

# Pathways

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## A Warrior's Code: A Life Code

**The past cannot be changed  
the future is still in your power  
Hugh White**

I wonder if you have seen the movie "The Last Samurai." The movie has some excellent lines in it, but the premise of the movie and the transformation that occurs in the hero set me to thinking about the Code of Bushido....the Way of the Warrior.

When we think about warriors we tend to think of courage, self sacrifice, loyalty, honor, discipline, commitment to a cause and such things.

The Code of Bushido is, however, based upon nine precepts, some of which, might at first sight be unexpected. Depending upon the texts that you study, you will find anywhere between seven and nine principles, which governed the life of the samurai class for more than a thousand years. Similar codes have been developed by warrior classes the world over, from the dawn of the historical age with the

Warrior States like Sparta, through the codes of chivalry in the Middle Ages, to the modern day codes of ethical conduct espoused by military academies all over America.

This month, I would like to discuss with you eight precepts of the Samurai Code as follows:

**Chi:** The attainment of wisdom through the acquisition of knowledge

**Chu:** Duty and Loyalty

**Gi:** Justice and ethical conduct

**Jin:** Compassion

**Meiyo:** Honor

**Rei:** Respect

**Shin:** Truth

**Yu:** Heroic Courage

I do not pretend to be an expert in Japanese history, culture or language, nor do I profess to be an expert in all of these character states. Every time I have an epiphany about how to behave I realize that I am not behaving in that way; and that I

am a work in progress. I do, however recognize that we live in a world where integrity is compromised as a matter of daily convenience. One of the parents at my school made the comment to me the other night that morals seem to be a thing of the past, and in the context of the conversation, the statement was entirely valid. Let me start from the statement that a code of behavior is a state of being that results in a way of doing. Integrity is not an expedient for getting ahead. or something we use when it is convenient and put aside when it is not.

That being said, I would like to discuss each of the eight precepts that I listed and see where it leads us.

**Chi:** The attainment of wisdom through the acquisition of knowledge. This is an interesting concept. Wisdom comes from experience and our experiences give us

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## Not done yet....

knowledge about the world and our place within it. I am a sponge for knowledge, it is perhaps one of the defining attributes of my life. Almost everything I do, I do to acquire knowledge of some sort. More than that though, knowledge has little value unless it is put to some use. In that regard I am a pragmatist. I like the things that I learn to be of value. What is interesting about this is that I am the one who defines the value of what I learn. Wisdom is another matter entirely. Wisdom comes from understanding the flow of life: It is knowing what to say and do for the benefit of all involved. But wisdom is not something you can go out and get. You can study a subject and acquire knowledge, you cannot learn to be wise. Wisdom accrues from the correct interpretation of the events that make up the fabric of our lives. There is an intuitive rather than learned aspect to wisdom. I know many knowledgeable people, I know few wise people.

**Chu:** Duty and Loyalty. It is a sad fact that employees and employers seem to have little loyalty to each other any more. It is a two-way street. My father worked for the same company for his entire working life. But in a world of lay-off's downsizings and bankruptcies it is more a case of every man for himself. Companies do not see that they owe anything to their employees and the reverse is also true. Employees are often looking for the fastest way up the corporate ladder and employers are always looking at the bottom line. Loyalty relates to responsibility. In the sense of the Code of Bushido, loyalty is to take responsibility for all things that fall under the care of the warrior. There is a sense of "owning" here. To take responsi-

bility for something is to own both it and its consequences. In this sense, there is obligation associated with duty. As an ecologist and a geologist as well as an entrepreneur, I tend to see that we have a duty to our planet and its resources. We should take ownership of the consequences of our actions. Unfortunately there is a tendency to use the planet in the same way we live our lives and careers. We take what we want and discard what is no longer of any use to us. Hardly the way of loyalty and duty. As an entrepreneur I have brought into being an economic entity with a life of its own. I have responsibility to the employment opportunities it creates and the client relationships it generates. I have a responsibility to the life of my business and all that it represents. I feel a sense of loyalty towards it beyond the bottom line. Duty evolves from a sense of loyalty. If we feel no loyalty towards anything, we feel no duty to protect and nurture it. In the sense of the Code of Bushido, once a warrior has taken something into his or her care, he is responsible for it, loyalty requires that it becomes his duty to protect, honor, nurture and serve.

