

Pathways

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY CHRIS DEWEY MARTIAL ARTS, INC.

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**"To see a world in a
grain of sand and
heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the
palms of your hand and
eternity in an hour
glass"**

William Blake

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What Is Your Passion?

Most of us have some idea of the things that we enjoy. But how many of us, I wonder, know what it is about which we are truly passionate? As adults, most of us remember our first love and the depth of those emotions. Some of us were fortunate enough to find a true soulmate in our lives and that meeting taught us a different kind of passion. Some of us have careers that define who we are, or have families that resonate in the deepest parts of our hearts. These too are forms of passion.

As a kid, by the time I was twelve, I absolutely *knew* I wanted to be a geologist. This did not seem strange to me until decades later, when I began to realize that most twelve year-olds are not making life decisions. I knew that I would pay any price to make that dream come true. I was passionate about it. I was fixed in my intention. Over the years martial arts also became a passion for me. I *knew* that I would keep the essence of the martial journey close to my center for my entire life.

The thing about it, is that passions are deeply rooted aspects of our lives that provide definition and shape to the contours of our world.

When I opened the business I didn't do it out of a passion to make wads of money, I did it from the passion to pursue the martial journey. During the tough times of being an entrepreneur what has sustained me has not been the martial arts *per se*, so much as the deeper commitment to personal growth for myself and for others with whom our business connects.

The maturity that comes with

increasing years has shown me that there is a unifying passion, which underlies all these parts of my life. The unifying passion is a simple question: Why?

Why life? Why me? Why anything?

I did not, however, discover this question as a geologist or as a martial artist or even as an entrepreneur or as a father or husband.

I discovered the question by stepping back and looking at the gestalt of my life. A couple of years ago I came to a point where I began to ask myself why I had done the things that I had done, pursued the quests, climbed the mountains and gone through the valleys (both literal and figurative).

My passion is a spiritual passion. Being a geologist brought me to the absolute edges of the universe in time and space. Being a martial artist is about finding the limits of human performance. Both speak to me of potential, just like our relationships, our families and our careers.

Another discovery I made about passion was that I was willing to pay any personal price to find my answers, regardless of how strange my decisions might seem to others.

Passions drive us, they provide mechanisms for finding the answers to the deep questions of our lives.

It is a new year. Space and time do not notice the passing of the old one and the human fabrication of the new one. But in our human-ness we like new beginnings. We fill them with opportunity. How about understanding why you are passionate about a particular something or discovering your passion in 2006? ☺

Listen

Here's an interesting thought: How do we listen? Do we truly hear what the people around us are saying; or do we filter what we hear through what we think we want to hear? Do we truly listen, or do we start applying the filter of interpretation before the people to whom we are supposed to be listening have even finished speaking? Do we listen with our whole being or just hear words?

How many of us listen to those around us with our *eyes*.

Say what? Did you say eyes? Yes, I did. People say the words that we hear and a whole lot more. For sure, we all hear the nuances of language, the emotions behind the words, the intonation, inflection, volume, pitch and intensity of the words. Listening with the eyes involves being aware of non-verbal language in the gestures and body-speak of the people with whom we are communicating. We recognize incongruity when the words we hear and the non-verbal signs do not match each other. Our minds tell us that something is not right here. Often we are not sure what, but our instincts tell us that something is amiss.

How many of us listen with our *hands*?

O.K. Dewey, steady-on here, what are you talking about? Yes, listening with our hands. Touch has a language all of its own. A caring touch given to a friend or stranger can change their day and have a profound impact on their emotions. Also a touch can reveal much about a person's level of stress or comfort. Fingers are not just for giving, they are also for understanding

the world around us. Is it so strange to think that our fingertips could be a valuable tool in the language of communication and a very sensitive tool in the art of total listening?

Most of us are too rushed to spend the time it takes to truly listen to those around us. Most of us rush through our word-filled days without hearing, or understanding the meanings sent with those words, let alone the emotions that were packaged in the body languages or the nuances of the touches we received. It is as though there is so much information coming at us that it is better to filter it out and apply standard interpretive cues to navigate our way through the day. We deal with gross emotions but tend to avoid subtleties as being too complex to deal with in casual conversation. And then we wonder why we lack the ability to truly listen when it is critical!

A better question might be: When is true listening not critical? When is communication so insignificant that we need pay it no heed and listen with only partial attention?

One of my intentional choices for 2006 is to listen more fully. This is no small task. My wife might tell you that, for me, it is Herculean in scope, but what the heck?

It seems to me that we are losing the capacity to listen, to truly, deeply, totally listen with all our being.

Look at the Earth. Look at our cities and our homes. Look at the forests, mountains, streams and oceans. Is not every atom of our world and our lives asking for us to listen?

When did we lose that skill? What did we lose along with our ability to listen? Did we also lose tolerance? Compassion? Understanding? Connection? Hey now, I spoke about this all last month, why am I hammering at it again?

Actually, the reason is very simple: In Dewey time it is only tomorrow. Yesterday I finished the December newsletter and today I feel the urge to put mouse to screen to complete some unfinished thoughts from yesterday. The concept of listening was one of those thoughts.

As I look out of my window at the lake I see the garden waiting for Spring. It is quietly speaking about the inevitable rebirth that Spring will bring. My wife, the gardener, knows its rhythms and moods. She listens with her fingertips, her eyes, her ears and her heart. Her example of nurturing teaches her family a thing or two about the art of deep listening.

So here is my last thought for this article: Listening with your fingers, eyes and ears is just listening with your mind. True listening comes from the heart. When communication is at its richest it is always heartfelt. So this then is my challenge to you: Make the effort. Take the time. Allow the messages that you are receiving every moment of every day to penetrate beyond the barrier of your mind and sink into the ocean of your heart.

My wife is right....it is a Herculean task and one at which I fail every day, but it is a noble and worthwhile enterprise. It is another pebble that we cast into the unknown. ☺

"Half our fears are baseless; the other half discreditable"

- Christian Boyle

Energy Circles

Circles are interesting things, they have no beginning, no end, they are complete in themselves, regardless of size.

The point I want to address in this article is very simple. Everywhere you care to look there are circles.

The earth is all about circles...building mountains, eroding them down again...all part of the rock *cycle*.

Living systems are all about circles: The transitions between the molecules in the air we breathe, the foods we eat, the water we drink and the bodies we constantly rebuild throughout life.

Interpersonal relationships are all about circles, giving and taking in equal measure. As the old adage says about our behaviors: What goes around, comes around.

Even in history, (which is nothing more than the story of human development) we read about *revolutions*. Did you ever ask yourself why they call them *re*volutions?

The martial arts like Judo and Ju Jitsu are all about learning to use circles. Some are large, some are small. Circles of footwork, circles of body movement and circles of partner interaction.

In the final analysis, the one thing that every single one of my examples has in common is that they all involve circles of energy flow.

If we go back to last month and the article on listening in this newsletter for a moment; when we talk about connections, and talk about deep listening skills, we are talking about creating circles of energy with those around us.

We bind ourselves together as com-

munities because we share energy at every level. Energy at the grossest level could be the city power grid or the gas pump, at a much more intimate level it could be the "electric" touch of a lover upon the skin of his or her mate or the hugs shared between children and their parents.

The point here is that the circle is not complete until we receive and give back in equal measure. As individuals we are merely conduits, we don't store energy for long periods at a time. In fact, our bodies do not have the energy resources to last for very long at all without the input of new fuel on a regular basis.

If the martial arts have taught me anything at all, they have taught me that we are energy beings. Effortless movement in the martial arts reflects the effective and efficient use of energy. It is about receiving and redirecting your partner's energy. Quality martial artists do not oppose; they accept and redirect. There is so much here in a simple martial arts class that we can learn about raising our children, loving our spouses, nurturing our friendships, creating business deals and living lives of meaning and value.

The first step is becoming aware of the flow of energy around you. Sometimes, after working all night on some project, I will come to the dojo the following afternoon, feeling somewhat drained and I will tell the parents that I am going to steal some energy from the children's class. Although that's what I say, it's not exactly accurate. I don't steal anything. I do not take energy from the kids. In reality, the chil-

dren share their gifts of energy. When our classes work really well, there is an incredible dynamic between the children as a group and between the children and the instructors. The instructors get infected with the irrepressible buoyancy of the children. It is a wonderful thing of which to be a part.

