

Pathways

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

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“Remember that diamonds are only lumps of coal that stuck to their jobs”

B.C.Forbes

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Moving Energy

My son made a discovery recently, one that I hope will stay with him for the rest of his life, but more of that later. Before I get rolling on this topic, some of you will no doubt fall back upon the line that I have OCD tendencies in the area of tidiness and organization...I don't particularly care, we each go to our own church! I like tidy and I like organized, I function better in an uncluttered environment, I am more efficient and productive, I am more at peace with myself and the universe.

My son, however, is cut from different cloth. Walking into his bedroom makes my skin crawl; it is something akin to walking into a landfill. I sometimes think that he is my son precisely to teach me something in this regard.

Anyway, to the meat of the article:

Recently, our household has been doing some organizing, rearranging and redistribution of 'stuff'. All families and households accumulate 'stuff', but how much of it do we really need? How much of it is simply excess baggage that loads us down with stagnant energy?

Since we got married, my wife and I have lived by the rule that if we haven't used it in a year we probably don't need it. We also have a second rule, which we call the thirty-second rule. Basically, if either of us finds something during a cleaning event and don't know why we still have it, then we both have thirty seconds to recall why we acquired the thing or why we keep it, or what purpose it serves. If we cannot find an answer, then the item is encouraged to share its energy elsewhere in the cosmos. The Chi-

nese have a philosophy that if you want change to occur in your life, move thirteen things around in your home. The point here is that everything carries an energy of sorts, and when you move things around in your home, you are activating energy. It may sound silly, but it is the entire basis of Feng Shui, the oriental art/science of arranging harmonized living space.

A living space is exactly that; but with a slightly different interpretation of the word 'living'.

Your living space profoundly affects your internal space in subtle but significant ways. The problem is that we are so busy in our lives that we don't take time to feel the effects of our living space upon our daily lives. As an example, we thirst for stimulation and leave our T.V's on all day, even when there's no-one in the room to watch them! The effect is to speed up the energy in your home, which leads to more restlessness. Turn off the T.V. and sit, feel the difference, feel the stress of a busy work day fall away, rather than getting even more tightly wound watching distressing news, or sitcoms about dysfunctional relationships.. It's just a thought...try it.

So what did my son discover? Well, last weekend he tidied his room with some help from mom. At the end of the process he noticed how much 'lighter' his room felt. He commented that he felt less crowded and overwhelmed in his room....he actually laughed about the difference. He's ten. It was a profound moment of insight....I hope it stays with him. ☺

Taming the Mind

One of the hardest things for humans to do is to tame the mind. It rules our days with thoughts and fills our nights with dreams. The mind though, is what you make it, or more accurately, what you allow it to be. For sure, there is a component of genetics and a component of environment involved in building our minds...the so-called nature and nurture influences that define our personalities at very early ages.

But there is a lot more to the mind than this. It is not an unchanging or unchangeable thing. The mind is a plastic, adaptable thing. If you look at our society, however, we have developed a lot of aphorisms that relate to our perception of the mind: "A leopard can't change it's spots," "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree" and so on. It is all too easy to buy into these statements and simply accept that "I yam what I yam" and that's all there is to it. Recent research with stroke victims, blind people, amputees, athletes, long-term meditators and a whole host of other people (including piano tuners) suggest to us that the mind is much more plastic than we had previously thought. In essence the mind is a trainable thing. But like all training, some of it is difficult, time-consuming and well...tedious.

So let's start with a definition, or two: The human brain is an organic structure, the product of billions of years of evolution. The human brain carries the entire history of our lineage. The brain then, is a thing, a mass of biological components. The mind, however, is not so much a thing so much as a product of the processes within the brain. The mind is the totality of our thoughts and emotions. Think of your brain as the CEO of a corporation (You Inc.), or your very own bio-computer floating in a biochemical soup (so be careful what you eat too!). The mind is the product of the activity

of the brain. So how the mind behaves is, in part, hard-wired by the structures and functionality of the brain, but also the brain is altered to the experiences that it stores.

So much for the introduction.

When you think of your mind from the perspective of an outside observer...who are you?

