

Trading An I For An Eye

Robert M. Nideffer, Ph.D.

All great truths are simple in final analysis, and easily understood; if they are not, they are not great truths.

Napoleon Hill

This essay is about my search for a scientific understanding of the knowledge and skills which great philosophers, and religious figures have promised will lead to victory over all of the trials and tribulations of life. You will not find any truth in this paper that hasn't already been expressed in a very eloquent way by others. What you will find is a web of connections between the truths others have articulated. A web that will allow you to experience the fullness of the truths in a way you never have before. Ultimately, it's the depth of your experience and understanding that provide the confidence and commitment you need to embrace life and live up to your full potential.

My pursuit of excellence and my direct involvement with elite level performers started thirty-five years ago in Japan, when I began studying the martial arts. I was attracted to the martial arts because of the underlying philosophy and the emphasis on the integration of mind and body. Though the philosophy was fascinating, however, it was the actual ability of some of the masters to perform unbelievable feats of skill and strength, under extremely stressful conditions, that turned my fascination into a life long quest. A quest to identify and define the specific steps you and I have to go through to optimize performance through the complete integration of mind and body.

I returned from Japan with a black belt, with the awareness that most peoples potential went completely untapped, and with more questions than answers. So for thirty five years I've been continually evolving, applying, evaluating, and modifying a theory, and a set of tools and techniques, designed to help those who are willing to apply them, to perform at higher levels than they dreamed possible.

There are powers inside of you which, if you could discover and use, would make of you everything you ever dreamed or imagined you could become.

Orison Swett Marden

Let Your Mind Rest At the One Point



Isoyama, my Aikido instructor in Japan, was the nearest thing to superman I'd ever seen. He had such incredible control over his mind and body that no matter what happened he was always able to stay focused on his primary goal or objective. Nothing interfered, neither pain, nor the unexpected, nor bad luck. What ever came his way, he was prepared. He would put on demonstrations where he would be surrounded by a number of his students (myself included) who were free to attack him in any way and at any time. We never laid a hand on him, we'd end up being thrown all over the mat. His ability to sense our moves, to almost anticipate them before we did, was unreal.

One day Isoyama asked me to help him demonstrate a throw that could be used to counter an attackers punch at the opponent's face. I was told to stand directly in front of him, and to hit him in the jaw. I was nervous about playing the role of attacker, and it must have showed. Although Aikido is practiced in a cooperative way Isoyama believed that you only improved your skills by pushing yourself to the limit, both physically and psychologically. When he would demonstrate a throw or takedown, he always seemed to know just how much pressure he could exert before a bone would break or a joint would be dislocated. I knew from experience that I was about to experience some pain.

Following Isoyama's instructions, I doubled up my fist, drew my arm back and took a swing at him. Just before I made contact with his jaw, however, I pulled back tapping him lightly on the side of the jaw. To my surprise he'd made no move to block the punch, he'd just stood there impassively. In response to the tap he looked me in the eye and in a firm voice said: "I told you to hit me." I doubled up my fist and took another swing and again I pulled up at the last minute, though not as much as the first time. For a brief moment I thought I saw some anger in his eyes. In a more forceful voice he said: "Hit me!" By this time I realized I would be in more trouble for pulling my punch than I would be for following through.

I outweighed Isoyama by at least twenty pounds and I made up my mind that I would put all of my weight and strength into the punch. I swung as hard as I could, and again he made no move to block it: Like some crazy Western movie where the good guy takes the best punch the bad guy can deliver. I hit him in the side of the face as hard as I've ever hit anyone. The force of my blow may have moved his head an inch or two to the side, but his body didn't move at all and I saw no change in the expression on his face. His only response to the blow was "Good, now do it that way again."

Isoyama needed me to fully commit to be able to demonstrate the throw he was trying to teach us. He was willing to let me hit him in the face to make sure that I would correctly perform my part of the demonstration. What amazed me was his willingness and ability to take my best punch. He seemed immune to pain and/or fear.

On another occasion he was demonstrating a technique used against an individual who is trying to stab someone with a knife. The attacker who was in front of him, stepped forward on his right foot, and with his right hand, thrust the knife at Isoyama's stomach. In response to the attack, Isoyama pivoted 180 degrees around his left foot (which was in front) so that he was now at the side of his attacker and facing in the same direction. This move got him out of the way of the knife thrust and into a position where he could try and catch the attacker's knife hand at the wrist.

Unfortunately, he made a slight error and it was compounded by the fact that the attacker withdrew the knife as quickly as he had thrust it. As a result, Isoyama's hand closed over the knife blade just as the attacker pulled it back.

The audience didn't notice a thing. Isoyama's face remained unchanged and without any hesitation in his movement, he made a 360-degree pivot around his right foot. As he made this pivot, his left hand caught his attacker behind the neck and his right hand caught the attacker's knife hand at the wrist. From that position he was able to pull the man off balance, forcing him to the mat and taking the knife away. Once he disarmed the attacker, Isoyama walked to the side of the mat and grabbed a piece of cloth which he used to bind his hand so he could finish the demonstration. After the entire demonstration was over, he went to hospital and got his hand sewn up.

When I asked Isoyama how he was able to accomplish the things he did, he would give me explanations based on the religious philosophies underlying the martial arts. Some of those explanations seemed to make sense, others didn't.

Mind Like the Moon and Mind Like Water

He who reins within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king.

John Milton

For me to be able to respond to several attackers at once, I was told I would have to make my mind like the moon and like water. I was told that a full moon on a clear night, casts it's light evenly on the landscape. If clouds drift between the moon and the earth, they break up the moon's light and it falls unevenly on the earth.

To me, the clouds represented emotions, in particular anger. Isoyama was telling me that if I couldn't control my anger I wouldn't be able to concentrate and/or see all of the things I needed to be able to see to perform well.

The mind like water analogy was explained as follows. A calm, clear, pond, reflects a mirror image of the world around it. Let the water be disturbed by the wind or a stone that breaks the surface, however, and it ripples. The rippling surface of the water distorts the image of the pond's surroundings. My challenge was to make my mind like a mirror or a still pool of water.

It seemed obvious to me that wind and rocks were fears and anxieties and that unless these could be controlled, I would be unable to perform. That made perfect sense, but the obvious question was how was I supposed to control those fears and anxieties when I was out matched, when someone was trying to stab me, or when I was about to be shot?

Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido told a story where he and the group he was traveling with were attacked by a group of bandits in China. One of the bandits was in front of Ueshiba, pointing a pistol at him. As the master tells it, in the instant before the pistol discharged, he felt a "spiritual bullet" pass through his body. In response to his perception, Ueshiba moved to the side the instant before the gun actually fired, dodging the bullet and ultimately disarming the attacker.

The distance you need to move to get out of the line of the bullet, isn't great if you know precisely when to move. The bandit aiming the pistol at Ueshiba undoubtedly gave off subtle cues indicating he was about to pull the trigger. The muscles around his eyes might have tensed in anticipation of the bang. The muscles in his hand and forearm may have tensed as he began to squeeze the trigger. Those cues would be enough to signal Ueshiba to move, but how was he able to retain the ability to see and respond to those cues when he was about to be shot?

When I asked Isoyama what I needed to do to control emotions and make my mind like the moon and like water, he told me I must "center" and let my mind rest at "the one point," then, I needed to focus my Ki!

Focus Ki

The first law of success... is concentration- to bend all the energies to one point, and to go directly to that point, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

William Mathews

According to Isoyama Ki was a life force or energy flow that we could strengthen, and learn to focus and direct. All things had Ki and as students of Aikido we were to learn to be able to sense the energy flow of others, to bend and either redirect that flow, or get into it so we could use the individuals Ki to our advantage.

The concept of Ki was difficult for me to understand. I believed there was something to it, because I could see and feel the power of my instructor, but in two years of intense training I made little progress in strengthening and/or controlling mine.

I remember one training session quite vividly. We were practicing a "rising block", to defend against a downward blow (aimed at the top of our head). Isoyama was the attacker and as he would step forward with his left foot and strike at the top of my head with his right hand, I would step back with my right foot and block the blow with my left hand. Then he would step forward with his right foot and strike with his left hand and I would step back with my left foot and block with my right hand. We had moved back and forth across the mat four or five times and Isoyama's blows were very heavy (he was focusing his Ki). For a while my blocks were strong but I was taking the force of his blows on the bones in my forearm and they were bruising and I was becoming tired and sore. With each block my arms were feeling tighter and heavier and the pain was intensifying. I began bracing or tensing the muscles in my arms even before contact was made and as a result my blocks were dropping lower and lower.

Isoyama shouted at me "Focus your Ki." All I could think at that moment was "What do you think I'm trying to do. What good is it for me to focus my Ki when yours is stronger." Instead of getting more focused, I became tense and angry. Soon, my arms were so tired and beaten up that Isoyama's blows were driving them back into my head.

The One Point

You are searching for the magic key that will unlock the door to the source of power; and yet you have the key in your own hands, and you may make use of it the moment you learn to control your own thoughts.

