

Pathways

THE CHRIS DEWEY MARTIAL ARTS, INC. NEWSLETTER

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Are your painful experiences stumbling blocks, or stepping stones?

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Change

Change is an interesting thing. It can bring out our deepest fears and our greatest strengths....often at the same time. Humans are such interesting creatures in this regard, we are so paradoxical: we like new adventures, but we feel safe in the status quo; we want things to be fun, and we want to learn, but we don't want things to be too easy or too hard. If things are too easy, we lose interest, if things are too hard we complain. Curious isn't it?

As I come to the end of the semester, my university students are concerned that the final exam will be too hard. In a different environment, today in class one of our young martial artists wanted to quit coming to class because martial arts are too hard. One of the reasons that Judo and martial arts like it have a tough time keeping students is that falling is difficult.

There's more than a single lesson here and as always, Judo is a metaphor of life.

So let's journey together for a few moments and look at falling into the future. Stepping into the unknown is always difficult and yet everyone of us does it every moment of every day.

What does any of us know about the next moment of our lives? We walk blindly into the future, assume that it will be there for us, and assume that what we have learned from the past will equip us to meet it.

But what do we really know? I am assuming, as I sit here and type this newsletter, that I will finish it, post it to the website and send out e-mails to all of my wonderful contacts, informing each of you that the newsletter is finally available. Will that actually happen? I have no idea.

As for the past, well it is the only thing I

know, but is it an accurate predictor of what will occur in the future? I doubt it. Ask the chicken in a sandwich, the lettuce that lies on top of the chicken, or the wheat that made the bread. The point here is that everything we know is fine, right up until something changes, and then the past is no longer so reliable.

So how do you greet change? Do you embrace it? Do you see it as an opportunity? Are you afraid of falling over? Are you willing to stand up again if you do? How do you want to step into your future?

The real question I want to ask you is whether what you carry with you at this moment from your past is baggage that holds you back, or whether it is a catapult projecting you into your greatness. What if you were to get out of your own way and let yourself go by? What then?

Looking back over thirty years in the university world, or forty years as a martial artist, or fifty plus years as a son, did I really know what lay ahead? I had a vision for my life, when I was a kid...is *this* it? No, not really. Well, yeah, kinda. You see, I had no idea as a kid. I had no experience. I had a lot of hope, I believed in myself to some extent, and I had some faith that it would all work out. In other words I was clueless, but determined. At times life has been easy, at times it has been hard. So what?

Well, it comes down to this, it's not about what you think you know, it's the tools that you bring with you and how you choose to use them.

As I was told at a coaching seminar I attended "How you do anything, is how you do everything." How mind-blowingly simple and how mind-blowingly true. Wow! 🤯

Chris is an iPEC Certified Professional Coach and an Energy Leadership Master Practitioner.

I am currently **accepting new coaching clients. You have read the newsletter, you know who I am and what I do. I offer you the chance to partner with someone who deeply cares about both the inner and the outer world of our lives.**

If the themes of the Pathways newsletter resonate with you, if you want to remove your personal blocks, catalyze the achievement of your potential and show up in the world as your highest self...I invite you to partner with me as your coach.

I have a couple of simple requests:

- You want to move forward with your life.**
- You accept the possibility that you are greater and wiser than you think you are.**

For information about personal coaching opportunities, martial arts classes, reiki classes, books and seminars contact Chris at: 662 323 5522 either chris@thirdpathway.com

Future perfect

Here's a tense subject...the future perfect. Think about it for a moment, who amongst us has not, at some point in our lives said something like: Things will be better when..., or I'll be happier when..., or I'm really looking forward to...

Conversely we look backward and say things like: If only I'd....., or I wish that..., or I should have....

I believe it was Mark Twain who said that twenty years from now you will be more concerned about the things that you did not do than the things you did do. His message is a simple one, and it is a call to action, to live boldly, to live with passion and to live up to our potential. Within the statement though, there is also a sense of momentary fulfillment...or put another way, to live each moment fully.

When do we allow ourselves to be here and now?

We spend so much time looking backwards at our supposed mistakes or our supposed victories, and we spend as much time looking ahead at our goals, dreams and visions, that we tend to forget that all we really have is this moment...right here, right now. We even have trite phrases for it all...'planning for the future', 'learning from the past' etc.. Living here and now is all I can really do. The past is done, I cannot go back and change it, the future is not here and I have no idea how it will unfold. The past consists of a whole stack of stories I tell myself and the world about who I am. Really? Am I really my past? What if those same stories create blinders that restrict my view of the present, so that I show up in this moment as someone who has a limited view of what is possible. Put another way...what am I

not seeing? To a greater or lesser extent we all do this. We all show up in the present moment with our past story, ready to tell it and to play it out again.

