



“When the hand stays still, the body moves.
When the body moves, the hands stay still.”

-Ying Tsun Idiom

7th Annual MYVT Sisters Retreat “The Art of Change”



West Coast Sunny Tang Victoria hosted the 7th Annual MYVT Sisters Retreat at Honeymoon Bay Lodge, BC. Women gathered from across Canada and the United States to train, share stories and leadership, relax and live the kung fu life together.



The Dragonfly and Change...



We were frequented by dragonflies in this year's retreat, on the land, by the lake and finally *inside* our retreat buildings. One entered our meeting room and stayed for days. It left the last day of the retreat.

"In almost every part of the world, the dragonfly symbolizes change, transformation, adaptability and self-realization. The change that is often referred to has its source in mental and emotional maturity and understanding the deeper meaning of life. The dragonfly moves with elegance and grace."

<https://www.dragonfly-site.com/meaning-symbolize.html>

What insights did you gain from this year's retreat?



"We all struggle as moms, wives and sisters to make this work for us and our families. It can be draining and satisfying in equal amounts. Somehow we find the time to make kung fu a part of our lives. It is not always easy but is rewarding. I need to trust that the path I am on is the right one."
-C.J.



"There is strength in our individual actions, we can cause/inspire change with small things. Be kind to ourselves but always with forward intent. Surrender is not failure, it's change, and adapting to change is power."
-W.H.

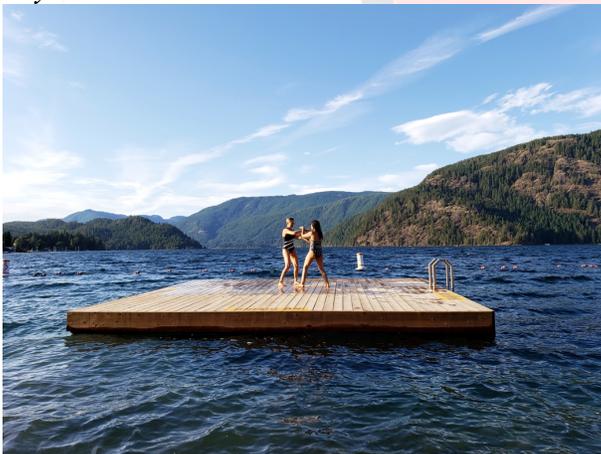
"I can meditate, and it's not as hard as I thought. To be open to change and to step out of my comfort zone to allow for greater opportunities and growth."
-S.S.



“This retreat inspired me to train Ving Tsun with love and gratitude. I gained new connections with others and within myself.”
 -Heather



“So much clarity! And how invaluable our sisters space and community is. It also deepened my gratitude for the history of our lineage. I love the storytelling as a way of passing on the tradition and history.”
 -Dyan



“This year's retreat really helped me see that, as I continue my training, I need to continue exploring the inner aspects of the art. I am quite dedicated to my training in that I train a lot, both in and out of class. However, some of my training may be a bit superficial, or only related to the gross physical aspect of learning. This retreat emphasised to me that I need to work more with the subtle aspects of training related to personal growth.”
 -Natalie



“Like always, I appreciate how much time we spend on the 'integration' of our kung fu: the inner work and evolution of a martial artist. These retreats consistently reflect to me how much my outer kung fu practice reflects my inner spiritual/psychological practice. Specifically, I saw how I collapse when 'giving' or stepping in, and tighten/tense up when 'receiving' or when someone is attacking.”
 -H.E.





Sifu Jim Kragtwyk with Simo Mia Velez

THE ART OF CHANGE: Surfing the Waves of Grief, Confusion and New Beginnings

As our club hosted this year's Moy Yat Ving Tsun Sisters' Retreat, I was asked to give a talk on the Art of Change from the perspective of a psychotherapist. When not in the role of Sifu, my main professional focus is as a psychotherapist and an organizational health and wellness trainer/speaker. One of the most common topics organizations seek understanding and skills development with is on transition and change.

