

Pathways

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**Nature does nothing
without purpose**

Aristotle

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If and when thinking

One of the interesting aspects of self-dialogue is the insidious ways in which we can undermine ourselves. These days, we are all familiar with setting goals using positive terms in the present tense because our brains can only deal with the present moment...much as though we might like to imagine otherwise. One of the tricks we play on ourselves though, sometimes without even noticing is the substitution of 'if' for 'when' thinking. Of course, it's all legitimate reasoning...after all, we live in a world of uncertainty. Nothing is ever guaranteed, except change.

Nothing is ever certain. Indeed, if you want to get philosophical about it, you cannot even guarantee your next breath! We all assume that it will happen, but for all of us, that assumption will eventually be proven false. O.K....so what?

Well, I caught myself doing some 'if' thinking recently. I had laid all my plans for the summer and was putting them into action, but I was stopped in my tracks when our Program Manager stopped me and asked why I kept saying 'if' and not 'when'. If this happens then I will do such and such...I was not using 'when this happens...' Since the mind only deals with positives and only brings things into reality that are firmly planted in the subconscious an 'if' thought is the kiss of death to any well-meaning plan.

'If' thoughts tell your brain that nothing has changed or for that matter is going to change, so all the stuff that comes afterwards is self-entertainment or wishful thinking. Only when you use 'when' thoughts does your brain

kick into action mode and start bringing your plans into fruition.

I can see it all around me...see if any of these sound familiar:

"if I can get my credit cards paid off, then..."

"if I get accepted into xyz school, then I'll..."

"if I can just get past this week, then..."

Do you see the trap? Somehow we never do get our credit cards paid off, or get accepted into xyz school, or get past the problems of the week....we just drag it all along with us, because we told our brains that this is the *status quo*.

Only when you serve notice to your brain that something is going to change, will things begin to happen.

For instance:

"When I get my credit cards paid off, I'll..."

Suddenly the brain is put on notice that you will be debt-free and therefore it sets about finding ways to make this come to pass. Maybe you stop buying the daily Starbucks, or eating out so often, but some things will change and slowly you will clear your credit cards...it is inevitable.

I cannot over-emphasize the positive value of replacing your 'if' thoughts with 'when' thoughts. You will amaze yourself with the changes that take place.

Bottom line: Never underestimate your brain's ability to bring to you exactly what you ask for... WHEN you allow it. ☺

Sun Tzu

In Sun Tzu's great treatise "The Art of War," there is a wonderful line, which depending upon the exact wording of the translation, goes something like this:

"Invincibility lies in defense, the opportunity of victory lies in the offense"

So let's look at this statement. At first glance it might seem to be an admonition to either a) do nothing, or b) to wage all out war; but I don't really think that's what Sun Tzu was getting at. I don't think that he was an either/or sort of guy. High strategic art is not about dogma, so much as understanding timing. The reality is a little closer to knowing when each of these strategic responses is appropriate, given the circumstances, and when a melding of strategies might also be appropriate.

Is it possible to be on the offensive but maintain a good defense? I would argue that it is imperative. Admittedly, I only have national-level tournament experience to go on, but to engage in full-out offense is liable to get you blindsided by the unseen counter-attack. Likewise, playing the defensive role will not gain you any opportunities to win a match. As a player and a referee, I have seen plenty of matches when a player was unwilling to attack and ended up losing the match to a more aggressive player, who *was* willing to take chances. But don't get me wrong, I have also seen what *appears* to be an overly defensive player lure an aggressive player into the attack only to spring a superior offense on an unwitting prey.

So, does this only apply in tournament or battlefield settings? I would suggest not. I would suggest that it plays just as well in the world of business and also in the

realm of interpersonal relationships. Again, do not misunderstand me. Neither business, nor our relationships are acts of war, at least in my view of the universe. But the fact remains that in order to remain in business you need to understand the rules of the game, the nature of the terrain and the economic climate. You need to understand your competition, your allies and your resources. Being in business and staying in business, is about knowing when to be aggressive in the marketplace of opportunity and when to be defensive. It is also about knowing when to be defensive in one area (hold your own), while exploiting a new opportunity in another area of possible income.