Napoleon Hill

To help us develop our Ki, Isoyama would have us kneel on the mat, sitting back on our heels with our backs straight but relaxed. We were instructed to meditate, letting our minds rest at the "one point." The one point was our center of mass, a spot located about 2 inches behind our navel.

After we had been meditating for about fifteen minutes, time enough for the pain that was developing from our position to be completely distracting, Isoyama would start to move quietly about the mat. We had been told to keep our eyes closed while we meditated and we believed that if we were successful in focusing on the one point, Isoyama would not be able to knock us over.

I would sit trying to concentrate and find myself in a major internal battle. I would be distracted by pain in my legs from the position, and by my instructor sneaking around the mat. I would hear him move and begin to tense up, anticipating that he was about to take a run at me and try and knock me over. On top of that, logical thought processes were arguing with his instructions. "Let your mind rest at the one point." How could my mind rest at the one point, my mind was in my head?"

Sure enough, it wouldn't be long before Isoyama would fly into me to test my ability to center. He would knock me over and then say "You aren't concentrating on the one point!" When I would talk back, question, or try to argue with him he would tell me to "Stop thinking so much, practice, and believe." If I persisted with my questions, he would initiate an attack to force me to concentrate on the execution of a defense and to silence my thoughts.

Summary

Morihei Ueshiba, the founder of Aikido was in his 80's during the time I was in Japan. He was still active, still able to overcome any attack. I had been attracted to Aikido because of the philosophy behind it. Aikido, was "nature's way." Ueshiba said:

"The Art of Peace does not rely on weapons or brute force to succeed; instead we put ourselves in tune with the universe, maintain peace in our own realms, nurture life, and prevent death and destruction. The true meaning of the term samurai is one who serves and adheres to the power of love."

Ueshiba and I both began to study the martial arts for the same reasons, power, control and revenge. Now, in the later stages of his life he was preaching, and in his mind, practicing love. Though I could see the "harmony" involved in getting into an opponent's energy flow in order to throw him, the love part wasn't getting through at all. As far as I was concerned, love was a nice feeling but it didn't have a lot to do with throwing someone around a mat or with being a warrior.

I returned from Japan knowing without a doubt there were great powers that could be unleashed in all of us, even me, but I didn't yet know how to do it. I just knew that as far as Isoyama was concerned I had to:

- Keep anger and anxiety under control.
- Center, and let my mind rest at the one point.
- Be sensitive to and learn from my surroundings.
- Focus all of my energy or Ki in one direction.
- Continue my practice.
- Quiet my analytical mind and stop asking questions.

"Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out"

I returned from Japan and began studying psychology in the early 60's and certainly wasn't the only one interested in Eastern Philosophies and the expansion of human potential. The Beatles were traveling to India to attain enlightenment and Dr. Timothy Leary was traveling from university to university telling all of the college students to *"Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out."*

Hallucinogens like LSD and DMT were being touted as pharmacological keys to becoming one with the universe, tools that could be used to attain instant enlightenment. In San Francisco, Dr. Kamiya was suggesting that Zen meditative states could be quickly achieved by using biofeedback training to control the electrical activity of the brain. It was an exciting time, every place you turned someone was either looking for, or claiming to have found, a short cut to an altered and higher state of consciousness.

For me, life couldn't have been more exciting. Not only did the people I was surrounded by share my interests, but I was being encouraged to think! The performance arena in college was much different than the performance arena in the martial arts. In Japan Isoyama had kept telling me not to question, in college I was being told the exact opposite. At last, I was playing to my strength.

"Contemplate the workings of this world, listen to the words of the wise, and take all that is good as your own. With this as your base, open your own door to truth. Do not overlook the truth that is right before you. Study how water flows in the valley stream, smoothly and freely between the rocks. Also learn from holy books and wise people. Everything - even mountains, rivers, plants and trees - should be your teacher."

Morihei Ueshiba

Looking back on the teachings of masters of the martial arts, it's obvious they could not be good teachers without having spent a lot of time thinking and asking questions. As with the physical techniques we studied in Japan, however, the

challenge with verbal and intellectual skills was to develop them to the point that one could instinctively select the right time and place to use them. Easier said than done. It wasn't long before I discovered that the principles of mind like moon, mind like water, centering on the one point, and focus of Ki applied as well to the pursuit of intellectual achievement as they did to athletic excellence.

The first paper I was asked to write in college was an essay that was supposed to persuade the reader to adopt my point of view. When we were given the assignment I'd immediately thought about a military court martial that had occurred while I was in Japan. From my perspective the trial had been a perfect example of injustice, rather than justice and seemed to be an ideal subject for my paper.

In the military, we were required to listen to the post chaplain give a talk on character guidance once a month. On this particular occasion, the chaplain was telling us how we should "be prepared, if called upon, to give up our lives for our country." One soldier raised his hand and when called upon said: "You can't be serious. I know if you told me there was a bullet with my name on it, and that I was going to die in the next battle, I wouldn't go into the battle." For that statement, the individual was demoted from the rank of E5 to E1, thrown in the stockade for six months, lost six months pay, and his security clearance.

Waiting for the professor to return our papers, I was excited, looking forward to his comments. I'd really gotten caught up in my subject and believed I'd made a very effective, impassioned plea for my point of view. I was convinced I had talent as a writer and figured the professor would recognize that too. The paper was placed on my desk and the grade at the top of the page was a "D". There was one comment written across the paper which said:

"You came out swinging so hard you knocked yourself out in the process."

I had allowed my emotions, in this case my anger at military injustice, to control me. I had not controlled my emotions. Thirty-five years later, I can tell you that the battle to keep my passion for a subject, and the intensity with which I present an argument, from causing others to become so defensive they are unable to attend to the content of my message, remains a life long struggle. I have to work at making my mind like the moon when I make a presentation.

It doesn't matter who you are, you can be advocating the most logical, rational, position in the world. If your presentation becomes too intense, too emotional, most individuals will focus on the feeling content of your message, feel threatened, and instinctively become defensive. You can learn to control your anger enough to make your point, provided you learn to "make your mind like the moon."

U.S. History

The importance of being able to make my mind like water came to me during my final exam in a U.S. History course. The class had been unique in a lot of ways. On the very first day, the instructor had announced that less than 50 percent of the students would pass the course. He went on to say that he didn't believe in textbooks because none of them were good enough. "Since the state requires that each course have a book I have assigned a book published by Dell Books on U.S. History which you can purchase for \$2.50 at the book store. Oh, but don't bother to read the book because most of the resources you'll be using will be found in a variety of sources in the library."

These were protest times on college campuses and our instructor was big on protests. Each day he would come to class in the same outfit, baggy gray pants, a blue and black checkered Pendleton wool shirt worn outside of his pants. He would have a purple beret on his head, an alligator belt around the outside of his shirt and sandals on his feet. He was always two to five minutes late to class, would walk in without a word, and sit on top of his desk in a half lotus position. Once situated, he would turn to the class and say "Where was I?" One of the students would look at his/her notes and tell him where he had left off the day before. With that he would begin lecturing from memory, and continue for the remainder of the class.

As you might imagine, students were very anxious as the time for the final began to roll around. We'd taken no exams, received no feedback during the semester, and didn't even have a text for the course that we could rely on for review. We'd been told the majority of students would fail, and now we were about to take a final exam. Over the last four weeks of the semester 40% of our class dropped the course.

On the day of the final, the instructor walked in and proceeded directly to the black board. He picked up a piece of chalk and wrote "Write a brief interpretation of American history from 1603 to the present." That was the final exam! You could have cut the anxiety and panic in the class with a knife. You needed to be able to make your "mind like water" to recall, organize, and write down, 350 years of history in ninety minutes. Under those conditions, there weren't many calm ponds!

Focus of Ki

Concentration is the key to economic results...no other principle of effectiveness is violated as constantly today as the basic principle of concentration....Our motto seems to be: "Let's do a little bit of everything."

Peter F. Drucker

During my junior year in college I was competing as a diver on the swim team and taking a very heavy course load including classes in English, religion, and psychology. I was conducting research on the legal and illegal use of LSD, I was the student representative to the Dean to help in the establishment of a campus wide drug policy, and I was coordinating a psychology interest group on the study of

hypnosis. If that wasn't enough, I had the responsibilities of being a husband and the father of a two year old. In addition, my father had just passed away, making me executor of his estate. Mid way through the semester I began to experience some of the physiological symptoms associated with anxiety and stress. I went to the doctor and the best advice he could give me was "relax" and "don't drink coffee."

On the way home from the doctor's office and again called upon my Aikido experiences. I calmed down long enough to realize I had to find a way to focus my intellectual and physical energies and efforts. I had term papers required by most of my classes so I decided to identify a theme I could carry through all of them. That theme had to do with the control of mind and body. Immediately I reduced the amount of work that I had to do by about 200%. The reading I was doing on hypnosis and for my research on the use of LSD, became the primary source of information for all my papers. In addition, I was able to apply what I was learning about hypnosis and other psychological techniques for controlling concentration and arousal, to my diving. I ended up winning the conference diving championship and got a 4.0 as well.

