

Pathways

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**“If you believe you can
or you believe you can’t,
you’re probably right”**

**Jim Bregman,
friend and mentor.**

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Moving Forward

We could argue that the purpose of life is to develop awareness and understanding of its meaning. Sound a tad circular? It’s not really. I tend to live my life from the perspective that there are some really important questions with which we are confronted and that underneath those questions are deeper mysteries, as yet unseen.

As a geologist I have been confronted with some of the great questions of science: I have asked questions of how and why. I have struggled with the meaning of seemingly simple things like ‘time’ and ‘space’ and ‘stuff.’ And I would have to say that no matter how far my science gets me, it always leaves me *inside* the universe asking questions *about* the universe. My questions are therefore only superficial things under which are other questions that I lack the ability to express well or understand fully.

So...from this perspective life is about asking questions that lead us from what we think we know into those things about which we know little, or nothing.

Every question, therefore, leads us just a little closer to understanding our purpose and the meaning behind our individual existences.

Moreover, every question asked from a mental construct (like my questions about geology) has a mirror question that is reflected within the spirit.

In so far as I am able then, I attempt to live from the perspective that a good chunk of our lives is lived in total ignorance!

What do we truly know? How many “scientific” truths have been refined in the last century of thought? How

many times did you find that something that you thought about someone or some event was not to as others perceived it? How many times have you clung to a belief about yourself that was a false image of your true self?

When you look at my first statements in this article again in the light of these questions, you can see where I am attempting to go.

Who I was yesterday, is not who I am today...hopefully, if I have learned the lessons of the experiences I have had, I understand more than I did yesterday.

Which leads us where I wonder?

I believe it leads us to three things: Compassion, tolerance and understanding.

Compassion is to love, understand, accept, and move away from judging. Compassion is selfless, deep caring.

Tolerance is the ability to accept self and others as we each are at this moment, without judgment or demanding something other than what is. Tolerance involves a degree of hope and acceptance.

Understanding (in this sense) involves an acceptance of the fact that each of us is doing the best we can with what we have at this moment. Some of us are surfing, some are swimming, some are attempting to doggie paddle and some of us drowning, a very few of us are floating over the water of life. Each of us though, whether we recognize it or not, moment by moment, is searching out our own answers to life.

☺

An Attractive Attitude

I think it's probably time for a little clarification.

You have often read articles that refer to the Law of Attraction in this newsletter. My personal take on the Law is that we bring into our lives the people, events and opportunities that are commensurate with our self-belief systems.

In a couple of conversations recently, I have become aware that what I have written has not been interpreted quite the way I intended it.

Let's get something out of the way before we get started....the Law of Attraction is not a magical thing. It is totally practical.

I'm not talking about imagining your dream home and have it manifest itself. I am talking about having a vision of what you want to bring into your life and working steadily towards those goals.

I'm not talking about simple wishful and positive thinking. I am talking about having an attitude of gratefulness and a willingness to see the opportunities that present themselves in your life.

I am most certainly talking about an attitude of mind, heart and spirit.

So it comes to this: If you believe you can or you believe you can't, you're probably right.

One of my mentors used to use this line a lot in his classes. Now go back to my definition of the Law. If I believe I am going to do well at something, there is a high likeli-

hood that I will be using all the resources I have available to me to their fullest. If I believe, however, that I am not going to do well at something, there is an equally strong likelihood that many of the potential resources will remain unused and again, I will achieve exactly what I set out to achieve.

I have seen people come to my martial arts classes and tell that they are feeling stressed and that they can't concentrate.

Guess what?

I have also seen stressed people come to my classes and tell me that they want to let the stress go for an hour or so, have a good time and go home feeling rejuvenated.

Guess what?

It's not rocket science.

These examples do explain for you, however, the way in which I see the Law of Attraction at work. People create thoughts, thoughts become actions, actions generate energy and the energy affects all of us.

The Law of Attraction is simply the effect of the energies that we create around us.

