

Pathways

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Life isn't about finding yourself, it's about creating yourself
George Bernard Shaw

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Reasonable People

According to George Bernard Shaw: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress is made by unreasonable men."

I'd like to address this issue from a slightly different tack. Suppose for a moment that we are all reasonable people, precisely because of the reasons we carry around with us. Put another way, each of us has a set of beliefs and justifications about our abilities and potentials and for precisely these reasons, we hold ourselves back.

In effect, our own personal stories keep us small and prevent us from truly achieving our potential in life. In short, we show up in life as less than our highest, best self.

You know how it is...we all have a personal story about how we cannot achieve something....we all can come up with any number of reasons why something can't be done, but few of us free ourselves from our litany of reasons.

So, look at the last line of the initial quote one more time.

Now, recast the quote at the end of the first paragraph in terms of using your life as a chance to create yourself (quote in the left panel).

Suddenly things change...a lot. If we let go of our reasons a.k.a. our 'story', then all manner of possibilities open themselves to us.

So what holds us back? What precisely are these so-called reasons that we raise like flags whenever we want to start a new adventure or reach for something beyond our normal grasp?

Some of the reasons are historical justifications...and often they stop us in our tracks before we even get started. In

essence, our histories tell us what happened in the past when we tried to do something and they tell us that the same thing is likely to happen again...so let's avoid the embarrassment and simply not go there to begin with. If you have any financial investments, you have probably read a line that goes something like "past performance is no guarantee of future performance." Suppose you apply that logic to your histories...what then?

Next, there are the societal and cultural beliefs that we accept without really thinking about them. Where would we be for instance, if the Wright brothers had accepted the maxim that 'if man was born to fly, God would have given him wings?' For sure, we can see examples of societal norms that are being challenged every day, but how often do we internalize some cultural value or belief system that has no place in our lives? How often do we let cultural and societal beliefs limit us in achieving our fullest potential? Let's try an example: "Better safe, than sorry." Or how about this one: "Better the devil you know, than the one you don't know." These are examples of proverbs that are entrenched within our societies and which we use to justify a particular course of action, whenever it suits us to do so. Another example might be that "you can't get a good job without a university education." Although not a proverb, it has the potential to limit us if we allow it.

So just for this week...why don't you see how unreasonable you can be....you might just amaze yourself and the world! ☺

FREE GIFT...REALLY!

I am currently certifying as a personal coach with the Institute of Professional Excellence in Coaching.

As part of the learning process, I want to complete 37 more pre-certification complimentary coaching sessions as part of my 50 session goal.

Consequently, I want to thank those of you who already called and offer to each of you...a **FREE**, yes **FREE** coaching session, via telephone, or face-to-face (if you wish it and live in the Mississippi Golden Triangle area).

I have a couple of simple requests:

- You want to move forward with your life.
- You accept the possibility that you are greater and wiser than you think you are.

If you are interested, I invite you to send me an e mail or call (see below).

For information about personal coaching opportunities, martial arts classes, reiki classes, books and seminars contact us at:

662 323 5522 either chris@cdmapathways.com or

smaa@starkvillemartialarts.com

Attention and Intention

Here's an interesting one. I think that we all know how to pay attention, and we all know how to create an intention...but how often do we pay attention to our intentions?

Now I am willing to concede the point that we can argue any number of issues surrounding an ability to pay attention, (as in, staying focused on a work or school task) but what I really mean here is the ability to remain mindful and present within a process of personal change.

Since I am apparently in the quoting vein today, let's use another quote: "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

So what does that really mean anyway?

My sense of it is that the quote means that most of us set what we call intentions and then promptly forget about them and therefore we never change...we just keep moving along the same path we've always been on.

So let's take a few examples: I might intend to start a savings account, or find a better job, or start an exercise program; but somehow these things never seem to actually happen and I just keep cruising along, like I have always done. I guess the obvious conclusion is that I don't want these things enough to take action on them.

So what if I did want them?

I truly believe that real and lasting change occurs in our lives when we are:

1. hungry for change to occur,
2. when we set very clear intentions, and
3. then pay attention to the results of our intentions as we move toward the object of our intention.

It doesn't help me, if for instance, I say that I want a better job, but then do nothing

about finding one. If I expect the universe to drop the ideal job into my lap without me lifting a finger to do anything about making it happen...I suspect that I will be waiting a lo-o-o-ng time.