LSD and Electric Zen

From 1963 through 1973, I conducted research designed to see if hallucinogenic drugs and biofeedback could be used by impatient Westerners to achieve the enlightenment Ueshiba and other Eastern masters took decades to develop. Wouldn't it be nice to become "one with the universe", to gain total control over mind and body with just a few hours of training.

The person determined to achieve maximum success learns the principle that progress is made one step at a time. A house is built a brick at a time. Football games are won a play at a time. A department store grows bigger one customer at a time. Every big accomplishment is a series of little accomplishments.

David Joseph Schwartz

Unfortunately, my research failed to support the idea that truth and a peaceful mind and spirit could be attained through a couple of trips on drugs, or with a few hours of biofeedback. A careful look at the differences between legal and illegal users of drugs indicated quite clearly that for drug induced insights to have any lasting positive meaning and/or impact on the person, a great deal of time and study had to have been spent in preparation for the experience.

In a similar way, laboratory studies soon began to show that biofeedback was not going to significantly alter the basic electrical patterns of a person's brains. In fact, studies on monozygotic and dizygotic twins clearly showed that your brain waves patterns and mine, are to a large extent established biogenetically, and the patterns

are as unique as fingerprints. Though we may gain some control over when we enter one brain wave state (e.g., alpha), or another (e.g., theta), the amount of time we spend in each state remains constant.

It was becoming clearer and clearer to me, that if a person wanted to be the best in the world at what ever they did, there were no short cuts, they were on a life long journey. At the same time, however, I was learning enough about concentration skills and emotional control to realize that the length of time it would take to move from one small success or step to the next one, could be shortened. The more the time between steps could be shortened, the farther an individual could travel on their journey!

My studies and my experiences were providing a great deal of insight into the concepts of Ki, mind like moon, and mind like water. I was beginning to understand what was going on in the brain, and what was necessary from a concentration standpoint to experience that altered state of consciousness athletes referred to as "the zone," and others called a "flow state."

The Science of The Mind

"I was warming up and made a decision to perform a reverse dive with one-half twists in a layout position. It's a very pretty dive when done well, and one I enjoy. You begin the dive by taking a normal approach to the end of the diving board-the same approach you would use for a simple front dive. Then, as you spring up into the air, you reverse your direction, diving backwards toward the board. At the very top of the dive you should be in an upside down position, with your head and back over the diving board. At that point, if you were to drop straight down, you would hit your head and shoulders on the board. From this position, your body pivots and you drop one shoulder, twisting so that you end up just missing the board and entering the water headfirst with your back toward the diving board. It's a beautiful dive all right, but it can be frightening because the first part of the dive is blind-that is, you can't see the board or the water.

"On this particular occasion, I came up off the board in perfect position. It was as though something had clicked inside of me. I knew exactly where my body was relative to the board, even though I couldn't see it. I had perfect control over my body and crystal-clear, complete awareness of everything that was going on. Time seemed slowed down as if things were happening in slow motion. I floated up, up, up, and as I reached the very top of the dive, I seemed to hang in the air. I knew that a good portion of my body was over the board, and I knew that I would miss hitting the board by about 3 inches.

As I began to drop a shoulder and twist, I heard the screams of the crowd and I knew they thought I was going to bury my head in the end of the diving board. As I was twisting, my eyes went past the people in the stands and I saw very clearly the expressions on their faces and the fear in their eyes. I instinctively

smiled, feeling such power and control. I exulted in knowing exactly where I was-and in thrilling the crowd. I turned my body and dropped into the water 3 inches from the board to complete what had to be one of the most perfect dives of my life."

I was that diver, and the above description illustrates some of the changes in perception, awareness, and concentration that occur when an athlete "enters the zone." Most importantly:

- The perception of time is slowed down and/or that objects seem larger than usual.
- There is a feeling of power and/or total control.
- There is an awareness of the final outcome before it happens.
- Emotions are altered either becoming more intense or more detached.

The master of the martial arts is "in the zone" when he is able to anticipate the move of an opponent seemingly before the opponent knows what he's going to do. Likewise, the gifted counselor, clinician, or detective, is in the zone she has a sudden insight into a client or case. It is an insight that occurs because different pieces of information have been connected in new or unique ways.

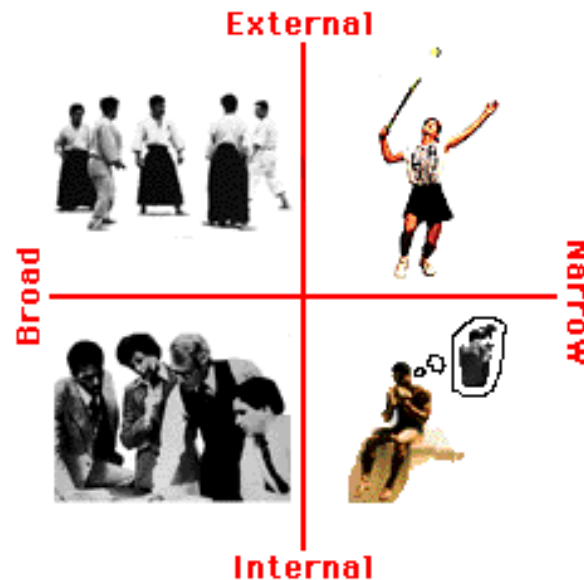
Concentration skills and/or attentional processes have been the subject of research in psychology for over a hundred years and in that time, we've learned quite a bit. Though we still haven't learned much that intuitive observers haven't been able to discover for themselves, through careful observation.

Dimensions of Concentration

Focus of concentration moves along two intersecting dimension in response to the changing demands of different performance situations. At any given point in time, your focus of concentration can be described on the basis of it's width (broad or narrow), and it's direction (external or internal). Figure 1 shows the four different types, or styles, of concentration you engage in every day.

FIGURE 1

Concentration Styles



Different Situations Require Different Concentration Skills

A broad-external focus of concentration is used to quickly read and react to the world around you. You have this focus when you make your mind like the moon, or like water. A master of the martial arts uses this focus to react to attackers, a sales person uses it to size up clients, politicians use it to read the reactions of their audience, and basketball players use it on fast breaks.

A broad-internal focus of concentration is the style used for "big picture" work. Senior level executives use this focus for strategic and financial planning, and coaches use it to make decisions about which personnel to play when. Teachers and students use it to problem solve and to develop new creative ideas. It's the type of concentration you need to "Write a brief interpretation of American history from 1603 to the present.

A narrow-external focus of concentration is the type of concentration required to focus Ki. This concentration style is used to hit or kick a ball, sink a putt, or take a shot in basketball, soccer, or hockey. You use this type of concentration when you make eye contact and direct your arguments to a person you are trying to make a point with.

A narrow-internal focus is used to systematically organize and/or rehearse an activity like a dive, a speech, or a response to an anticipated question. You also use this type of concentration to solve math problems in your head, or when you balance your checkbook, and you use it when you focus on the "the one point" or your center of mass.

A narrow-internal focus can be distinguished from a broad-internal focus in that you are attending to immediate issues or problem solving in "the here and now." When you have a broad-internal focus you are traveling across time. You are recalling past information, and blending that with the present to predict the future.

Your Perception of Time Depends Upon Your Focus of Concentration

Perception of the passage of time is directly affected by the amount of time concentration is directed to things going on in the world around you, as opposed to being focused on your own thoughts and feelings. When athletes are able to quiet, conscious, internal thought processes, and keep their concentration focused almost exclusively on the game, time is slowed down and they enter "the zone."

Time perception can be speeded up as well. When you go to sleep at night, your focus of concentration becomes almost exclusively internal and time seems to pass very quickly. When researchers or executives are problem solving or writing, concentration can become so internally focused for such a long period of time, that they enter the academics equivalent of "the zone." The end result is that an incredible amount of high quality work gets done in what appears to them, to be a very short span of time. Under these conditions it's quite common for an individual to report that when he looked at the clock he was shocked at how much time had actually passed. What had seemed like minutes was actually hours. On these occasions, thoughts and words "flow" without effort, so smoothly in fact, that at times it almost seems as if they are coming from someone else.

Interestingly, focusing exclusively in an external direction or an internal one, can be either extremely positive or extremely negative. When the performance situation is one that requires an exclusively external or internal focus, and you have the skills and abilities to meet the requirements of the situation, you enter the zone no matter what the direction of focus is. When the performance situation requires a different type of concentration from the one you are engaged in, however, and you are unable to shift, major problems can occur, including extreme panic, and "choking."

Emotional Arousal Affects Width of Focus

Research has demonstrated conclusively, that increasing emotional arousal causes an involuntary narrowing of your focus of attention (e.g., to zero in on the object which is causing the arousal in the first place). This automatic narrowing when unchecked is a primary cause of many fatal accidents. The FAA for example, has well documented cases showing how minor mechanical problems in commercial flights

have narrowed attention and so preoccupied entire flight crews that they've failed to monitor and/or hear other, much more critical flight information, until it was too late to do anything about it.