What is the nature of your mind? What adjectives do you use to describe your brain? When you think about your brain functions do you use words like: clear, powerful, intuitive, insightful, analytical, creative, brilliant, capable, calm, peaceful, thirsty, focused, vibrant, positive, optimistic? When you think, do you seek clarity, knowledge, insight, understanding, awareness, synergy? How you describe your mind has a lot to do with how it will operate. In the words of Earl Nightingale (one of the great motivational speakers), you become what you think about most. In terms of neuroplasticity: Neurons in the brain that fire together, wire together and vice versa. The foregoing raises all manner of wondrous, philosophical questions, but for now, let's consider how to tame the mind. Understand that taming the mind is training the brain to produce certain thought patterns or wavelengths of activity. We know from biofeedback exercises that it is a relatively simple thing to teach someone to slow their own heart-rate or breathing, both things that we generally consider to be autonomic functions of the body. Now, let's extend the idea a little and think about neurofeedback exercises that teach you calm your mind, to focus the mind and acquire clarity of thought. We can all do this, we just don't see it for what it is when it happens. Any time that you focus so fully on one thing that you lose all sense of space and time, you are turning your mind into a laser. These moments are powerful moments for re-wiring the brain. Neural

pathways are strengthened and enhanced, more neurons are recruited for a single task and therefore more re-wiring is occurring. When you focus on a task like learning a judo throw, rather than talking about learning a judo throw, you are rewiring your brain for the activity, which is why we use the adage "repetition is the mother of skill." There is no substitute, people who do countless repetitions get better, people who don't, don't...it's that simple.

It is for this reason that martial arts is one of the ways to control the mind and bring it into line with who you would like to be. Martial arts is a neuro-feedback exercise and over years can have profound effects on the way we use our minds.

Taming the mind is about what you do when you watch your mind as an observer. Pay attention to what you think, ask yourself if you wish to continue those thoughts and if not, then distract yourself into thinking something different.

For me, it always comes back to breathing. When I need to focus the mind, I breathe. Deliberately. I focus on each breath as though it were my last. When I get it right, my entire energy system changes and my mind becomes the product of a congruent system, not the rampaging, willful, petulant child that it is capable of being.

When I get it right, I remind myself that each breath is a gift of life and brings the gift of life. My next breath is not a guaranteed thing, and if my life has value then it is dependent upon an unending stream of in and out breaths (at least at this level of existence). Nothing focuses my mind more quickly than this single thought. And there it is....bring your mind to a single thought that you select and practice...you are well on your way to training your mind. Congrats! Now practice. ☺

Facing Fear

It is interesting to me how things come to pass. I thought I had written enough about fear recently, but apparently it is not so. I have been involved in a bunch of conversations recently concerning some of our children at the dojo, some of our adults in the dojo and some of my students at the end of the semester at college. The focus of many of these conversations could be distilled down to issues of fear...or put another way, different fears that we face in life.

So let's make a list. Things of which I/we am/are afraid that have been mentioned by people with whom I have spoken during the last month:

- Failure / Losing
- Success / Winning
- Living / Dying
- The next step in life
- Loving
- Rejection / Being worthy
- Commitment
- Being known
- Being vulnerable
- Being strong / Being weak
- Being determined
- Making the wrong choice
- Making any choice
- Risk / Opportunity
- Betrayed trust
- Creating or receiving injury and/or pain, either physical (in the context of martial arts training) and/or emotional (in the context of our relationships)

That's probably not an exhaustive list, but each and every one of these has come up in at least one discussion in

the last month or so, since I last sat at the keyboard to write a newsletter. I find it interesting to observe how seemingly unrelated sets of experiences lead people to similar conclusions and questions about life. People who have never met each other ask me the same questions from completely different experiential contexts...all of which makes me pay attention. Does the universe have a message for me?

Almost twenty years ago, Phil Porter, one of my Judo instructors, made the comment in a seminar that we're all afraid, all the time, so if we take that for granted, let's get on and deal with it. Using the context of the seminar as a metaphor, Phil was talking about taking judo throws and falls. To Phil it was simple - it was all a question of trust; trust in self, trust in the planet and trust in our partners...that's a lot of trusting. To Phil falling was a lesson in learning trust. Stepping up to a competition line was a question of trust. Daring to find out how good you might be in tournament was a question of trust. Daring to find out what you still need to learn was a question of trust. Phil had some truly deep insights.

But he was right, that's what fear comes down to: trust, faith in the cosmos...or more accurately, a lack thereof.

When we let go of our fears we find that trust increases almost in direct proportion to the degree to which we let go. So fear is a thing to which we cling...like it's a necessary part of be-

ing us.

