

@
 Telephone 611632
 E-mail lifetime@jerseyeveningpost.com
 Website www.thisisjersey.com/lifetime
 Text 0762 480 3210



Charlotta Le Brocq practises Rainbow tai chi every morning and has found it beneficial for her health, stress level and general well-being



TheColumn

Tai this for size ...



THERE are many different forms of tai chi, some of which are well known in the west.

When many people think about tai chi they will picture the slow motion routines that groups of people practice together every morning in parks around the world, particularly in China.

Tai chi is a slow motion, moving meditative exercise for relaxation, health and self defence which has its origins in Chinese Taoism.

Rainbow tai chi, as practised by Charlotta, is aimed at helping the body to release and heal itself. This form of tai chi kung was developed by Peter Chin Kean Choy at his centre in Devon.

Charlotta will be running two weekend workshops early this year to give people an insight into Rainbow tai chi and using the tai chi and chi kung principles to improve life and resolutions.

The first of the workshops will be on 19 January and the second in early February. Peter Choy will also be visiting the Island in March.

For more information about the workshops contact at charlotta.taichi@gmail.com or by telephone on 07797 895865 or 741967.

GO with the flow

Feeling stressed out? The ancient Chinese art of tai chi can offer true relaxation, as **Anna Plunkett-Cole** discovered when she tried it for herself

WHEN was the last time you really let your body go? Can you recall the last time your shoulders managed to detach themselves from the bottom of your ear lobes?

Certainly with Christmas only just out of the way, the answer to either of those questions will not be the last couple of weeks and for many true relaxation may not have happened for months.

One of the symptoms of modern living is that we are so used to the stress that we endure on a daily basis that it is easy to forget what it is like to actually be relieved of it - even if only for a short while.

Our new year's resolutions usually revolve around working harder, being fitter and generally a 'better you'. How about just deciding to find a way of relaxing more - real relaxation?

Rather than just collapsing in front of the television and waiting for the strain to ebb away, how about trying to ease your strain through tai chi?

Most people are only familiar with the ele-

ments of this Chinese art as a form of martial art or movement, but it can also have the power to relax the mind and, according to practitioner Charlotta Le Brocq, help us to heal ourselves. And, after an hour-long consultation, resulting in a visible shoulder drop, it is difficult to disagree.

This form of tai chi is about finding balance in the heart, mind, body and spirit and uses a sequence of exercises to help the individual to achieve a more peaceful state.

Harmonious

Certainly, this has been the case for Charlotta, a former probation officer, who has found enormous benefit through tai chi. 'I practise every morning, but no session is ever the same. There is always something new. I have never felt so harmonious and peaceful and have let go of a lot of pain. I also used to get regular chest infections and health problems which I just don't get anymore,' she said.

Charlotta had always wanted to try tai chi

and then came across a class while living in Devon, the practise of which has suited her ever since.

The sequence of exercises used rely on looking at each element - heart, mind, body and spirit in turn and using movement to help each find harmony.

The practice uses 15 fundamental tai chi and chi kung exercises. The first discipline - tai chi - opens the body and joints. The second - chi kung - is used to move the energy through the body.

So the first stage - with one hand held over the heart and the other over the stomach - is to listen to the heart beat, breathe, and work with the body to allow it and the mind to slow down and examine what it would be like to let go.

A part of this sequence is to examine the roles which we play, how they are affecting us and letting them go.

Next in the sequence is an exercise during which the novice begins to glimpse just how much tension is held in the body. The stomach becomes the centre of a movement from the waist which involves swinging the arms up, pausing and then letting them drop with their full weight.

In tai chi, the belly is the central source from which the body's energy flows. Later parts of the exercise sequence are designed to help that energy release.

It can be quite frustrating feeling that the

tension simply will not drop away so, in a partner exercise, another person takes the weight of each of the other's arms at a time, slowly rotating and lifting them but always taking the full weight.

In this way it really is possible to feel the weight dropping out of the shoulders and the general tension ebbing away.

Charlotta said that many people were amazed, following this exercise, how tense they had been and that, in fact, there could be a physical and obvious difference in the height of a person's shoulders before and after the exercise.

'People are genuinely shocked at how much tension they are holding. It is a symptom of society and how busy we are that we hold so much in our shoulders,' she said.

The next stage is to release the energy stored in your own body. In this way said Charlotta, the body, once relaxed, can accept the energy that it generates and so heal itself.

The essence of the whole process is movement and how the body moves and changes from day to day. 'A tree is never the same from one day to another, neither is a river. Why should we be?' she said.

'Life is about movement but we often move so fast. We can look at that speed and learn to flow at the body's own natural rhythm. We are often a long way from that and tai chi can help bring us back to it,' she said.

TOMORROW: TA your way to fitness