**Gi:** Justice and ethical conduct. A warrior does not expect justice from without, he lives a just life. There is a huge difference here. Justice is an expectation from within that dictates the way in which the warrior goes about his or her everyday actions. There is, of course an element of honesty here. To live a just life is to treat people with honesty, it is the ethical way to live. The two things are intimately and irrevocably connected. That which is just is normally ethical, that which is ethical is normally honest. To live a just life

leaves little room for hypocrisy. To live a just life is a continual exercise in refinement of behavior as we discover the ways in which we are internally unjust.

**Jin:** Compassion. Training in the martial arts leads to technical prowess associated with the development of a grace and economy of movement as well as strength and speed. With the learning comes a power. With power comes responsibility. The greater the power, the greater the responsibility. Power is something that should be used for the benefit of all. Do not confuse power with force. Force implies opposition and resistance. Force always polarizes systems and requires energy to feed upon in order to maintain its existence. Power, conversely is complete in itself, it does not need energy to sustain it. When a martial artist in training uses force, everyone can see it and recognize it for what it is... something that can be overcome with a greater force. When a master of the martial way has power, it is equally obvious but in a much more evolved fashion. When a person using force comes up *against* a person working from a position of power, the former will always lose because there is nowhere to push. Power is always associated with compassion and understanding. With power comes deeper levels of compassion and caring. True power always leads to higher states of being and a recognition that power flows through us rather than being used by us. Again, there is a fundamental and critical difference. I sometimes think that one of the most important lessons of the martial life is to learn compassion for our fellow man and to actively seek situations in which we can help those who can benefit from what we have learned

## Still not done...

(or are learning). Perhaps this also leads us back to the precept of Chi....the acquisition of wisdom. I would have to say at this point in my own journey that compassion and wisdom are often related. I have yet to meet a single person whom I would consider as being compassionate who was not also wise in a way that transcended my normal expectations.

If what I have just written has any validity it may be found in a sense of justification of choice. I choose the martial way because it draws me out of my weaker self towards a higher self, so that I might become a more useful tool of humanity both with regard to my responsibility to all life and to the planet. As I train and learn and grow, I overcome the weaker parts of my character and as such I attract into my life greater opportunities to care for those around me. When I am in the thrall of my weaker self, there is no room to care for those around me and I act in selfish, greedy ways and undermine my own growth. As I said, I am a work in progress.

**Meiyo:** Honor. Honor is perhaps one of the most misunderstood words in the lexicon. Honor is entirely an internal thing. Ultimately, no matter what the world may say or do to you, you only have one judge: Yourself. You can live a life of your own choosing, but you cannot hide from yourself. Every action, every thought leaves a permanent record in your psyche, an indelible imprint on your life. You cannot be a little bit honorable. You either have honor or you do not. You do not do the honorable thing one moment and not do it the next. Honor is a way of being, not a way of doing. Consequently, I suspect that very few of us are truly honorable. I know my demons and I know that they frequently stand in

the way of living an honorable life and having the external appearance of honor. Honor is not something about which you can fool yourself. You know in your heart of hearts whether your actions and thoughts are truly honorable or merely have the appearance of honor. As I get older, I think that living an honorable life is possibly one of the hardest tasks, but one that is made easier by the acquisition of other traits that support living with honor. Take for instance the acquisition of power. As I train I know when I am acting out of force and when I am letting power flow through me. I know when it is my weaker self who is "practicing" the martial arts and I know when it is my higher self who is living the martial way. When I act with wisdom and compassion, when I do what is just and ethical, when I am truly honest internally and externally, I have honor. When I do not do these things, I have compromised my honor. It is that simple. So how often do I live with honor? Nowhere near as often as I should, nowhere near as often as I could and nowhere near as often as I will.

