

Pathways

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

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*"We are what we think.
All that we are arises
with our thoughts."*

Siddhartha Guatama

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Change

Lincoln was dead right...it is impossible to please all the people all of the time. If there is one thing that drives this fact home more than anything else, it is the phenomenon of change.

Anytime that things change some people prefer things the way they were, some people would have done things differently, some people love the changes and some people simply roll with the change as though nothing major had happened.

As many of you know, we have just moved our dojo to a new location and it has created a bit of change in who and what we are. Almost all entrepreneurs go into business with some sort of vision of their ideal business. The vision evolves over time as experience teaches us what works and what doesn't. Visions can be clear-cut, crisp and detailed, but they are rarely cast in stone. Visions by their very nature have a nebulous, uncertain quality to them...they are, after all, not based in reality. Vision dwells in the world of the imagination and it is only the commitment to a course of action that brings the vision to life as a reality.

Underneath all visions I think, is some sort of ground truth, a rock solid, unshakable image around which the details are built. For me, the ground truth to my vision of the dojo has always been a belief in the potential of the human spirit. In each of my students are levels of potential of which they may be blissfully unaware. We are therefore committed to personal growth. This is our mission statement in a nutshell. Everything

else derives its life and energy from commitment to that single phrase.

There are a lot of trickle down effects of this particular ground truth:

1: We all fall over.

2: The courageous always stand back up.

3: We hold no past wrongs in the present insofar as it is possible to do so.

4: Each day, each moment is a new moment full of potential to make new choices and create new lives.

5: We are, all of us, works of art in progress.

6: We are all learning, all of the time and sometimes we don't learn the lessons that others can clearly see that we need to learn. See point #1.

7: We aspire to be better than we were and we accept that we are all far from our own, individual personal best.

8: We are tolerant, compassionate and forgiving.

9: We listen and seek to understand.

10: We do not complain, criticise or condemn.

Such is the ground truth to the business that I call the Starkville Martial Arts Academy. We are a long way from that image, we are a work in progress, we are changing, sometimes we move forward, sometimes we get complacent and lazy. Sometimes we might even take a step or two backward as we lose sight of the vision.

The walls have changed, the view has changed. Our new physical home is closer to the vision I have of my ideal dojo. Our challenge is to live up to its potential and accept nothing less than our personal best. ☺

Complacency

One of the biggest snares of life is comfort and its staunchest ally, complacency. When we think we are good at something we can tend to get lazy and not put in the effort that we once did, when we aspired to greater achievements.

One of the things that has kept me aware of my true martial skill has been competition. I have competed since I was twelve years old and am still competing. True, I do not get to compete as often as I once did and the years have definitely taken their toll on my strength and endurance in the arena. At the same time however, I have gained the wisdom of experience and waste less energy in my tournament bouts. These are the trade-offs of almost forty years of competition.

The point here is that competition has never allowed me to sit back and say to myself.... "Wow, I'm pretty darned good at this stuff." In all my years of competition and training there has always been someone bigger, stronger, faster or technically superior to me and so I am always reminded that there is more yet to learn. I was talking to a potential client the other day about how long it takes to "master" the martial arts. As the client asked the question I was thinking that the only thing I had really mastered was how to tie my belt....and then that very night while we were doing free practice fighting (randori), my belt came undone. I think it did this, just to remind me that I have not yet mastered even the most basic of skills.

There is no room for laziness, no room for comfort and no room for complacency. We are each of us called to live a life that draws us towards our fullest potential, and when we fail to aspire to such heights we not only undermine our own lives, we also tend to act as a drag on the energy of those around us.

In equal measure, those who inspire and innervate us to do better are those

who are constantly striving to improve, who work constantly upon becoming their highest and best selves.

If you want to find an excellent Judo, find the person who has taken the most falls. Find the people who trust themselves and their partner so much that they give themselves to the throw at each training opportunity. Show me someone who resists falling and I will show you someone with fears to overcome. Sooner or later, it is the basic, simple white belt skills that define the quality of a true black belt.