It is this link between emotions and the narrowing of concentration which you must be able to control if you hope to perform in a situation that requires a broad focus of concentration. The master of the martial arts for example cannot react to attackers if his attention becomes too narrowly focused. Nor can a student adequately recall information and answer test questions when anxiety causes her focus of attention to become too narrow.

The Feeling of Control

Significant changes in either the width or direction of your focus of concentration will result in your experiencing an "altered state of consciousness." It's important to point out that whether or not your experience is perceived as positive or negative depends upon two factors:

- The degree to which your concentration focus matches the demands of the performance situation.
- The extent to which you feel secure and in control.

Take another look at the description of the dive at the start of this chapter. There was very little shifting from an external to an internal focus and as a result things seemed to be happening in slow motion. There was however shifting of attention along the dimension of width and with that shifting there were alterations in my feelings. Throughout much of the dive I had a broad focus, "aware of everything", during that time I was a passive observer of the world around me, unaware of my feelings. The scream from the audience caused my focus to begin to narrow and as that happened, I became very aware of my feelings.

My experience was a very pleasant one because I was in control. Had I not known where I was relative to the board, my reaction to the scream from the crowd would have been dramatically different.

Emotional arousal not only influences your ability to voluntarily shift concentration along the broad to narrow dimension, it can also affect your ability to shift from an internal to an external focus. To understand this, however, you need to know how thoughts affect the movement of your body about "the one point" or your center of mass. Before going into that, let me summarize the key points about concentration.

Summary

There are four types of concentration you must be able to shift between to perform effectively in different situations. Any change in the normal amount of shifting between these concentration styles will result in an altered state of consciousness. Depending on your preparation for the experience, your confidence and feeling of control, and the extent to which your focus of concentration matches the demands of the situation, the event will be experienced as positive (e.g., in the zone) or negative (e.g., choking).

Center of Mass - The One Point



"The key to good technique is to keep your hands, feet, and hips straight and centered. If you are centered, you can move freely. The physical center is your belly; if your mind is set there as well, you are assured of victory in any endeavor."

Morihei Ueshiba

To control emotions and retain your ability to react and respond appropriately to the world around you, you must "learn to let your mind rest at the one point." As a student of Aikido, those instructions were difficult for me to understand and because of that, impossible to follow. Before I could let my mind rest at the one point I had to understand what I was being told.

Research in exercise physiology and biomechanics has demonstrated the critical relationship between the body's movement about its physiological center of mass (the one point) and performance in sport. Your center of mass or one point is the spot in your body where a vertical line dividing your body in half would intersect with a horizontal line doing the same thing. That spot is somewhere behind your navel.

The power of a boxer's punch, the distance a baseball or golf ball travels, the heaviness of a ground stroke in tennis, all of these depend upon two critical variables, speed (e.g., club head speed in golf, hand speed in boxing) and body weight or mass. For optimal power and performance in sport, timing has to be perfect so that weight transfer through the body's center of mass and maximal

speed are achieved at the instant the club head makes contact with the ball in golf, or when your hand makes contact with your opponent in boxing.

Mind and Center of Mass are Connected

What you concentrate on or think about affects emotions, and emotions in turn affect the distribution of body weight about your center of mass. The changes that occur as a result of your thoughts can interfere with timing and coordination reducing your level of performance. To understand this, imagine yourself in the position of the Aikido instructor at the top of this page. You might want to stand up and actually assume the position to feel what I am about to describe.

The body weight of the Aikido instructor is evenly divided between both feet. Fifty percent of his weight is on his right foot and fifty percent is on the left. Now, although you may not be able to see it, his knees are partially bent, lowering his center of mass slightly. The more he relaxes the muscles in his lower body, the more his center of mass drops. Conversely, the more anxious and/or tense he is, the more he straightens up and the higher his center of mass.

If the Aikido master was attacked from the front and moved forward to meet the attacker and punch him in the face, the power from his punch would come from his hand speed, and from the movement of his body weight through his center of mass. To get maximum power (focus of Ki), he would have to quickly shift a higher percentage of his weight to his back foot and he would have to lower his center of mass even more. Then, as he began his punch he would move his body weight up and forward, timing it so that all of his weight was behind his punch and his hand speed was maximal at the instant his fist made contact with the opponent.

To a highly trained, highly coordinated athlete that move should be relatively simple but it depends on accurately perceiving the movement and intent of the attacker. If emotions aren't controlled perceptions become distorted and timing is upset. If for example, the Aikido master becomes anxious or fearful, the thoughts associated with his anxiety will affect him in two ways. First, they'll cause him to shift more weight towards his back foot than he needs to. Second, they'll delay his response to the attacker. His punch will be tentative and lack power because he's falling away from the opponent. If the Aikido master becomes angry he is likely to rush his attack. He will transfer his weight up and forward too quickly and his opponent may have time to pull back. In this instance, power is lost because body weight has been transferred through the center of mass before the fist makes contact. The power in the punch now has to come from hand speed alone.

Center of Mass and Emotional Intelligence

Sensitivity to the moves, moods, and intentions of others is the hallmark of success in any performance arena involving two or more people. The ability to read the non-verbal cues which tell you what a person is feeling, if they're being honest, if they're

a friend, or if they're a threat, often spells the difference between winning and losing.

"Timing is everything" and more often than not, it's non-verbal messages that announce the proper time to introduce your idea, ask your question, or make your point. When you become too anxious, or too angry, or overly focused on your own needs, you lose the ability to accurately read others. Not only that, but you communicate enough about your own feelings in non-verbal ways to your opponent, to allow him or her to read your energy flow. Your opponent can get into the flow of your Ki and use your own power against you.

The Mind-Body Interaction and Transition Points

In most performance settings there are auditory, visual, and tactile or kinesthetic cues that provide performance relevant information. Your brain simultaneously monitors these different sensory input channels. Imagine your brain being connected to a board on the wall with a bunch of lights on it. Each of the lights provides information to your brain from one of your sensory channels. The lights are steady most of the time, but blink briefly with each change in sensory input. For example the light providing kinesthetic feedback to your brain blinks each time your body movement changes relative to your center of mass. It blinks as you start to move forward then comes on and remains constant until the direction of your movement relative to your center of mass, changes again. The light providing auditory feedback blinks with each change in tone and/or intensity of sound. The light providing visual feedback blinks each time your visual field shifts becoming broader or narrower.

Each time one of the lights blinks your brain becomes aware of a new pattern of stimulation. At that instant there is a pre-conscious analysis of that pattern. Think of those pre-conscious instants of analysis as "transition points," because they indicate a transition between patterns of stimulation.

The more highly skilled and experienced you are as a performer, the more likely your brain has experienced the new pattern before. This fact makes it easier for you to recognize and interpret those changes in the patterns of stimulation that are out of the ordinary. Changes that indicate a need to make some adjustments in what you're doing. Likewise, the more highly skilled you are the easier it is to recognize and ignore those pattern changes that need not concern you (e.g., a scream which had no relevance to my dive).

When patterns are out of the ordinary, and adjustments have to be made, you begin to consciously control and direct your focus of concentration. As soon as you do, you inhibit your brains ability to monitor other sensory channels. Thus, the speed with which you are able to make adjustments becomes critical to performance and critical to getting into, and staying in, the zone. If recovery is too slow, you begin to fall farther and farther behind. As you'll see below, speed of adjustment is directly

linked to your level of experience, training, and confidence. When you have the training and experience to give you confidence in your ability to perform, it's easy to recover from adversity. When you lack that confidence and experience, however, recovery is much more difficult.

Different performance situations require different pattern recognition skills. Athletes for example, must be highly sensitive to kinesthetic and visual patterns for good hand-eye coordination. Sales persons and politicians need to be sensitive to visual and auditory cues if they hope to read the non-verbal behavior of others. To be successful, academics, researchers, and executives engaged in problem solving tasks have identified patterns they associate with good, logical, thought processes. When an argument fails to conform to the expected pattern an alarm goes off and concentration becomes focused on identifying and analyzing the inconsistency.

