

# Pathways

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*When one door closes,  
another door opens ...  
but there may be a long  
hallway between them'*

*Unknown*

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## Pattern Seeking

Since you were a baby in your mother's womb, you have been a pattern seeker. As an unborn baby you responded to changes in your mother's heart rate and breathing and have been tracking patterns ever since. At a societal and individual level, however, most of our pattern seeking goes back to hard-wired survival instincts.

As martial artists we learn movement patterns and we learn defense and attack patterns...but have you ever thought that the patterns you see become the patterns you expect? More than that if you believe you live in a world where the patterns are known, it will come as a huge surprise to you when something unforeseen happens. We spoke about this last month, and I'd like to continue the thread a little more.

Frequently, our patterns trap us because we become blind to things that do not fall within our pattern recognition programs.

For instance, if you are used to avoiding Tigers because you know them to be voracious predators, but have not encountered a Leopard before, you might not see it until too late because you are used to looking for orange and stripy, not yellow and blotchy. If you have the time to respond, then you might recognize that yellow and blotchy has some of the same behavior traits as orange and stripy, but if you happen to be the focus of the predator's attention, you do not normally have the time to respond to behavioral characteristics.

In this example, your pattern recognition is

- A) Not refined enough to include all versions of predatory cats,
  - B) Not adequate as a predictor of future or imminent harm
- .....both of which can have severe and negative consequences.

So what does this teach us?

Firstly pattern recognition must be updateable if it is to be useful to us. Get the upgrades!

Secondly, what we think we know is not always enough. There is always something new to learn that can radically alter your perception of reality.

Thirdly, your perception of reality is a function of your experiences and the biases that your experiences have created in your world of interpretation.

Fourthly, what you think you know is not always a good indicator of what you don't know, nor a good predictor of what will transpire in your field of operations.

Fifthly, and we have said this before: You don't know what you don't know you don't know.

Lastly, when we rely completely upon what we think we know, we are frequently blinded by our perceptions of how we think the world should work and are, more often than not, really surprised when things happen that we were not expecting (Read: For which we did not have a pattern recognition program).

Bottom line? Pattern recognition programs seek similarity and ignore dissimilarity. It's not the similarities that are of concern, it's the possible lessons that are hidden within the dissimilarities.

What do you see?



## Keepers at the Threshold

In any true learning environment there are things that challenge what we know or what we think we know.

I personally believe that change lies at the edge of our comfort zones, not within them.

So why is that?

When we are confronted by challenges, we have a tendency to imagine things to be (and quite often, make things) worse than they really are, or imagine them to be bigger, or harder.

After we've dealt with something that resembles a challenge in our lives, we are tempted to look back with 20/20 hindsight and say...."oh that wasn't so bad"....most of the time. We grow as a function of these times.

I believe, however, that we grow *more* when we are able to look back, (having, by default, survived) and say "yup, that was pretty much as bad as I feared....but I got through it."

There's something else here that we need to consider....when we don't know anything it's easy to do something, because we don't know that we don't know enough yet ....(uninformed incompetence)....

At this level of performance we have JUST BEGUN to learn and are about to get thrown into the real world of putting what little we know to use.

At the moment of contact with the challenges that lie at the edge of our

comfort zones we come face to face with the awareness of 'I know I don't know anything.'

We become Informed Incompetents. We realize in these moments that we know a few things, but not nearly enough to be doing what we are about to do.

I would further argue, that any professional in any field and any parent who has humility and integrity feels the same way at such moments. There are moments as a business owner, or as a martial artist, or as a parent that I feel completely clueless...I know I have nowhere near the knowledge or skill set that I require to do the job I am doing...or about to be doing.

In my experience, when people of humility and integrity are faced with these moments, they throw everything that they've got at the situation and give it nothing less than their best. When the event is over, they walk away from the crucible of learning a little bit stronger, wiser, more confident and more competent....also a little more humbled by the experience.

Moreover, I believe that such people see the crucibles of learning as little more than preparation for the next event. This is part of the annealing and tempering process. What we do, prepares us for what we will do (notwithstanding the last article).

All of which brings me to the guardians at the doorways of learn-

ing.