Let's take another example. Let's look at my business. It is no surprise to me that my business attracts the types of people it does. Equally, it is not a surprise to me that certain types of people walk into our business, see what we do and decide it's not for them.

In a lot of ways all I'm talking about here is the way in which our

business markets itself and attracts people with similar values sets and goals for their lives.

Let's assume I advertise my school as a full-contact, no holds barred, defensive tactics school. Do you think I'd attract many families? I know schools who do advertise with this sort of message and they get exactly the sorts of clients that they need to be successful. We share different portions of the marketplace and this is as it should be.

Again, our marketing strategy is just another example of the Law of Attraction at work. There's nothing magical here, it's simple pragmatics.

In wrapping this up, let's talk about self belief systems for a moment. In both my university career and in my martial arts business I continually see people who achieve things that (in their own words), they 'never dreamed possible.' So what does this have to tell us about the Law of Attraction?

It simply tells us that for each of us to achieve something that was hitherto impossible, we must change our belief paradigm. We must move from a position of non-belief, to a position of self-belief and self-trust.

So whatever you believe about yourself is, in large measure, where you will steer the ship of your life.

And that, ladies and gentlemen is what I mean by the Law of Attraction. ☺

You can never tell what type of impact you may make on another's life by your actions or lack of action. Sometimes just with a smile on the street to a passing stranger can make a difference we could never imagine.

Ed Foreman

Personal Rhythm

Finding a rhythm for your life can be a challenge, especially with all the pressures of working, building a home, and all the other things that go into a daily life, like eating and sleeping and staying fit and building relationships.

So how do we find a rhythm that works? How do we fill each minute with a minute's worth of living, without feeling burdened? How do we avoid looking back and feeling as though we wasted our time?

Time is a non-renewable resource. You can't save it or bank it and you certainly can't re-use it.

But I wonder how many of us actually stop to think about how we choose to spend the one resource that is most precious to us.

One of the things that I would like to do more often is to take time to sit quietly in nature every day. On days that I do take a few moments to sit quietly under a tree, or by a lake, I feel enriched and much more at peace with the world. I am better able to let the stresses of my daily world drift by without impacting me so dramatically. Since I do not take as much time as I would like to be with nature as often as I would like, I steal those moments through the lens of my camera.

When I take pictures I am looking for something special, something that has a depth, a beauty and a timeless quality to it. Later, when I'm sitting in my office, working and fighting deadlines, I can look at the images on my computer and embrace the things I value about being alive, even if it is just for a moment.

If I have been unable to take my quiet time as I would like, I will also sometimes leave my office and walk across campus, listening and breathing deeply, and feeling the rain or the sun. Afterwards, I can return to my work and be more effective and more efficient.

It would probably be fair to say at this point, that my own personal rhythm doesn't seem to follow a typical circadian day. Ever since I was an undergrad I have been able to work on just a few hours of sleep for many days in a row.

Sometimes, I get my very best writing done during these periods. It doesn't matter whether I am writing newsletters, books, scientific articles for publication, lectures for my classes, or poetry....the flow comes most forcefully and most powerfully when I give huge chunks of time to the process after having previously given large chunks of time over to the gestation process.

When I'm done, there is a wonderful sense of completion, of having used my time wisely and effectively. Only when I'm done will I feel a sense of being tired. During the process, I feel energized. Only when I'm done will I feel that it is time for me to recharge the batteries and take some time to do nothing in particular.

Then I'm ready to go at it again.

There are those around me who think I'm an idiot....that's O.K.. My wife will tell you that the only thing that keeps me going at times is the movement inertia that I have established. I can see her point. I am frequently

counseled that 'this can't be healthy' and yet, I am able to achieve all the goals I set for myself in my writing, teach classes that have meaning, and in my interactions with other people. I feel as though...for the most part...I am living a life of value.

It has a rhythm, a flow to it.