In our inter-personal relationships, we are always 'making statements' about the things we believe and want, the things that we support and the things that we resist. Inevitably, our positions lead us into arenas of conflicting viewpoints. Sometimes our 'statements' are non-verbal, body language actions, sometimes they are words. We do it with the clothes we wear, the places we go, the jobs we have, the conversations we hold, the friends we attract. Consequently, to my view of things, running a business and inter-personal relationships are so intimately intertwined, it is a natural step for me to see that running a business is, in many ways, a subset of relationships.

In my business, I am making a statement about the values that I hold dear. Our clients come to us because (hopefully) they see and share our core values. As a direct consequence my business attracts a certain type of client. So what does this have to do with Sun Tzu's statement? Simply this: We have taken a strategic position as a business and act to both

defend it, and also enlarge the enterprise according to available opportunities. Our foundation is our defense, our adaptability is our offense.

When you come to class to practice remember the words of Sun Tzu...they affect everything that happens in class, from the ways in which we meet and greet our partners, to the ways in which we train with our partners, and ultimately the ways in which we are both a team and a group of somewhat competitive individuals, all striving for personal excellence in our own way. Again, it is my view of the business, but we do not strive to excel at the expense of those with whom we train. We compete in a motivational way...if you get better, then I am encouraged to get better...it is a mutually reinforcing proposition. From this perspective, my defense as a business owner, and as an instructor is the foundation from which I move and derive my essence as a martial artist. My offense is the growth of my students and the stability of our business.

So this is my statement isn't it? Anything that threatens to undermine the business is defended against, and anything that can help to build the business is seen as an opportunity.

Ultimately then, whether we are talking about an individual life, or a martial arts tournament or a business venture, the goal is to be both invincible, and victorious.

Lastly, let me say this...remember that Sun Tzu was a Chinese philosopher who was heavily influenced by both Taoism and Confucianism, both of which emphasized the natural order of things. Seek, then the balance in his statement when you train and live.

"Those who are awake live in constant state of amazement"

Jack Kornfield

Kime, Mushin and Zanshin

I know we have talked about these things before, but I want to talk about them as a mutually supportive set of skills.

As I have said before, Kime is to act with intent. Kime is about making every thought and movement an action of meaning and purpose. When we do things with Kime, there is no wasted effort, no wasted energy. So, from the perspective of the martial arts, when we act with kime we don't *practice* Judo or Ju Jitsu....we *do* Judo or Ju Jitsu...

Next is mushin. Mushin is literally 'mind of no mind'. Mushin is about being able to act through innate awareness and not thinking about *when* to act. When we act with mushin, our actions transcend conscious thought. In the west, we see mushin during moments of flow. Moments of flow occur when we are so in tune with things around us that all action is effortless, and time seems to lack meaning. Moments of mushin can be profound in their impact on our training and are recognized in all areas of elite performance, whether it is in the concert virtuoso, the ballerina, the Olympic athlete or a classroom teacher. It doesn't make any difference what the enterprise might be, moments of flow are possible within any activity...even if you are just

sweeping the floor!

Using our example from above...when we are in moments of mushin we don't *do* Judo or Ju Jitsu, Judo or Ju Jitsu *does us!*

The last of my three words for this article is zanshin. Zanshin is often referred to as 'remaining spirit'. It relates to being fully present in the moment and allowing nothing to distract you from the present and all that it contains. It sounds a little bit like mushin, but it is different. Mushin is about out-of-conscious awareness, whereas zanshin involves mindfulness. That's not as contradictory as it might first sound. In Judo, when we talk about zanshin, we often talk about how we finish a throw. In essence we want to complete the throw fully, not let it trail off as our energy decays. When I was a young martial artist, I was taught that zanshin was taking care of your partners when they land. As I learned more about the arts, I was taught that zanshin also included any event that ended an engagement....so walking away with kime, or finishing to a hold down, would both serve as examples. It's not about doing a throw and then doing a hold down...it's about moving seamlessly from throw to hold. Do you see the difference? One action leads naturally into the next with full attention., without hesi-

tation and with complete purpose.