One of my students asked me the other week what I look for in a black belt and he caught me at a bad time so I told him it would be in the newsletter....after all, I knew it would. What I look for in a black belt is heart. It is that simple. There comes a time in the journey of every martial artist that he or she knows that they are a black belt. There is also a time when the insightful instructor knows that it is time to put an added burden of responsibility on a student in the hope that the added responsibility of rank will cause a renewal of commitment, or a commitment to the path of personal achievement, or an insight that the journey is not about to end...it has barely begun.

In the West we make a big deal about "black belt", but in reality black belt rank is merely the beginning of the student ranks. So what should we expect from someone who wants to become a student? Heart. Commitment. Resolve. Dedication. Such are the hallmarks of a good black belt.

Did you notice that technical prowess was not amongst the list? Give me the qualities I listed and we will build technique. Technique is merely an external expression of an internal drive. Technique is temporary. Use it or lose it! We can therefore never sit on the dojo sidelines and say that we don't need to do those extra push-ups or that

we don't need to do those extra break falls or front kicks. It all counts.

Rob Colasanti, President of NAPMA, uses the line that we should send our students home "sweaty, smiling and sore." He is so right. But why?

It is all too easy to get comfortable and forget that every day we get a little older. Arthur Rubenstein, the great concert pianist, made the comment once that if he missed playing scales for one day he would notice the difference in his performance, if he missed for two days, his audience would notice the difference.

When we get comfortable and cease to work as we once did, we lose a little of the edge everyday.

It is the edge that counts. Steven Covey talks about "sharpening the saw" in his seven habits. It is keeping the edge that he is talking about.

So what's the trap? Why do we fall so easily into complacency?

I think that the trap is simply this: We look at what we might achieve and shrink away from it. The goal is too big, too frightening...much better to stay where we are and be content with the status quo. But the status quo does not exist. Time moves forward and so we either use the time wisely or we let it drift away into the past, never quite filling each minute with a minute's-worth of living.

Improving who I am can only be done one moment at a time. This is my responsibility and mine alone. As a black belt and teacher, it is also my responsibility to help others to do the same thing...which brings me back to my vision of the potential that I see in my students. When we see the potential in others, there is no room for selfishness or for becoming complacent. The debt I owe to those who come to me to train, requires that I become nothing less than my best...and that, ladies and gentlemen, is often a lot harder than going to tournament. ☺

The Extra Mile

As I write this newsletter for June...it is actually July. I have fallen behind my own time line. In my defense I would say that I have been working very hard building the new dojo. In reality though, I deliberately let the June issue of *Pathways* slide simply because I knew that the move would bring so much to the surface about which I would need to write.

Remodeling our new dojo has led me to consider the concept of the "Extra Mile" again. I have been awed by the dedication of a small, but determined group of people who have toiled, worked, laughed, joked, learned and slogged their way through the process. Some of these people have put in hundreds of hours in the last month, just to bring a vision to reality. It was not even their vision; it was, I think though, a vision in which they shared. I have also been amazed by the help given by people who are not even part of the dojo community.

In any endeavor (not just dojo remodeling) there are always those who go the well beyond the extra mile. So we can ask a larger question: Why do certain people always go beyond the call of duty. What drive a person to exceed expectations?

It seems to me that the bottom line in almost all circumstances is belief. People who go the extra mile, people who sacrifice their time, resources, energies and in some cases lives, do

so because they believe in what they are doing. Invariably, people go the extra mile because they believe in a greater good, that what they do surpasses the action itself and goes to something larger and more embracing. I cannot speak about those heroes of the battlefield who, for countless generations, have laid aside their lives for their comrades, but I can say that whenever I meet someone who is going the extra mile it is always because they have an unshakable belief that what they are doing serves a greater good.

I talk with martial arts instructors all over the country who sacrifice their time, money and energy for what they do. More to the point, they often do it without fanfare or fuss, they simply get on and do it, day in and day out. Why? They know that what they do changes lives, one person at a time. It is easy to be a black belt and take the view that training is each person's own personal responsibility, but the instructors I talk to, know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have a responsibility to help their students because of the greater good that their efforts will create. I used to have a quote on the wall of my old dojo, which stated that the most important member of the dojo was the newest white belt. That quote was a reminder that the future resides in each new member, a reminder that each of us

was once a beginner in need of help, and a call to action to go the extra mile by putting our own needs aside to help someone who has learned less than us.

