



**Tai Sophia
Institute**

Redefining Health



Tai Sophia's Signature Program—
an experience that changes lives.

Redefining Everything

An experience that changes lives

Participants share their stories . . .

Although the computerized records don't go back to the early seventies when Redefining Health (RDH) was first offered in a different form, it's safe to say that over the last 35 years, thousands of people have experienced some form of Tai Sophia's signature workshop, delivered by co-founders Dianne Connelly and Bob Duggan.

Initially, Dianne and Bob welcomed an audience coming to learn about acupuncture and its needling process. The program evolved as participants sought to become the needles *themselves*, and as the SOPHIA program developed in the late 1980s. Recognizing that RDH is at the philosophical roots of everything Tai Sophia offers, Dianne describes it as an "overture," explaining that "like any overture, it heralds different facets of a whole symphony and plays them out."

Bob points out that for each RDH session, "what goes on depends on who shows up," and Dianne suggests that it's "all about shining on each other." And that's what these pages are about: shining on a few of the many who have shown up for Redefining Health and who have redefined their lives in inspiring ways.

Of course an exploration of Redefining Health would be incomplete without shining a little on Dianne Connelly and Bob Duggan. Both delight in the balancing dance of teaching together, and recognize that they make sure different things happen in different ways. Although they may come with different approaches, both Dianne and Bob see the work as high-stakes and are committed to being fully present for it. Says Bob, "It's risky doing this work in front of large groups. People are dealing with pretty potent attachments, and we are asking them to let go." When asked if he likes being the voice of challenge, Bob offers an emphatic "No!" and laughs. Still, he pushes through, knowing that part of "being a healer is carving into a space that's uncomfortable for people."

Dianne identifies the challenge of remembering to teach RDH for the sake of the attendees, to let go of any insecurities, and to be in embodied practice herself. Dianne asks, "Do I forget sometimes? Yes. And I'm committed to not forgetting." She smiles and adds, "It's all about love, really."

Ultimately, Redefining Health was never a task designed for a select few. It remains the charge of two virtuoso teachers and all of us to use wisely the power we have within us: to redefine not just health, but everything.



During each Redefining Health weekend, Bob Duggan and Dianne Connelly masterfully work with attendees to reframe issues or concerns in their lives. Above, Bob provides coaching to Andrew Reiner, a participant in February 2009.

Redefining Family

For Cecil Rosen, one of the eye-openers in Redefining Health was that he is constantly in the process of writing his life stories and in charge of the way he writes them, one chapter at a time. Both Cecil and Karen, his wife of over 40 years, took this realization deeply to heart as they moved through Karen's diagnosis of brain cancer and the treatment that followed. They found that in one of the hardest parts of their lives, they were able, as Cecil says, "to find and create joy in virtually everything we did."

Karen was diagnosed in June of 2004 and was unable to continue in her role as professor of marriage and family

therapy at Virginia Tech. At that time, Cecil quit his job as a business executive to become a full-time caregiver for Karen. Their son Jeff, an internet software developer who had been living in San Diego, moved back to Virginia in 2004 to support his parents with the help of his brother Mike, a realtor and real estate investor.

From that time until Karen's death in April 2008, the Rosens shared a number of joyful celebrations and adventures, including Mike's marriage to Jenny in April 2005. Also, in early 2005, Karen and Cecil began driving from their home in Virginia to Laurel for acupuncture treatments with Dianne Connelly.

Through Dianne, the Rosens learned of Redefining Health and came to the October weekend with Jeff and Mike. Cecil found it an important way for the family to get on the same page and to find "the positive aspects of the most dire situations." As Cecil explains, Karen's brain cancer, with the most aggressive form of tumor, left her with a prognosis of six to eight months to live. Instead, she survived almost four years, with Karen and her family managing to truly enjoy the time they had together — made possible, as Mike explains, by one of the gifts of RDH: "Just because it is raining outside doesn't mean that it is bad weather. We have a choice to see the rain as good or bad."

Cecil describes Karen as having a gift for interpersonal relationships, carrying herself with grace, and acting as a model for the rest of the family. Says Cecil, "RDH helped the rest of us by giving us the tools and context to grow in many of the ways that we saw and experienced in Karen."

Numerous practices from RDH touched the Rosens, from living life in ways that honor the ancestors and serve future generations, to "keeping the lid on the rice pot moving," to using words as treatments, to always drawing the circle big

enough. And the Rosen family circle became a little bigger in 2006 with Jeff's marriage to Cristina, and then again in 2007 with the birth of Jeff and Cristina's son Reece. When Reece was born, Karen decided to give the gift of a photo album and memory book to her new grandson. After Karen's death, Cecil finished the work Karen began and gave the album to



For the Rosen family (above) Redefining Health was ultimately a way to "bring a family closer." Pictured (from the upper left) are Cecil Rosen and his sons Jeff and Mike. Christina, Jeff's wife, holds their son Reece. Seated on the right is Jenny, Mike's wife.

Practices you can use

When you find yourself upset, remember you have a choice: Upset is optional.

Reece for his first birthday, with the intent to connect him to his ancestors.

Cecil explains that "both Redefining Health and our relationship with Dianne Connelly as a clinician played major roles in helping all of us find ways to navigate this brain cancer journey with joy, peace, and happiness." And Dianne played an important part in the service celebrating Karen's life.

