12 O'clock
7 <sup>th</sup> July	SOTM with Julie	Cuppa and Chat
14 <sup>th</sup> July	Qigong with Jane	Group Quiz
21 <sup>st</sup> July	Sue from Open Minds	
28 <sup>th</sup> July	Qigong with Jane	Think Hypno
4 <sup>th</sup> Aug	SOTM with Julie	Cuppa and Chat
11 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Qigong with Jane	Fibro Bingo
18 <sup>th</sup> Aug	TBC	TBC
25 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Sue from Open Minds	

## Weekly programme during the transition period.

	Date	Time	Class
	<b>Zoom</b>		
Mon	July 6 <sup>th</sup> onwards	13.30 – 14.30	Advanced
Mon	July 6 <sup>th</sup> onwards	15.00 – 16.00	Sun Style Principles
Tuesday	Group Meeting 11am- 1pm		
	<b>West Park</b>		
Wednesday	Walk and Café stop 10.30 Open to group members and Tai Chi Students		
Thursday	July 2 <sup>nd</sup> onwards	10.30 – 11.30	Sun Style Principles
Thursday	July 2 <sup>nd</sup> onwards	11.30 – 12.30	Advanced



## Jane's Tai Chi Blog Part 2



So, by the end of part 1 of this blog I had finished at the point where Julie and I were having lessons with Chris and Chris was coming once a fortnight to our group meetings to teach our members Tai Chi for Arthritis Part 1. This was becoming a very popular part of our programme, but this was itself becoming a problem. Group members were unable to progress far, as new people kept joining each week and we had to keep going back to the beginning.

Julie and I tried to think of ways around this problem, but we were at a loss, we discussed this with Chris, and he went off one week commenting that "I'll give it some thought!" We just thought that was the end of it and he would forget about it. A couple of weeks later he came back with the comment "I've had an idea" I thought this sounded promising, but had no idea what he could have thought of, then he casually dropped his, to me anyway, bombshell of "I think you two should train as Tai Chi for Health instructors!" There was a very long pause before he got a response, Julie took it in her stride, but as the saying goes, I was 'gobsmacked'!! I don't know what I thought he was going to say, but it wasn't that!

In part one of this blog I mentioned that I was shy and nervous, well I have got a bit better with age, but this was so far out of my comfort zone that it might as well have been in another galaxy! On the other hand, I knew if I backed out I would be completely disappointed with myself, so in a state of great fear and panic I decided to give it a try.

### Training

Julie and I had about three months before the training course, so plenty of time to perfect a form that we already knew well, but I knew I needed some extra help, so I asked one of my doggy walking companions, who happened to be a hypnotherapist if she could help. Sharrie, from Think Hypno helped me immensely, she built up my confidence and taught me coping strategies that could help me in situations that make me nervous, not just tai chi training courses.

Strangely, the thought of teaching a class did not worry me anywhere near as much as the training course, but I survived the course and came out with my certificates, Angus, my husband, came to pick us up from our course and commented that we were a bit quiet, so we let him think I had failed. Actually, we were both just extremely tired, but poor Angus spent the journey home trying to work out how he was going to cope with my disappointment, I let him off the hook just as we reached home! In all my





exams and college courses that I have



completed throughout my life, this was, for me my greatest achievement. Tai Chi has given me both peace of mind and also my biggest challenge!

### Strictly No Falling: Age UK Derby & Derbyshire

At this point in time, we only intended teaching our Fibro Active Group members, but very soon we were approached by Jo from Strictly No Falling, she asked if we would consider teaching a course for people with balance issues and Strictly no Falling: Age UK Derby and Derbyshire would sponsor us. We thought about it and decided that we would do this, as it would earn us some money to support Fibro Active, especially as the subs taken at our weekly group meetings were not quite covering the room rent.



Our first open class was launched at 'Spring into Action' an event jointly hosted by Fibro Active and Strictly No Falling. We had a lot of interest at that first taster session with about 29 people attending; I think it was a record for Strictly No Falling! Julie insisted that we do a demonstration of Tai Chi for Arthritis Part 1 & 2, we both thought that the only ones watching would be those doing the taster session, imagine my horror when I turned round and the rest of the Spring into Action stall holders and attendees were watching!!

