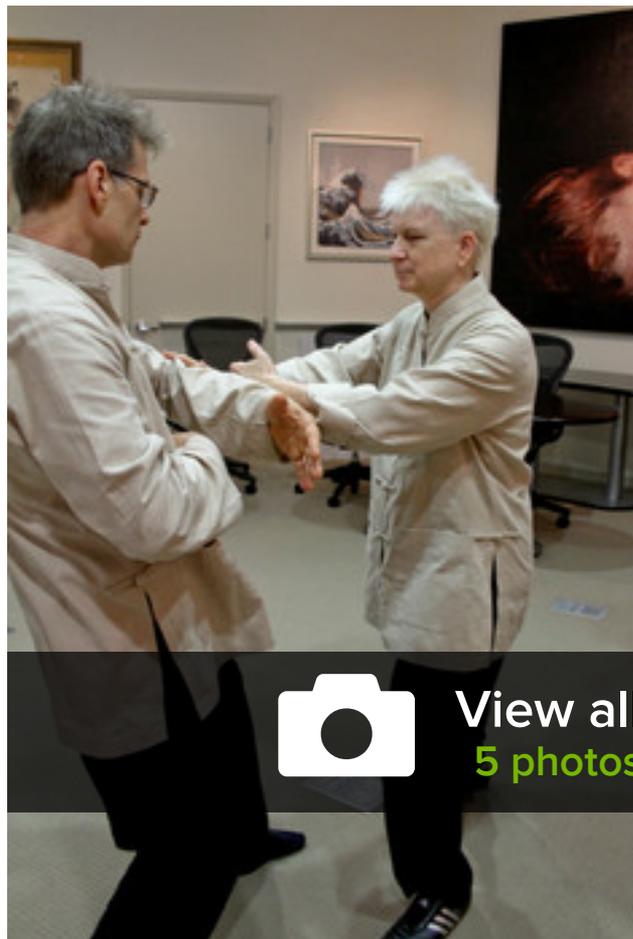


## “Ten Zen” brings me calmness

January 15, 2016

8:27 PM MST

Recently, I received a USPS package. Inside, sat a small flat item wrapped in grocery bag type of brown paper and tied with raw hemp strings. The package looked rustic yet with elegance. It was too handsome to be unwrapped. Yes, I am silly in that way and felt emotionally attached to the mysterious item already. I tried to move the knot to a corner to slip the item out without destroying the strings. But the strings were tight. I decided to wait a day or two before opening it. Nevertheless, curiosity got the best part of me and I could not wait further. It sure would not make any difference if I just pulled a string out of the knot quickly. Instead, I untied the strings slowly with the same softness and stickiness as a [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) Chuan movement. There wasn't any Scotch tape on the wrapping paper. The paper was neatly folded in an origami fashion with ends tucked in. With the same rigor, I pulled the ends out gradually. A little book with a heavy brown paper cover revealed itself. It dawned on me that Tai Chi Sifu Jennifer St. John of Florida had promised me her latest book titled [Ten Zen](#).



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*The Fusion Group*

There are ten original short stories crafted by Sifu St. John. Each one has a profound meaning. Aside from Table of Content, End Notes, and a dozen or so beautiful photos, there are only 70 pages for content. I could have finished reading the entirety at the duration of sipping a cup of tea. However the extra large font (Papyrus, 16pt) slowed me down. It also invited me to contemplate more. I like traditional [Zen](#) stories, short and sagacious. Even though I understand the moral of them, some seem elusive and not applicable to the complex modern life. At the end of each story, Jennifer prompted questions for reflections. She also provided suggestion for considerations. They are all relatable to the challenges we face daily spiritually and emotionally at home and at work.

At age 5, Jen got beaten up by a bully. Her dad took her for Judo lessons. She then learned Tae Kwon Do. In college, she attended a Shaolin martial art studio near campus and started learning Chinese Kung Fu. She was drawn to a beautiful wall-hanging calligraphy of [Dao De Jin \(or Tao Te Ching\)](#). She got a copy of the book and read it from cover to cover. Later she studied Tai Chi Chuan from Master Waysun Liao and others. As her skills and knowledge grew, she became a Tai Chi instructor and opened [House of Tai Ji](#). She continued to read Dao De Jin. Furthermore, [the Fusion Group](#), a successful business-consulting firm founded by Ms. St. John, used to give copies of Dao De Jing to clients.

According to Jen, her life has been a journey of discovery of the Great Way (or Dao), the Perennial Philosophy. She has been stymied in trying to explain Tai Chi, Dao, Holosophy and the loving warrior spirit to others. Holosophy is a new word coined by one of her teachers. She explained that “Holosophy seeks to assist people in seeing themselves as part of the wider universe in which consciousness is the source point of creation, which becomes increasingly complex as it develops

through the personal, the familial, the community, the super group, living things, the physical universe, the spiritual, and the infinite. Holosophy's view suggests that the current fascination with 'science' as a 'substitute' for religion is both problematic and reductionist. We consider that Life is more than mere atoms, yet the spiritual nature of life itself is enmeshed with the physical: in a complex and mystical combination. Becoming more familiar with the parts of life gives us a better platform for understanding the whole." Dao De Jing is great but hard to digest. Jen hopes that through stories, not too grand, not too threatening, and not too all encompassing, she can share the perennial wisdom with others. *Ten Zen* is the first book of the *Zen Series* that she intends to publish.

As a Tai Chi student and teacher, I understand what Jen means by "When the student is ready, the Master appears" and "Learning is letting go". I also echo Sifu Jen's teaching that the ultimate goal of learning Tai Chi is not "doing" Tai Chi but "being" Tai Chi.

The chapter marker "10" (see the design in the attached slide show) in the book is thoughtfully designed. Embodied East and West philosophies, "1" was typeset in a western style while "0" was drawn with a brush with a look and feel of the Tai Chi symbol and a representation of nothing-ness. *Ten Zen* is sophisticatedly put together both in content and design. I appreciate Jen and her team took the time mindfully wrapped each of the books. It was an active Zen undertaking, which certainly rubbed off on me. I am grateful to receive such a present during the recent holiday hustle and bustle.

## **SUGGESTED LINKS**

- **Paul Brennan is God sent**
- **Recommended: Insight Timer for meditations**
- **Vincent Lyn: a master of martial and musical arts**
- **Drunk on Tai Chi**
- **Meditation can improve your brain health**



**Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner