

Pathways

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

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*"In the depths of winter,
I finally learned that
within me there lay an
invincible summer*

Albert Camus

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Waiting

So why is waiting so important? What does it have to teach us. I always find myself going back to Judo for an answer. If you attack or defend too soon, or even move too soon you can find yourself completely off-balance and vulnerable. Sometimes you move too soon and hit a wall. Sometimes you move too soon and no-one is home. Sometimes you can attack before your partner is not yet in the right place or when they are wrong place (not quite the same thing). Sometimes we just get too eager.

Does this sound at all like life? It does to me.

A lot of times (like I said last month), I find myself writing a lot and at other times the ideas, the inspiration and the words simply are not there. These three last newsletters have been like that. I thought November's newsletter would never write itself and then the words started and three newsletters have fallen out in less than three weeks. The point is that I learned a long time ago that if I force the issue I rarely write what I truly mean.

This happens in my martial arts, my writing and my life in general.

I'm all about resolution, I want answers, I like closure, I do not like loose ends. But life doesn't work that way. Sometimes the answer has to come in its own time, not mine.

The time between knowing that an answer is needed and the arrival of the answer is critical gestation time. It's like having a baby....it takes time. First time parents need time (a lot of it) to prepare for a total change in life, I for one was glad for the nine months of prep time.

Perhaps this is where I first came to terms with waiting. I needed the time to find some of my own answers before I became a father. Writing this newsletter has taught me more about waiting.

It has taught me to appreciate the calm before the storm, the slack time between the tides, the pause between breaths, the chrysalis before the butterfly, the seed before the tree.

It is not merely that we are waiting or even asleep or inert at these times, it is more that we are doing quiet, deep work that will bear fruit....later. In these moments of ripening it can appear as though nothing is happening, but it is; we are bringing our attention to the issue at hand and at the same time we are not forcing a conclusion, we are letting it go. Sometimes we are simply letting the traffic go by before we continue the journey. We are cognizant that the right answer will present itself, we have faith, we trust. We know the light turns green eventually!

So if we allow these times of waiting into our lives and grant to them the power that they have to restore balance or chart the correct course, perhaps we could avoid some of the moments in which we fell flat on our faces.

How many times in our lives has each of us regretted an outburst of anger, or of an injudicious word spoken out of time? How many times have we leapt in, when we should have waited?

I sometimes think that the wisdom that experience brings us is all about seeing waiting moments for what they are. ☺

More on Integrity

I thought I was done with integrity for a while, but perhaps I am not.

I want to use the last article on waiting as a springboard into this article, because in times of waiting we sometimes experience moments of doubt. How we deal with these times of either waiting or doubting involves the use of integrity.

It seems to me that we often don't take easily to waiting for things, and when we are forced to wait we can get impatient and anxious. When we are hampered in our desires we sometimes feel as though we should be doing something and we can end up feeling frustrated in our efforts. Also, when we are forced to wait, we can begin to entertain doubts as to the outcome of a particular thing.

It should be no surprise to us that doubts of one kind or another are a near-constant companion on the road of life. After all, there are so few certainties in life, we understand so little of life in the greater scheme of things and we are generally not clairvoyant. Most of us will face questions about our careers, our finances, our relationships, our retirement, our health...and each of us will face doubts in each of these areas.

In a lot of ways, a degree of doubt can be a healthy thing. Doubt forces us to examine our actions, our options and potential outcomes. Even in the face of doubt, we will often make a decision and then we put our doubts behind us and move forward with determination and resolution. We put forth effort, even when we are uncertain of an outcome purely and simply because we have faith.

Why would an entrepreneur open a business, or a couple get married, or a student enroll in a university class if each of them did not at some level believe in a successful outcome? Each event involves an element of risk, a degree of doubt, and a measure of uncertainty. When we move

forward, however, we move into the uncertainty even while we acknowledge our doubt precisely because we do believe in the eventual outcome.

There is an element of integrity here. Let me see if I can explain.

When we set our purpose to do something, be it taking a college class, or opening a business or getting married, we do not do it with the intent of failure. We do it in the face of the uncertainty, aware of our doubts and when we put forth the effort necessary to reach the best possible outcome we do so on faith. Each one of these elements: Intent, doubt, effort and faith are bound together by the integrity that we bring to the event.

It is a consequence therefore, that if I act on my beliefs, then I will be acting with integrity.

It is when I choose to do something that does not coincide with my belief system that I act without integrity. Faith and belief are sides of the same coin. If we have faith in something, we believe in it. I'm not talking about a religious or spiritual faith or belief here, although they certainly fall into this discussion.

I am talking about things like my 'belief' in the economic system that allows me to open and operate a business, or a belief in the academic process that allows me to earn a grade that is proportional to my achievements, or my belief in the institution of the family structure and the sanctity of a marriage. When I act in accordance with these beliefs, even in the face of doubt, I do so with integrity.

