

A Meaningful Gift

By Susanne Kikuta

I have had a very fortunate life. I have a great family, a stable job, and good friends. I was happy and comfortable, but at the same time I was selling myself short. Fortunately, about a year ago, my life changed in a very profound way. I found out how to make the most of my opportunities, experience things on a deeper level, and affect positive change in ways I couldn't have imagined before.



The most significant opportunity came when my friend Gabriel told me about a Tao ceremony. The ceremony is called Qiu Tao, and it means to receive or request Tao. The ceremony itself is very simple and short. But the significance and the benefits are immense. When I came to the Qiu Tao ceremony, I didn't know what to expect. I was simply curious and I trusted my new friend.

After the ceremony, I knew immediately that something had shifted. I felt more whole. Visually, everything looked clearer and brighter. In general, I understood and experienced life more deeply. I felt like another part of my brain had been turned on.

The months following my Qiu Tao were exciting and new. As I was adjusting to the new world I was living in, I had opportunities to invite people to the ceremony. I was so enthusiastic and couldn't wait to invite all my friends, family and coworkers. I wanted to invite everyone I met. But when it came time to actually ask people, I was suddenly paralyzed, shy and tongue-tied. (None of these qualities are characteristic of me.) In my heart, I knew I wanted to share this experience with everyone. Yet, my mind and my body gave me so many reasons to think that I shouldn't.

So many strange things happened even when I even *thought* about bringing someone to Qiu Tao. I wouldn't want to call or talk to my friends. I'd simply forget about people. I'd get distracted. Even *they* would act unexpectedly, by breaking plans with me or simply not calling me back. So

many thoughts ran through my head. "What if it's only right for me? Will it really help them? Will my friends think I'm strange? They don't really need any help. I don't know anyone. This is hard."

In many cases, it was difficult to talk about the ceremony and my own experience. Thankfully, my friends who cultivated Tao reminded me that the negative thoughts and fears were simply obstacles, which I could choose to move through and overcome. Resistance is a test when there is something of worth and importance on the horizon. The one thing that always helps me to rise to the occasion is to remember why I want to share the experience. I know with every cell in my body that if someone has the chance and chooses to come to the Qiu Tao, they will definitely benefit from it.

*"To fly, we have to
have resistance."*

- Maya Lin

After pushing through a lot of resistance, some friends and family were able to receive Tao. This gave me real faith in the significance of the ceremony. But, even though my personal experience opened my eyes to the world around me, I couldn't see how I had changed personally. It was only after I saw my family and friends creating healthier lives that I was able to notice how the ceremony had changed me. When I saw dramatic changes in my friends and family, I realized that Qiu Tao was truly special and unique.

For example, my best friend's irate and neurotic nature became more stable and confident. Akie, another close friend, finally broke her pattern of unhealthy relationships, and she also launched her own business. My brother began a committed relationship and became more responsible, which is a change that shocked both his family and his close friends. My parents significantly cleared out the house that they had been living in for the past thirty years. They are now selling it and getting ready to start fresh in the next phase of their life. It's so rewarding to see the people I love finding joy.

My relationship with each person I invited to Qiu Tao has changed for the better and become more genuine. This is because the ceremony helps us break through unnecessary clutter we have accumulated in life, and reconnect to our hearts on a more profound and authentic level.

After I saw how the ceremony helped people, it became much easier for me to tell more people about it. Now I wait in wonder and excitement to see what positive change and growth everyone gains from the ceremony. I truly love to see people grow and learn. It inspires me to see others working toward and realizing the dreams of their true selves. I hope to see more people fully actualizing their potential, and discovering their talents, gifts, strengths, and their True Hearts. I am so grateful that I can offer such a great gift to people who give so much of themselves for me. Thank you.

My e-mail address is skikuta@gmail.com. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you'd like to know more about the Qiu Tao ceremony. □



Graphic by Heather Poon
www.heatherp.com