**Rei:** Respect. Here is an interesting thing. We tend to think of respect as polite courtesy....using our manners. But respect is so much more. Of course it all begins with respect for self. If you do not respect who you are, how can you possibly respect those around you? When we lack respect for ourselves we walk around trying to prove something to the world, we try to externally justify ourselves and we judge those around us. We are always ready to complain, criticize and condemn. (In my more self critical moments, I wonder if that is what I am doing every month as I write this newsletter, but in my more lucid moments, I see lives it touches and can open my

heart to the good that it does. This would not be possible, were I acting from my weaker motivations) To judge, prove and justify are the ways of opposition and force, they imply duality and resistance. They are not the ways of tolerance and respect. Respect permits differences of opinion because we do not all have the same experiences nor even the same interpretations of similar experiences. Living a human life implies a wonderful variety of possible outcomes for any given event and respect does not take away that freedom. Respect is not dogmatic or demanding; respect recognizes the uniqueness and value of each path. Respect protects the sanctity of each path and promotes diversity.

**Shin:** Truth. We are told in Hamlet that if we are true to ourselves then it follows as surely as day follows night that we cannot be false to others. Yet how often do we truly live our lives in this way? When I was a brown belt in Canada, my Judo instructor once taught a class about a concept called "makato", which I understand to mean "stainless mind". My mind is anything but stainless, but that's not the point here. In the sense of the warrior's life, speaking and doing are one and the same. The warrior does not give his or her word, there is no need. There can be no duplicity possible. Like honor and integrity, truth either is or is not, there is no mid-ground. There are no half truths, despite the fact that we are continually surrounded by them. Like honor, only you can tell whether you are being uncompromisingly honest. Every time we distort the truth a little to suit the contingencies of the moment we are robbing ourselves of power and compromising both integrity and honor. The way of truth is far from easy. It

*(Continued on page 4)*

Calendar of Events:

- ◆ Bo staff seminar, mid July (tentative date) SMAA, Mark Chevalier, clinician
- ◆ USJA Junior NtIs, and Coaching Symposium, Chicago, IL, July 10th-12th, 2004
- ◆ Akayama Jujitsu Camp, Birmingham, AL. July 17th, 2004
- ◆ USJI Junior Olympics, Ft Lauderdale, FL, July 23-24th, 2004
- ◆ Battle of Indianapolis, August 9th, 2004
- ◆ USJI Ladder and Fall Classic, Northglenn CO, Sept 3-5th, 2004
- ◆ Bokken seminar, SMAA, Van Bushnell clinician. September 17 & 18th, 2004
- ◆ Gentle Wind Judo Tournament, Baton Rouge, LA, September 25th, 2004
- ◆ Akayama Winter Camp, Gulf Shores, MLK Weekend, January 2005

*Finishing now...*

is uncompromising and absolute. It is no wonder then that so few of us can maintain the way for more than a few moments at a time. But this is the value of training. We accept ourselves as we are, this too is part of truth and we strive to improve the quality of our lives. It is curious that I have followed the eight precepts in alphabetic order and I left with the most important of them, and one that grows out of a commitment to all of the others.

**Yu:** Heroic Courage. Heroic courage in this sense is not the courage of a warrior in battle, it is the courage to act in spite of fear, the willingness recognize risk and opportunity and to live life fully, wonderfully and vibrantly. It is said that to hide in a turtle shell is not living, it is merely avoiding risk for seeming security. Heroic courage is not blind, it is an intelligent determination to act. Heroic courage takes us past the sense of being afraid to act. Living is a dangerous, risky business. Placing a shell over ourselves and our children does not take away the risk. I am reminded of the movie "Finding Nemo" in which the Dory, who accompanies Nemo's dad on his quest reminds

him that if he never allows anything to happen to his son, well then nothing would ever happen to him. It takes heroic courage to truly live each moment of life as fully as possible, to grasp both the risk and the opportunity present in each choice and to make choices that draw us out of ourselves towards our potential. The way of the turtle is the way of "good enough", the way of the warrior is the way of uncompromising devotion to personal growth. It is for this reason that our mission statement as a business can be summed up in the phrase you will find at the bottom of our letters "committed to personal growth." I do not intend to imply that we have made it, but that we have chosen to put ourselves on a path. I would walk that path with those who chose to see both risk and opportunity on the way finding their true potential. I make no claims that I have the answers or have arrived at my destination. It is my goal to live life as fully as possible to fill, in the words of Rudyard Kipling: "the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run."

Thank you.

*Be kind; every man you meet is  
fighting a hard battle*

*Ian Maclaren*

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