So what does this have to do with waiting, doubting and faith? Simply this: At times when I am forced to wait for an answer to emerge, or times when I am surrounded by doubts and confusions, it is my belief in the final outcome that guides my actions, even though I have no such assurance that the outcome will be as I imagine

it to be.

It seems to me that we tend to do this without really thinking about it. We use our faith in the outcome as an unseen guide in a sea of doubts.

Even so, in times of uncertainty and waiting we can use the time to become aware of how our faith in the outcome is guiding our decision-making process.

Consequently, it becomes possible to even wait with integrity. There are times when this is absolutely the best course possible. It is better to wait with integrity than act without integrity.

I think that sometimes when we force a conclusion to a particular issue in our lives, we do so just to gain closure. Sometimes it is better to wait than to force the issue. If our impatience gets the better of us, we can end up compromising the integrity that binds together the intent, the ensuing doubts, the faith in the outcome, and the effort expended.

So the next time you find yourself getting frustrated, or impatient about something in your life, take a look at the interplay between what you intended at the outset, what things you are grappling with as doubts, what you believe will happen in the end and then make your decisions accordingly.

Of course it is much easier to say this than to do it each time such an event occurs, but my son and my business have taught me a lot about learning to wait.

Ultimately, I know what I believe about my family and my business and in times of doubt, if I let those beliefs guide me, then I am more likely to act with integrity than not.



To live is not to learn, but to apply

Legouve

Live Now!

Now here's a piece of advice I could give myself and do well to listen to. Do you ever think about living in the present?

Self help gurus tell us to live in the present, but when you stop and think about it how many of us actually do this? Look at your thoughts for a few minutes...you might give yourself a headache if you do it for too long.

How many of your thoughts are actually in the present? You know, thoughts that are concerned with this actual moment. How many of your thoughts are focused on the past? How many of them are considering the future?

I like examples...so let's take typing this newsletter as an example.

Right now I am typing words on a keyboard. Most of my thoughts are directed backwards to the keys that I have already hit in my efforts to construct a grammatically correct sentence containing accurately spelled words. Oh yes, and involved in here is also the desire to make some kind of logical sense.

Another group of my thoughts is looking ahead at the words that I have yet to write, the flow of ideas that I would like to convey and the manner in which my readers will interpret what I write.

I have very few thoughts actually focused on the here and now.

Now is always either gone already or not yet here!

Perhaps the example of driving a car would be better? We drive in the future, we never drive in the present. We are always reading the road ahead and driving accordingly, we read seconds ahead and act on the information that we acquire. When we are driving a car, 'now' is being used to prepare for the future.

That's an interesting thought.

So what does it mean to live now? Now is all we have, we know this, but 'now' doesn't exist in a temporal vacuum. Now

exists because of the cumulative effects of all my yesterdays and 'now' will exist as one of the many potential paths that my future could hold.

The past offers us lessons to be learned, wisdom to be gained and the future offers us opportunity and potential. Now gives us action. Action is always immediate, here, now. It is never in the past and it is never in the future. I can only ever act... NOW...this, I believe, is what it means to live in the present.

I think I learned this on the Judo tournament circuit as a referee, a coach and a player. Referees are concerned with policing the action, they are the arbiters of what just happened and the really good referees are the ones who can read the match moves ahead and be waiting for the throw to happen right in front of them because they have placed themselves in exactly the right part of the mat for the events to unfold.

Not a lot of living in the present here.

Another part of the refereeing game was being an observer of the process. I would watch a match as I refereed and watch coaches screaming (I kid you not) at their players. They would leap out of their chairs and scream the name of a throw at their player. Of course by the time the player hears the instruction, processes the data and reacts, the other player has done the same thing and the opportunity is gone.

Not a lot of living in the moment there.

As a player I would always be attempting to 'encourage' my opponent into a course of action that would lead to his eventual downfall. Occasionally I would talk to my self....Am I breathing? Am I tight or am I relaxed? Am I moving or standing still? Am I feeling my opponent's actions or am I closed down? Clearly I am living in the present during those moments.

My thoughts were always comparative to

the extent that I was comparing what I was doing to my ideal competitive state... "breathing well, relax more, shoulders too tight, move to the left, set right hand power grip, feint, stutter step, turn hips" and bam!

O.K. so that is my ideal world, but as a player I was always looking ahead, even if it was by microseconds. There was no time for looking backwards in the match. Time for examination and reflection would come later, after the match.

Not a lot of living in the moment there then either.

Or was there?

I would argue that when we are fully invested in something, we are most definitely living in the moment. In moments when a conscious awareness of the flow of time fades and there is only "NOW", then we are truly living in the moment.

We all do it. We all get moments like this once in a while. They are like diamonds and they throw life into contrast and stark relief for us.

