

It's About the Journey...



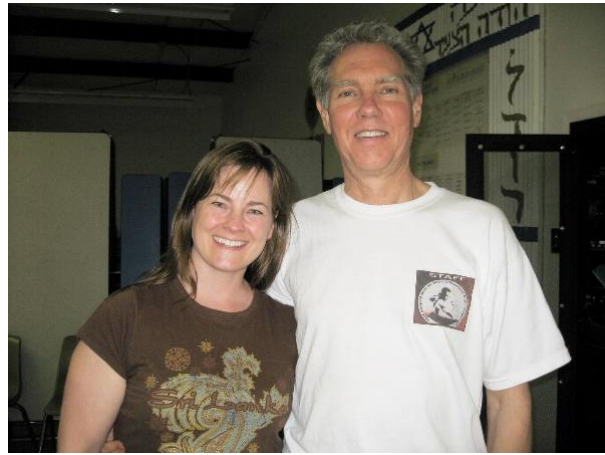
Celebrating 20 years of offering Free weekly Tai Chi classes to Central Wisconsin

By Deborah Adams

It was the summer of 2006, and I was beside myself with fear, frustration, exhaustion, even loss of hope. I was trying to make an unhealthy marriage work, I was raising two young daughters, I was working endlessly and the nation was creeping into the Great Recession which made owning a small business extremely challenging. The gym & fitness addition I put onto the original spa building in 2004 was costing my business huge losses each month and I was at a point of feeling like everything in my life was failing.

The National Wellness institute was holding their annual Wellness Conference in July at UWSP and a friend of mine, who was helping me with some marketing, purchased a weekend training for me attend, in hopes I could offer this new activity at the spa and we could draw in customers by offering Tai Chi classes.

This 25-hour introduction to being a 'Tai Chi Easy Practice Leader' was my goal for completing the 3-day training, figuring I could offer it to the public and advertise The Wellness Spa in the process. In fact, the very day after the course completed, my friend set up a class in the park starting at 5:30pm for anyone who wanted to attend. That was a Tuesday... a 'Free Tai Chi class' in front of the bandshell from 5:30-6:30pm. Three people showed up, and we took as many close-up photos as we could of our tiny group to make it look like lots of people were doing Tai Chi in the park! I set out my sign every Tuesday for the rest of the summer and our tiny class grew each week as we did Tai Chi looking out at the flowing river, swaying and breathing deep in the summery sun shaded by those large lovely trees, and forming a community of Tai Chi goers in Pfiffner Park. When it became too cool to offer the class outside anymore, we moved it into the spa's class space (which is now the Qi Garden Salt Spa and swing porch room).



2007 Austin, TX - Level One Certification of 200 Hour Tai Chi Teacher Training, pictured with Dr. Roger Jahnke

Attendance slowly grew through time, but the most important growth came for me, as a human, as a woman, a mother, employer, leader. I noticed the more I taught and practiced Tai Chi and Qigong, the healthier I became inside and out. Though my finances were so tight, I scraped together whatever I could to be able to learn more, travel to places that offered more training, found teachers who could take me under their wing and put gravity to what I was doing. Remember, this was before iPhone or online learning platforms! I studied under several Tai Chi masters and learned all the techniques I could. But I was not prepared for WHAT Tai Chi was going to do to me in the process, for the changes it made inside of me... changes that would not only affect me but affect those around me.



2009 Santa Barbara, CA - Level 3 Tai Chi Teacher Training and Certification from IIQTC

I noticed within just a few short weeks and months of practicing and playing with “Qi” or energy, that the brain fog from intense stress, lack of sleep and limited self-care ... turned into Clarity. My brain could think again and make choices that my heart knew were the right ones for me, my family, my business. In fact, in Chinese calligraphy, there is not a symbol for heart or for mind – there is only one for Heart-Mind, as neither can make a true decision with clarity on its own. It gave me strength and courage beyond the weight-lifting I did, it was an internal strength that spurred on purpose, authenticity, and a deeper connection with what was truly important. What my husband at the time called ‘silly hand-waving’ was a pathway to understanding, awakening and awareness. With my eyes now open, I chose divorce, to raise my daughters the way I believed, and take control of my business with a new sense of coherence and fortitude that helped us not only survive the recession, but come out with a new understanding of what wellness truly was about and the healing that can come to anyone willing to believe.



