

# Pathways

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**"In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves ... self-discipline with all of them came first."  
— Harry S. Truman**

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## More on Goals

We have talked about goals so often in this newsletter, you might reasonably ask what else is there to say?

I was driving to the dojo the other day when I thought about the goals in my life that I have achieved and the goals I have yet to achieve.

I have thought about goals before, but perhaps there was something missing.

It is for me easy to set yearly goals or trajectories for progress and then at the end of the year look at the results of my efforts, but what does this have to do with my goals?

The simple fact is that I achieve exactly those goals that I feel in my gut. If goals don't have some visceral level, gut-wrenching significance to me, then the chances are, I will not pour my heart into their achievement. For goals to have meaning in my life they have to be of earth shattering importance to, well....me.

Goals, from this perspective then, are selfish. You can't borrow someone else's goals, you can't live your employer's goals or your spouse's goals, or your parent's goals, it just doesn't work.

Equally, you cannot expect to reach goals that you set for yourself that do not *move* you, deeply.

So, as you start 2008, ask yourself some potentially awkward and/or painful questions.

1. What is it that truly moves you?
2. What is it that you believe as being your value to the world?

3. What is it that draws out your very best?

4. Are you doing it?

5. If not, why not? What are your fears?

6. If you are doing it, what new goals do you need to set?

7. Are your goals and trajectories coherent as a set?

8. Do they have integrity with your heart's desires?

9. Where are you falling short of your potential

10. Do you care?

What we achieve is exactly what we set out to achieve. So what is it that is in your gut to achieve with your life? How do you find out?

A tricky question to answer.

A second part to all of this is setting goals and trajectories that will inevitably lead us out of our comfort zones. It is all too easy to set goals that are within reach and fit snugly within our comfort zones and our previous realms of experience.

Those things that will draw from us unknown potential and demand the development of new skills exist outside of our comfort zones and beckon to us. But those things are not for the faint-hearted or those prone to not facing **and** overcoming obstacles.

Perhaps the creation of challenging goals and trajectories is the greatest gift that we can offer to ourselves and to the world we serve.

## Fear and Attachment

One of the great traps of living is the trap of attachment. With attachment comes fear. Primarily, attachment brings fear of loss.

I'm not saying that attachment is a bad thing, I'm saying that it contains a trap.

We can become attached to identities, ideas, people and stuff. Sometimes, those attachments acquire an energy of their own. If we allow them to, they can hold us prisoner and they can hold us back.

Let's take the example of an unreasonable attachment to the idea that "I'm not good at math." That single notion can leave us unable to balance a checkbook or take a career in a field in which we might otherwise be highly successful. Or how about being in a job that you do not enjoy, but you stay there because it is secure and fear to take the risk that stepping out on your own might entail. This too, is a form of attachment. In both cases, the attachment to an idea leaves us hobbled and trapped.

O.K., so this is easy enough, we can each go through our lives and look at ideas, people and stuff to which we have formed attachments and which, in turn, hold us in chains of one kind or another.

At another level, we can expand our thinking and do the same exercise as communities, as societies and as cultures.

So where does the fear aspect come in?

Sometimes we cling to our attach-

ments with such voracity that they become part of our identity and we fear their loss. It doesn't matter how debilitating the attachment might be, its loss represents such an unacceptable level of shock to our being that we will not consider losing the attachment.

It takes a paradigm shift of fairly major proportions to get us to part with some of our deeper attachments and these sorts of events are often painful to us...so we resist them...and thereby strengthen both the fear of loss of the attachment and also the attachment itself.

Fear of loss can become, if we let be so, a very vicious circle and an incredibly powerful negative feedback loop.

Years ago I remember listening to a CD set by Brian Tracy in which he advocated the process of looking at any stressful situation, deciding what the worst possible outcome might be and then resolving to accept that outcome. We can debate this approach at length, but at its heart, the process is about non-attachment. In a similar fashion, and in a different generation, Rudyard Kipling asked us if we are willing to lose everything and with worn out tools, stoop to pick up the pieces and begin again.