If you think about some of the great myths or stories about fictitious heroes and heroines, there is almost always some great challenge to overcome before the treasure is found, the crown is won, the kingdom is saved...whatever. In our everyday lives, Threshold Guardians can take any form that creates a challenge to perceived progress through life.

Threshold Guardians are there to draw out our best, to bring definition, clarity and value to what we do. They are there to teach us courage. Courage is knowing the fear and putting one foot in front of the next, with no assurance of the successful outcome of events.

In our culture, we tend to believe that things will always work out for our heroes in the end, but that is not always the case. Moreover, if we are honest with ourselves, we all know this.

So what? Does that stop us from acting? Should it?

As I was thinking about this article it dawned on me that Threshold Guardians are there not just for our benefit as individuals, but also to remind us of our responsibility. Threshold Guardians do not go away, they are always there. We can choose to walk away from them if we wish, but the guardians are there as a rite of passage.

Have you met any good guardians recently? ☺

*A friend hears the song in my heart and  
sings it to me when my memory fails.*

## Doorways

I heard a quote recently that I rather liked. I don't know where it comes from so I cannot give the originator of the quote full or adequate recognition.

We all know the line: "When one door closes, another door opens." Well I heard a nice wrinkle on that one: "When one door closes, another door opens, but there may be a long hallway between them."

I'm not sure what it is about my mind, but I like playing with words, they're fun.

The moment I heard the quote I just gave you, my brain threw out a second option: "When one door closes another door opens, but there may be a long haulway between them."

Same idea, different meaning.

So, since it is the nature of my brain to do this sort of thing, I just had to play with the implications of the comparisons between the long hallway and the long haulway.

The long hallway speaks to us of distance and time between doors. The long haulway speaks to us about effort and baggage.

The hallway doesn't imply anything except distance. It doesn't tell us how fast we can travel or how long it has to take us to get from one door to the next, just that the two doorways are not close to each other.

The long haulway seems to imply effort, and therefore, a slower rate of travel, regardless of the distances involved. The long haulway seems like it's going to be harder, but if I

could drop the baggage I'm hauling could I travel faster and reach the second doorway sooner? Am I obliged to haul the baggage? Will I need it when I go through the next doorway? Is now a good time to drop the baggage?

So what's the meaning and purpose of the long hallway? The long hallway is about preparation. Getting from doorway one to doorway two is going to take time. It is a time for reflection, preparation, analysis and integration. Sometimes, the long hallway is a necessary interval between where we are and where we need to end up. Sometimes, the long hallway prevents us from entering the next stage too soon.

So what of the long haulway? What is its meaning and purpose? The long haulway is also about preparation, but in a different way. In this version, getting from doorway one to doorway two is going to take effort. Could it be that the haulway is there to teach us to become more efficient? Or perhaps to let go of baggage we no longer need? Perhaps it too is also a time of reflection and integration. From this perspective we reflect on what we are carrying, integrate what we need and let the rest go.

So, do we get to choose?

Do we get to choose the long hallway or the long haulway? Do we sometimes combine the two and make the long hallway into the long haulway...do we sometimes make

things harder than they need be?

We all know the answers to these questions. But how many of us are willing to do anything about it?

Doing something, paradoxically, seems a lot harder.

I have life goals. There are things I want to accomplish in my life, places I want to see, experiences I would like. I have baggage I carry around with me; we all do. Why is it then that I drag this baggage around when I should set it aside?

As I stand inside one doorway of life and look at the road ahead it can be somewhat daunting to look at it as a long haulway. Perhaps it is time to drop some unnecessary baggage, leave behind the things I no longer need and strike out for the next doorway with a lighter step.

As I stand inside one doorway of life and look at the road ahead it can be somewhat daunting to look at it as a long hallway. The next doorway is so far away....it'll take forever to get there. Perhaps it is a good idea to use the time to prepare myself for what comes next.

While I stand here inside one doorway, looking at the next one, regardless of whether I'm looking down the long haulway, the long hallway or a combination of both, there is a window of opportunity here...perhaps I should use it! ☺

**Your mind can do one of two things:  
Worry about doing something or  
get on and do something**

**Janet Dewey**

## Someday I'll

I was at a Toastmaster's meeting recently and one of the speakers was talking about life goals. In her speech, she used the line "Don't die on 'someday I'll...'"