Having said all of this, my wife has a completely different life rhythm. The common thread in both of our lives is the need to touch nature on a regular basis. My wife keeps a rhythm that is much more in tune with daily cycles of time. She is one of those people who, in a bygone era, would have got up with sun and gone to bed with it. There is a natural beauty to her life rhythm.

It has taken us more than a few years to balance our different rhythms within our marriage, but from understanding comes acceptance and from acceptance comes an ability to work together without forcing each other into our own notion of a life rhythm.

I believe that it is important to know what things are important in your life and how they form the mosaic of living. It is important to know when you are working and playing and living at your best. It is important to know when the rhythm is working for you and when it is 'off.'

Knowing how to flow in the currents of life is important. It can make the difference between living with grace and struggling.

Of course, it would be really cool, if we could do this all the time, and perhaps that's another lesson for us to learn along the way. ☺

It's difficult to move forward when you're living in the past

Eric Welch

Gratitude and Contentment

There is a balance point in life between striving to improve and having an attitude of contentment.

Learning to keep a mind of gratitude and having the grace to accept life as it is, rather than whine and complain about what we don't have and don't want, is not always an easy task. O.K., so the whining and complaining bit should be easy enough, that's a simple choice. The next time you feel like saying 'I wish I...' recognize that you are about to follow up with a complaint about something you either don't want or wish was different in your life.

This is not to say that we do not seek to improve ourselves. Far from it. But if you wish to improve what you are currently experiencing in life, you must start from a position of acceptance.

It goes back to something I was talking about recently....goals must be in the present tense and they must be positive. Your mind doesn't deal in negatives. It only deals in positives.

I have used this example before: Don't think about a pink elephant. There! See? You all have a picture of a pink elephant in your heads. Stop! Don't do that! DON'T think about a pink elephant!

Your mind simply cannot deal with 'don't'.

Let's take an example: A student comes to me early in the semester and tells me that she doesn't want to fail my course. Another student comes to me and asks what he needs to do to get an A. What's going to happen here? Do you think that each student's thought process will affect their actions during the semester?

So let's go back to an attitude of gratitude. Suppose I look at where I am in life and am thankful for all the things about which I can be grateful and mean it...really mean it. Suppose I start my day that way, suppose I end my day like that. What do you think

would be the effect?

Let's take my student who doesn't want to fail my class. What do you think her primary feelings will be when she comes to class? Do you think she worries about failing? How about if she hops out of bed in the morning and is deeply, truly thankful for the opportunity to go to college? What then? What happens to the fear of failing? What happens to her thought process?

Now play the same process over but put yourself in a job you don't want, or in a financial crisis or some other life challenge.

The attitude of thankfulness is a great harbinger of positive change in our lives.

So if you want to see change in your life, stop for a moment and examine your primary perception of the events as they affect you. Be thankful at the deepest possible level for all the things you can think of. I'm not talking about blind positive thinking here. I'm talking about creating a thought process that allows you to see positive outcomes because you have placed your mind in a more conducive state for developing positive goals, which, when achieved will enhance not only your life, but the lives of those around you.

Surely....something else for which to be thankful?

Now, I'm not saying I live like this all the time...I don't; it would be a lie to tell you that I did...but when I do....ah! There's a world of difference in my day.

On the days when my first thoughts are of how fortunate I have been in so many ways over the years, then the day is a joy.

But like most things...being thankful is a trainable habit, and as my dear friend Elaine will tell you: Practice makes Permanent!

So be careful what you practice. ☺

June						
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May						
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27	28	29	30	31		

- ◆ Shingitai Ju Jitsu clinic, St Louis, MO, May 19th, 2007.
- ◆ Wakushai, Columbus Judo Tournament, Columbus, MS June 16th, 2007
- ◆ Akayama Ju Jitsu, Summer camp. Jacksonville University, Jacksonville, AL, July, 2007
- ◆ Louisiana State Judo Championships, XXXX, LA, September 22nd, 2007.
- ◆ Akayama Ju Jitsu, Fall Clinic, SMAA, Starkville, MS, October, 2007

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