Difficult stuff.

What both Tracy and Kipling have to say in common is that the only thing that each of us really have is the ability to take the next breath of life. Everything else is an attachment of sorts. Many of those attachments

are ideas, habits and things that we started to collect as children or take for granted as adults and many of them are things that we don't even notice as being 'attachments' at all. To see the attachments at work. let's take something as simple as your dietary likes and dislikes. How easy is it for you to try something that you normally would not eat or drink, when you are presented with a choice? Well, if that's difficult, how much more so is changing a habit? For some of us this is easy, for others, it is very difficult.

Ever ask yourself why?

Humans are both adventurers and survivors. The things that give us security (survivability) are things to which we cling and yet we are also aware that life is all about change (adventure and risk-taking). The ability to manage the two halves of living is incredibly difficult to do. Perhaps, if we can accept the possibility of loss, it will be easier to loosen some of the strictures of attachment and allow us to live, freer, less-encumbered lives.

In Judo, I see people afraid to fall over, because they fear, not the landing, but the loss of control that is implied by giving your body to either the planet or to your partner. If Judo contains a lesson, it is this: be willing to give way, to become flexible and not rigid. I still have much to learn and many attachments to resolve. How are you doing?☺

If you know exactly what you're going to do, what's the good in doing it?  
Since you know the exercise is pointless, it is better to do something else.

-- Picasso

## The Real Battle

Here's a discussion I have had several times recently: Why do we train in the martial arts? Why do we keep going, long after the physical goals have been achieved? After all, there comes a time in life when the physical abilities will decline and while we may be slowing down the aging process, we cannot forestall the inevitable.

So what's the point of training? I have often asked myself this question... Especially when I see my students reach a certain point and then quit.

Some of them quit before they get to black belt. Some of them quit at black belt and yet, some keep going. Some of those who quit drift away because they move to a new town and seem unable to find a school to their liking. Some drift away because they lack a trajectory for continuing the path of training.

In all cases, I wonder whether or not I have failed to inspire in my students the primary reason for continuing the path.

For sure, there are questions of personal security, health and physical fitness to be considered, but in the final analysis, many of us will never be attacked in our lives and we can all find different ways in which to maintain personal fitness.

The longer that I remain in the martial arts, the more I am coming to the realization that the real warrior's ability is not found in the hand or the foot; the real warrior is the one who is forged within the

heart.

The real battles are not the ones that are fought on the street or in the competition arena, although validity of these cannot be ignored. The really important battles are the ones that we fight in the silent corners of our own hearts. No-one bears witness to these battles. No-one gets a trophy for overcoming a personal challenge.

There are no colored belts or black belts to be earned for overcoming an addiction or facing a fear. There are no certificates to hang on the wall for overcoming a deeply personal trauma.

The real warrior is the one who stands in the battlefield of his or her own life and is willing to do so, time and time again, even if it means fighting the same enemy over and over.

The continuation of martial arts training is an exterior pathway that teaches us how to face the enemies we each have within us.

The principles are exactly the same. The tricky part is recognizing that the lessons we learn in our martial arts classes are not just about fighting an external enemy.

What makes the internal battles so difficult is that in the internal battlefields, the self as the enemy has parity in all areas of knowledge and ability as the self as the ally. Such a realization makes the internal battlefield a difficult terrain in which to work towards a resolution.

I am reminded of the old samurai proverb that goes something like

this:

*If you do not know yourself or know your enemy you will only know defeat. If you know yourself but not your enemy, the outcome will be uncertain. If you know both yourself and your enemy, you will never know defeat.*

Over the years, I have seen this quote in many forms, but the essential truth is not about defeating external enemies; it is about first overcoming the internal enemies that prevent us from truly knowing and being ourselves. Self-knowledge is a daunting task. To see self in all its guises is not a pleasant thing. It is easy for us to see ourselves as honest, noble, understanding, compassionate and so on. It is much harder for us to acknowledge that we are selfish, greedy, manipulative, angry or cruel. It is even harder for us to do something about that.