The extra mile also goes to synergy of purpose. When we put our needs aside for those of the community, we stand to create much more than could be done by dint of our solitary efforts.

When I look at our new dojo, I do not see my vision, or even my own efforts. I see the faces of every one of the people who gave up their time to help build the place. I see the time shared, the fellowship of souls, and am almost sad that the remodeling is over. But as one of my students said a few nights ago...we haven't just finished the dojo, we have just begun. The walls and the mats are just a place. The people and their dedication to each other is the real dojo.

So here you have it. Going the extra mile isn't about self, it is about service, it is about something larger than self or one's own actions.

In closing this article, I for one, cannot thank each of you enough who shared in the remodeling our new home, it has been an honor to walk the extra mile in your company. For your sweat, time, sacrifice and for the lessons you have each given to me: Thank you. ☺

In the battle of life, it is not the critic who counts, nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of the deed could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings; who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotions, spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those timid souls who have tasted neither victory nor defeat.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Intangible Collateral

If you go to the bank and ask for a loan they will invariably ask for some kind of collateral. Banks want to be assured that the money that they are lending you is backed by something that they can sell in the event that you fail to make your payments.

In life there are also intangible forms of collateral that are worth more than money. Forms of intangible collateral include the value of your word, the way you treat other people, the respect of others, trust that others place in you, your reliability and similar sorts of qualities.

Having been in business for almost ten years and being faced with the task of finding a new home for our business, led me to consider both tangible and intangible forms of collateral rather deeply.

Martial arts businesses do not tend to hold much physical inventory, our collateral is in the students we serve, but you can't take that to the bank! When I went to the bank to seek a remodelling loan, all I could take was my business history, my banking history and a limited inventory of depreciated furniture, mats and resaleable uniforms. The banker with whom I visited has known us almost since we opened our doors back in 1996 and he knows who we are and what we do. He also knows that we have never taken a loan to term. Taken together these things were enough to secure the loan we needed to make the move. Additionally, there was the challenge of actually finding a space that would be suitable, and again, who we are spoke volumes to the people with whom I negotiated potential locations.

Interestingly enough, intangible collateral has also been a big part of our son's life this summer as he discovered that simply saying "sorry" doesn't cut it if he then turns around and repeats a behavior that got him into trouble the first time. He is

discovering what it is to lose collateral.

All of that being said, let's go back to the previous article for a moment to those souls who invariably go the extra mile, those souls who accept nothing less than their personal best and those souls upon whom you can rely in good times and in bad. These sorts of people have huge amounts of intangible collateral and are frequently found in positions of trust and responsibility.

Each of us has what I call a "trust account" and every interaction we have with one another either contributes a deposit to, or creates a withdrawal from, that account.

When a student goes the extra mile in class or helps out an under-ranking colleague without being asked, he or she earns collateral in the trust account with every one of the people in the class. When a student shows up late on a consistent basis, or complains about his or her classmates, then a withdrawal is being made from the trust account. And to be honest, we all make deposits and withdrawals to some extent in every class.

The trust account is always in a state of flux...the account is always open. Every interaction counts. As Brian Tracy is so fond of saying in his motivational audio series: "Everything counts, nothing is neutral." So the real issue comes to this: It is what we do on a consistent basis over time that truly makes the difference in our trust accounts.

Learning about intangible collateral can be a difficult process, but pretending such a thing does not exist is no answer. Like gravity, intangible collateral affects your life every day.

How's your trust account looking? If yours is anything like mine, it could stand to take a few deposits.

☺

July						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
30	31					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

June						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

- ◆ Charlotte Camp, NC, USJA Judo Camp, June 23 –26th, 2006
- ◆ Akayama Summer Clinic, Jacksonville, AL, July 15-16th, 2006
- ◆ Louisiana Open Judo Tournament, Baton Rouge, LA, September 30th, 2006

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