There are many key attributes that one needs to consider around this topic. The first thing we need to consider is if the change is planned or unplanned and to what degree we have control and choice over the process, timing and outcome. Context is important. Basically, we are asking if we are in a crisis situation (not planned and little control) or are we in a situation where we have time, resources and agency to align with the process of change in a healthy way. Obviously in a self-defence situation, this is a crisis. In this article, I want to focus on the other context.

As the truism goes, the only constant is change. As a result, we need to be seeking it out and learning

how to engage with change instead of hiding from or resisting it. The metaphor I often use is surfing. The waves of life are never ending and something we have limited control over. We cannot control their frequency, speed, size or intensity. We can, however, choose *where* we surf and learn *how* to surf with the varying waves. If we do not learn how to surf the waves of change, they will either pass us by or wipe us out.

Often people have negative feelings about change, using words like *fear*, *scary*, *anxiety* and *dread* instead of *joy*, *enthusiasm*, *excitement* and *wonder*. The reason many of us have negative feelings about change is that we were not taught how to skillfully surf the waves of change to get to the benefit and growth that it can bring.

One of the key understandings of surfing change is to understand the nature of the wave. First, we have to understand the difference between change and transition. A change event is something that has a moment in time. Transition is the *process* before, during and after the change event. We need a certain skillset throughout the process of transition. I will now describe the three stages of change and transition: the ending, the period of uncertainty and the new beginning.

The Ending:

The ending requires us to grieve. Grieving is the healthy and natural process of letting go of the old, of what no longer is. The letting go includes our emotional, cognitive, behavioral and spiritual emptying. When we grieve, our nervous system goes into a state of chaos, dysregulation and unravelling, resulting in the emergence of emotions such as sadness, confusion and anger, to name a few. Our beliefs and cognitive functions can become irrational and inconsistent and our behavior will reflect all of this chaos as well. While this is typically a state that is uncomfortable and we want to avoid, it is one that requires our presence and engagement. We need to fully feel our feelings without shutting them down nor unnecessarily amplifying them. We just need to feel them “without

the story” and trust they will diminish over time. We need to empty our tea cup fully if we want to receive the new cup of tea fully. We need to let go instead of holding on or trying to control things. If we do not learn to grieve and let go fully, it will thwart our ability in the next stages and perpetuate the negative experiences we have had around change. If we do not have this ability, we may need the help and support of others.

The Uncertainty

Once past the ending, we find ourselves in a place that, for some people, is more uncomfortable than grieving and letting go: the place of not knowing what to do. The old is no longer there and the new has not arrived. We are in a state of limbo. We can feel disempowered in this state, as many of us do when we do not know what to do or what is coming next. This stage can feel very scary and anxiety-provoking. We can surf this part of the wave by choosing actions that support us in a time of not knowing. Focusing on self-care and wellness practices, accessing support from family and friends, learning coping and mindfulness skills to manage our emotions and remain “present” are a few actions that can stabilize this time of uncertainty and confusion. Focus on things you can control and influence, then forget the rest. This is the essence of empowerment.

New Beginnings

If we have moved through the first two stages of change and transition with some skills, we are set up for an ideal experience as we step into the new. We can have a mindset of optimism, curiosity and excitement of what the new can bring to us for our alignment and growth with the big mystery of life. During this stage, we can support our surfing by looking at the positive aspects of the change, acknowledging that despite the discomfort and strain of the earlier parts of the process, that the change was ultimately for our own good and that of others and life in general. We can then settle into a new pattern of stability, appreciation and joy for all the gifts that this change has bequeathed to us. We can

drink deeply from this new cup of tea and savour all of its flavours.

And as I change my metaphor one last time, keep an eye out for the next wave and be ready to catch it!

- *Sifu Jim Kragtwyk*

Training

Each newsletter features two discussions: an account from a particular new student, and an account from a senior student. These write-ups are focused on what that individual is working on with their training. This way, we can appreciate different perspectives rooted in different skill levels and experience.



