

# Pathways

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## Living on the Curve



### CONTENTS

Living on the Curve.....	1
contd.....	2
Judgement.....	3

*“The men who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed”*

Lloyd Jones



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I have spoken many times about the cyclicity of yin and yang, but today I would like to chat a little about how we live on the curve of life.

Let us assume for a moment that in all things there is a beginning and an end, plus the terrain between the two. Alternatively, we could look at the process of change from one extreme to another and the terrain between them. We are born. We die. We live in the terrain between the two...but the really important question is: What do you wish to do with that terrain?

We also know that the only real constant anywhere within that terrain is the constant of Change and its implied cousin, Time. Without change we could not measure time. Think on it for a moment. We perceive Time because we experience change. Without change, how would you recognize the passage of time?

No matter where you are living on the curve of life we are constantly in a state of flux, continually faced with sequential and oftentimes overlapping instances of beginnings and endings in our education, our careers our social and intimate relationships. The trick it seems to me, is to find the balance between beginning things, perpetuating things and ending things. Remember this though...doing one often invites one of the others.

Finding the balance is about knowing what you wish to achieve in life. Where do you want life to take you? What do you want to learn? Experience? Know? What drives you? What is your purpose?

Put another way...what motivates you to begin something, continue something or end something?

Simple Truth Number One: If you wish to end anything, drive it to its extreme.

Simple Truth Number Two: If you wish to perpetuate something, graft it to learning and growing.

Problem is that often we don't see when we have driven something to its extreme. We just keep pushing until something breaks. I can see examples in my life where I have pushed something too far. Some of those things were small things, some were pretty huge. Sometimes I wish I had seen some of those breaking points earlier, and not been so blind...such has been my inability to see consequence.

I have, however, learned that if I wish to perpetuate something then it requires nurturing new growth as well as trimming away some of the old growth to make room for the new. I might argue that the span of my life has been about learning and growing. Some of it, stumbling into a crisis because I am blind. Some of it, deliberate action as a function of insight into a potential life choice.

So let's look at life goals for a moment. What do you want to achieve in the short term? How do your short-term goals support your long-term vision and your long-term goals? Where do you want to go? How do you want to get there? What is the value of the journey and the potential destination?

Make a decision.

Start moving. If you wish to continue in the same direction, keep doing something significant each day that moves you in the direction you wish to go. Trim away what doesn't work or help, nurture that which does. Move when it is right to do so, stand when it is right to do so. Step aside, regroup, step backwards according to the requirement of the moment and its relationship to the overall purpose of your journey. Pushing too hard at the

## Living on the Curve contd.

wrong moment drives something to an extreme of imbalance and leads to collapse. Not acting wisely at the right moment costs you opportunity.

Use both a short-range and a long-range view to understand where you stand in any moment of the journey. At any point in the journey you can look at where you stand, the direction in which you are moving and ask yourself several powerful questions:

Are my actions beginning something, ending something or perpetuating something? Are the actions in which I am engaged, liable to generate the results that I want?

Before we wrap all this up and call it good though, it would do us well to go back to my two simple truths and deconstruct them for a moment.

Simple Truth Number One: If you wish to end anything, drive it to its extreme.

Simple Truth Number Two: If you wish to perpetuate something, graft it to learning and growing.

The two statements in themselves are neither positive or negative, they are just neutral. It is what you do with them that creates the difference and controls the outcomes that you generate in your life.

If we examine the first simple truth, you can ask whether driving something to its extreme going to achieve the result you seek? True, it will end the thing (whatever it is), but it might begin something even less desirable. It might even end in a way that leaves you with a lot to clear up that you hadn't anticipated. One of the keys is to finish something, or let it end in the way that leads to the best possible outcome for all concerned.

Remember though that whenever

something ends, something new begins. So when something is ending, it is a good idea to look ahead and be sure that the new thing that is about to begin is what you want on your journey.

Moreover, the word "extreme" is loaded with potential for misinterpretation.