Such moments bring clarity and detail. We remember them always...as though the event was just moments ago, not days, or weeks or years.

So, people who truly live in the present are acting in accordance with lessons learned and plans laid. It doesn't really matter what scale you are working at here: You could be looking at your life goals or you could be looking at the next few microseconds as a pedestrian steps into the road ahead of you as you drive.

To that extent, there is a deterministic quality to living in the present. Living in the present has that quality about which we have spoken so many times: "Kime." Living in the present requires a deliberate intent and a focus of concentration.

How many present moments have you experienced recently? ☺

Although the world is very full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.

Helen Keller

Control

So what do you actually control? I sometimes wonder. I wonder what I control. I can influence some things, but the older I get, the less that I think I control anything. From an internal perspective we could say that I have thoughts, feelings and actions and that I can control all of them.

Outside of those three can I control anything? Nope, not that I can see.

It goes back to being a Judo competitor. I can certainly encourage my opponent to pursue a particular course of action, but I have never yet made an opponent do what I wanted. More often than not, I would take advantage of what he presented me, but I certainly wasn't controlling the choices he made at any given moment. Occasionally a player might look as though he or she is controlling the match, but all that this really means is that the dominant player is exerting a high degree of influence on the decision tree of the opponent and having reduced the opponent's degrees of freedom is better able to capitalize upon the ensuing opportunities. Good negotiators do the same thing.

O.K., so if we accept for a moment that I cannot control anything outside of my physical being, and we leave aside the implications that this statement might hold, let's look at what we have left.

I have three things: Thoughts, feelings and action. Do I really control all of them?

When my wife or my son hits one of my hot buttons an emotional reaction seems almost reflexive. I cannot control what I feel...I can control how I act on the heels of the emotion and I can choose to dwell on the emotion, amplify it or let it go and choose another emotional pathway. I've done both. Catch me on a good day and I will choose one path. Catch me on a day when everything that can go wrong, has gone wrong and I'm not so apt to act in an enlightened fashion!

Emotions are hormone induced events and thoughts are neuron impulses. Taken together, the two of them result in a series of action choices.

I recall a time shortly after I opened my business, I was chatting with Lynn, a dear friend of mine, and she made a comment that I have had cause to reflect upon many times since: "Fear and fatigue makes cowards of us all."

Most of our fears are irrational specters of

our own creation. Most of us have no idea where they come from. We could argue that we can choose to have a fear, but put a person with a morbid fear of high places on a cliff edge and see how much choice there is. We can choose how we react to fear.

As one of my instructors always used to say: "Face the fear and do it anyway." It's not that I can control being afraid, it's that I can control what I do with the fear.

I've never been to war, so I have no frame of reference, but I have heard it said that cowards and heroes on the battlefield experience the same emotions but respond to them differently.

To a lesser degree that is probably true of all of us who know fear of something in some form or another.

It's not the emotion that we can control, it's the action that proceeds from the emotion that we can control.

Now let's turn to thoughts. I don't know about you, but my mind is constantly active. Thoughts are bubbling up all the time, like a boiling pot. Even in quiet moments of meditation, when I observe the observer, the instant I become aware that I am not thinking, I'm at it again! It seems that I cannot control even something as seemingly intimate as my own brain activity.

Certainly, I have entertained thoughts upon which I haven't acted. But then again, there's the main issue: Action.

It's not the thoughts themselves that I control, it's how I act that I can control.

So it comes down to this then...humans do not seem to be very good at controlling their thoughts or emotions, but they can control what they do.

I can choose to run my business in an ethical fashion, or not. I can choose the path of loyalty to my wife or not. I can choose to do pretty much anything I want.

This then is the heart of self-control. It is the hardest of taskmasters. The next time you find yourself making digital responses to the driver who just cut you off, or acting on impulse, or losing your temper, just remember the only thing you can control is what you do....and it's not that easy.

But this is one of the beauties of living... making new beginnings after repeated failures is also a choice. It is one thing that you can control. ☺

February						
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

- ◆ Akayama Ju Jitsu Winter Camp, Orange Beach, AL, MLK weekend, January, 2007
- ◆ Columbus Judo Tournament, Columbus, MS, January 20th, 2007
- ◆ Gulf Coast Judo Clinic, Jim Hunt is hosting a Kata clinic, Ocean Springs, MS January 26-27th, 2007,
- ◆ TN State Judo Championships, Nashville, TN, February 3rd, 2007.
- ◆ Tai Chi Clinic, Tupelo, MS, February 2nd- 4th, 2007
- ◆ Wakamusha Judo Tournament, Atlanta, GA February 10th?, 2007.
- ◆ MS State Judo Championships, Jackson, MS, March 3rd, 2007
- ◆ Frayser Judo Tournament, Memphis, TN, March 31st, 2007

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