

# Pathways

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

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 9

SEPTEMBER 2005



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*“nothing is good  
or bad but think-  
ing makes it so”*

—William Shakespeare

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## The Blues Brothers

Last month I talked a little about stagnation; this month I want to talk about how we can negotiate our way through the difficult times we can encounter and the what we can do when we are caught with a dose of the blues in our lives.

I present for you here, ten strategies that I have used over time. Many of these strategies were things that I grew up with, they were simply part of being a child and have been adopted into my adult life. Some of the strategies I learned in school, some of them I have learned as a college professor, or as a martial artist and more recently as a business owner. I have learned that it is best to work all the strategies at the same time, and many of them are such a natural part of my daily life that I do not think about them much. On the other hand, every once in a while it's a good idea to polish on them a little bit. In this way, they can be valuable tools when the inevitable slumps hit us.

So here they are, in no particular order:

1. Be a realist
2. Eat close to nature
3. Seek counsel
4. Study mentors
5. Exercise
6. Diverge
7. Indulge a whim
8. Be patient
9. Reflect on past success
10. Be proactive

It would be unrealistic to think that our lives will run smoothly all the time and that every day is “rainbows and butterflies.”

The fact of the matter is that there are times when life is hard going, we face challenges or we just feel “blue.” It is perhaps the focus of all of these newsletters (in the grander scheme of things) to provide a series of strategies that we can each apply in our lives that help to ameliorate the blues and emphasize living a life that does indeed have a good number of “rainbows and butterflies” in it.

I suspect that overall, Pathways is about finding a path to successful living, through trial and error, through having an open mind and learning new skills, through reflection and acquiring wisdom and through sharing the experiences we have along the way with others who share our goals and aspirations.

This month, I suspect that by the time I'm done, the whole newsletter will have been devoted to the single theme of the Blues Brothers. I am going to take the ten points I just outlined and enlarge upon them individually. So get a cup of tea or coffee, a glass of wine, and settle in...here goes!

**Be a realist:** I'm all about positive thinking, but pretending to be something you're not could be viewed as self-delusion. I have a plan of how I want my business to grow and like most things with a life of its own, my business does not always do what I want it to. Sometimes I am anxious about it, sometimes I worry about it

## Brothers of Blueness....continued

but most of the time there is the strong, quiet undertow of assurance. When my business is not doing what I had hoped or planned for it to do, it is not a time to pretend all is going well. It is a time for being practical and realistic.

When your world isn't going the way you planned, recognize what's going on and make strategies to deal with the situation. Don't pretend to everyone around you, but equally don't be a prophet of doom and gloom. Whining and complaining do not get us anywhere, but naïve delusion is just as futile. It is important to recognize the realities of where you are and remain bouyant and positive about the eventual outcome.

If you are angry or depressed or sad, don't pretend that you are not, but equally don't pollute the lives of those around you with your negative emotions. Give yourself some time to acknowledge of your feelings of sadness, loneliness, depression, anger...., but then let them go and focus upon the emotions that will bring you out of your current emotional state. Understand exactly why you feel the negative emotions and begin to see the cause of the

emotions as something that you can control....and therefore, change.

**Eat close to nature:** Last month Becky gave you some great advice about eating foods that you find around the walls of a supermarket. We get much better nutritional value from eating a variety of natural, whole, unprocessed foods. The foods we eat do a lot to help fortify our bodies and strengthen our minds. When we are feeling depressed our immune systems are more susceptible and if we put in high value nutrients we help to bolster the natural immune systems. It's much easier to combat the blues if you feel physically healthy and if you are eating and drinking things that keep you mentally alert. It's not a good idea to go on an eating binge and demolish a gallon of your favorite ice cream or drown your sorrows in alcohol. Large, heavy, fat laden meals only make us feel lethargic and place a further burden on our ability to cope. This strategy is pretty much an all the time thing and not something that you only do when you are feeling stressed. Make it a part of your daily living.