Let us look at any event in life. There are always pre-incident indicators of the potential for an event. How I choose to act on the pre-incident indicators has a lot to do with how the event itself will play out. From this perspective then, driving something to an extreme might simply involve missing the pre-incident indicators and continuing a path in blindness, unaware of the pitfalls ahead. Pre-incident indicators are like road signs on the journey.

The signs are there if you are paying attention, but they cannot actually do anything for you. A road sign can merely indicate the presence of a potential hazard in the road ahead and the preferred rates of speed or directions of travel for the avoidance or negotiation of any hazard. It is your responsibility to act upon what the sign is telling might be ahead.

A simple example might be eating a healthy, well-balanced diet and avoiding potential health risks. For each of us there are dietary road signs and health indicators if we care to pay attention.

Another example might involve the preparation for an academic exam or a career interview. How we prepare says a lot about our ability to obtain the best possible outcome. We all know the old adage, failure to prepare is preparing to fail. Preparing to

fail is simply an example of driving something to its extreme and closing the door of opportunity.

Finally, if we examine the second simple truth, you might be wise to ask whether perpetuating something is serving your greater good or acting as a hindrance to your development and slowing your journey?

Sometimes, perpetuating a thing is simply taking the path of least resistance and might not be serving your highest potential. Sometimes it is important to end a thing, and begin something new, because it builds upon a foundation already laid by previous experiences and draws something deep within us that might otherwise remain dormant.

While on the surface of things perpetuating something might appear to be a reasonable path, it might actually be the kiss of death for the potential that lies within. Perpetuating something in the absence of a nurturing environment, is like forcing something to grow in nutrient poor soil...eventually, it stagnates and dies. We have effectively driven it to an extreme, by trying to force it to perpetuate. It has been my experience, however, that so long as I am truly learning and growing, then perpetuating a thing continues to draw on my inner potential and keeps me living at the edge of what it is that I know...beginnings and endings then occur naturally.

Using these guidelines then, we can more smoothly transition through the beginnings and endings that continually occur in our lives and make the best possible use of the terrain that lies between them.

Happy journeying! ☺

***“There is nothing which can hinder or circumvent  
a strong and determined soul  
seeking for health, usefulness, truth and success.”***

***Ella Wheeler Wilcox***

## Judgement

One of the things I like about a Toastmaster's meeting is the Table Topics section of the meeting. During Table Topics we are asked to speak to a question in less than three minutes without the benefit of preparation. The goal of the exercise is to help us to think on our feet, organize our thoughts and to speak with confidence in an extemporaneous setting.

And?

Well the question was: If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?

Answer: One and a half minutes on the subject of Judgement.

Brilliant. Truly brilliant.

One of the things I struggle with in my own life is the almost hard-wired judgement response to everything I perceive as reality.

If I begin with myself, I judge myself to be inadequate or talented, clever or stupid, each according to the situation in which I find myself.

Think about it for a minute...we judge everything, all the time. One of the hardest things to suspend is the ability to make a judgment about something.

Of course judgement about things is a critical skill for survival...hot vs cold, safe vs dangerous, etc.

Then we bring it into our lives and make judgements about people and things of which we know nothing. We listen to someone speaking and make a judgement about their meaning. Frequently, however, we can be wide of the mark by a good deal. Unfortunately, our judgment then informs all further interactions with that person. For instance we may read someone and

make the determination that they are angry with us, and yet the truth might be that they are in intense physical or emotional pain and trying to mask it.

If, rather than being so ready to jump to a conclusion and make a judgment about an event or a person, we can open our minds and hearts to other possibilities, something rather wonderful happens to the world.

More often than not, most of us spend our time thinking that we are right about just about everything. And that's natural, if we went around second guessing ourselves all the time we'd have a tough time achieving anything at all.

But let's examine, just for a moment, the possibility that I don't know everything, or understand everything that I perceive as happening within or around me. What then? What if I were to suspend judgment about things that happen around me and explore possibilities other than the one towards which I lean. Might there not be more harmony in the world? Might there not be the possibility of deeper understanding and less opportunity for miscommunication?

What I am really talking about here is the notion of discernment.

Discernment involves seeing through the veneers of life to the truth beneath the obvious or the superficial.

