

# Pathways

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***“Find happiness  
in yourself, in  
your mind and  
body, in your  
values and  
achievements”***

**—Susan Polis Schutz**

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## Past into Present

How often do we really live in the present moment? Many of us live with one foot in the past, or one foot in the future, but very rarely with both feet in the present. For sure, we are all a collage of our past experiences. With equal certainty, our past experiences color our perceptions of the present and provide a contextual reference for our choices. Our drives, abilities, phobias, issues, challenges and choices are all visible in the backlight of our past experiences and current view of how we each perceive reality.

That being said, it is good to look at how well our past has served our present. At the beginning of a new year, many of us will create resolutions that we will discard before the end of January. Some of us will make resolutions as part of an ongoing plan of self improvement, but then again, we don't need "new year's resolutions" because we recognize that we don't need a special time of the year to engage in personal growth. So, as we enter 2005, I would like you to take a moment or two and examine how much your present is controlled by past events. How much of what you do is colored by some event in your past? How many opportunities came your way in 2004, that you let slide because of your self-belief system? How many opportunities did you not let slide? When you look back over the past year, how often do you find yourself using the phrases "I should have....." or "I'm glad that ...."?

I might set you a challenge this year: Look at any part of your belief system that holds you back and see

how well it is serving you. Check to see if your past experiences are negatively affecting your present choices. What can you do about it?

If we learn from our past, then we can make better choices today than we made yesterday. We are presented with two paths: One is to capitulate to the past and accept that who and what we are is fixed and cannot be changed, and the second path is to recognize that each of us can write the present as it occurs. We are each given the freedom to make every choice for the first time, free of prejudice, free of the past. Unfortunately, very rarely do we do this because we think that the lessons that we learned from our past choices are viable indicators of how we should act in the future....and of course a lot of the time, they are....but not always. The trick, of course, is to find those past experiences that stood in the way of you reaching your potential and which ones helped to propel you forwards. By isolating the choices that we made that did not serve us well, we can unearth our self-limiting perceptions, and with effort, can change them.

So, here's my challenge to you this year: Find a self-limiting perception and remove it from your life. Allow yourself the freedom of making choices that will bring you to higher levels of existence.

And while you do it, remember that as you improve yourself and overcome your own past, you help society to grow...one person at a time. Welcome to 2005! It's going to be a great year! ☺

## Present into Future

No matter where you are in life, you are at a beginning. If you choose it to be so, you are also at an end.

It is our own choice to continue in life as we have been, or to change and do things differently. Much of this decision rests on whether or not we like the results we are getting. It is a maxim of business that if you like the results that you are achieving, continue doing what you are doing. A corollary of that statement is that to expect different results from continuing the same activities is unintelligent behavior. So put these two statements together and evaluate where you are...right now in your life.

Do you like where you are? Do you like the results you are getting? Do you like how your career is going and where you are headed? Do you like how your family life is going? Are you content with your spiritual growth? Are you happy with your health? How about your financial fortress?

O.K., it's a fair bet that not one of us is exactly where we want to be, which implies that some of our activities are not getting us the results that we would like...So let's examine what we need to change and get different results. To do nothing is to assure nothing will change. So make a decision, do something, be proactive and then examine the results of your new strategy and see if things have improved or not. Then make another course correction and keep at it until you like where the ship of your life is headed.

If you look at each part of your life as a ship that is either on course or off course, steaming full speed ahead or chugging along on one screw, or perhaps even becalmed in the ocean of life, then you can perhaps envisage a fleet that is all moving ahead together in the same direction to a definite destination....or not.

At the beginning of the year you

can dedicate yourself and your resources to getting the fleet all headed in the same direction at the same speed.

The present moment is therefore a navigation point in life. Are you where you want to be on the map? Do you have a map?

The next pair of questions then become these:

What needs to change?

What are you willing to change?

After all, we might recognize that something needs to change in our lives, but be unwilling or unable to do anything about it (for whatever reason).