As I wrote down the line on my meeting agenda. I had a little 'Aha' moment and chuckled to myself at the humor of it.

In my mind's eye, I saw each of us as shoppers in life, wheeling a grocery cart around the Supermarket of Life, picking up experiences, comparing products and brands, looking at some things and putting them back on the shelf, avoiding some things entirely because we don't like them or want them or because they are too expensive, or too cheap...the list goes on. Slowly as we go through life we fill up the shopping cart and move along, looking for new things, checking out the special offers, bumping into fellow shoppers and checking out their baskets to see what sorts of things they have selected.

Sometimes as we shop we are looking for the same old things that we buy every week because they are our favorites, or because we trust the brand name or we like the price.

Sometimes we look for variety, something to spice up the normal routine of dinners.

Sometimes we pick up something just for the heck of it, to try it out, see if it will be any good.

O.K. you've got the picture. Now how does this fit with our goals and visions of life?

I don't think that most of us want to spend our entire lives shopping for groceries and doing the same shopping week after week after week. Even the most comfortable amongst us, like a little change once in a while. We like variety, if we didn't, our supermarket shelves would all contain the same things. (Wait...they do!! O.K...sorry about that.)

Actually, what I meant was that there

would be no choice available, we would, all of us, get exactly the same stuff week after week. The whole point of marketing is to get you to buy something different and then to keep buying it until another marketing plan pushes you to the next purchase point. So the question comes to this: Who or what controls your purchasing decisions?

As you wheel your cart through the Supermarket of Life are you making purchases according to the list that someone else pushed into your hand as you left the house? Are you making your purchases according to a list that you wrote for yourself? Do you have a list? Should you have a list? Are you missing opportunities if you have a list? Are you missing vital products if you don't have a list?

If you look at the shelves in the Supermarket of Life as lined with experiences of life, we can choose for ourselves, we can have other people choose for us, we can even have our choices controlled by what we think someone else wants for us regardless of whether it is what we (or they) truly want or not.

If you want, you can even look into other people's carts and make judgments about their quality of life based upon what's in the cart (not recommended).

All of which brings me to the question of why we do what we do in the Supermarket of Life.

Are we driven? Are we motivated? Are we compulsive? Are we habituated? Are we simply trying things on to see if we like them? Fill in your own question here...why are you doing what you are doing in the Supermarket of Life.

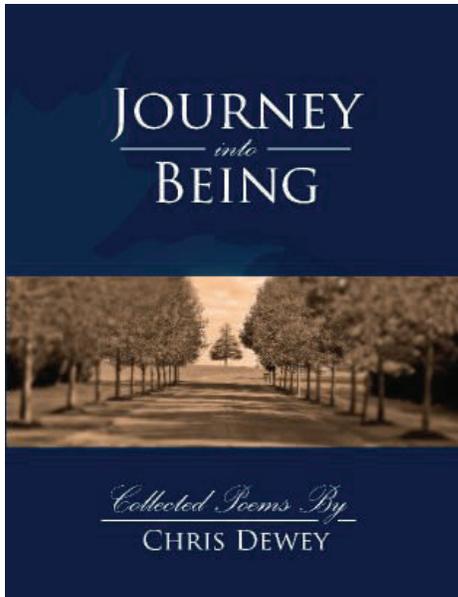
Whatever you decide here...don't die on 'Someday' Aisle. (And that's what I wrote on my agenda.)

Carpe Diem.



## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- ◆ LOUISIANA STATE JUDO CHAMPIONSHIPS, BATON ROUGE, LA, SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2007.
- ◆ T'AI CHI CHIH WEEKEND RETREAT, PLYMOUTH BLUFF, COLUMBUS, MS, OCTOBER 6 & 7TH, 2007.
- ◆ KICK A THON AND THROW A THON, SMAA, STARKVILLE, MS, OCTOBER 13TH, 2007
- ◆ AKAYAMA JU JITSU, FALL CLINIC, SMAA, STARKVILLE, MS, OCTOBER 20TH, 2007
- ◆ MISSISSIPPI JUDO TOURNAMENT, JACKSON, MS, OCTOBER 27TH, 2007



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