Interestingly, discernment relies on intuition, logical intellect, gut emotions and spiritual insight. When all parts of the mind and spirit are in congruity with each other we can access the potential to see things as they are, rather than as we think.

When we truly embrace discernment as a tool, we put aside our encultured prejudices and interpretations and are able to see something in the larger landscape of implications and meaning.

Suddenly, things aren't all about us, but hold larger potentials.

I like to think that discernment allows us to learn and grow in ways that we might not have previously imagined. When I set aside a judgment about something and seek a deeper level of discernment, it never fails to amaze me how much a situation can be resolved without resorting to anger or conflict.

Now that is not to say that differing opinions are necessarily resolved, it is merely to say that it becomes possible to accept a divergent opinion without resorting to the need to defend one's own opinion or position. Moreover, it becomes possible to listen without the filters of pre-judgment. I don't have to agree with you, but I can listen with an open heart to your position. I do not have to believe what you see as truth, but I can accept that for you, it is truth.

Judgment tends to close down options, whereas discernment tends to create opportunities for learning and growing.

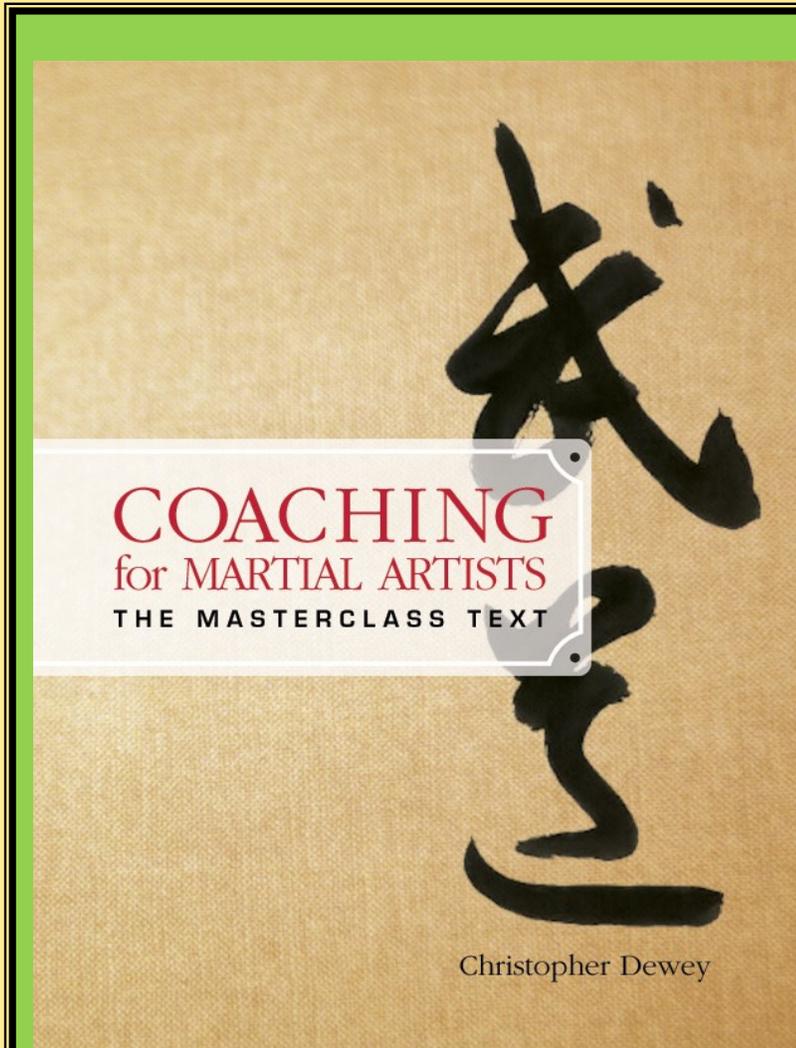
Easy to say, not so easy to live in the bustle of everyday life. After all, we all fall back on our tried and trusted reflex responses.

It takes constant attention and mindfulness to employ discernment. But that's probably another article.

☺

*“Judge no-one and disappointment and forgiveness won't be an issue.”*

*Donna Fargo*



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