Kurt Fairfield training platform chi sau with Helen Guilding

A Little Big Idea

Last week, at the end of class, Sihing Mark put on a recording of some interesting kung fu discussions. We all sat around and listened intently for small details that could help our own training. While we mostly physically train at the kwoon, this is also an important aspect of our training: listening to new ideas.

When wisdom comes from others, besides Sifu or a Sihing or Sije, it makes sense to check if what they are saying matches with the Faat Do of Ving Tsun, specifically when the information is coming outside of our lineage. Some ideas may seem foreign, but they could just be a different angle on a concept you already know. Sometimes it's the exact same thing that Sifu has been saying for years, but suddenly, we hear it with new ears. Whatever is said, if it comes from someone with a genuine desire to explore the nature of Ving Tsun, it can be of value.

Compare what you hear with your own understanding as well. Ask yourself the questions: Do I actually understand what they are saying? Does it apply to only the topic at hand or is it a larger concept that spans many aspects of Ving Tsun? Then test what you've heard. Perhaps find a partner and see if what was said makes sense. It could open a new door or maybe confirm something you have felt or thought about in the back of your mind. By exploring the 'new' idea physically as well as mentally, we can open up the concept much deeper. My point is that the source is not always the critical part of a piece of wisdom, but sometimes the way you hear or receive that wisdom is equally important.

As another example, I was watching a video about Chu Shong Tin Ving Tsun. The discussion surrounded a concept of the sphere, and the difference of how Tai Chi addresses the sphere versus Ving Tsun. While I had never heard of the sphere concept in either Ving Tsun or Tai Chi, the idea was very much embodied in me already. As soon as I heard it, I felt an 'aha' moment inside. But the real 'aha' moment came when Sidai Arne and I were training one morning last week. I mentioned the topic and quickly tried to explain what the master had said. I was able to express it verbally. However, once we started rolling and tried out the idea, both of us quickly developed a deeper understanding that we would have had from just chatting about it on the couch. My point here is that when given new inputs to your Ving Tsun, try them out right away. In your mind at first, but perhaps

more importantly, with a partner who is also interested in deepening their understanding of the art.

Gathering new ideas from a diverse set of sources is a great way to breathe life into one's practice. I have watched Sifu and Sihing Mark continually model this and am starting to understand the value of gaining many perspectives of the same *little big idea*.

*Kurt Fairfield
Blue Sash*



Kurt Fairfield with his partner, Cindy Dennison and Sifu Jim Kragtwyk at club barbeque to welcome sisters for the retreat

My Kung Fu Journey



This month will mark four years since I joined the club. My perspective of kung fu during the last four years has flowed and ebbed into many crevices and doorways within myself. When I began, I just knew I needed to do this, but for the first three and a half years it was a struggle to just get myself to class. Each time I go, I never know what it will bring up inside of me, for it has become a container of substantial physical, emotional and spiritual growth, hard work and fun for me.

When I started, I came into the club with some joint issues, which were very challenging in many ways. I had to speak up and say, "I have to stop because my _____ is hurting," or "Can you lighten up because of my _____." Then, with time over the years, slowly stretching myself outside of my perceived limits and often with supportive encouragement from my siblings, Sihing Mark and Sifu, I have now come to realize that I have strengthened myself in more ways than I could have imagined, just by being supported that if I needed to, I could slow down or stop...

This freedom to be "me" allowed me to often push through small barriers within myself, one inch at a time. It is said, "that with small things, big things grow", and with my kung fu journey, this is very true. I can do so many things in class now that I could not before. This is also true in my everyday life. My balance and proper alignment of joints/horse connection to the ground has gifted me such a wonderful feeling of confidence.

My ex-partner, Samantha Hewer, is a former student of the club and the one who introduced me to the Ving Tsun. I am thankful for her doing that. Now, I want to share a personal story that happened with her early on in my first year with the club. This situation proved to me just how powerful the art is in our everyday life.

Samantha and I used to live at a place on the Gorge that had a nice swimming pool. Samantha is a very playful person that likes to do sneak attacks, and one day at the pool she pushed me into the water with a devilish grin. However, she felt really bad when she saw me flail, with shock in my eyes, as I flew

helplessly across six feet of tile and way out into the water. She was just having fun, but I felt really embarrassed that my girlfriend just sent me flying. It was a very disempowering moment when I realized that someone could uproot my body so easily, leaving me feeling so helpless.