Once you know what you need to change, and have decided that you are willing to do something about it, you will need to evaluate the resources that you have available that will help you effect your change in direction. Next, you will need to take action, and continue to take action until a change in course becomes apparent. At this point you merely have to decide whether the new course is bringing you closer to your desired destination or further from it. Repeat as necessary.

After a while you will become acutely aware of when a ship of life is not with the main fleet. You will automatically start to make course adjustments, and the process will become something that is an integral part of daily living.

So here then, is my main point: Ultimately we don't need a New Year to make a resolution. We merely need to make a resolution that improvement will become an integral part of our daily living. Once we are resolved to the process of personal growth, each and every moment is both a beginning of something better and the end of something that was not taking us where we wanted to go.

These are not always easy choices and the longer that we have been with

a particular behavior or habit, the harder it is to change and the less capable we seem to be to make the change on our own.

As I get older, one of the things that I look back upon that has sustained me through most of my trials of life has been HOPE. Hope is the belief in something better, something achievable and something worthwhile. Hope is what keeps us moving forward, making decisions and living with their consequences.

When I was a child and first read the Greek Myths, I thought that Pandora really messed up and that Hope wasn't much to get in return for all the misery that came out of the box. I was mistaken. It is Hope that lights the next step ahead and fills our hearts with the courage to take it.

Happy New Day. ☺

"Happiness cannot come from without. It must come from within"

—  
Helen Keller

## Past, present and future

So let's put it all together. The trick to everything that I wrote in the first two articles is to learn from the past, live in the present and plan for the future. It is circular living at its best. Actually it would be better to call it cyclical living, working all three parts of the circle at the same time.

There is a thing called oscillation theory which relates to the size of waves. When waves of the same frequency add together they create larger waves. When waves of different frequency interact they cancel each other out.

Say what?

Alright, the notion is this: If you live in the past its effects can mushroom out of all proportion to their present significance. I'm sure that you know people for whom some past event that may have happened decades ago still rules their lives and they never quite managed to let it go and move ahead. Equally, I am sure you know people who are never present... they are always living somewhere down the road when things will be better. These types of people are caught in oscillation waves of the past and the future.

It is a balancing act to live NOW, for NOW's sake, to learn from the past, to see our mistakes and take steps not to repeat them and finally, to create a vision of how we would like our lives to be and start taking steps that will lead us in that direction.

It is all too easy to get trapped by events in our past or get trapped by

some view of a brighter future and never live NOW.

The Yin Yang symbol at the end of our articles is illustrative here. In each half of the Yin Yang diagram is a small part of its opposite. In the past are seeds of the future, in the future are relics of the past. The present is the line between the two, the wave form that defines the here and now.

It is wisdom to see the seeds of our future being sown as we sow them. It is wisdom to recognize the relics of our past as they continue to snag us from time to time.

We all intuitively know that neither past nor future have any basis in reality. They do not exist. The past is done, it is irrevocably written and cannot be undone. The future may never happen. All we have is this moment. Here... Now... this instant and how we choose to use it.

The thing of it is that this moment is already past as I make the decision about how to use it, which brings me back to a Japanese word that we use a lot in the martial arts: KIME. Kime means to act with decision. In some ways kime could be viewed as living and acting with resolute purpose, willing to make a choice and accept the consequences of each choice we make. None of us can see the future, we can only recall what we think we know of the past and we can see the present through whatever filters we are currently using. So if we are unwilling to make decisions now, then we live in a state of either partial or

complete paralysis, unable to use each moment to its fullest.

If you want an illustration of living with Kime, watch a child at play. Children are fully invested in their play, they care not a whit for what was past or what will happen later, they are simply living in the present moment, fully alive in the act of playing. As adults, we could do well to watch and learn from some of the wisest people on the planet...our children. Children don't make life cumbersome or difficult, they see things simply and live completely in each moment.

So where does this leave us? It leaves us empowered with choice and freedom. Fortunately for almost everyone who gets this newsletter, we are each free to choose where and when we want to live. We are each free to live in the present with a resolute purpose. We are free to see the past for what it is: Our teacher. Likewise, we are each free to see the future for what it is: An unpainted canvas ready to accept whatever brush strokes we care to put upon it.

