

Pathways

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CONTENTS

Ideas	1
Letting go of fear	2
Who are you and what	3
Getting to grips with food	4

“Ultimately, you must forget about technique. The further you progress, the fewer teachings there are. The Great Path is really No Path.”

—Ueshiba

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Ideas

Ideas change the world, they change societies and they change people. We can see it over and over again throughout recorded history. We can see it in our history books and in our science books. We can see it in our effects on nature, in political reform and economic development. Take the Information Revolution for instance....one man had a dream to put a computer in every home at a time when computers were large structures that covered the entire walls of a building. Fast forward twenty years and people are carrying computers no larger than a brief case with more computing power than the Mission Control computers at the time of the Apollo Moon landings. Even your cell phone has a more powerful processor than the computers that put a man on the moon.

Ideas present new ways of seeing things and frequently they involve a paradigm shift either within a single person or within a society.

By way of a societal example, the United States of America was built upon the idea that the people of the New World could rule themselves and did not need to be told how to live their lives by a monarch from across an ocean. Consequently, enshrined within the Constitution is the idea of personal freedom.

Now take a person who decides to change his life. He sees the need for change and embraces the notion that it is within his own ability to recreate himself as a different person. He chooses a path and changes the course of his life. Where do the effects of that idea go? Do they affect his

family? His children? His workplace? In the martial arts, we begin with an idea of getting fit or learning self defense. Often the idea itself might be novel one for us. It may be the first time we have made a commitment to improve our health or security. It may even involve a life altering paradigm shift from living the life of a victim to living the life of a self motivated individual or the life of the couch potato to that of a physically active person. Ultimately though, somewhere along the road, the martial arts lead us beyond our initial goals and doorways open to things we did not imagine when we got started.

If we become technically proficient at what we do, eventually the technique becomes a restriction to our development and a new idea must be born before we can move ahead. Eventually we must see technique for what it is....a mirror. Eventually we must look beyond the mirror and let the technique go.

There is a message here. Life is about letting go. Life is about discovering what holds us back, restricts our ability to move forward and cutting it loose. This often involves the pain of loss. Losing what has been comfortable (or seemingly so) for many years is never easy, but it is the only path ahead....which is why many people remain trapped and unable to move ahead.

In order to reach our dreams and goals we must be willing to rewrite ourselves as a new person, capable of achieving more than we dreamed possible. It could be a brave new world out there. It is up to you. ☺

Letting go of fear

My sister gave me a true gift for Christmas. It was a framed quote from Nelson Mandela about our collective and individual fear of achievement and the implied resistance to acceptance of personal responsibility and power. Serendipity being what it is, my sister's gift hit me at exactly the right moment and has been resonating throughout this year.

I have been returning to Mandela's thought a lot this year in the newsletter. I think a lot of it has to do with the conversations that I have been having with myself and my students during the course of the year about letting go and daring to be truly, deeply happy and truly, deeply effective with the talents and abilities we each have. Each of us has skills and attributes that others do not have and when we use them together for the collective good, synergy is the inevitable result.

The events of the last couple of months have demonstrated this fact admirably as people from all walks of life have given of their time, money, blood and sweat to help the devastated victims of Hurricane Katrina. Living in Mississippi, I have seen people open their homes, hearts and bank accounts to help families who lost everything in an effort help the rebuilding process. It has been heart warming to see and hear. It bolsters my faith in the nobler aspect of humanity.

I also see that each of us has been affected by the Hurricane in one way or another. It touched all our lives; some in dramatic, painful ways, some in subtle not so obvious ways. For all of us there is however,

opportunity within the heart of the storm. There is the opportunity of rebirth, of rebuilding and being better than we were.

I often look at the world as a fractal metaphor. A fractal is something that looks similar at different scales. A head of broccoli is a fractal. A fractal metaphor is something that can be seen as an illustration at differing scales. The large can be reflected in the small and vice versa. So, at the risk of trivializing what was probably one of greatest natural disasters to affect the United States in recorded history: The storms of life offer the chance of rebirth for all of us.