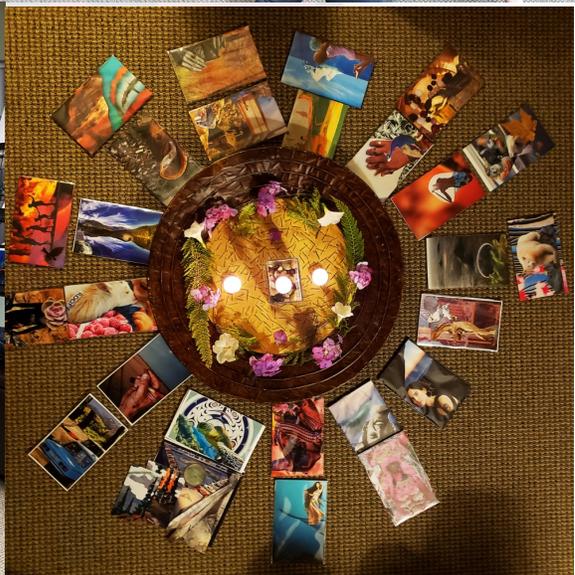
About six to eight months later, after I had been with the club for probably six months, we were at the pool again. I was off in nowhere land in my head and didn't see it coming. Again. She attempted to push me into the pool once more with that devilish smile. This time, however, I shifted my weight toward her and came to a full stop after only getting moved back a couple of feet. In that moment, I felt the power of kung fu. A big empowered grin came across my face as I looked upon her expression of surprise. She could not push me into the pool anymore. I am smiling widely now with that memory. It was a fun moment for both of us as we acknowledged the huge difference that kung fu has made in my life. It also inspired her to be extra stealthy and sneaky the next time she wanted to get me into the water again. :-)

I could honestly make a list a mile long to forever if I started naming the amazing benefits I have been gifted from the club. Some of the top things are: the wonderful people; the hard work we all do that gives rise to so much respect for one another for just continually showing up; the confidence of feeling more and more able to face and handle force that may come my way; the hidden gifts, like conflict resolution in relationships as we train with each other and have to learn how to move through our stuff; and then there are the physical benefits that have given me my body back, so that I'm feeling younger and stronger with each year I train.

Last but not least, I want to express much appreciation to Sisook Colin for the class he taught on his visit four years ago. I sat on a chair and just knew as I watched and listened to him talk about relationships, that this place, this club and this martial art was deeply calling to me!

*-Arne Pedersen
Red Sash*

MYVT SISTERS RETREAT MONTAGE



**Welcome to our new student:
Tanvir Khan**

Special Events

- * September 2019: 7th Annual
Moy Yat Ving Tsun Sisters Retreat
www.VingTsunSisterhood.org
- * September 2019: Sifu's Birthday Dinner

Upcoming

- * December 14, 2019: Club Christmas Party

**Congratulations to Helen Guilding for
achieving her BLACK sash**



Special shout-out to our kung fu brother, Raj Pal, who met Instructor Mark Watson in Peru for some Machu Picchu chi sau. We miss you Raj!



**Click or cut and paste the links below to
see several videos from recent classes:**

<https://www.facebook.com/881935713/videos/10162218467195714/>
<https://www.facebook.com/881935713/videos/10162078250240714/>

Editor: Heidi Erhardt

Copy Editor: Nat Rogers

Photos: Mark Watson and Helen Guilding

MYVT Photos courtesy of Wendy Hamilton

Videos courtesy of Mark Watson

NOTE: We use the spelling Ving Tsun, which late Grand Master Ip Man used to differentiate our kung fu from the various branches.

Please check out our Facebook Page (@WingChunYYJ) and website (www.victoriawingchun.com) for more information about Ving Tsun, Sifu Jim Kragtwyk's talks on various aspects of the system and instructional videos.