The point seems fairly clear:

It is one thing to set an intention, and it is quite another to actually take action on achieving the object of your intention.

It is at this point in the process that attention comes in. Let's say I take some definite, specific, and measurable action towards a pre-determined goal. The result of the action will either bring me closer to, or further from, the object of my intention.

If I am attentive to the process I will be ready, willing and able to make course adjustments that will ensure my eventual arrival at the stated goal of the intention. Attention then, is the navigator of the process.

Consequently, attention keeps me on track within the process, whereas inattention allows me to drift all over the place. Ultimately, without attention, I lose focus and my intention fades into the mists of lost and forgotten dreams and I dig myself deeper into my entrenched position.

I can always recognize when I do this in life...I'll use a line that goes something like "I intended to [fill in the blank], but somehow life got in the way and I never got around to it."

Sound familiar?

The funny thing is though, I recall that a few years ago, it was possible to purchase a little circular piece of wood with the words "to it." stamped on it...so that you could finally say you had gotten "a round to it." The sad part about that is the idea of failing to reach our goals or

complete our tasks is so deeply rooted in our society that we are willing to market and sell gimmicks to accentuate the issue!

And laugh at it!

In some ways, actually a lot of ways, this is quite sad to me, because, in an insidious sort of way, a round 'to it' tells us that it is O.K. to let go of our dreams.

So where does this leave us?

We have an intention, we take some action and we don't really pay too much attention over the long haul...but hey...at least we tried...right?

I would hasten to suggest that you don't want this, or else you wouldn't be reading my newsletter.

Alright then...time to get anabolic and positive:

The crux of the issue is this:

Attention is, in part, a function of commitment. Just how committed am I to the enterprise?

Mostly committed won't do it.

Only fully committed will do.

If I am fully committed to the object of my intention then I will muster all my resources and bring my full attention to the process.

When intention is coupled with attention through total commitment the end is almost a predictable outcome. When intention is fully coupled with attention, it will be obvious to the casual observer that you are totally committed. There is no room for doubt or second-guessing. There is no obstacle too big to stop us, so that when we are attentive to our intentions...we get things done.

It's that simple.



*"A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable,
but more useful than a life spent doing nothing"*

George Bernard Shaw

Attention..again

In the last article, I told you that attention, is, in part, a function of commitment. I also tend to notion that attention is also a function of awareness and effort.

Being mindful, present and attentive takes work...hard work....work that is often difficult to sustain.

Intention and attention really comes home to roost when we start moving in the world of deep interior personal change.

Overcoming deep-seated personal challenges, like fear of various types, grief, depression, anger and deeper rage, jealousy and envy, self-doubt, issues of self-worth, addictions and self-control issues, insecurity and issues of trust....

O.K. we all know them and some of us have lived them...maybe not all at once, but we carry their scars and the attendant baggage.

They are part of our story.

In a journey of personal growth and development in which we seek to blossom into our highest and best self, there are some necessary steps, each of which requires attention.

The first step is simple observation....watch yourself. Observe yourself from the outside, like you are watching a stranger and ask yourself what you are seeing. In short, pay attention to yourself. It is easy to do this for maybe a few minutes and then attention gets bored and goes in search of something more interesting to do.

Oddly enough, there's an amusing message there...(no, I'm not going to tell you...figure it out ☺ !)

The second step is one of acceptance. Wherever you are in life, unless you are some super-enlightened being (not me), you cannot be somewhere else at the same moment in life...you are, in fact, where you are...so accept it and move on.

Sounds simple enough...but how many of us really do that? How many of us really accept who we are...right now, right this second? Try it on for size for a moment...Accept yourself for who you are...warts an'all.

Really...do it and don't judge yourself for it or by it....just accept...not quite so simple is it?

Stay positive in the acceptance process, but be resolved to grow. It is very easy to beat yourself up over what a lousy person you are (trust me, I know, been there, done that, don't own T-shirts though). It is easy to look at all the "mistakes" you have made in life and completely lose sight of the fact that every one of those so-called mistakes was fertile ground for learning. Each mistake was a value opportunity for learning. Each so-called mistake was, in fact, a wonderful gift from the universe to you!

How wonderful is that?

It takes attention to stop yourself from falling back into the old routine of beating yourself up for every "mistake."