The key it seems, is the notion that we can live in fear of storms or we can accept them as an inevitable part of living, be willing to face their consequences and embrace the risk that we might actually come out of our personal storms as better people.

I believe that within each of us are hidden, latent talents that most of us are either unable to see or unwilling to embrace for fear of the responsibilities that they might create. I sometimes wonder if we actually fear to embrace our highest qualities, talents and abilities inevitably settling for mediocrity because it is safe, comfortable and warm...despite the nagging sense that we could be better.

Eventually it seems, the nagging sense that we could be and do better gnaws away at us and we are brought face to face with the need to change: This is the true path of the martial arts. Training in the martial arts eventually brings us face to

face with ourselves. If we are ready, we look into the heart of the storm and we embrace change. If we are still gripped by our fears, then we walk away. It is a tough decision. It is a personal decision. It is a decision that comes to each of us many times in life, not just in the martial arts. We face it in our schools, our jobs, and our families. But these are only external mirrors of the internal struggle between embracing possibility or clinging to old fears and paradigms.

Beginnings are always difficult because they are terra incognita...they are Shakespeare's Undiscovered Country and they exist in all of us, every day. What an amazing heritage of hope to be given to each of us!

One of the greatest rebirths of my life was the moment that I held my son and he opened his eyes for the first time. At that moment I was confronted in an inescapable way with the opportunity of being a father and the fear of failing as a father, and the fear of the responsibilities and power involved. I saw the stone being cast into the pool of life. It was up to me to chose the stone and to cast it on behalf of my son and our family. I chose the pebble of opportunity. It changed my world. I have no idea how many other worlds it changed.

The only thing that will ever hold us back is fear.

Can we live a life without storms? Will more storms affect us? Will we embrace the opportunity hidden in each storm? Will we greet each new beginning?

"Instructors can impart only a fraction of the teaching. It is through your own devoted practice that the mysteries of the martial arts [sic] are brought to life."

Morihei Ueshiba

Who are you and what have you done with my son?

By: Robby's Mom

I found myself asking that question as my soon-to-be eight year old son bounded up the stairs to get ready for bed. When I stopped to think about it, I had been asking that question for awhile but hadn't given much thought to look for the answer. To be completely honest, I was afraid to even *hope* that my son had finally turned a very difficult corner, but it seemed that he had.

So much had happened to our family during the past two years that I had consciously stopped looking for answers. It was a defense mechanism of the highest order. Most of the time, it was enough for me to make it through the day. But this was different. This was my child. I realized that I had finally stopped holding my breath. It was exhilarating. It would be an oversimplification to attribute the changes to just one thing, but like a stone thrown onto the undisturbed surface of a pond, the ripples that were created impacted and touched everything. I realized that the center of the ripples of change for my son was studying martial arts.

My son had been begging to take karate lessons for quite awhile, but if truth be told, I finally decided to sign him up so that he would have a safe and controlled environment to express his feelings. I had heard of all of the benefits of children studying the martial arts – self-control, self respect and respect for others, working toward a goal, and physical fitness to name a few. At the very least, I thought a lit-

tle “controlled” kicking and punching might not be such a bad thing. I knew that changes wouldn't happen overnight. Quite frankly, I really didn't expect any changes at all but much to my delight, changes did begin to occur.

The first thing to go was anger and belligerence. Since he only expressed these attitudes at home, I noticed this change first. He was getting much better at controlling and expressing his feelings appropriately. His frustration level while learning new things has so significantly decreased that I hardly notice any frustration at all anymore. He just keeps plugging away until he masters what he is working on. He is more coordinated and much more aware of where his body is in relation to the personal space of others. He is more self-confident and happy. But perhaps the most profound change is simply his attitude. He has stopped looking for, let alone finding, fault with everything and everyone and now looks toward the positive in all things. Attitude alone really does make a difference! Best of all, he continues to build on these improvements through martial arts.