Truly living in the moment is a staggeringly difficult thing to do, and yet in a Zen-like way, it is beautifully simple.

One of the easiest ways to live as a human *being*, is to let go of judgment.

Ouch!

That's tough. We pass judgment about almost everything, all the time. Think about it for a moment. Catch yourself doing it. Then attempt not to judge yourself for catching yourself having a judgment about something. We're human, it's a game; laugh and be kind to yourself.

So what do I mean? Suppose for a moment you were to suspend judgment about yourself. What then? Who would you be? How would you show up in the world? Think for a moment about all the ways in which you carry judgments about who you are and what you do. I hear it from my students on a regular basis: "Oh, I'm no good at science" or "I never learned [.....] in school, so I just don't get it." The judgment limits ability. The judgment keeps us small.

Let's go back to the young child who today tells his instructor that he wants to quit because martial arts are too hard. What is he telling himself? The irreducible truth is that "I'm not good enough to do it."

Ouch!

Sorry, but it's true. When we tell ourselves that things are too hard, we are making a judgment that we are not capable of handling it...in simple terms we are telling ourselves that we are not good enough to succeed at [.....].

If, for one microsecond we let go of the words 'too hard', then we immediately enable ourselves to achieve. How valuable is that?

What are you willing to do with that little gem?

Do you begin to see how judgment creates limitations? How much potential could I achieve if I were to let go of my own perceived judgments about myself and the world in which I live and move?

Instead of creating judgments about what I should have done, or could have done, or have to do, I can begin to live in the moment.

A human being happy is not a conditional state of affairs, except in so far as we make it so. A human being happy is a function of allowing yourself to be so. When we live in the conditional future, it's no wonder we're in the present, tense.

One of the steps that you can take to let go of some of the tension, is to simply let go of the need to be your harshest critic and the need to offer up judgments for everything that you do. Each of us has an inner critic who knows every last weakness, and is only too willing to parade them in front of us to keep us small and supposedly safe. The inner critic is also your judge, you already know this. Your inner critic will tell you all the reasons why you are not good enough, and when you give it power, your inner critic will rob you of the freedom to be happy, truly deeply, happy.

Of course, calling it your inner critic is a judgment too...so what do you want to do with that?



*"We do not see the world the way it is;
we see it the way we are"*

Anais Nin

Present, tense

So who showed up this morning with some stress? Who carries some weight on their shoulders and who put it there for you?

Why would we do that? Is being stressed up with nowhere to go some badge of office? Is it a requirement of doing business as You Incorporated?

I was talking with one of my clients recently and using the analogy of trying to run through heavy, sticky tar. The more it clings, the tougher the ability to move forward. Hmmm...that couldn't be a metaphor again could it?

Our general view of stress is that it does the same thing to us; it slows us down, it saps our energy and we achieve less. More than that, stress creates medical issues for us that can have life-threatening consequences. Stress creates inner conflict, which then manifests in our outer world as conflict in our work life, our family life and with our friends. So why live in the present, tense?

Where's the benefit in that? Why are we all so eager to do it?

More to the point...knowing all of this, why do we not cut it adrift and live stress-free lives? If we could do this, would we? Do we live in a society of adrenaline addicts? Do we create our own dramas to justify the struggles and thereby perpetuate the cycle as a positive feedback loop based upon the retelling of the same story?

Just to add another wrinkle...why does stress get such a bad rap? After all, a healthy stress response keeps me alive when I get attacked by sabre-toothed cats or invaded by gut-wrenching mi-

crobes. I have had more of the latter in my life...I can't speak for you.

Stress, then, isn't all that bad is it?

I suppose it comes to this: I like a challenge. I like to know that there is something more to achieve. I think of this as anabolic stress, it pushes me towards my personal best. As a martial artist, I am always looking for ways to improve my skill, my technique, my level of understanding. Ditto that as an academic...one look at my library will tell you that I read all manner of subjects.

But then there are other stresses that get to me if I allow them to do so. These are catabolic stresses, they break me down and undermine my ability. They lead me to doubt myself. Many of those stresses are produced by the circumstances I perceive around me; many of them are delivered up as morsels for consumption by my ever-present inner critic. Let's take one that will hit home for most of us.

Finances.