Summer 'Tai Chi for Wellness' class at The Wellness Spa

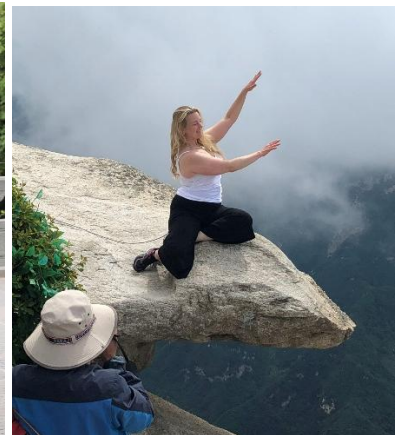
That all started 20 years ago! Hard to believe it has been two decades since that first summer in the park. I am still offering 'FREE Tai Chi for Wellness' classes every Tuesday from 5:30-6:30pm. Every summer until 2016, I would offer classes in front of the bandshell from May until September and then move back to the spa for the winter months. When we turned that old fitness room into the Salt Spa, we moved our classes into the big room that once held weights and fitness machines. And after a refresh of that space in 2018 into the current Fire Horse room, our beautiful space is filled weekly with Tai Chi students, coming in to breathe, do gentle movements and quiet themselves with meditations in the hour-long class. Our 3 students of 20 years ago have grown into regularly 30-50 people per class. Weather permitting, we journey outside to enjoy the beauty of nature, fresh air, and wildlife that join us on the property. It has become a beautiful community which we've coined our "Qi Family". Many people have been attending for years, others drop in and out, people try it when they travel through town, (there has honestly only been a few times we haven't had a new attendee in class) – so class is always taught at a beginner level, and those that come regularly deepen their own personal practice using these same simple movements.



July 2018 - Tai Chi Easy Practice Leader Training at The Wellness Spa, 1st pic: Tom Bertram, 2nd pic: Ella Adams

I have taught literally thousands of people from all walks of life, all ages, all health or ill-health levels, seated or standing, even those from other countries visiting or passing through ... for the 20 years I've offered this free class. And I haven't done it alone. Though I have taught the majority of classes throughout this time, I have had others help out when I couldn't, to ensure this recurring weekly class continued each and every week. But since 2018, Tom Bertram has been my go-to Tai Chi practice leader. He helps out several times throughout the year, has created his own Qigong forms and is a student favorite for his uplifting and fun personality. So grateful for Tom!

And I am so grateful for all the stories shared from people attending this class. My rule of class is: “As long as you’re doing something, you’re doing it right!”. That means I just want people who come to class to participate, to join in, to take a deep breath that maybe they haven’t done in a while, and to not worry if they are doing it “right” or not. In this class, as long as it feels good, you’re not feeling pain or discomfort, and you stay in the present moment with us – you are doing everything right! This “permission” to relax and ‘Just Be’ is the path to self-healing. As soon as we begin to worry or stress – we shut off the lever to wellness and to our own self making its own medicine. This class is intended for healing... deep internal healing that you can do for yourself for free. And if you practice for even a couple minutes each day, you will gain profound, life-changing results. People who have shared their healing experiences and stories with me have brought me to tears... the depth of what you can do to help your own self to heal is beyond comprehension.



2018 Wu Dang, China – Studied Tai Chi & Qigong with Master Zhou, as well as other Taoist and Buddhist masters throughout China along with fellow Institute of Integral Qigong and Tai Chi (IIQTC) graduates

I have been told throughout the years that my classes are different than traditional Tai Chi, I have been criticized by martial artists who have learned the 'right way' and that I'm not following the rules, and because I was newer to these teachings, I wondered if I should follow the crowd? Or keep creating my own movements to share? But when I studied Tai Chi in China, on the mountain where Tai Chi was originally created, I was reassured that I am doing exactly what Tai Chi and Qigong were created for! Not only an exercise for vitality and longevity, but a way to tap into profound internal healing! I don't teach traditional Tai Chi, I share tools to help individuals learn how to heal themselves through the simplicity of breath, gentle movement, self-awareness, meditation, and fun! That includes teaching children – who need it just as much as the rest of us. Children have more stress than we want to admit, and something as simple, yet sincerely profound as Qigong can make a difference in how a child learns to deal with the stresses around them. All ages benefit! And when done with openness and personal truth, it is life-changing! I live with deep gratitude each day for learning and being able to share this miraculous gift called Tai Chi & Qigong.



2019 Stevens Point, WI – Deborah's 20-hour Certification training for those wanting to teach Qigong for Children. A program created from her training guide and storybook: 'The Horse, The Dragon, & The 10,000 Things'

If you haven't tried the Tuesday 'Tai Chi for Wellness' class – please come join in anytime! Our growing Tai Chi community is a welcoming, non-judgmental family of folks that just want to be part of the healing experience for the hour. No registration required, we just ask that you try to be there by 5:30pm so the relaxation can begin as a group.

If you don't live in the area or are unable to make Tuesday night work in your schedule, I have created an online course called 'Medical Yin Yang Qigong' that will take you on a journey through 16 Qigong movements created around nature and life, using that to awaken your connection to your own self. Visit The Wellness School online: www.wsw.edu (Programs → Qigong → Online Qigong Course) for more information on this easy to watch and learn video course.

Remember: Life is not about the destination, but more about the journey. Breathe, Relax, Be.



Deborah Adams is an Entrepreneur, Thought Leader and Wellness Expert. Founder and CEO of The Wellness Spa, Inc. since 1994, co-owner Qi Garden Salt Spa, Water Dragon Inn overnight accommodations, and The Wellness School; Clinical Massage Therapy Training program and facility. She is a Master Qigong and Tai Chi Instructor and the author of "The Horse, The Dragon & The 10,000 Things" and holds certification programs to train others to become teachers of her method. Deborah uses her experience from 25+ years as a Licensed Massage Therapist, massage therapy instructor, personal trainer, dancer and Human Performance coach and brings her acquired knowledge into her keynote lectures, trainings, and retreats. To contact her visit www.WellnessSpaResort.com