

Who would have thought that through a tenuous connection with Green Prescription, I would eventually be trained as a Tai Chi instructor in the Tai Chi for Health programmes?

I had lived with diabetes, arthritis, and hypertension for 5 years, resigning myself to the twice daily doses of medicines, and accepting that these ailments could be controlled by medication, so just lived with it. Of course I would have preferred not to take prescription medicines, but rather homeopathic remedies, something I'd done in the past whenever I was unwell. I'd been active in all sports when I was much younger but had damaged my lower back and knees so active sports was not an option. My sedentary lifestyle and working in front of a computer had made me unfit.

On return from overseas, I reintroduced myself to my doctor and she suggested I join Green Prescription and get myself into a healthier state and to try and stave off the progress of diabetes. I knew I needed to do this and with my doctor's encouragement, in April this year, I took part in the Healthy Lifestyle Programmes at the Ponoke Football Club in Kilbirnie. What a great programme; once a week, for 2 hours, I joined others in learning about nutrition which incorporated healthy cooking on a budget, and reading labels so we could be aware of what the products contained and what we were putting into our bodies. It was from these sessions that I learnt of the aqua aerobics classes, so I joined that also. I was in the right frame of mind to join anything that would help me.

I thoroughly enjoyed both the Healthy Lifestyle Programme and the aqua aerobics sessions, meeting others in the same unhealthy cycle that I'd found myself in. The support amongst the participants was priceless and we had such fun at our aerobics sessions; there was much discussion and laughter in the pool as well as doing the aerobics as instructed by Louise.

It seemed a natural progression, at this time to lean towards tai chi. I'd learnt tai chi in the Philippines for 3 years from a lovely elderly Chinese man. On return to Wellington, I discovered Modified Tai Chi which catered for people with arthritis, diabetes and assisted with falls prevention. Things just seemed to fall into place – I guess the universe was looking out for me – and I was able to combine 2 courses to become a Tai Chi Instructor. I was so incredibly lucky to be able to do this and it was shortly after completing the 2 courses that I was asked to fill in for an instructor at the Kilbirnie Community Centre, who was going on an overseas holiday for 6 weeks. I was nervous but buoyed by my love of the principles of tai chi and the health benefits I'd experienced, I stood in front of the class of around 24 participants, and began my journey as a tai chi instructor.

It's now 4 weeks since I began my own tai chi class at Kilbirnie Community Centre from 1.30 to 2.30pm, teaching beginners and anyone who would like to join in. I had 15 participants in my first class which totally blew me away as I hadn't expected such a crowd. I value the knowledge passed on to me by my elderly Chinese instructor in the Philippines, and the other instructors from whom I am currently learning. I am privileged to be learning tai chi which, for me, has proven the most effective exercise for my physical and mental well-being. I will continue to learn and to pass on this gift to others so they too will enjoy the benefits.

I would strongly encourage people to take advantage of the Healthy Lifestyle Programme and Green Prescription Programme because there is so much support and encouragement given. Why wouldn't anyone want to take part?