



Philip Lai Qi Gong Association

## May Newsletter 2020

My dear Qi Gong friends:

### What Makes Us Happy?

A 75-year study done by the Harvard Medical School called the Grant Study looked at what predicts healthy aging. The main result of the study was that those people who cultivate and maintain warm, loving, caring relationships are the happiest. The only thing that really matters in life is your relationships to other people. This supersedes other factors such as money, status or even level of health. People who make over \$5 million per year are not any happier than those who make \$100K per year. Money only makes people happier if it lifts them from poverty to a modest income of about \$50K per year. By middle age it is the richness of your circle of friends that predicts your level of happiness. Humans have evolved to live in social groups and we do not do well apart from a group. The more intimate the relationship, the better. The happiest people were found to be in a romantic relationship. More married people describe themselves as very happy compared to never-marrieds.

There are other predictors of happiness according to the study. People who are involved in altruistic pursuits such as volunteering for charitable organizations derive a lot of happiness from this. People who make lists of things to be grateful for can derive feelings of happiness for the short term. If you have a general “attitude of gratitude” in your general outlook you can maintain general feelings of happiness for the long term. Another way to be happy is to be curious about the world and try and learn something new every day. The happiness is increased if there are people you can share this discovery with. The way you relate to those closest to you can also increase happiness. Always be ready to forgive your loved ones when they disappoint you. In fact, this reflex of forgiveness should be automatic and unconditional in your relationship.

### The Power of Friendship

Spending time with others improves our emotional and physical health. It greatly reduces our chances of depression and early death. Loneliness is associated with chronic inflammatory responses and weak immune systems. Social connection with good friends and even casual acquaintances is a

health factor of the same importance as healthy diet or avoidance of smoking. Humans have evolved to seek out friends. Studies in the animal kingdom have found that animals with strong social bonds have more offspring and live longer. Researchers have used MRI machines to compare the brain patterns of people who are friends and found that their reactions to various stimuli were very similar. The researchers think that the brains of friends actually align. This is probably an evolutionary feature which has helped humans co-operate to survive (for example: to get together to hunt for food).

Although face-to-face interaction with friends is the best way to connect, the use of social media has a role if you cannot be together in person. Technology such as Facebook is useful to maintain relationships with people who are far away.

### Who Makes a Good Friend?

There are certain qualities in a person that makes them a good friend. We want friends who “have our back”, people who are emotionally stable and who will listen to our troubles and can at least empathise with us even though they may not actually be able to solve the problem. We seek long-term relationships with people who are “nice”. A good friend is thoughtful, kind, sensitive, forgiving and outward focused. We avoid people who are moody, impulsive, self-absorbed, inflexible and always looking to settle a score. Unfortunately, these types of people lose out by having more risk of emotional disorders as well as fewer friends. They are also among the unhappiest people in the world.

Emotional stability in a friend is very important because you want them to be a “rock” of emotional support, not let you drift in the storms of life.

### Let's Get Together

My friends, even if we can't be together in person for a while, we can use on-line means to visit and do some Qi Gong, meditation and just check-in with each other.

I will let you know by email and Facebook about upcoming on-line events.