***This*** is why we train in the martial arts. ***This*** is why we go back week after week, for a lifetime. ***This*** is why we don't quit, won't quit and can't quit. It is not a path for those who are unwilling to look within.

So yes, there are all sorts of external benefits to martial arts training, but the view from nearly forty years of training, is that it is the internal battles that are the ones that are truly worth winning. I still have so much to learn. Please join me on the training deck, and let's learn together. ☺

*With equal passion I have sought knowledge.  
I have wished to understand the hearts of [people].  
I have wished to know why the stars shine.*

*Bertrand Russell*

## Value

As a follow-on from the last article, let's talk about value for a moment. What things do we value?

In marketing and sales we are told to sell the *benefits* of our products or services. The key point is not, however, selling the benefits as we see them...it is seeing the benefits as they are perceived through the mind of the client.

Let's take my last article as a 'for instance'. If you happen to be the mother of a seemingly hyper-active eight year-old boy, then talking about a lifetime of training is completely irrelevant. What you, as a mom want, right now, is something to channel young energy in an appropriate direction. Life skills can come later, let's get the whirlwind under control first.

So, from this perspective then, our value sets are vastly different. If I am only interested in selling a lifetime of training, I'm missing the point because I am not seeing the mom's needs, nor her value set. Mom is not getting her needs met simply because I am not even attempting to sell the right benefit to my would-be client. We both lose, and so does her child. Looked at from the perspective of the child as he grows into an adult...who else pays for my lack of insight during that 'sale'?

It is an inevitability in life that we will find ourselves in situations in which our values seem to be different to those of the people around us and we find ourselves in situations of conflict. Understanding value has a lot to do with looking at things from another perspective....someone else's perspective.

How many times have you found yourself in a situation where the main issue comes down to understanding the values of the people

involved? How many times do we place a judgment upon the values that other people might have, which differ to our own?

It is a very difficult thing to hold one value set and yet simultaneously respect the values of others, when they run counter to our own.

How many wars have been fought for exactly these reasons?

At a wholly different level, how many parents can relate to that one?

O.K....so where am I going with all this?

In the martial arts we deal with value judgments in almost every class. We talk about things like adversarial psychology, attacker's initiative and windows of opportunity, all of which relate to what our opponents 'want' and therefore, 'value'.

Again, by way of illustration let's say I punch towards my partner. In the moment of the punch there are three things I value: i) my balance, ii) my weapon of opportunity and iii) the location of my target. As the partner being punched I value three things also: i) my mobility, ii) my defensive arsenal and iii) my window of opportunity for a counter attack or escape.

You will notice that these things are not the same.

Now let us take it to the real world: If someone attacks you, what do they want from you? Your belongings? Your life? Something else?

What do they believe? That you are a victim? That you are incapable of defending yourself? That you are mentally and/or physically weak? You have something that they want? They have the right to take what they want from you? That you are afraid of them?

What is their value set? Life is cheap? Strength wins? Their rights supersede all others?

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- ◆ **AKAYAMA WINTER CAMP, ORANGE BEACH, AL, JANUARY 19-20TH, 2008**
- ◆ **COLUMBUS JUDO TOURNAMENT, MUW, COLUMBUS, MS, JANUARY, 27TH, 2008**

In the position of the would-be defendant during a violent assault, your value set is probably going to be quite different to that of the attacker. Unfortunately if you do not understand the difference in positions, you will not be able to defend yourself effectively.

If we are willing to do so, we can then take the same lesson to the boardroom, the home or almost any environment in which people with different value sets come into conflict with one another.

Effective conflict resolution comes from understanding the values of the parties involved. It is sad, however, that all too often we are less than interested in the needs, values or beliefs of those around us.

It takes an effort of will to truly listen to those around us and be willing to examine life from their perspective, but it is possible.

When we take the time to understand value sets that differ from ours, we are much more likely to be able to avoid conflict or if conflict is unavoidable, resolve it without everyone becoming a loser.

Or, perhaps I am just an idealist!!

☺