The third step is to set an intention about what you wish to change and develop a process for getting the work done. Now, for most of us, this part of the process is not some mind-blowing, earth-shattering revelation moment, it is

slow, hard, painful and often tearful, work. Staying with the process of (for instance) overcoming anger, addiction, fear, or depression, takes incredible tenacity and attention. You will fail time and time again, but you get up and keep going, recognizing the value of the previous step (acceptance and opportunity). Each failure gets you just one step closer and is cause for celebration, not judgment. If you were not making the effort to change, you would not need to fail...failure is a sign post on the road of progress. Attention (as we said before) is the navigator....but the key thing to remember here is that navigators are all about creating a successful journey, by looking at where you have been, to understand where you are, so that you take steps in the right direction to your destination. Without paying attention during the difficult times, it is very difficult to make progress.

And so, to the fourth step. Keep at it. Not the intention...the attention. Keep paying attention, notice subtle changes in attitude and response. Notice the small ways in which you change and keep paying attention. Let your attention expand to include the people around you and the environment in which you move. Stay true to your intention, but use attention as your guide.

Little by little you will change and old wounds will heal, deep hurts will fade and you will find new strategies for facing times of difficulty. It's not easy, but it is possible...if you want it.

All you have to do is start with some attention....and be gentle.



*“The possibilities are numerous
as soon as we decide to act and not react”*

George Bernard Shaw

Coping Strategies

So from everything I have just written, it should come as no surprise to you that a lot of our issues come from a former self, to whom we have given control of the current situation.

Let's take a for instance: If you have children you know about the terrible-two's. Two-year-olds, however, do not exactly have the broadest repertoire of crisis management skills. We might argue that adults do...or at least they are supposed to!

So fast forward from the two-year-old to a fifty-two-year-old driver screaming at the car in front for cutting him off. Who's really driving the car?

I'm sure that you realize that each of us is a kaleidoscope of skills that we have picked up for coping with stresses that have occurred in our lives along the way. The challenge comes because we react to situations, rather than choose to act.

Well, O.K., I'll concede the point that a reaction **is** a choice, but that's not really what I'm talking about.

Let's carry on with my example. The guy driving the car gets cut off by another motorist. That was an event.

The driver can then react by screaming and throwing a hissy fit and exploring the vernacular limits of his lexicon for the benefit of the driver in front (who is out of audible range anyhow).

The fifty-two-year-old just used the adult version of a skill learned as a two-year-old....I didn't get my way, so I'm going to scream out my frustration!

Alternatively, the driver could evalu-

ate a series of responses and choose to slow down and give the driver in front some space...after all maybe the guy in front is driving his wife to hospital to have a baby! Who knows?

The point is that there are choices available that do not involve regressing to a skill learned when we didn't have any other skills with which to respond.

As we get older, we experience more things, learn more skills and evolve in our situational response skill set. Experience means that we have more choices available to us, regarding how we might act under any given set of circumstances.

In an ideal world, we would all live at the cause of our lives, not the effect of our lives.

When we choose to live at the cause of our lives..not only do we live lives of our choosing, we are actually living lives of choice.

There's a very subtle difference here...a driver with road rage is making a reactive choice. Granted, it might be a subconscious choice, but it is a choice to live at the effect end of life, nonetheless.

At this point, paying attention and using a higher level of thinking awareness allows the driver to actively and purposefully choose a different response. The driver is now living at the cause of his life...he is actively causing his emotional and mental state to be governed by his decisions, not some external occurrence that is hijacking his emotional calm.

Once again, it comes to attention...do I have yours yet?

Almost everything that I have said this month comes down to mindful living...not in a hard way, but in a gentle self-supporting way. When we pay attention, we see through different eyes, choices for response open up to us, opportunities for learning and growing appear all over the place like daisies on the road of life.

When I pay attention in life, the world is a much more vibrant place, I feel supported and sustained by the world in which I move.

When I let my attention drift, I return to small thinking, petty thinking and reactive thinking...I become small-minded, angry, selfish and resentful. I move into a position of 'lack'.

When I move to a higher level of attention I see more possibilities and I definitely think more constructively...I become open-minded, calm, generous and tolerant and very grateful.

Of course I don't live there...I'm human and I have two legs...so I fall over..a lot.

But I do have an intention, quietly working its magic in my life. I am paying attention to the results and sometimes I have to remind myself to pay attention, but that's O.K....at least I'm going towards my destination, one fall after another...or...one opportunity after another.

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything"

George Bernard Shaw