Becoming Centered

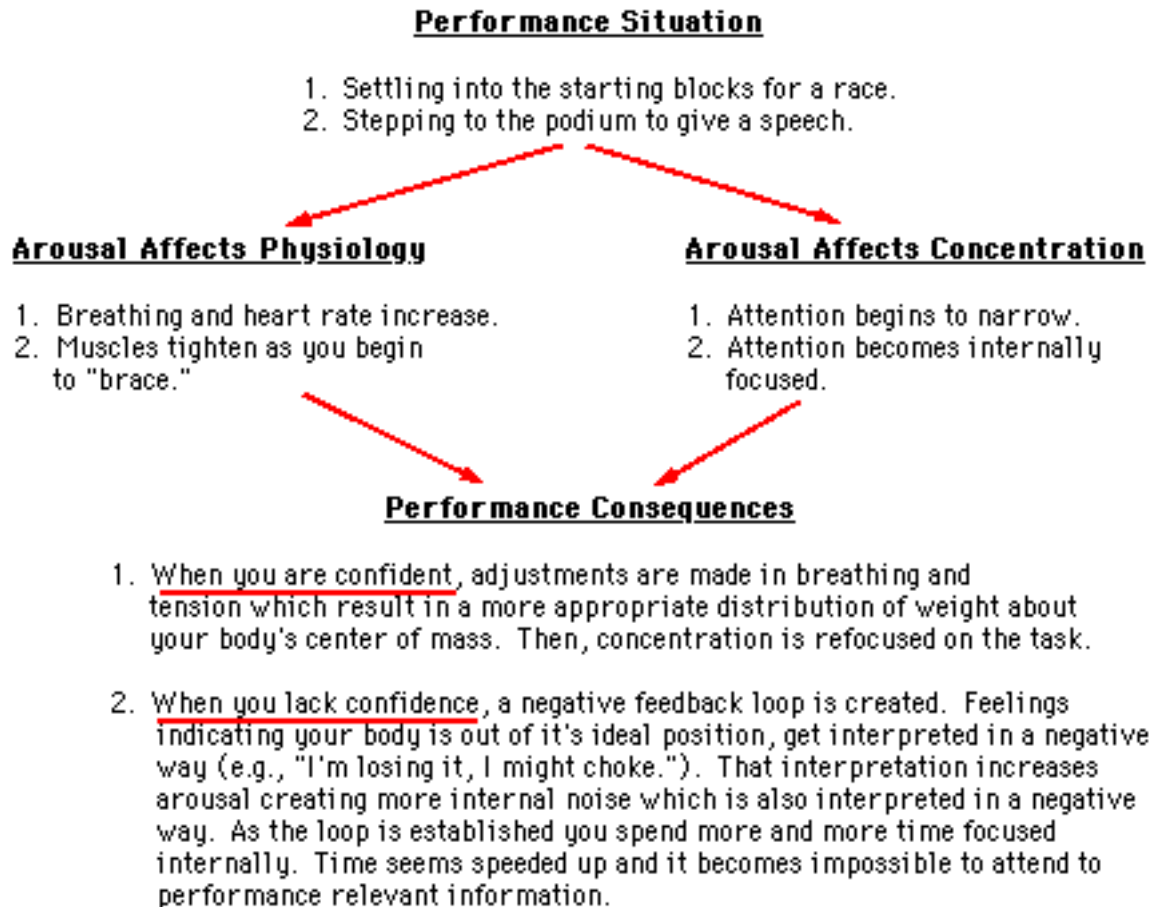
You feel "centered", confident and ready to perform, when the kinesthetic feedback your brain is receiving from your body signals that weight distribution around your body's center of mass is appropriate for the task at hand. As you get into the starting position immediately prior to a race, or as you step to the podium to deliver an address, you become acutely aware of your body. As you settle in to your ready position your brain receives a pattern of stimulation based on weight distribution. That pattern either indicates you are "Okay", in which case you're "centered", or that something is wrong.

When the signal indicates everything is okay there are no internal distractions and it becomes quite easy to focus concentration on the task. When the signal indicates you are not in the correct position, however, some adjustments need to be made before concentration can be totally focused on the performance. If you are confident, and aware of the position your body should be in, relative to your center of mass, the adjustments can be made quickly, and your concentration can be refocused on the task.

When you are not confident in your ability to meet performance expectations, recovery becomes more difficult. It's under these circumstances that choking is most likely to occur.

Choking

As pressure increases in a performance situation there is a corresponding increase in your level of emotional arousal and a narrowing of attention. The changes in arousal affect the distribution of your weight about your center of mass.



Summary

Research in the areas of exercise physiology and biomechanics provided me with the information I needed to put the concepts of Ki and the "one point" into a more rational, less mystical, framework. I was getting a good picture of the mind-body link. It was easy to see the specific way in which the changes associated with increased emotional arousal affected concentration, coordination, timing, and the non-verbal messages people communicated to each other.

I began systematically using that knowledge to help myself, and others, develop greater control over concentration in pressure situations. I quickly found out, however, that knowing what was happening to concentration and emotions wasn't enough. Changes in emotional arousal often occur suddenly, and without warning. Once those changes occur, it becomes impossible to recover quickly enough.

Recovery and the prevention of problems depends upon making the necessary adjustments in breathing, muscle tension, and focus of concentration before the situation gets out of hand. That knowledge, combined with the fact that research indicated that different individuals have different concentration strengths and

weaknesses, led to the development of The Attentional and Interpersonal Style (TAIS) - Inventory.

Don't Ask Willie Stargell to Bunt

"The leader never lies to himself, especially about himself, knows his flaws as well as assets, and deals with them directly. You are your own raw material. When you know what you consist of and what you want to make of it, then you can invent yourself."

Warren Bennis

Willie Stargell was a great long ball hitter, but a lousy bunter. Fortunately for Willie, his coaches recognized his strength and were smart enough to play to that instead of asking him to bunt. A Willie Stargell who is allowed to hit away will be a lot happier, and experience a lot more success than a Willie Stargell who is continually asked to bunt. The first step toward maximizing potential and enhancing performance consists of identifying your concentration strengths and weaknesses.

This doesn't mean you don't have the power to do or be anything you choose. Under optimal conditions the average person can match the concentration requirements of any performance situation. How often, however, do you encounter optimal conditions? How often, are you in control of every aspect of a situation?

Finders, Minders, and Binders

Research has demonstrated that although the average person moves easily into the four different concentration areas I talked about earlier, most of us have one focus of concentration that is preferred, or more highly developed than the others. The absent-minded professor for example, is dominated by a broad-internal focus of concentration and as a result isn't very sensitive to things going on in the world around him. The highly emotional, hysterical individual portrayed in the movies is so sensitive and reactive to the environment that she fails to think things through before acting on them.

Mark McCormack, author of "What They Don't Teach You at Harvard Business School", and a very astute observer of human behavior, talks about three types of individual's you can find in any large organization. McCormack calls these individuals "Finders, Minders, and Binders."

According to McCormack, Finders are the individuals who come up with the creative ideas that generate an income stream for the organization. Finders are very good at developing a broad-internal focus of concentration, but not very good at narrowing their focus. Minders on the other hand, are good at narrowing their focus of concentration. Minders enjoy attending to details and perfecting processes and they are the people who are responsible for seeing that the Finders ideas move from concepts to products. The third category Binders, are individuals who have more

balanced concentration skills. That balance allows Binders to empathize and communicate with both the Finders and Minders in the organization. Binders tend to be the managers who resolve conflicts and hold the team together.

Research on the concentration styles of the Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) of major corporations, and those of World Champions in sport, support the importance of recognizing different concentration styles, and of learning to play to your concentration strengths.

*"You see things; and you say, "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say,
"Why not?"*

George Bernard Shaw

The primary responsibility of CEO is to have the vision and foresight necessary to grow the organization. CEO's must be able to see "the big picture." Not surprisingly, their concentration strength is their ability to develop a broad-internal focus of concentration, the style used to analyze and plan. The CEO's relative weakness is focus. CEO's are less focused and less attentive to details than most of the other people in the organization. As a result, when follow through and attention to detail are required they delegate those responsibilities to others.

World champions, in contrast to CEO's, are able to focus. In fact, this is their most highly developed concentration skill. It's their exceptional ability to focus concentration, to polish and perfect skills, to make one thing in their life a priority and to stick with that priority no matter what, that gets them a world championship.

Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

Calvin Coolidge

You may have the concentration skills required to be a CEO, without having the skills necessary to become a world champion in your chosen sport, and vice versa. To succeed at both would be extremely difficult because the abilities that help you in one setting would hurt you in the other. A CEO who becomes too narrowly focused will lose his/her market share to the competition. A world record holder dominated by an analytical style will think too much when it comes time to perform and be unable to stay focused. In fact, it's been my experience that individuals who do have the concentration skills to be both, end up not being happy because they don't make it to the top in either field.

Development of TAIS

The Attentional and Interpersonal Style - Inventory (TAIS) is a 144 item self-report questionnaire. It was designed to measure both your ability to develop and shift between the four different types of concentration, and to measure certain performance relevant interpersonal skills.

As with concentration skills, there is ample research indicating you have dominant interpersonal characteristics that can be used to predict how you will behave when you are under pressure. The interpersonal behaviors and needs TAIS measures include your need for control, your ability to compromise, your level of self-confidence and speed of decision making, your confrontiveness, your supportiveness, your need for personal space and privacy, and your need to be involved with others. These particular characteristics were chosen above others, because they play an important role in a majority of performance arenas.

It's helpful to think of your concentration skills and interpersonal characteristics as habits. Some habits are more highly developed than others. Again, we know from research that those habits that are most highly developed are the ones that lead to initial mistakes, and also control your behavior when you become emotionally aroused.

