

## My Tai Chi Journey By Beryl Appleby

My Journey began in Autumn 2003. I was walking in the hills near Bolton Abbey. We were in Desolation Valley and I was finding the going very tough., having to stop every 10 minutes or less to get my breath. My walking stick was helping and taking most of the strain. My passion used to be walking and I was near to tears, finding for the first time that my weight was holding me back with a vengeance.

The following week my friend Pat suggested we try Tai Chi for a laugh. If nothing else we could find out what it was about! We went along . Some of the group were friendly. We stuck it out and after 6 weeks we were getting to know some of the moves. I was still finding moving tough and after an hours exercise my body was shouting at me to slow down! I was moving at snails pace and even they were overtaking me!



The following January I went on a diet to try to shift some of the weight that I had put on. My self-esteem was at an all time low. After 4 weeks the weight started to come off and I started to feel better. Due to my walking passion I was walking around the park in my lunchtime sometimes with my colleagues from work. I became a walk leader with the Healthy Living Programme. I was still going to Tai Chi rarely missing a week.

I was learning the Tai Chi moves and after two years I was put on a training programme with Dr Paul Lam. It was Tai Chi for Diabetes. I found that due to my weight I could not do some of the moves correctly. It was good for me because I was now in the position that I could show my students alternative ways of achieving the moves with out loosing self esteem. I then went on to do TCA with Lesley. I was inspired to continue - 5 years on I teach 8 classes per week and I am also attending workshops both here and abroad.

I always tell my students that Tai Chi is a bit like a good virus. It gets under your skin and you don't feel good unless you have done some Tai Chi every day!

My journey still goes on. I find that learning new forms exciting, challenging and full of fun. You get to meet interesting people some of whom inspire you to take on new challenges. Life has changed for the better. My weight is stable and I am still loosing but very slowly. My fitness levels have soared and I can now get up Desolation Valley without walking sticks or stopping every 10 minutes to get my breath.

Tai Chi has been my turning point in my life. I would be lost without it.

Beryl Appleby