So let's put them all together: Acting with Kime is to act with full intent of achieving a desired result, Zanshin requires that you will not dissipate your effort, force or focus on extraneous activities that do not bring you closer to the desired result. Mushin says that you act in concert with the flow of energy around you and not force your will upon a situation, just to get a desired result.

In summary you have intent, awareness and mindfulness.

Can you imagine the effect of a life lived in Kime, full of moments of mushin and cognizant of zanshin?

Whether it is sitting and watching a sunset, or making your bed, do it with intent...act with kime. Be mindful, bring your entire being to the event, again, it doesn't matter whether it is just sitting watching a sunset or making your bed, be fully present. Be aware of the world around you,, and be willing to be surprised by the universe and awed by living. More than that, do not just be aware of all that is around you be aware of your place within it, learn to flow and be expectant of moments of mushin.

When we live this way, life is rich, full and vibrant. ☺

"[Y]our body is precious. It is [y]our vehicle for awakening"

Jack Kronfield

Stubborn and Determined

Recently, I have been working with one of our children, who is planning to attend her first Judo tournament this month. We get together for a private lesson twice a week, and each time we get together we work on a particular set of tournament skills and discuss a part of the mental game of competition. In our discussion yesterday we discussed the difference between being stubborn and being determined.

During the physical training time, Ashley was attempting to throw her partner, who is both bigger and stronger, with a specific set of pre-selected throwing skills. As things progressed during the training drill, attacks were being made that did not work.

There are basically only three reasons that a Judo throw doesn't work: Either 1. the attack is being made at the wrong time or 2. it is being made in the wrong place (direction), or 3. it is being made with the wrong weapon platform and the improper application of tools, given the movement of the two players.

So this is where being stubborn versus determined comes in.

As Ashley worked on her throws, she started relying on the same throw over and over, which in itself is not a bad thing....if it is done at the right time and in the right

place. The problem was that Ashley was using the same attack *regardless* of where her partner was moving. She was eager to throw, but not considering the placement of her partner....she was being stubborn.

So we had a little chat. We talked about walking into a wall over and over again looking for a door. If I keep hitting my face on the wall and do not leave the room....clearly I haven't found a door. I may want to leave the room, but if I keep smacking my head into the wall, nothing is going to change....I am being stubborn. Stubborn is about wanting something really badly, but being unwilling to learn from the circumstances or change the process to obtain a better result.

We then talked about being determined to leave a room, but changing my approach after hitting my face against the wall once. Once I have hit my face into the wall, I look for a different way to leave the room, and after repeated experiments I find a door and successfully negotiate my exit. Once I know what a door looks like and feels like when I use it, I can repeat the event, anytime I want to enter or leave a room.

The same thing applied to Ashley's Judo throw. If she kept attacking at

the wrong time or with the wrong body placement and was unwilling to change her actions or timing, then she was merely being stubborn, and would be sure to be overcome by a superior force. Ashley was being stubborn and Judo doesn't happen in stubborn-city!

