

STUDENT PROFILE: CHRISTINE REYNOLDS

By WTS Staff

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Laoshi tells us that he was impressed when he first met Christine Reynolds, who has now been in the Thursday evening Qigong class since October of 2004. "We were completing a guided meditation one afternoon during the Older Adults class," he says. "She stayed outside until we were done." According to him, most people would've made another choice.

"I've heard it said that all things happen for a reason," says Christine when she recalls what brought her to the door that afternoon. "I had a serious illness 3 years ago, and found acupuncture to be very helpful." She tells us that she was also taking Chinese herbs, which she found not always to be the tastiest. When her acupuncturist recommended Qigong, her first question was: "How bad does it taste?"

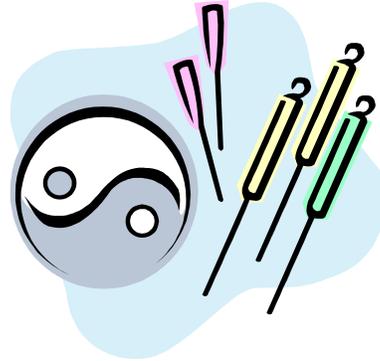
She was told that it was a form of movement addressing the body and the mind and that there were classes in Patchogue. Christine connected with the idea, armed herself with the kwoon address and class schedule, and found herself at the door.

She says that she had heard of T'ai Chi, but that Qigong was new to her. She remembers watching the graceful movements of Laoshi and the Friday afternoon students and then asking many questions. In deciding to try the Qigong class, she explains, "I was recovering, both physically and emotionally, and figured, 'What have I got to lose?'" She quickly adds, "After studying Qigong for about 18 months, I see the more appropriate question would have been, 'What do I have to gain?'"

According to Christine, she thought Qigong might feel similar to the yoga she had practiced years ago. However, she found herself "pleasantly surprised" by her first class. There was challenge, but there was also connection to the movements. She describes the feelings she had at the end of that first class as being "light and relaxed" and "like nothing else I'd experienced before." She admits that she particularly enjoys the concept that, generally, it isn't all about the perfect physical form right from the outset. Laoshi is quick to interject here that he's a little more particular with the truly external arts like Fragrance Qigong (*Xiang Gong*). He does, however, agree that with his approach to most of the styles he teaches it is more about feeling the correct way to play the forms and understanding that it takes time to improve than it is about movement details.

Another aspect of the class that Christine tells us she enjoys is the size. "We have an intimate little group on Thursday evenings," she says, "and it's been wonderful meeting the other students and sharing our experiences with the forms." Laoshi admits that he likes the intimacy as well, but would like to see the class size increase. He says that he's not sure why the class continues to be small. He thinks it is probably one of two factors: 1) the time of the Thursday evening class, 8:15 to 9:15 PM; or, 2) the fact people are like Christine was initially, and are unfamiliar with the art.

He is pleased with her progress and that the unfamiliar is no longer so. "She's a very dedicated student in getting herself in the door each week," he says. "She's actually told



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me – aside from occasional business conflicts – that she has to be very incapacitated before she even considers not coming to class.”



Christine (R) joining in David Alexander's workshop at *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day – Patchogue 2005*.

But Christine tells us that her connection to Qigong isn't restricted to her time in the kwoon on Thursday evenings. She's also made a point of participating in such Water Tiger public events as *Alive After Five* and *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day*. “The two aspects that have become a part of my everyday life are breathing and meditation.” She tells us that she had always been someone who found it difficult to meditate because of what the Chinese call “the Monkey Mind.” In other words her mind was always racing to the next thing she had to do. She smiles as she tells us that now when things seem to be getting hectic, she finds herself stopping, taking a few conscious breaths, and slowing down. She even meditates when she finds herself in the dentist's chair. There's something she has in common with Laoshi.

Something else she has in common with Laoshi is her enjoyment of the *Standing Eight Pieces of Brocade*. She tells us that she likes the entire set, but is especially fond of the posture *Turn, Look, and Leave Behind....* She says, “It's a wonderful combination of both a physical movement and a profound philosophical idea.” She continues, “It reminds me of lyrics from one of my favorite songs, *Big Country* by the band of the same name: “Just 'cause it happened doesn't mean you can't discard it...” She shares that it's at that part of the practice that she reminds herself to let go of any clutter in her head that she doesn't need anymore, and leave it behind. She concludes, “Sounds simple, but it's been very profound for me.”

Even connecting with simplicity can be challenging. Christine confesses that she has two points she needs to address. The first is balancing on one leg during the Crane Frolics. The second is making the time to practice. She tells us that she is learning that a short practice is still better than none. “My goal,” she says, “is to spend more time practicing outside of class, and to feel more comfortable with the more complex movements.”

When asked if there is anything else she would like to share, she says, “I enjoy the rules and traditions of the kwoon, such as removing our shoes and bowing as we enter and leave.” She continues, “But I am pleased that the class is not so strict, and that we can laugh at ourselves, too.” We giggle as well when she tells us that she is a dedicated fan of ballet and that she compares the movements in *Swan Lake* to the movements of the crane in class. She adds that she sees Laoshi's guidance and encouragement as the most important component of the class and that she cannot wait to spread her wings every Thursday.

Coming full circle at the end of our conversation, Christine ties her closing comments to her first words and her illness, “Out of an unpleasant experience came my introduction to Qigong, Laoshi, and the terrific students at Water Tiger School.” She smiles, and adds, “I guess things do happen for a reason.”