"My faults and my virtues are the same. Nothing is ever enough. I must check everything. It causes me problems - people think I don't trust anyone."

Giorgio Armani

Have you ever noticed how many brilliant individuals have been brought to their knees by the very characteristics that led to their initial success and rise to power. Consider the following quotation from General George Patton.

For years I have been accused of making snap judgments. Honestly, this is not the case because I am a profound military student and the thoughts I express, perhaps to flippantly, are the result of years of thought and study.

George S. Patton

Patton was a brilliant strategist who had total confidence in his intellectual abilities, a very high need for control, and a corresponding disregard for the opinions of others. His need for control combined with his confidence and faith in himself made him a great general and also got him fired. Under pressure, Patton's high level of self confidence and need for control kept him from listening and/or compromising. Though a great general he was a lousy politician. On the battlefield his characteristics served him well, as a general who had to take orders from the president (his commander in chief), his strengths became his liabilities.

As every divided kingdom falls, so every mind divided between many studies confounds and saps itself.

Leonardo Da Vinci

Even the most brilliant people have limitations, and can improve. In the preceding quote, Leonardo Da Vinci makes it clear that he was aware of the extent to which his exceptional analytical and conceptual skill (broad-internal focus) created problems for him. Da Vinci realized that his overly fertile mind kept him from completing projects. Certainly there are those today that believe he would have contributed a great deal more had his genius been more narrowly focused.

By using TAIS to identify your more highly developed concentration and interpersonal skills, it becomes possible to:

- Identify the situations you will be most effective in, because your concentration and interpersonal strengths match the demands of the performance arena.
- Identify the situations where problems are most likely to occur because of mismatches between your dominant concentration and interpersonal skills and the requirements of the situation.
- Predict the type of mistakes you are most likely to make (e.g., becoming overly aggressive or too tentative) as well as how these mistakes will affect weight distribution around your center of mass.

Summary

The knowledge I gained through personal experience and research led to the development of a theory about the relationship between concentration skills, emotional arousal, and performance. That theory can explain what happens to your focus of concentration when you are "in the zone" and when you choke. I developed The Attentional and Interpersonal Style (TAIS) inventory, to measure those concentration and interpersonal skills the theory indicates are critical components of performance, and therefore predictors of success and/or failure.

The first version of TAIS was published in 1976 and since that time the inventory has been revised, and used around the world for selection, screening, team building and performance enhancement with athletes, executives, police officers, and military personnel. Over the past twenty years, a great deal of data has been accumulated demonstrating the validity of both the theory, and the attentional and interpersonal constructs measured by the inventory. People do have preferred concentration and interpersonal styles and they perform better in those situations that play to their preferences. The utility of the information provided by the inventory, for team building and performance enhancement has been demonstrated time and time again.

By the time TAIS was developed, my search for the answers to ultimate performance had come a long way. I was able to explain those mystical concepts of mind like moon, Ki, and the one point in behavioral terms. I could use TAIS to measure concentration and interpersonal skills, and use the results to predict when the person would perform well, and when he or she would not. I could predict the particular type of concentration error the individual would make and how he or she would respond physically and interpersonally to mistakes. I could help the person select a specific performance arena to work on, and then tell them the concentration and interpersonal skills they needed to strengthen, and/or emphasize, to get into the zone. The specific nature of the information I could provide from TAIS results, meant the length of time it would take a person to develop a skill, or a higher level of performance could be dramatically reduced. But something was still missing. Interventions were too specific, the confidence and skill developed in one situation wasn't automatically transferring to others.

Are You Scared?

Transcend the realm of life and death, and then you will be able to make your way calmly and safely through any crisis that confronts you.

Morihei Ueshiba



You are about to attempt to set a world high dive record by executing a triple reverse somersault from 172 feet in the air! Confidence in your ability to do the dive is limited by the fact that no one, including you, has ever done it before! The difference between success and failure could be death. To make your challenge even more difficult, one of the major television networks is covering the event. When you entered the contest you were told you would have to be willing to be interviewed by the network, at the top of the tower, just before you took that leap into space.

Looking into the TV camera and speaking into the microphone to be heard above the wind, you respond to questions like. "Are you scared?" "Is the wind blowing?" "Will the wires holding up the tower get in your way on the take off?" Just when you need to be concentrating on positives, some idiot is doing everything possible to create internal doubts. Under such extreme conditions, how can you let those distractions go, center, and focus on the dive? Ueshiba was in the same position when attacked by bandits in China. He had never been in a situation where someone was going to shoot him, yet he had to be able to perform to survive.

Research on the relationship between focus of concentration, emotional arousal and performance had provided me with the information I needed to help people control emotions and concentration when they had time to prepare and practice. I had found ways to speed the learning process and to help them develop the confidence they needed to be able to let go of distractions under most reasonable circumstances. But I had still not found the secret to the kind of inner peace that allows an enlightened individual to transcend the realm of life and death so that he or she can control emotions and concentration no matter how dire and/or unexpected the circumstances.

"Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love."

Karen

It was 10:45 PM when the phone rang and I'd been asleep for about 45 minutes. The switchboard operator for a suicide and personal crisis intervention service was on the line. "Hello Dr. Nideffer, I have a caller can I patch them through?" I could feel muscles tighten and noticed a change in my breathing. I had no idea who was on the other end of the line. In spite of the operators attempt to screen calls, the person could be a prankster, or someone wallowing in self-pity who wanted to lodge a complaint about the way he or she was being treated. Of course, it was also possible that the caller could be serious about taking his or her life. It was the latter possibility that made me anxious because a serious caller was placing some of the responsibility for his or her life in my hands.

I asked the operator to wait a minute while I got a pad and pencil, and then took a deep breath to center myself before taking the call. Then, I told the operator she could patch me through and began by saying "Hello, I'm Bob Nideffer, can I help

you?" I waited for a few moments and hearing nothing, tried again. "I'd like to help, but it's awfully hard if you won't talk to me." There was still no response from the other end of the line, so I stopped talking and began listening. Soon, I could hear very soft sobs from the person on the other end of the line.

Knowing someone was on the line, I continued for several minutes to try and get the person to talk. Still no success, but the soft sobbing continued. I'm not a patient person, and in the past, I'd responded to calls where people refused to talk by listening for about fifteen minutes and then saying something like "I want to help, but I can't if you won't talk. I'm going to hang up. When you're ready to talk, call back." Then, I would hang up. Sometimes they would call back and sometimes they wouldn't.

This time something was different, for some reason I was much more patient than usual. The hair on the back of my neck was standing up and my senses seemed keener, more alert. I felt no irritation at the individual's refusal or inability to talk, only a very strong desire to make contact with them. I instinctively knew this was a real crisis, and that the person on the other end was in a great deal of pain. My mind was resting at the one point and I was "in the zone."

Looking back on the experience, I realized there were a lot of very subtle cues I was picking up without even realizing it. The sobs were too soft to be a prank. A person trying to lead me on would have sobbed louder, and more at certain times in response to my expressions of concern. Instead, the sobs seemed unrelated to the things I was saying. The person was caught inside their thoughts and feelings and the sobs were in relation to those, not to anything I was saying.

I kept asking questions and expressing concern for about 45 minutes. I found myself surprised by the differences in my feelings. My normal objective, logical approach to handling a crisis call had disappeared. I was feeling the person's fear and loneliness. I was hurting with them and for them. There was no thought about the words I should be saying, no conscious analysis on my part to try and figure out what I could say that would get through to the person. Instead, my words and feelings were spontaneously tumbling out, and the caring in my voice was obvious. "Please let me help, I know you're hurting and I know you're alone."

Those words and the tone they were expressed in, brought her out of her head. When she responded, her voice was soft and gentle and the words she spoke came out as a simple statement of fact. "It's no use, no one can help." She said those words with the same logic and reason I had used all my life. There was nothing dramatic in her statement. Although I knew nothing about her, her voice, and the way she spoke, told me she was very special. At that moment, I knew that I cared for her, that she would be very important in my life.

"It's no use, no one can help." I wanted her to be wrong, but in my heart I knew she wasn't. "You sound so sure.... I know you feel that way but I can't understand where the feelings come from unless you tell me.... You may be right, there may be nothing I can do, but please... give me a chance to try...."

Her sobbing continued but at times it would be broken by the attention she would briefly pay to things I was saying. I was starting to get through. "Please, let me help." The words came out like the plea, as if I was the one in pain, as if I was the one that needed help. She heard my pain and my concern and she spoke in a caring, empathetic way, saying "I know you want to help, but its no use. There is nothing you can do, nothing anyone can do, I shouldn't have bothered you, you can't help."

A voice inside of me said "this girl is going to die," and I found myself asking her, "Have you been to see a doctor?"

Looking back on the experience I know my instincts were based on the patterns of lights from sensory information my brain was receiving from her. My mind was like the moon or like water. The words, the tone of her voice, the timing of her statement in response to my tone of voice, and the content of my statement, all demonstrated that this girl had gotten out of her head and was concerned for me! In spite of her fear and her loneliness, she had responded to my plea. She was feeling badly for causing me pain. At that moment she was more worried about me and cared more for me than she did for herself.