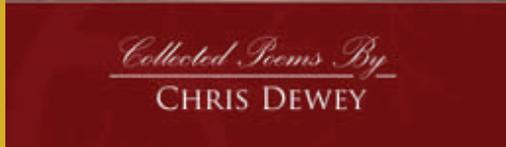
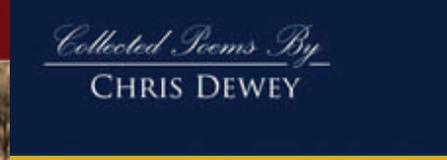
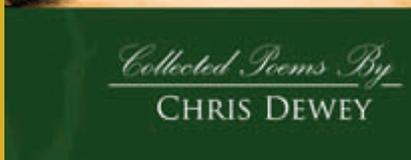
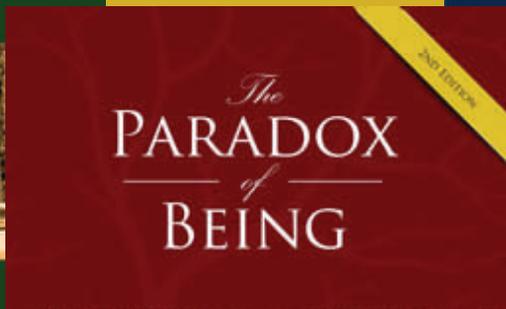
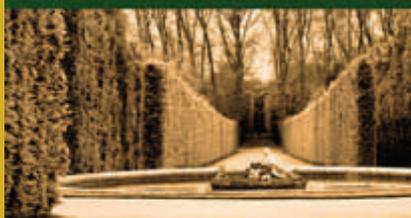
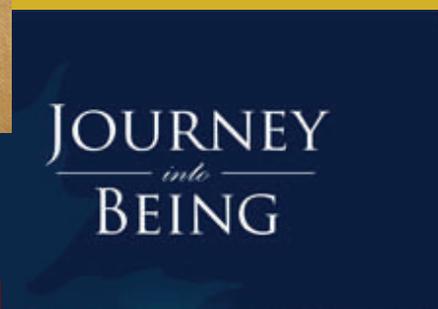
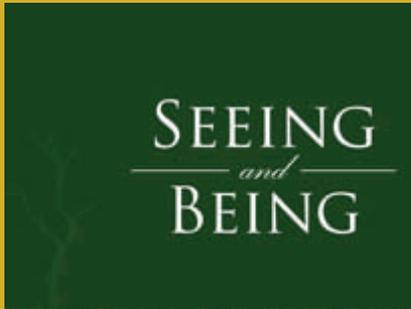
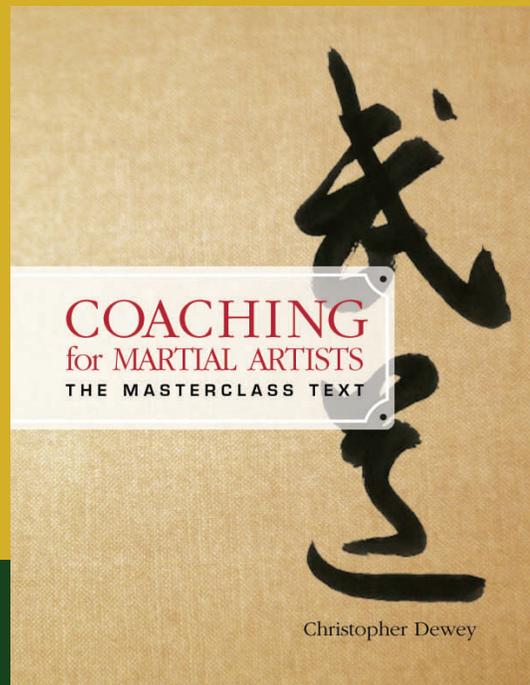
Once she started to start to feel where and when to attack, she changed her timing and position and slammed her bigger, stronger partner with an almost effortless piece of Judo...over and over again. Ashley had moved beyond being stubborn, to being determined. Ashley learned through determination and adjustment where and when to attack.

Being determined is about knowing your skill set and applying it at the right time and the right place to achieve a desired result and not quitting until you get the result you seek. The point isn't that you keep attacking regardless of what your opponent does, the point is that you adjust your attacks and continue to put pressure on your opponent and rob them of opportunities to attack you, while you continuously seek opportunities to use your own offensive skill set.

Learn to be determined...not stubborn...it applies in life, not just in Judo.

"There is wisdom of the head and a wisdom of the heart"

Charles Dickens



**For information about classes, books and seminars contact us at
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