**Exercise:** Two words: Do it! Exercising helps us to metabolize our

foods better, it promotes good muscle tone, good blood circulation, helps to maintain a healthy cardiovascular performance, massages our internal organs and promotes the production of endorphins that help us to "feel good." The reason you almost always feel better after a good workout is that your body is awash with hormones that generate feelings of well being.

Combining good eating habits and a daily exercise routine is more than half the battle. If you can find an exercise routine that brings you to heightened states of awareness and is not simply a repetitive routine, you will find that your mind is sharper, more focused and more capable of seeing new initiatives that will help you through the doldrums or worries you face.

Again, this strategy should be a part of your daily living, not something you do only when you are stressed or upset. After all, if you only exercise when you are getting stressed or feel worried, you will not get the long term health benefits of regular exercise and you will increase the likelihood of injury.

**Seek Counsel:** Solitary brooding tends to be like wading through mud.

"As soon as you trust yourself, you will know how to live"

Johann Goethe

## Indigo Siblings....still at it

It can easily turn in on itself and lead us deeper into negative thinking than we want. Finding a trusted friend and talking things through can help to lift your spirits because you are sharing your concerns with someone who truly cares. Moreover, other people whom we trust can often provide insights that we might have missed. They almost always provide a new perspective on things if we are just willing to open our hearts and minds to truly listen. In my business I have a board of advisors with whom I work on an ad-hoc basis. Sometimes the business needs a formal meeting of the advisory board; more frequently, I will seek out one or more of my advisory board who has special gifts in a particular area and seek their counsel. Getting outside of your own mind can be very liberating, especially if you are willing to really listen to what your friends have to say. This of course, does not mean that you have to take their advise every time, but it does give you the possibility of gaining a fresh perspective...and that is always useful in creating a positive outcome.

**Study Mentors :** I learned early on in my business life that there are few overnight sensations. And, as my father once said to me...stars may burn brightly, but they frequently do not burn so long. Success takes effort and is the reward given to the tenacious, the determined and the willing. In the lives of many of the people who I have chosen as

mentors, are all manner of failures. But this is exactly why I have chosen some of these people as my mentors: They have failed, started anew and eventually reached success. I should tell you that some of my mentors are famous people long since dead, but that doesn't matter; their writings and their lives are inspirational to me. Which brings me to another strategy for benefitting from the experiences of your mentors. I use my car as mobile university and learning center. I listen to audio CD's concerning people, or by people, who are or were leaders in areas in which I need to learn more. Some of my mentors are people with whom I have regular contact, so I have the added benefit of being able to talk or write to them. Like my trusted friends, my mentors have insights for me and provide clarity and perspective. They remind me that I am not alone on my journey, that others have gone before me and have made the same mistakes, learned similar lessons and are now willing to help me along in my journey.

**Be patient:** If the lives of our mentors can teach us anything, it is to be patient and tenacious. All lives have times of disaapointment, anxiety, and stress. Each of us knows times when we are just not motivated. Equally, all lives have times of great joy. The art of living well involves learning how to surf the waves and not sink to the depths for long periods at a time. During the difficult times it is good to cultivate patience both with yourself

and with the situation...as with all things, "this too shall pass". Patience allows us to weather the storms of life and recognize that success takes time. Patience puts things in a "time perspective."

**Reflect upon past success:** We have all been successful at something at some point in our lives. When you are feeling low, look back on those times. Look at photographs, read letters of thanks that you have received over the years. They remind us that we are not total failures and inspire us to keep forging ahead with our plans. Reflecting on past success also reminds us of the skills and techniques that we used to achieve success. Some of those skills may be of use again in the current situation. Remember why it is that you have passion for some of the things that you do in life.

**Be Proactive:** Don't wait for things to change, take action and look at your plans and options; reorganize and re-prioritize, but don't just sit there in the gloom of the moment. If you sit under a cloud, you will only get wet. You have to be careful here, because you don't want to take indiscrimiate action, you want to make sure that the action that you take is going to lead you in the direction of your ultimate goals. This is where patience, wisdom and insight will guide you towards the right choices and the actions that you need to make.