I really feel that my son has begun a lifelong journey through the study of martial arts and I will do my best to continue to support him along the way. What has martial arts given me as a parent? I can honestly say that I have received so much more than I expected. My smart, sweet, compassionate child, with his delicious sense

of humor and laugh, was given back to me. For that alone, I will always be grateful!

Editorial Comment: One of our parents came to me last month and asked if she could write something for the newsletter. Never one to miss an opportunity, I happily accepted the offer. What you have just read is the article I received. The young man in question joined us early this summer and has been training with us for about a little over four months.

Sometimes perhaps, I take the value of the martial arts for granted. I have been doing martial arts for so many years...that it is simply a part of my life now. The pebble cast in the pond of my life changed it completely.

Maybe as martial arts instructors it is not for us to know the full impact of what we do in the lives of the families we touch. We can see the individual changes, we do not often see the overall changes. We talk about changing lives and personal growth, but it is only when I read stories like this that I am brought face to face with the difference that martial arts can make.... but as I said to the mother of this young man...we really didn't do anything. Robby did it all himself. We provided opportunity, environment and context. Robby provided willingness, dedication and desire. The rest iswell....magic.

'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself'

- F.D.R

Getting to grips with food: Becky Follmer

I wrote an article in July's *Pathways* about nutrition and weight control. But, as I'm sure you are well aware, the other half of the weight loss equation is exercise! You may see results with one or the other, but for optimal fitness both components really need to be used to complement each other.

Initially, feel free to throw away your scale as a gauge of your success. While it is a tool in measurement, it is probably not the best choice. Monitor how your clothes are fitting, measure your waist, and your body composition. Your body composition determines your percent body fat, and could very arguably be better than relying a scale since muscle weighs more than fat.

If you are trying to lose weight, you should ideally be doing low to moderate intensity exercise at 30-60 minute intervals 5-7 days a week. Even something as seemingly simple as brisk walking is helpful. Also, change your activities up from time to time. If you only do Judo, add a little Taekwondo flavor into your regimen. If you enjoy walking or jogging, try riding a bike and changing your routes (which is also key for safety – but that's an entirely separate article). We have also started a cardio kickboxing and aerobics program this month which is another great way to have fun and burn fat.

While I am writing here, I would like to add my two cents on these fad low-carb diets. Research shows that they work short-term, and while it is unhealthy to be overweight, when we cut carbs we are cutting out our primary energy source for the human body, and 45-65% of our diet. Additionally, while too much fat is bad, too little fat can be unhealthy also. The risk of being on a low-fat diet is a deficiency in vitamins A, D, E, and K, all of which are vital. The key is to eat more of the right fats, and

less of the wrong fats. It is important to limit intake of saturated and trans fats. Saturated fats are contained in things like meat and whole milk dairy products; trans fats are contained in things like margarine and fried or processed foods. The fats you want to replace these "bad" fats with are polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats. Most nuts are a very good source of monounsaturated fats while fish and corn are good sources of polyunsaturated fats. If you are looking for a diet plan to follow, some recommended by dietitians include: Weight Watchers, Volumetrics, and the third stage of the South Beach diet. These are recommended because in general, they are effective, and they allow people to eat a balanced diet.

When grocery shopping, you may also want to pay special attention to food labels because they can be deceiving. A product label may indicate that it is low in sugar or sodium, but this is all related to the serving size. Take those yummy reduced fat wheat thins for example. If you look at things more closely, in the reduced fat wheat thins, both the crackers and the serving size are smaller than the originals. I mentioned in my previous article from July's issue that we should try to take in more whole grains. Labels that indicate "made with whole wheat" are not actually made from whole grain. Whole grain products will have whole grain listed as the first ingredient on the label. Another misconception that all juice is beneficial. While juice is a good source of nutrients, it is important to make sure it is the right kind, something that is 100% fruit juice.

If you really want to simplify things, take in fewer calories, and exercise more. It is also helpful to eat a mixed diet, but the former are at the chore of weight control.

October						
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30	31					

September						
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25	26	27	28	29	30	

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Akayama Winter Camp, Mobile, AL, MLK weekend, January, 2006

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