But if we focus on the trust part of the equation for a moment, (for me at least), it resolves down to a question of why I am here...why do I have a life?

Surely, if there is something of value in the experience of living then that 'something' can only be undermined by a lack of trust or an abundance of fear. What IS that 'something'? How is my life supposed to be expressed?

Go back and look at the list of fears...how many of them will hold me back? How many of them stand as sentinels at the gateways of a life truly lived with purpose, and lived for the greater good of all? How many of them stand in the doorway of a life lived in service? Ask yourself this: How many times do I shrink from my potential, or get trapped into inaction by my fears?

So let's look at it this way; every time that I face one of my fears I emerge a little wiser, more able and capable, a little more whole as a person, a little more trusting of myself and others.

As my fears diminish my life becomes more buoyant, energetic and I become more willing to completely fulfill my visions, my dreams and my goals. Each step is seemingly incremental. Often each step is a tiny step forward, but in the journey to a destination, each step, no matter how small is a necessary component.

So this month..find a fear..face it, and let it go...easy, right? Maybe not, but do it anyway. ☺

"On the whole, it is patience which makes the final difference between those who succeed or fail in things"

John Ruskin

Nelson Mandela

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Nelson Mandela
Inaugural Speech, 1994

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- ◆ MEMORIAL DAY PARADE, MAY 31ST, 10:00 A.M., 2010.
- ◆ STATE GAMES OF MISSISSIPPI, JUDO COMPETITION, COLUMBUS, MS, JUNE 19TH, 2010
- ◆ BLACK BELT SCHOOL OF JUDO 1ST ANNUAL INVITATIONAL IN PURVIS, MISSISSIPPI ON JUNE 26TH, 2010 .
- ◆ AKAYAMA SUMMER CAMP, ORANGE BEACH, AL, JULY, 17 & 18TH, 2010.

COMING SOON:

DOJO TOURNAMENTS ON A SATURDAY IN JULY, SEPTEMBER, NOVEMBER, FEBRUARY AND APRIL.....STAY TUNED FOR DETAILS.

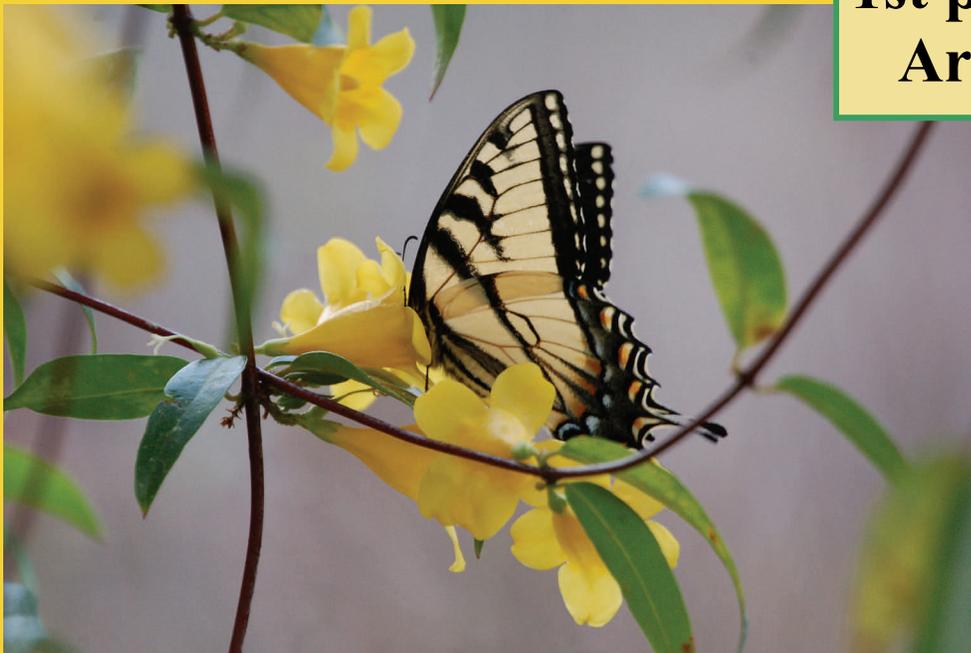
ALSO:

CHECK OUT THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS ON THE WEBSITE AT:

SMAA@STARKVILLEMARTIALARTS.COM



**1st place Cotton
District Arts
Festival**



**1st place Prairie
Arts Festival**

**Check out the Summer Enrollment Specials at
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