

# Pathways

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

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 6

JUNE 2005



## CONTENTS

Making the Grade.....	1
What's in Your mind? .....	2
Clinging to Mistakes .....	3
Chipping Away at David.....	4

**“Genius is  
eternal  
patience”**

**—Michelangelo**

© 2005 Chris Dewey Martial Arts, Inc.

## Making the Grade

I get a sense that this month, we will be looking into the mind a lot. We have spoken about the Law of Attraction many times before, but at this time of year, after the grades are in and many of my students have gone for the summer, I reflect on the previous semester to see what lessons I can learn from it.

One of the things I have thought about this semester is that “we become what we think about.” It seems to me that whatever you focus your mind upon, grows in your life.

I see my fair share of students who are not doing well academically and who tell me that they will do better....and yet they do not, despite their best efforts. I also see students who have a bad semester and never repeat it again. So what's the difference? Let us for a moment assume that we are dealing with two students who are doing badly in school and that they both have similar scholastic abilities and are both willing to do the work. One student repeats the cycle and gets put on Academic Dismissal, the other starts improving and within a couple of semesters is doing quite well and shows all the signs of continuing to improve. As an educator I have to ask myself why.

Perhaps I am being a tad too simplistic, but one of the things I have discovered is that the Law of Attraction works in the negative as well as the positive. You cannot win a race by looking over your shoulder at the pack behind you. You can only win a race by keeping your eyes fixed on the finish line and running faster than everyone else. Seems simple

enough, right?

So let's go back to my student example. I have discovered that one of the big things that makes a difference is that some of the students who end up on Academic Dismissal spend a lot of time looking at the past, saying things like I can't get a D in this class, I have to get at least a B. On the other side of the equation are the students who focus their attention on what they need to do to get an A in the class... regardless of what they did in the past. The key word here is *regardless*. Regard: to look at, to give attention to. The bottom line is that thinking about what you *don't* want is as likely to bring it about as not thinking about what you do want.

The message is very clear: Focus on your goals, whatever they are. If your goal is to get fit, don't think about how unfit you are, think about how fit you will be after coming to class on a regular basis for several months.

So how does this play out in real life? I think it plays out in our wishful thinking. Do you ever catch yourself saying things like: ‘Things will be better when.....’. What's the focus here? Is it the job you don't like, the debt you cannot escape, the habit you cannot break?

Catch yourself in wishful thinking and replace the thoughts of what you don't want, with thoughts of what you do want in your life. This is a tricky thing to do. First you have to be aware of the negative dialogue, then you have to stop it and replace it with something more useful. But just like getting fit....practice pays off.☺

## What's in Your Mind?

Have you ever thought about what you put in your mind? If anyone could access every thought you ever had... what would people see? Think about the experiences of your life, all the things that you have done or not done, all the ideas that you had but never acted upon, all your dreams and hopes, all your fears and limitations... it's all recorded somewhere in your brain.

What set me to thinking about this was a comment that I read recently that by the time a child has reached fourteen, he or she has seen on average something like four thousand acts of violent death or murder on television *per year*. Given all the wonderful, hopeful, joyous images that a child could see on television, it seems to me a massive tragedy that we fill the minds of the young with so much violence. Of course, this comes from a kid who grew up after the Second World War and watched his fair share of war movies and westerns as a kid. Anyway that's really not the point of this little missive.

On a daily basis, how much do we put into our minds that is not worthy of who we truly are? How many times in a single day do we judge, condemn, ignore, hurt, blame, complain, or get

angry, depressed or scared? How many of our daily thoughts are truly worthy of the person that we might be? Our minds record every thought, every nuance of our being. Looking back on nearly half a century of living, I can see much that perhaps I should have done in other ways. Many times I have failed those who came into my sphere of influence. One of the things that martial arts has taught me is to watch the world in order to learn from it and to learn my place within it.

At some point in the process, we inevitably ask the question "who watches the watcher?" The instant you ask this question of yourself, the world changes. You see yourself in a different light, you see your responsibilities in a different context and you begin to see that even your unspoken thoughts can have an impact on those around you. If that is the case, it becomes imperative to place a guardian at the door to the mind.

