

Pathways

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**The more we study, the more
we discover our ignorance.
Percy B. Shelley**

Where are you headed?

Have you ever stopped to wonder where your life is going? We go along from day to day dealing with stress and whatever personal issues we have to resolve and somewhere in there we live a life. Sometimes when we look back on it, we wonder how we ever managed to get where we currently are. All those sudden turns in the road, all those choices that led us down a new road.

I can tell you honestly that if you had asked me twenty one years ago whether or not I would live in Mississippi for twenty years, I'd have laughed at you. If you had asked me five years ago if I'd ever be a parent, I'd have told you probably not. And yet both of those things have happened. On the other hand if you had asked me when I was twelve what I would do with my life, I would have told you that I would have a university career in geology. Yet again, if you had asked me when I was twenty how far I would go in Judo, I would have given you a goal that I exceeded more than a decade ago. Curious.

Obviously we are not clairvoyant, and it is probably well that

we are not, but we cannot see what tomorrow will bring and so all we have is NOW. That is all we'll ever have...just NOW. That unforgiving minute. So when all is said and done where you are going is determined by what you do NOW, not what you will do at some unspecified time in the future but what you choose for yourself right this instant.

Needless to say we never live with this thought at the forefront of our minds for very long. I wonder how many lives would change for the better if we truly lived in each moment.... If we truly lived NOW. I can write about this because here is something that I know I do not do. I can see all failures of my life, all the mistakes and lost opportunities. I can also see the moments of grace, the moments of insight and wisdom, the moments I cherish above all else. It is a patchwork life

Life is a very precious gift. It is not something that we ask for ahead of time and yet we are presented with this amazing opportunity. As I get older, I find myself believing that we make of our lives whatever we

choose. I have watched people for whom life seemed to be an unending series of trails and hardships live noble and inspiring lives. At the same time, I have seen children who have been given every opportunity throw it all away only to come back years later with regret for their past.

As I get older it seems to me that the great corrosive emotions are guilt, shame, remorse, anger and regret. The ennobling emotions are compassion, humility and love. The problem is that as we grow up we learn shame and we acquire guilt for all the things we have done wrong or failed to do correctly. We regret our choices and we are angry at others for what we perceive was done to us. It seems that we have so little room in our lives for these feelings. There is precious little time in a human life, why would we want to load it down with negative emotions? We could reach higher levels of living by just cutting the negative emotions away and choosing to embrace the higher more noble traits.

We are each on a path. Where is yours taking you?

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The Welcome Uniform. By: Janet Dewey

Too many people have asked me this question to put off an article any longer. What is the best way to keep a uniform clean and smelling fresh?

1. Own at least one uniform for every two practices.
2. Do not wear the same uniform two days in a row.
3. Allow your uniform to dry on a hangar after practice, before washing it and after removing it from the dryer. Those smelly bacteria thrive in the damp. If you work out, throw the uniform in the wash and put it on again without allowing the internal fibers to dry completely (which the dryer won't do) bacteria continue to grow. Whatever you do, don't throw a damp, sweaty uniform in the hamper!
4. Wash two uniforms together (or one uniform and two towels), with nothing else. Use the maximum load setting on your washer (super wash). In order for the washer to remove soil (sweat), there must be an excess of water and room for the clothing to fully agitate.
5. Use soap rather than detergent. Detergent smells good, but it is just a cover up and is extremely rough on the fibers (especially Wisk). Baby washing soap (Dreft or Ivory) works really well. Another reason for using soap is that many people are allergic to detergent and we are in a contact sport.
6. Add a natural enzyme-based booster to the wash. I use a product from Melaleuca called Sol-U-Mel, but there are others on the market.
7. If you must use bleach, use it sparingly. Sanitize no more than 2-4 times per year. Add no more than the amount your washer recommends. Fill the tub with water, and then add bleach and soap. Agitate for a moment to disperse the bleach, before adding the clothing. Never pour bleach on the garment. Pouring bleach on the garment will stain it yellow and weaken the fibers.
8. Fabric softener is a trade-off. Using it removes that sand-paper effect (for Judoka), but reduces that crisp snap that we like in our TKD forms. Liquid works better and isn't as hard on the appliances as those dryer sheets, but it requires a more active role on your part.
9. Never dry your uniform completely in the dryer. Damp dry it and then hang it until it is completely dry (24 hours). Again, this requires effort on your part and is the reason for owning multiple GI's. You do want it completely dry, but if you use the dryer to do it then shrinkage will occur.
10. Choose your uniform carefully. 100% cotton is less likely to stain and accumulate odors than a polyester blend. Cotton also breathes better, so you are less likely to sweat profusely in cotton than in a polyester blend.

The life of every man is a diary in which he meant to write one story, but wrote another; and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make of it.

James M. Barrie.

Form and Function. By: Janet Dewey

I was practicing the other day with Kate, my Renraku No Kata partner and we got into a discussion about how common it is for people to say they dislike Kata. I had just finished teaching Nage No Kata (forms of throwing) that week, so it was foremost in my mind as I observed a few wry looks out on the deck. People go through the motions, but it is clear that they would rather be doing Randori (free practice, sparring). So I began to ask myself, why do people hate Kata so much? All of espoused reasons leapt into mind: It hurts too much; I don't have a partner my size/shape/level of ability; my partner doesn't move right; my partner is too stiff/relaxed; I don't see the point...this isn't the way it happens in Shiai/Randori, *et cetera, ad nauseum*. But those are just smoke...