"Have you been to see a doctor?" As those words came out, there was a sharp reaction from the other end. She cried out in pain "Oh God, why did you ask that question, why, why." Now the sobbing was loud and for a minute or two it was uncontrollable. As the sobs began to subside I gently asked what the doctor had told her.

Her name was Karen, and at first she was reluctant to tell me anything. Then, more to respond to my pain and helplessness she began to tell her story. It was difficult for her to talk, and the story took a long time to tell.

Karen was 23 and had moved to Portland, Oregon from a farm in Ohio. She'd only been in Portland for a few months. Her family was very close and it was obvious that she loved them very much. In fact, her family was the most important thing in the world and it was them she was trying to protect.

She was proud of her father who she described as a strong man, and very religious. A deacon in the church he was respected and admired in the community. Her brother too was special. A fourth year medical student, he was one of those individuals who goes into medicine out of a desire to serve others. He wanted to be a doctor more than anything else in the world and Karen couldn't have been prouder of him.

Karen's mother too had been a source of inspiration and strength. She had a very special relationship to Karen's father and had been everything Karen believed a wife and mother should be. It had been extremely hard on the family, but especially her father, when her mother died of cancer just before Karen moved to Oregon.

At the time her mother died, Karen was engaged to a young man who'd been sent to Viet Nam. With her mother gone and her brother in medical school, Karen made a decision to move to Portland, Oregon. She needed some space, and the West Coast seemed closer to her fiancée than the farm in Ohio.

As Karen related her story, her disappointment in herself became obvious. She had moved, but she had not had the strength she demanded of herself, and that she believed her family expected of her. Out of loneliness and insecurity she'd started dating about three months after moving to Oregon. It wasn't long before she was sleeping with the man she was dating. She'd gone in to see the doctor because she had missed her period and thought she might be pregnant.

Karen found the name of a physician in the phone book and made an appointment for a pregnancy test. She was given a routine physical and basic information about her past medical history was taken. The doctor was business like and told her he would have the results of the test in a couple of days.

The two days passed and Karen went in for the results. "I have some good news for you, you're pregnant. I want to take a couple of additional tests, however, so if you'll see the nurse, she'll draw some blood and set up your next appointment." The nurse was very efficient, drew the blood, and asked Karen to return in a week.

Karen left the doctor's office feeling confused and guilty. She didn't know what to do. She couldn't talk to her family or to her fiancée. She called the man she was dating and told him she was pregnant. His response was completely selfish, "That's your problem. I don't want to see you again."

Karen went home feeling dirty and worthless. She sat down at her kitchen table to try and figure out what she should do. She knew she couldn't forgive herself for what she had done, but she was determined to make the best of her situation. She would have the baby, her religious beliefs and concerns for life would not allow otherwise. Somehow she would find the strength to face her family and fiancée. She was sure the relationship to her fiancée would be destroyed but she would live with that. She was willing to accept responsibility for what had happened, and believed that somehow things would work out.

It had been a difficult week for Karen, made easier only by thinking about the baby, and about the things she would do for it. She was tired when she walked into the doctor's office for the third time, but no longer confused. She had a sense of purpose, a mission in life.

Except for a 45-minute wait, Karen's visit with the doctor was very brief. He was sitting behind a large desk when she was shown in. He was in his early 30s and seemed nervous. He had Karen's test results in front of him and he motioned for her to sit down.

"Karen, I've had several samples of your blood checked and you have acute leukemia. You may, with proper treatment live for two or three years. You must have an abortion because you will not be able to carry the baby to term. You will need to start chemotherapy soon. I want you to come back next week and we'll begin treatment. Do you have any questions?"

Karen couldn't even think, she just shook her head no. With that he got up, opened the door, and sent her out of the office as quickly as he could.

She walked out of the office in shock. She didn't remember anything about the walk home, she made it there on instincts. She entered the house, sat down in a chair, and stayed in the same position for the next three days. She didn't eat or sleep, her mind raced out of control, completely overwhelmed by all of the thoughts and feelings that pressed in on her.

She could not have an abortion. She couldn't bring herself to do that. She couldn't live with the guilt and shame that would come with the abortion. She couldn't reach out to her family. Her father had been hurt and gone through an incredible amount of pain as he watched his wife die. Karen couldn't put him through that again. In her mind, her sins were unforgivable. She had disgraced herself and her family. She could see no way out, so she would kill herself to spare them pain.

Having lived on a farm, Karen had grown up with guns and knew how to use them. She got up from the chair like a zombie, walked to a sporting goods store where she bought a pistol. She told the clerk she was buying it for protection. She took her purchase and returned home.

Her plan was simple, put the pistol to her head and blow her brains out. She sat at the table trying to work up the courage to pull the trigger and something kept her from it. She believed that no one could help. Her situation was hopeless, yet with all that shame and guilt, she still cared about life, and about other people.

It was Karen's ability to care for others in the face of tremendous pain that brought out the love in me. In responding to her, the "I" in me died. My concerns, fears, worries, anger all ceased to exist. Everything focused outward, on to Karen. In loving Karen, I found myself centered, at peace in spite of the situation.

What we do not see, what most of us never suspect of existing, is the silent but irresistible power which comes to the rescue of those who fight on in the face of discouragement.

Napoleon Hill

As Karen finished her story, I looked at the clock on the kitchen stove and realized we had been talking for three and a half hours. I knew she was physically and emotionally exhausted and I told her that was affecting her ability to accurately evaluate her options. "Karen, you may be right, suicide may be the answer, but it's still hard to know for sure. You're making such a big decision please get some rest first. You've waited this long, a couple of hours more won't hurt and it may help you see things more clearly. Please..., give us both a chance to think more clearly."

In hanging up, I was taking a chance. I only had a first name, I didn't know where Karen lived, but I knew Karen cared for me, just as I cared for her. She agreed to wait. She didn't think she would be able to sleep, but said she would lay down. I told her to eat some soup and to drink some warm milk thinking that might help her sleep. I kept emphasizing that her decision was so important that she needed strength and a clear head to make the best possible move. "You want to be sure, you want to help your family, not hurt them."

I hung up after Karen promised to call back if she couldn't sleep, and before she made any attempt to act on a final decision.

As I hung up, the caring that Karen had brought out began to be replaced by anger and even rage. The "I" in me returned. All I could think about was the insensitivity of the physician. How could he have let Karen leave his office without any knowledge of her situation? I thought again of Karen and realized that my anger wasn't doing either of us any good. The physician was a human being who cared about people. A human being who's very concern, crippled him. Karen's test results were stones that rippled the water and created anxiety for him. How could he look a 23 year-old woman in the eyes and tell her she was going to die, that she had to have an abortion? He closed his eyes and hid behind medical structure to control his own anxiety. His concern about his ability to do his job and control his feelings kept him in his head where he was unable to perceive Karen's need.

Alone at home I started to cry, feeling Karen's conflicts. I knew she believed she could never be forgiven. She expected so much of herself, in being weak and giving in to her loneliness she had hurt herself and her family. Being pregnant out of wedlock was something terrible in her mind. She was trapped by her desire to be perfect. She was afraid to reach out to people who met more than anything else in the world to her. Dying alone, even taking her-own life, would be easier than hurting them more, and risking their disappointment and rejection.

I realized I loved Karen and I was crying for a lot of people who felt like her, including myself. Karen was about to die alone and frightened. She would die alone because she was too afraid to reach out. I had never met a person I cared more for nor a person I felt whose concern for others had earned her the right to live and to have the love she so desperately needed.

It was two hours later when Karen's second call came through. She'd eaten a little soup and tried to rest. She had been unable to sleep, however, and indicated she had "...spent the time thinking about blowing my brains out. I was afraid before, but now that's gone, I'm no longer afraid." She sounded stronger, more self-assured. I had asked her to rest to get her to be able to think of alternatives and instead I'd helped her find the strength to pull the trigger!

For a brief moment, the water started to ripple as worries about myself began to distort my perceptions and I focused on the wrong things. "What would people think, I'd talked someone into pulling the trigger." Suddenly my concern wasn't for Karen, it was for me. I fell back on habits and techniques, mechanically trying to find the right things to say.

"Karen, I'm glad you're no longer frightened. Let's think about the effect your suicide will have on others. You are judging them by your actions. You are anticipating how they would respond to you and using that to help you pull the trigger. You're making them partially responsible for your death and it's not fair. If they are innocent think of the hurt your death will cause."

"I don't want to hurt them anymore, but after what I've done, they just can't respond in any other way." Given the events that had taken place, given her failure, it was inconceivable to Karen that she could be loved and accepted. My logical arguments to the contrary wouldn't change her feelings.

Karen's answer again hit me with the fact that here was a 23 year-old woman who was alone and about to die, yet her thoughts were for others. Her capacity for love, pulled me out of my head and refocused me on the love and caring I was feeling for her. At the time, I didn't know what was happening. I do now.