But...it takes great discipline to monitor our thoughts. And, if we are honest, most of the time we are too busy to be bothered. Which leads me back to the notion of quiet contemplation. It is important to find a place of solace each day in which you can reflect and

empty your mind of the constant chatter. As the contemplative process becomes more habitual it becomes possible to stand outside of yourself and catch those thoughts and words that can damage those around us before they happen. A moment of consideration in a time of stress can curb the tongue or rein in the mind...either (or both) of which can stop us from filling our own minds with more things to regret later. When we take moments of consideration, we can also protect those around us from words spoken in haste and thereby create a more peaceful environment around us.

I know that this is very difficult to do, but making the effort helps. As an example, every time you find yourself judging someone else, stop yourself, acknowledge it and let it go... eventually, the intent of non-judging will take hold. Then move on to another thought process and work on it also.

I wish I had learned to do this when I was a younger man.....perhaps I would have caused less hurt to those around me and by extension to myself in the process. ☺

"We live in the present, we dream of the future and learn  
eternal truths from the past  
— Mme Chiang Kai-Shek,

## Clinging to Mistakes

Are you picking up on the theme yet? We repeat our past mistakes because we have yet to learn the lessons that they are attempting to teach us. If I find myself going on diets time after time, losing and gaining weight over and over, is there something I am missing? If I get myself out of debt only to put myself right back in it again with a big shopping splurge...is there something I am missing? What is it that we are holding onto? What is it that pulls us back over and over? It could be as simple as trying to run away from something rather than running towards something else. So it seems that in the greater scheme of things it would be better if I was working *for* something rather than *against* something.

Let's look at repeating cycles of loading up with debt and never getting ahead financially. Perhaps the cycle is nothing more than running from the fear of debt, but as we just said in the first article, the things we focus upon become our reality. Rather than working against being in debt, if I was working toward financial freedom, I might just get a different result simply because the focus of my efforts is on the goal I wish to attain, not on the fear of the debt I wish to avoid.

If we continue the thread from the first article ...Not only is it tough to win a race if you are looking over your shoulder, it's tough to win the race dragging baggage behind you.

I was talking with two very dear friends recently and both of them hit me with the same line and it stopped

me dead in my tracks. Over lunch one day, one of my dear friends told me that they had accepted God's forgiveness for their past, but could not yet forgive themselves and then about a week later in an entirely different setting another friend said almost the same thing to me. What made the whole thing so uncanny was the total lack of similarity between the two conversations...they were nothing alike, they didn't even have the same perspectives and yet both came to the same position!

So why did I just tell you that?

Why did my friends' lines resonate so strongly within me...obviously because there was a message for me. (If you want to take the theme one stage further...apparently I didn't hear the message on the first telling!)

If I cannot forgive myself, I am dragging around my past and I am slowing myself down. Continuing with the thread from the last article...If I am looking over my shoulder I may be running forward, but I am running out of fear of being overtaken, moreover, I do not have a really good view of where I am headed.

Sooner or later, if we choose to be successful in life, we must let go of the past, put it down and accept with grace that we are not who we were, we are each of us, who we choose to be, moment by moment.

Sometimes I think it is as simple as refusing to accept the paradigm of the past. As I told another of my dear friends recently, 'I love you not because of who you were, but because of

who you might be'.

For whatever reason, few of us seem willing to see the miracle within us. If we were to show forgiveness, tolerance, compassion and understanding to ourselves, then we might be better able to show it to others around us. It is often said that we are our own worst enemy and our own worst critic. I would argue that these two statements work to reinforce each other and so we often fail to see our very best teachers and fail to learn the lessons that they bring.

It takes commitment to have a healthy discipline and yet at the same time accept yourself as a work in progress. Just like learning Judo, life is about having the courage to take a fall, stand up and do it again having learned how to better position ourselves for the next time. There are two ways to look at Judo: It is either about throwing someone on their back and keeping them there, or it is about falling over and standing back up again, often with a friendly hand outstretched to help you.

I choose to look at Judo in the second way. I see it as less of a sport and more of a way of life. When I am tolerant of my own mistakes, it is easier for me to reach out my hand to someone else.