Lastly we are each free to see the present for what it is: The great crucible of life, the place where all the action occurs.

So what actions do you want occurring in your crucible? And...how does what is happening in your crucible affect the crucibles around you?



**Reach for the good.  
Be strong, and don't give up  
-Pamela Owens Renfro**

# Patience

We, in the West aren't very good at patience. We want what we want, when we want it...and most of the time we want it NOW!

This tends to be true about personal growth as well as material possessions. Since this issue has dealt mostly with time, I thought that it would be fitting to finish with an article about time as the great healer.

I have said before that as I have moved ahead in the martial arts ranks, the demons that I have faced in my own person are harder to overcome and more intractable, because they are more deeply rooted in my being. Since the challenges I face internally are deeper in my character, it is understandable that they will take more time and effort to resolve. I think that this is why the time between each successive rank goes up. Each step from one level of black belt to the next presupposes that a level of growth has occurred. Rank is not about putting in the time and getting a new rank, it is about learning and growing. It takes patience.

One of the problems we face as we grow is that we sometimes do not see the small steps of growth as they occur and we can become impatient or even disillusioned.

Anyone who has had surgery knows about this. We seem to make great strides early on in the recovery process and then things seem to slow down and then eventually you realize that you are back to being healthy again. In the middle of the road the recovery seems protracted and we can get impatient with our apparent lack of progress, but quietly, moment by moment, cells are healing and regenerating.

Much the same is true of personal growth. We can make great strides with easy stuff, early on. Then we can get bogged down with the slow difficult work later on, and it is easy to get disillusioned, because we are losing

patience with ourselves and perhaps, even losing hope in the process. We entertain doubts because we do not see the levels of growth that we saw at earlier stages of growth and that we have come to expect. We become victims of our own impatience. Growth, however, is sometimes necessarily slow.

As I look back over the martial arts ranks that I have earned and see in them a metaphor for the personal struggles I have faced, I see that each step forward took as much effort as all the previous steps combined.

The lesson here is that forward movement is not linear, it is geometric and as such requires greater expenditure of effort over time on the uphill side.

Every moment in life is an opportunity for growth and brings with it some powerful tools to help us grow. I have already spoken about Hope and Decision in previous articles this month.

Patience is a powerful tool that gives us perspective as we grow. When we lose sight of the power of patience we become mired in doubts, dissatisfaction and disillusionment. Patience allows us to accept small steps of healing as necessary events, each of which requires its own time for completion and cannot be hurried. Patience allows us to see each moment for what it is, not for what we think it ought to be.

So ultimately I come to this: TRUST. Sooner or later, you have to place trust in the system, trust in the process and trust in self. None of the tools of hope, decision or patience are going to help one iota if you do not believe that the process will work.

So these are my thoughts at the beginning of 2005.

It is my hope that we will meet on the training deck and that you will join me in some much needed personal growth! ☺

FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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27	28					

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	1	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

- ◆ SMAA In House Judo Tournament. February 5th, 2005
- ◆ Wakamusha Judo Tournament, Atlanta, GA. February 12th, 2005.
- ◆ Clarksville Judo Tournament, TN. February 26th, 2005
- ◆ USJA Seniors, battle of Columbus, OH, March 4-6th, 2005
- ◆ Bob Harvey's Judo Tournament, Jackson, MS, March 6th, 2005
- ◆ Gentlewind Kata clinic, Baton Rouge, LA, March 12th, 2005
- ◆ Melton's Judo Tournament, Jackson, MS May 20th, 2005
- ◆ SMAA Open Judo Tournament, September, 2005
- ◆ USJA Junior National s, Toledo, OH, July 1-2nd, 2005
- ◆ USJI Junior Olympics, Atlanta, GA, July 23-24th, 2005
- ◆ Melton's Judo Tournament, Jackson, MS November 18th, 2005
- ◆ USJA Junior national s, Boca Raton, FL, 2006

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