If you have been following the other steps, then you will be getting a lot of

Whatever you can do or dream, begin it.  
 Boldness has genius, power and magic in it  
 - Johann Goethe

## Navy Monks....wrapping it up

information and new perspectives on your situation that will help you decide what sort of activity might be best under the circumstances.

**Diverge:** Take a new approach. If beating your head against a wall is giving you a headache, I would suggest that you might want to stop and try something different. If one approach to your situation does not work, then look for an untried approach. Again, if you have been practicing this set of strategies as a whole, then you will be getting ideas from the mental vitality you feel from your diet and exercising, you will also be getting ideas from your friends and mentors, as well as ideas from looking at your past successes. Look at so-called opposites. I have been pleasantly surprised on more than one occasion when the answer I needed was found in doing the exact opposite of what I thought I needed to do. This is a lesson that Judo teaches over and over, control is often created by giving way and yielding, not by resistance. It is more natural for us to resist than to yield, but sometimes yielding can give exactly the result we were looking for.

**Indulge a whim:** Oh go on then..do something frivolous. Take some time out for yourself and get some fresh air both figuratively and actually. Read a book, watch a movie or do some gardening, go rock climbing, white water rafting...something. Doing something for relaxation and recreation is a powerful motivator. Look at the word for a moment: *re-creation*. What a wonderful word. During times of rest we can literally re-create ourselves. We can re-energize, re-focus and re-commit to our regular, daily life. Doing something out of the normal routine can help to put us back on track. This is why vacations are such an

important part of our lives. One of the problems with our society is that we don't see things like movies and television as a luxury any more... we take them for granted. Having not watched television for more than seven years now, I can tell you that it is very liberating and frees up all sorts of time to do other things. Equally, I watch fewer movies than I used to, which means that when I do watch a movie it really is a form of escapism and relaxation. Watching a good movie allows me to unwind, put my cares aside for a while and allow myself to be entertained. When we watch movies all the time they lose their therapeutic value. Another thing that has lost a lot of its recuperative value, is dining out. We combine business with a meal so often that we sometimes forget the wonderful fellowship that can be had when a group of friends gather to together for a meal. Going out for a meal or cooking at the house with some friends can be a wonderful form of relaxation and renewal.

So there you have it...Chris Dewey's recipe for dealing with the blues. I do not claim to have invented any of these, they are all learned skills and strategies. None of these things really stand on their own, I recommend the whole lot of them as a series of interconnected strategies that create synergy. Taken together these strategies create greater effects than any one of them taken alone. And, if you haven't figured anything about me from these newsletters by now, you should have figured out that I love synergy! I hope that these ideas are useful to you and don't forget...if we can help you with any of this, there's a space for you at the Starkville Martial Arts Academy....where class is never just about kicking and punching! ☺

October						
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September						
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- ◆ Judo/Ju Jitsu Clinic, SMAA, Starkville, MS, September 10th, 2005.
- ◆ International Martial Arts Symposium, Columbia, SC. October 1st & 2nd, 2005.
- ◆ Peachtree Judo Tournament, Atlanta, GA, October 8th, 2005
- ◆ PAF Kick-a-thon, Starkville, MS, October 15th, 2005.
- ◆ Akayama Clinic, Starkville, MS, October 22nd, 2005
- ◆ Jujitsu black belt rank test SMAA, October 27th, 2005
- ◆ Midoriyama Clinic, Huntsville, AL. October 29 & 30th, 2005.
- ◆ Judo black belt rank test, November 3rd, 2005
- ◆ Taekwondo black belt rank test, November 7th, 2005
- ◆ Shinsei Hapkido Clinic, West Virginia, November 4-6th, 2005.
- ◆ Melton's Judo Tournament, Jackson, MS November 19th, 2005.
- ◆

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