This past fall, Mike and Jeff continued the family's commitment to RDH and brought their wives Jenny and Cristina to the October 2008 weekend. For Cristina, the workshop offered a great way to experience connection, both with her husband and other loved ones, and ultimately a way to "bring a family closer." Since their RDH experiences, Cecil also notices that his family is more inclined to talk about how they feel, to listen to each other, and to appreciate shared moments. "We tend to look at all problems or crises as opportunities and possibilities. That practice has become so firmly engrained that we hardly notice as it happens."

Says Cecil, "We had a great start with Karen as a friend, wife, and mother. The Redefining Health experience gave us additional practical and down-to-earth ways to enhance our experiences of each other and the world around us."

Redefining Learning

Every day, 26-year-old Dawn Furfaro wears a red ribbon on her wrist. It often comes untied, which, she says, is good because the ribbon reminds her of whatever daily practice she's chosen from her storehouse of Redefining Health experiences. Out of the last six RDH workshops offered at the Institute, Furfaro has attended five. In a culture where learning is often approached as a one-time deal, Furfaro goes against the grain in coming back. "Every time I take a different piece in a different way."

For instance, at her second RDH, she watched someone "walk the circle." This person was struggling to forgive, and pushing back in a conversation with Bob. Ultimately, this person decided to forgive for the sake of his daughter. Dawn says it was incredible to see that; and she could easily apply it to a similar situation for herself. After watching this person's moment of forgiveness, she asked herself, "If this is possible,



Cecil & Karen Rosen used the Redefining Health experience to navigate Karen's brain cancer journey "with joy, peace, and happiness."

what am I doing holding these things?"

In her commitment to making the circle of learning as big as possible, she introduced her fiancé, Cole, to the program; and he's attended almost as many times as Dawn. Beyond Cole, she's brought seven others to RDH, sometimes offering it as a gift to friends and paying their way.



Dawn Furfaro introduced her fiancé, Cole, to Redefining Health — a program so meaningful and useful to them that they've retaken it several times.

Originally, Dawn came to Maryland as a pre-med student. Stemming from 11 years of health problems and a "huge fight with pain," Dawn wanted to be a doctor and to "actually spend time with people" in that role. Dawn was still in a great deal of pain when she started acupuncture treatment with Dianne Connelly, which led her to attend Redefining Health for the first time in February 2007. Says Dawn, both Dianne and RDH gave her a new framework for living.

The program has a profound connection with Dawn's experience of education; and she often uses what she's learned in RDH in her studies, now as a Peace Studies major at Goucher College. Amidst her struggle with illness and pain, Dawn says she went from loving school to hating school. Through the RDH practices, she's found a way to love school and learning once again. She was amazed that it was her *choice* to create upset and suffering; and for her, remembering that "upset is optional" calls her to all the other RDH learnings and practices.

Recognizing that the messenger can have as powerful a role as the message, Dawn has been deeply touched by Bob and Dianne as teachers. She loves the way they teach together and that their teaching comes from lived experience. Says Furfaro, "They love us in their teaching. I know that when I'm there."

And she's not done with RDH yet. Says Furfaro, "I'll keep coming as long as I can and it serves. It matters every time."

Redefining Balance

For Tekla Ayers, director of Patterson Park Audubon Center in Baltimore, finding Tai Sophia was "random, but not really random at all." Since moving to Baltimore two years ago, Tekla had been feeling off balance in many aspects of her life and had the major knots in her back to prove it. She had been living in Guatemala before she came to Baltimore. So the move brought lots of changes, along with an awareness that her support system — family in Arizona and close friends spread out far and wide — didn't all come with her.

Practices you can use

When you find yourself in crisis, ask:

What is the opportunity?

To seek balance and relief, Tekla exercised, got acupuncture treatment, and took a yoga class, where her instructor happened to be a Tai Sophia student who mentioned how cool her school was. So Tekla went to www.tai.edu, found Redefining Health, and instantly knew: "That's what I need."

Tekla liked how the program allowed her to step back and look at the relationships in her life — from being a step-mom to a wife to a director of other employees at a nonprofit. At RDH, Tekla "got lots of tools" to deal with everything on her plate and also found things to celebrate in her own life, like her regular practice of acknowledgment with family and friends. For Tekla and others, RDH isn't always just about discovering new ways of being; it can also be about reaffirming and remembering those ways that already serve.

Like attendee Dawn Furfaro (see "Redefining Learning"), Tekla has used wearing a bracelet to remind herself that upset is optional and to take a deep breath. She's also written phrases from the RDH weekend on her keyboard at work and shared the weekend with friends through offering them different ways of approaching their own struggles. Tekla says she's definitely bringing her husband to the next RDH; and her sister is planning her next visit around Redefining Health.



Tekla Ayers, pictured with Steve, her husband, and son Andrew, says that in Redefining Health she "got lots of tools" to deal with everything on her plate, and recognized things to celebrate in her life.

In another case of one thing leading to another, during Tekla's RDH weekend, she attended a mini open house for Tai Sophia's Master of Arts in Applied Healing Arts. She'd been seeking graduate programs in environmental science/policy, but none she'd looked at seemed quite right. And again, in a moment, Tekla knew that this program was for her. This January, Tekla started the program and took another step into balance.

To register for Redefining Health or for more information, please visit www.tai.edu or call 410-888-9048, ext. 6611.