Karen's dilemma was my own, and perhaps yours. Like Karen, I believed my sins were unpardonable. I hurt for her because I was in the same place. I hated myself for not living up to my expectations and the expectations I believed others had for me. I saw myself as selfish and uncaring, I hadn't really loved others. If I had, I never would have let them and myself down. Since I hadn't cared enough about others, how could they possibly care for me?

Karen's story provided the catalyst I needed to discover the tiny bit of self-sacrificing love that existed inside of me. In feeling the love I had for Karen, I became lovable. Trying to help Karen, she had helped me. My answer was her answer, for

Karen to change her mind about suicide she would have to be made aware of her own love.

"The moment you have in your heart this extraordinary thing called love and feel the depth, the delight, the ecstasy of it, you will discover that for you the world is transformed."

J. Krishnamurti

As I've indicated, it wasn't logic at the time of Karen's call which made me realize that she needed to become aware of her own love, it was instinct. I was "in the zone," and it was the expression of love that had gotten me there.

"You must love you family very much. To deserve your love, they must be very special people, I wish I'd known them. Your brother sounds neat, it must have been fun growing up together."

I got Karen talking about her brother. We started trading stories telling each other what it was like growing up. We had a lot in common, we had both grown up on farms, and we had done crazy mischievous things. She told me about the tricks she used to play on her brother and I told her about convincing my brother he could fly just by flapping his arms. We laughed together, neither of us afraid to share feelings. Without fear and mistrust blocking the way we became a part of each other. It seemed so natural to feel a deep sense of appreciation and love. Karen sensed my loneliness as much as I sensed hers and we protected and reassured each other.

I begged her to call her brother. I told her I couldn't tell how her father would respond but through the things we had shared I felt I knew her brother. I told Karen how important she was to me and why she was worth loving. I'd grown to respect her strength and her concern for others in those few hours. She could hear it, and she could believe it. I told her how badly I would feel if she died alone, how important it was to me that I be able to share my feelings with her, that I was positive her brother felt the same. "He wants to be a doctor because he cares about people. I know he will be able to understand, I know he must love you so very much."

"Karen, please call your brother, give him a chance. He is going to feel some responsibility for your death whether you want him to or not. At least respect him enough to let him talk to you. Don't pre-judge him. I know it's hard, but you can do it."

I told her I would hang up so she could call her brother. "Please call him and call me back. I know he loves you." She told me she didn't think she could do it. I told her I believed she could and that I was going to hang up. "Call me back, please." She said, "I will, if I don't kill myself."

We hung up, neither of us knowing for sure what would happen. I was betting on the strength and love I had seen in Karen. I was praying her love for her brother and for me was enough to give her the strength to make the call.

I received my last call from Karen at 8:30 in the morning. It had been a long night for both of us. She was excited and happy. She had called her brother and he was now on his way to Portland. He would be arriving in a few hours. She kept saying over and over that she couldn't believe it. He had been so understanding so loving and supportive. "He loves me, he wasn't angry."

I smiled at the tone in Karen's voice and in the delight she found in being reassured of her brother's love. I knew he'd come through, in my mind it was inconceivable that anyone could have rejected her.

Karen talked only briefly. She wanted to take a shower and clean up her apartment for her brother. She asked if the two of them could come to see me that afternoon. She wanted her brother to meet me. I told her I would be hurt if she didn't and we set a time.

That afternoon I received a call from Karen's brother. He told me Karen was sleeping. He had given her some tranquilizers as soon as he arrived. He said she wanted to keep the appointment but that he felt it was more important for her to get some sleep. He would be taking Karen back home with him. I had hoped to meet Karen, but maybe this was for the best. I told him I understood and agreed that she needed rest. He promised to say good-bye for me.

A couple of weeks later, I received a long letter from Karen's brother. He really was a special person. He too had been angry at the physician, saying the only good thing he did was "tell my sister she had two to three years to live." He had seen the laboratory report and a year would be a better estimate. Karen would have to have an abortion.

Karen had told him all about me and had said that I was "'Okay', high praise indeed from my sister." He then thanked me for giving him and his father the opportunity to spend the last few months with Karen.

Karen is dead now, but she showed me the incredible power of love. Through Karen I could understand and feel the truth behind Ueshiba's words:

"The true meaning of the term samurai is one who serves and adheres to the power of love."

"Loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. The spirit of self-sacrifice creates trust in the power of love."

We Learn to Love

"The way is not in the sky, the way is in the heart."

Gautama Buddha

It's in loving that you "transcend the realm of life and death." Love soothes the mind and body love conquers fear. It is in loving, that your mind rests at the one point. Love of someone or something else, pulls you out of yourself, the ego dies and as it does all fear and anxiety disappear. The clouds blow away, the water calms and you see the world clearly.

The "I" being referred to in my title for this paper, "Trading an I for an eye," is your ego. When your concern for self gives way to love for someone or something else, your ego "I" disappears and you enter the "eye" of the storm.

The most dramatic conflicts are perhaps, those that take place not between men but between a man and himself--where the arena of conflict is the solitary mind.

Clark Moustakas

There is a storm that rages inside each of us, a huge battle for control, control over our own thoughts and control over the world around us. The harder we fight for control, the worse the battle becomes. At the eye of that storm, however, at the core of your being, there is love. Get rid of the "I" that fuels the storm and you enter the eye of the storm that surrounds you. Reside there, and the storm dies.

Why love and why not anger, you ask. Doesn't anger get some people out of their head and get them to focus on the world around them? Yes it does. Anger can pull you out of your thoughts and feelings and get you to focus on something outside of yourself. Anger, however, generates physical tension and a hardness in us. Anger leads to "hard eyes", to a pinpoint focus, to an extreme narrowing of concentration. In anger you meet the competition head on. It's your Ki against the world, sooner or later you will lose and in the end both you, and the source of your anger are diminished. Love on the other hand leads to "soft eyes" and to an increased awareness of and appreciation for your surroundings. Love sensitizes you and brings you into the energy flow of the other person. As the two of you become one, you are both strengthened. Small wonder that medical research demonstrates clearly the healing power of love and the destructive power of anger.

Love is the emblem of eternity: it confounds all notion of time: effaces all memory of a beginning, all fear of an end.

Anna Louise De Stael

I don't feel the intensity of the love I felt for Karen often. When I do re-awaken that love, it does not last as long as I would like. I can, however, re-awaken that love and the more I do, the stronger I become. If I am to be controlled under pressure by habits, then let my strongest habit be the desire to place the needs of others ahead of my own.

He who would be useful, strong, and happy, must cease to be a passive receptacle for the negative, beggardly, and impure streams of thought; and as a wise householder commands his servants and invites his guests, so must he learn to command his desires, and to say with authority, what thoughts he shall admit into the mansion of his soul.

James Allen

No thoughtful man ever came to the end of his life, and had time and a little space of calm from which to look back upon it, who did not know and acknowledge that it was what he had done unselfishly and for others, and nothing else, that satisfied him in the retrospect, and made him feel that he had played the man.

Woodrow Wilson

Mission Impossible

"Makers of empire, they have fought for bigger things than crowns and higher seats than thrones."

Herbert Kaufman

Most of us can feel love and concern for others, when "conditions" are supportive of that love. But who do you know that can honestly say his or her love is unconditional? I can't! I've had moments, like the time with Karen, when my love seemed more self-less than others and those were indeed transcendent experiences. For the most part, however, our love, concern, caring, and positive regard for others, is contingent upon our circumstances at the time, and upon our receiving support for our love from the object of our love.

There is nothing wrong with contingent love. When we're feeling love for another person, whether that love is contingent or not, we're outside of ourselves, we can be self-sacrificing and we can enter the zone. Our problem is not that love is contingent, our problem is that contingent love does not last, it doesn't provide the support and reassurance we need when the supports our love depends upon aren't present.

"In extreme situations, the entire universe becomes our foe; at such times, unity of mind and technique is essential - do not let your heart waver!"

Ueshiba

The kind of love Ueshiba talks about, the love that allows you to meet any crisis, comes when you have a mission or purpose for your existence. A mission that is more important to you, than life itself. It is your mission which releases the love inside of you, and it is the love inside of you that provides all of the support you need for your mission. It is in following your quest, being true to your mission, that you can "Dream the impossible dream" and "beat the unbeatable foe."

You are searching for the magic key that will unlock the door to the source of power; and yet you have the key in your own hands, and you may make use of it the moment you learn to control your own thoughts.

Napoleon Hill

Master Ueshiba's mission involves the love and protection of Mother Nature.

"Those who practice the art of peace must protect the domain of Mother Nature, the divine reflection of creation, and keep it lovely and fresh."

Ueshiba engaged in combat out of love. Love for the art of peace and the domain of Mother Nature. It was that love that allowed him to remain calm in a crisis. It was his commitment to his mission that kept him from second guessing his actions and becoming his own worst enemy. It was the love he felt for mother nature that provided the strength and reinforcement he needed to live out his mission. Love was both the means, and the end.