So I asked myself again...WHY DO WE HATE KATA SO MUCH? Something Kate said pretty much crystallized it for me: she said she liked Kata 'because it *forced* her to see the natural ebb and flow of things and as a result she could relax and enjoy the moment more'. ***The reason that most of us don't like Kata is because it forces us to see all of the weaknesses in our technique and in our characters in glaring detail.*** The mirror is unforgiving.

Kata brings out the weaknesses

in technique. The throw/hold/strike/combination won't work if you aren't in the right place at the right moment with the right weapon and the right level of commitment. If we don't do the best and most appropriate break fall/block possible, the result is also painful. When two opponent-partners aren't moving as one, in unison, with the same and yet diametrically opposed goals the result is jarring.

Kata brings out the weakness in character: the excuses, the fact that we may not be as cooperative as we should, our laziness and our unwillingness to accept things as they are. We think we know how to perform a skill, yet when we do it in a Kata situation it becomes an order of magnitude more difficult. We don't like to discover that we don't really understand a technique we thought we performed well...our ego likes to believe we have it all figured out. It is also tough to admit that someone who has less experience or fewer credentials than us might actually be better able to see the situation for what it is. We don't want our training partners to tell us what is wrong with our technique...our ego would rather tell them what is wrong with theirs. We are a lazy species. Kata requires endless repetition interspersed with minor adjustments which beget more errors followed by endless repetition. Our lazy ego

wants to get it right the first time and move on.

To compound all of this, there are complex interactions between the shortcomings of multiple people. There are your shortcomings, bumping up against the shortcomings of your partner, bumping up against the shortcomings of your instructor. It is easier to blame it on the other guy than to ask yourself, what do I need to do differently to make this effective? Then take it a step further... what level of understanding do we have to achieve together in order to make this effective? This requires that we shed the bad habits to which we cling. Most of us are too bound by ego to have such a vivid and unforgiving mirror held up to all of our shortcomings for an hour straight. Nobody is exempt. Talk about a recipe for failure...

...But that's the whole point! If we accept that **we are not perfect**, if we accept that **we will fail** from the outset...if we accept that **we can learn from our failures...then there is only progress to be made**. We fail our way to success. There is no better teacher or harder taskmaster. The next time you don't want to do Kata...make the decision to spend an hour facing yourself. All we have to do is accept our failings...all we have to do is relax enough to see the ebb and flow of things and we will begin to SEE. Thank you, Kate.

The universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper

Eden Philpotts.

Calendar of Events:

- ◆ Battle of Indianapolis, August 9th, 2004
- ◆ SMAA In House Judo Tournament, August 21st, 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
- ◆ International martial Arts Symposium, Columbia South Carolina, October 1st – 3rd, 2004
- ◆ Akayama Winter Camp, Gulf Shores, MLK Weekend, January 2005
- ◆

Choosing Happiness

I was recently giving a clinic in Birmingham, Alabama at the school of one of my colleagues. I have to tell you it was a total blast. Every time I meet with this instructor and his dojo family it is the same. His people are full of spirit. They work hard, have fun, take care of each other and are striving to improve themselves at every turn. They are open and receptive to new ideas; and as a result, they learn immense amounts in a short time. The spirit of this dojo is in everything that they do: The way they talk, the way they move, the way they care for each other and the dojo, the way they act together outside of the dojo. If ever there was an instance of the Law of Attraction at work...here it is. The people attracted to the dojo are all of the same ilk, regardless of their socio-economic or educational background.

As I worked with the group and felt enriched by rubbing shoulders with them, I tried to figure out what it was that made them so. By the afternoon of the second day (sometimes I can be a bit slow), it hit me: Here was a group of people who, no matter what stresses their lives might be exhibiting at the time, choose to be happy. I had listened to them all weekend and had heard some of their stories, their trials of life and yet over and over I was struck by their buoyancy.

The instructor and I spoke about this notion several times over the course of the seminar and he made

the very clear statement that it was a choice to be happy. No wonder he attracted people to him of like mind!

But here's the point: We *choose* to be happy. Most of us live lives of contingency and delay happiness until a better time. For instance: I'll be happy when (fill in the blank), I'll be happy if (fill in the blank). What a way to live! Everyday is a precious gift of life and if we squander that gift waiting to be happy on the possibility of something happening in the future that will put the world to rights for us, we lose so much. In one interpretation, life is full of risk and stress and yet from a different perspective life is full of opportunity. We can therefore choose to a higher path and be at peace with ourselves. Here is the critical element then: It's not about making yourself happy, it's about being at peace, no matter what our circumstances.

Unfortunately we frequently define ourselves by our circumstances, rather than the other way around. Equally, when all is said and done we are *experiencing* life through whatever filters we chose to put in place. Unfortunately the Law of Attraction works regardless of what we believe: We truly do bring into our live the people, events and opportunities that are congruent with our self belief systems. If I believe I will be happy only if 'something' happens or when 'something' happens, I probably never will.

So (in the words of one of my professional trainers), "When would now be a good time?"

A loving heart is the beginning of all knowledge
Thomas Carlyle

United States Judo Association is offering a Summer special for new annual members:

\$20

Don't miss this one!!

If you would like to save both trees and time while at the same time helping to reduce our overhead by receiving this newsletter via e-mail, please give us a call at 662 323 5522 and ask to speak with either myself or Miss Becky.