I am still falling over and getting back up again. I am still learning and growing. I can also tell you this month that I am grateful for two very dear friends who had a message for me... that I have chosen to share with you.



Keep me away from the wisdom that does not cry [and]

the philosophy that does not laugh

- Kahlil Gibran

## Chipping Away at David

I have been giving a lot of thought recently to letting go of the things that hold us back in life. I have said this before, but I believe that each rank that we acquire in the martial arts, takes as much effort to achieve as all the previous ranks combined. Looked at through the lens of more than thirty five years of training, I can see that at each step along the journey I have overcome more of myself in order to reach my present level of development, with its limitations and lack of understanding. At this point in my life, I would tell you that making the study of the martial arts a lifetime commitment is one of striving to remove all the bits and pieces of our characters that get in the way of the potential that we might achieve.

From the perspective of a Michelangelo, perhaps it is removing all the bits of rock to reveal the David within. This gives a whole new meaning to the phrase 'I am David'

For some of us tournament is a vehicle through which we forge ourselves and chisel bits away. For others higher levels of technical purity is the tool that we choose. For yet others, martial arts is about giving back what we have been given. It really doesn't matter. Sooner or later, if you commit to the process, you will find yourself facing your greatest weaknesses and fears, simply because you know that to go any further, you must overcome self and chisel some bits off that are getting in the way, but, which have been there for decades.

We all know the old adage that 'there is no enemy, there is only self.' It is so true and works at so many levels in our training. When I bring my mind to focus on my training, I can do some elegant martial arts. When I struggle with myself, my moves are clumsy and awkward. When I allow my mind to release its grip on what it absolutely knows is my ability, I am capable of some rather graceful

moves....I can surprise myself and martial arts happen, without me willing it to be so.

At another level, the internal struggles that I face also stand between me and the potential that I could achieve. All my self doubts, all my fears, all my weaknesses, all my regrets, all the guilt and shame for the mistakes I have made in life, they all hold me back and sooner or later it is my responsibility and obligation to let them all go in order to achieve my potential. Underneath the surface and within the rock is David. All the bits that are not David are simply obstructions to the truth within.

So where does this get us? Martial arts is my chosen vehicle, but acquiring rank is not important. At this juncture I can honestly say that if I never receive another martial arts rank in my entire life, it will not matter, I am committed to the process of growth. It also gets us to the realization that the internal work that we do towards self-improvement is also a step towards healing the planet.

Kahlil Gibran makes a very lucid comment, when he tells us that much of our pain is self chosen and that it is the [medicine] with which our internal physician heals us. Add to that the notion by David Hawkins that "every improvement we make in our private lives improves the world at large", and suddenly, everything that I am capable of doing in my life becomes something that affects everyone else. If I do not overcome my negative programs, my weaknesses and my phobias what potential within me will remain unused when I die? Who will pay the price for that lack of use? My students? My family? My friends?

Personal growth is not something we owe ourselves, it is something we owe the planet. It is not always easy, it is frequently painful, but it is an absolute requirement of reaching the David within each of us. ☺

JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

- ◆ Charlotte Judo Camp, N.C., June 15th through 18th, 2005.
- ◆ Pat Burris clinic, Jackson, MS, June 25th, 2005
- ◆ USJA Junior National s, Toledo, OH, July 1-2nd, 2005
- ◆ Akayama Summer Camp, Birmingham, AL, July 16 & 17th, 2005
- ◆ USJI Junior Olympics, Atlanta, GA, July 23-24th, 2005
- ◆ International Martial Arts Symposium, Columbia, SC. October 1st & 2nd, 2005.
- ◆ Melton's Judo Tournament, Jackson, MS November 18th, 2005
- ◆ USJA Junior national s, Boca Raton, FL, 2006
- ◆ USJA Junior National s, Indianapolis, IN, 2007

*What will you do to improve your  
health this summer?*

**CALL us at 323 5522**

*We would value the opportunity to  
offer you a 25% discount on our  
enrollment fee*

***Earn Dojo Dollars!!!***

***Bring in your referral sheets and  
Check out our Black Belt Readers  
Program***

***For details talk to Miss Becky  
or call us at 323 5522***