But guess what? I survived it!

From the beginning of this first open class we have progressed to teaching 4-5 classes per week.

### Tai Chi in the Park

Another of our ideas was to have an informal practice session, with no teaching, on the last Saturday of the month, we started this last year on 'World Tai Chi and Qigong Day' This first outing was quite successful, even though we struggled through storm 'Hannah' and ended up wet and very, very cold! It took me the rest of that day to warm up.



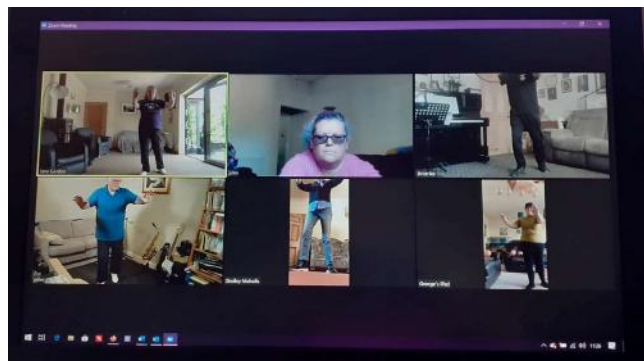


We have continued with these meetings which are open to anyone and have had people from all Tai Chi groups join in, but the loyal core are those in our and Chris' classes. We are just trying to promote tai chi to everyone and to connect as many tai chi players as possible! Those that attend these sessions all seem to enjoy them.

## Covid 19

In all my worrying and catastrophising (not anywhere near as bad as before Tai Chi and Sharrie) would I have dreamt up this disaster! Lockdown meant the end of tai chi and group meetings and the worry of not connecting with our group and tai chi students, some of whom can be quite isolated; but we soon thought of Zoom!

Zoom brought about a whole new way of teaching, our insurance stated that we should be able to see our students all the time, a bit difficult when we teach with our backs to our class! Between us we soon came up with the solution, I have a room large enough for all of me to be seen, Julie doesn't, so I teach and Julie watches and nothing gets past Julie! We



soon had four tai chi classes running plus our group session every fortnight.

Now with the lockdown easing we are about to venture out to our local park to begin real life classes. These classes will have to be small for now, but it is helping to get those of our students and members who can't do Zoom out and socialising, at a safe distance of course. It gets me out too! I am used to being on my own and I am happy to be this way, but teaching has forced me to engage with more people, and amazingly I find I enjoy it!

## Health and Wellbeing

I wish more people would try Tai Chi; it has an image suggesting that it is just for older people or those with mobility problems - but it's not!! Tai chi is for everyone from very young to old, some athletes use it to help them focus and centre themselves before competitions; it has been used to help with exam nerves in teenagers. The buzzword of now is 'mindfulness' and this is what tai chi is! It has been around for thousands of years. However, the west is only just waking up to the benefits. As I've said before though, it's not a quick fix, the physical benefits can be felt within a few weeks, but the benefits to health and wellbeing take a lot longer, possibly for the rest of our lives, but learning and challenging our minds should take forever and it's never too late to start.

Sadly, there will always be those who say it's too slow, or it takes too long to learn, one of my friends told me that she "wouldn't be seen dead doing tai chi!" (It's not that slow!!) Obviously, they are missing the point; I just hope that as more people



start learning, more people will want to learn. If it were to become 'trendy', even my friend would probably give it a try!

### **Confidence**

I know that I will never be perfect, I will still mix up my left and right, occasionally suggesting that my students put their left hand under their right foot, I can mix up body parts too! This causes some amusement! But everyone seems to enjoy my 'errors' saying that it shows I'm human....but I very much enjoy teaching, I have gained a great deal of confidence since I first started tai chi. There is so much to learn! I know I will never be able to learn all that I want, but I have learned and am still learning different forms and will continue to do so for as long as I am able! Tai Chi has become a very important part of my life; I would be lost without it.

Through tai chi, I have met some amazing people including those who have helped to set up our classes, my kind and supportive trainers and especially all those who have joined our weekly sessions.

As a final note, in a recent crisis of confidence, Sharrie told me to write down all my achievements, and not to forget the Queens Award, as not many have managed that one!

## **Positive Fibro Attitude**