Children are such amazing energy givers. We can learn much from them if we allow ourselves to do so.

As the business creeps towards completion of its first decade, we are beginning to see some things turn full circle. Some of the children who joined us as little ones are now maturing as young adults and black belts in their own right and are returning to the children's classes as assistant instructors to share what they have learned. The next generation of martial arts masters are being formed as we watch, right before our eyes. They are creating their own circles of energy and passing their knowledge back to the younger children who are following in their footsteps.

And so the energy pathways create circles of relationship, circles of learning and circles of synergy. The more we become aware of the energy involved, the less we oppose the flow and the greater the synergy becomes. It is only when we restrict our awareness that the relationships we worked so hard to build begin to fall apart and living becomes an effort.

So what have I learned from the martial arts in thirty plus years? Energy is not mine to keep. It is a gift to share.

☺

"Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood."

- Marie Curie

Confusion

Janet made the comment to me the other day that she felt that sometimes she is experiencing a mental fog that will not clear. Odd that. I often feel the same way. I call it lack of clarity. I also call it confusion, either of purpose or of understanding.

Gichin Funikoshi, the founder of Shotokan Karate wrote a calligraphic screen, which, when translated simply says: "Parting the clouds."

Well that seems innocuous enough. When I first saw Funikoshi's statement as a poster I decided that I needed a copy of it framed on the dojo wall...after all, isn't that what I have been talking about in this newsletter and what I am attempting to do in the martial arts?

In a different metaphor concerning clarity, looking at the nature of God, Saint Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, talks about seeing in a mirror dimly.

I think that much of living is lost in daily activity and as a result, we spend a lot of time in mental fogs of one kind or another. We do not spend an equal amount of time looking beyond the mirror or parting the clouds. We rarely penetrate the mysteries of life. We rarely take the time to do so.

Anybody know where I am going yet? I am going back to the M word from last month. I think that there are a lot of misconceptions about meditation. Meditations bring us to a state of calm and allow us to access new vistas of understanding and awareness.

For me at least, meditation is about seeking clarity....clarity in anything about which I would like to seek clarity. By way of non-contentious examples: I seek clarity in why I do what I do in martial arts and clarity in understanding of the universe in which I live and love. In my world, meditation is sometimes done in deep contemplation, sometimes by writing, sometimes by sitting and breathing and sometimes while moving.

Moving meditation? Yes, *moving*.

For my wife, gardening is a form of moving meditation

To me meditation is about being fully present in the moment. Let that soak in for a moment: **Fully** present...In exactly the way that so few of us are, most of the time. Being fully present takes effort and concentration. It takes practice.

In the martial arts, moving meditation helps to provide clarity about the moves and the relationship between energy flow and action. Another quote on the the wall of the dojo is a quote by a Judo instructor named Walter Todd. The quote reads: "In the technique, the doctrine is revealed."

This quote works at several levels. The level I wish to examine in this article is the one that reveals the relationship between the person and the martial skills being demonstrated. Moving meditation is therefore about allowing the martial arts to express themselves through us rather than the other way around. I have spoken about this several times before under the heading of a "flow experience."

During flow experiences we are in a state of moving meditation. At those moments the actions provide clarity about why we are doing them and they teach us a lot about ourselves.

Seguey...

You couldn't be talking about listening could you? Got it in one!

Meditation is about listening...deep, heartfelt listening. Listening provides clarity. Meditation provides clarity. It's all a matter of perspective and willingness to see things as they are, as opposed to how we might interpret them. Perspective is everything; and all too often, our perspectives are what create the sense of confusion we feel in our lives.

So if there is any confusion in your life in any area, try listening....really, truly, deeply listening. You might be surprised by the results. ☺



February						
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January						
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29	30	31				

- ◆ Akayama Winter Camp, Mobile, AL, MLK weekend, January, 2006
- ◆ T'ai Chi Clinic, SMAA, January 28th, 2006
- ◆ Tennessee State Judo Championships, Clarksville, TN, February 11th, 2006
- ◆ Mississippi State Judo Championships, Jackson, MS, March 6th, 2006
- ◆ USA Judo National Championships, Houston, TX, April 20 - 22nd, 2006

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at SMAA*

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