We can say a lot about the current financial state of the world and our individual inability to effect change in a global sense, or to protect our own personal financial stockade from imminent collapse. We can feel helpless, stressed. I can guarantee you though, that even in this global economic situation, someone somewhere is making a stack load of money in a totally ethical fashion, and bringing prosperity to those around them.

So what's the difference...where one person sees stress, shortage and instability, someone else sees opportunity and

potential for growth. The outer circumstances are not any different, just the internal perception of what they mean and what to do with them.

I tell my students something similar in class. There are some students who tell me that they hate multiple choice tests, and others tell me they hate essay tests. The test is the test, how you greet the event has a lot to do with how stressed you are about it.

Normally this sort of statement is followed by 'yeah, but...' At this point you can almost guarantee something from the past is going to be laid out that creates a limiting view on the opportunity as it is in the moment.

Net result? Present, tense

ROI = All stressed up with nowhere to go.

Humor aside, when we invest in our personal stress, we feed it. When we tell ourselves stories about how things were in the past and how they are going to be in the future, we create more stress and then we feed on it. It becomes our *modus operandi*. We create a positive feedback loop.

All of which, at some level is a personal choice. I will grant you that it can take Herculean efforts to break the cycle, or sometimes it can come from a simple change in perception of what is.

How eager are you to live in the present, tense?

How liberated would you feel if you let some of the stress go? What's holding you back?

☺

ROI = Return on Investment

**Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence**

Desiderata

Rewriting the past

Something that historians seem to delight in doing, is rewriting the past. Sometimes historians find new evidence that changes our interpretation of the past. Sometimes they simply reinterpret the available evidence. Does any of it change the past?

Not really. It may change the way we view some past event, but it does not change the event.

I've been reading a lot about the Crusades recently, and have read some radically different viewpoints concerning the same cast of characters and the same basic historic events. So who is right? What's the truth?

Now there's a tough question...what's the truth?

Well, obviously I don't want to talk about the Crusades, and I am not wise enough to talk about the truth (that was a judgment, if you noticed)...but I do want to talk about changing our past.

We all carry stories of our past. We have stories of our families, our friends, our careers, our supposed triumphs and our supposed failures. If you ask someone to tell you about their life, they'll be more than happy to trot out the well-rehearsed stories for you. But are they the truth?

I'm not saying that we are lying, merely that each of us has a viewpoint of what we think happened, and for us, that is the truth. Our story is a perceptive narrative, nothing more.

I am sure that my view of my school days is quite different to the views of my teachers.

One of the places I see personal perspective play itself out so easily in my life is when I lose my temper. On those rare occasions that I lose my temper, I invariably discover that I have missed some vital piece of information that changes my perspective. Consequently, I learned a long time ago that when I am getting angry, it is time for me to take a different perspective and see what I am missing. I am not always successful, but it is a far better strategy than losing my temper.

So let's take it a step further. Suppose for one moment that my view of my past (my story), is not what I think it is. What then? For certain, other people will have different views of the same events that I have experienced, and their perceptions will be different to mine, but who is to say that someone else's view of an event is any less real for them?

More than that, something that I perceive to be a 'mistake' or a 'failure' is only an interpretation of the event. Every so-called mistake in my life has brought me to this point...right here and right now. So how could any of it have been a mistake?

Right this minute, I am doing something I love to do...think out loud. I am doing it with the full awareness of my limited perceptions of what I think is my past. That's not a lot to go on (another judgment). The question here is: If I look at my past as a series of mistakes, failures and near-disasters what am I telling myself about who I

am? When I look at exactly the same events and see opportunities taken, lesson learned and experiences gained, what message am I giving to myself then?

Either scenario is a personal choice, and it is not about window-dressing. It is visceral and life-affecting. I can choose to look at my life as a series of colossal failures or of continued successes. The events don't change. My perceptions change, the outcome changes, because how I see myself changes

The second trap is being defined, and therefore, trapped by your story. One of my stories is that I am a geologist. Another is that I am a university professor. Other stories are that I am a poet, a martial artist and a nature photographer. Another story is that I am a son to my father, and a father to my son. While the 'truth' of any of these stories is obvious to anyone who knows me, not one of these stories defines who I am, or more importantly, who I will become.

When we are defined and trapped by our stories we limit ourselves and we build walls around our potential and wrap chains around our own ankles. When we are defined by our stories we hide from the truth, because we are unwilling to take a different perspective that might, just might, offer a contradictory position to the one we hold most dear.

Letting go of the story is scary and liberating. Your call. ☺

*[...] whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should*

Desiderata