

Newsletter "The Source"

Power of the New Year - Year of the Tiger

by Shihan Richard J. Van Donk

I am determined to state that "98 is Great". I will one day look back on 1998 as a banner year (this can be ANY year!!). Will you?

Are you willing to have the life you deserve? Are you willing to do whatever it takes without excuses? Life is continually unfolding the greatness of the divine for the individual who is willing to live their life as an exploration, to be bold enough to pioneer new territory even if it is only within their own thoughts. What if Einstein, Tesla, Da Vinci, Plato, Christ, or Buddha kept their thoughts only to themselves? You may have more to offer the world than you know. I encourage you to expand your limits and go to the outer edges of your possibilities and see what you are able to do. Take off the limits in 1998 and commit to doing at least one thing extraordinarily well- beyond your wildest expectations- just to let yourself know what is possible for you. I ask you personally, what are you willing to explore and expand in the vast areas of your life? Are you willing to go deeper, to deepen your knowing, your feelings and your understandings? How about more Intimacy, Strength? Resolve? Internal Power? Abundance? Is there music and art in your life? You probably know what you need. If you want wealth study wealth. If you want health study health. Not just talk but walking the walk, feeling the feelings to their depth. Socrates said "Know thyself" and I say to you, You have got to know for yourself.

Let me ask you this, What do you want from today? What do you want from your life? What do you want from Ninjutsu? What do you want to learn today? What is your life teaching you? Answer these questions now. I know you may be tempted to go on but spend some time getting clear on the answers to these questions. Our view of the outside world (whether we blame it or have gratitude for it) is only a reflection of what is going on inside us. For many years I have contended that it must get right in the inside of us before it gets right on the outside of us. There really isn't a separation but a reflection. One of the greatest lessons that I have learned is to respond to things instead of reacting to them. With responding comes choice and proper use of one's personal power. We can then learn to determine the meaning and outcome of a situation so that everyone wins. A fighting encounter is many times a different thing. If forced, you must do what you can with your best effort to protect yourself and loved ones. Being a protector of freedom is responding whereas fighting for ego or revenge is reactionary. I tell my martial arts students to always work on responding to the intent of the situation. Remember that the most powerful weapon you have is your mind. Not just your body but your mind. Actually, a unified being is the most powerful asset you can have. This is when you are integrated and aligned in body, mind, spirit with a unified direction of concentrated focus towards a chosen result with conscious awareness in the choices of the matter. If challenged in any fighting encounter, you have to know when to act, you have to know how much action to take, you have to know what to do in an instant. Those actions will be filtered by your own internal conflicts and awareness level of the situation. Also, most important to me is the level of intent by the attacker. If a person is just drunk and wants to pick a fight, I'm not going to want to hurt this person. As a martial artist I have a higher code of ethics- I am a

protector of freedom not a destroyer. Those days are long past. Learn to measure the situation, understand the needs of the attacker. You say you don't have time? Well, until you are trained you may just have to do the best you can during the encounter This is what martial arts training in and out of the dojo is for. To be prepared. Remember the old Scout motto? Be prepared. I say go into the world with both eyes open. Know the difference between proper distancing so you can control the outcome verses destroying this person. Because in doing that destruction, it still comes back to you, whatever you're doing on the outside is going to reflect what's going on on the inside because you need to deal with that too. The more anger you hold the more you get to see what anger really is through its effect in your life. Anger is your feeling that you are not in control, that you don't have the ability to control a situation at that particular time, that you have given up power or are powerless in that situation. And it can generalize to being powerless to anything at all. The fear makes one become attached to getting control back to at any cost. Remember, Buddha said that anything that you are attached to will control you. Anger usually violates everything in its path- you included.

Then there's often guilt. When people think that they have violated someone they usually find some way to cause themselves pain or punishment so that they can relinquish the guilt they feel. Some people manifest disease in their body from the constant anger they run in their bodies or receive from others and later don't feel worthy. They don't think that they should have a full life. It's very difficult for people sometime to say "Yes!, life is wonderful, it should be full of happiness and joy. And, "Yes, I can have it all and I can keep a renewed connection to God / Spirit. So we have to learn to let go of that anger. Learn not to manifest it at all.

Let us share our courageous acts and not our fears.

Takamatsu Sensei, my teacher's teacher, was a great martial artist who fought many battles, but he was also a great spiritual teacher. In fact in his later years of life he gave up most of his martial arts except for teaching my teacher, Masaaki Hatsumi. He became a priest and lived his life in the devotion of life. He spent many moments in the mountains and in attunement with nature, with life and studied how things naturally interacted. The most profound message he shared on the spiritual side of things was his conquest to give up anger. That was his personal quest for himself and he felt it was one of the most transforming actions that he ever took. According to my teacher Grandmaster Hatsumi, he did this very well. The times when he thought that Takamatsu Sensei would be extremely angry, he wasn't. Grandmaster Hatsumi has worked with this issue also and says at times it is a very difficult lesson to learn. I'm still working on it myself. The more actions one takes in the world the bigger the tests (mirror) become. The thought occurs to me that if I'm angry at someone else without action, whose body suffers? Mine. Wait a minute here- they violated me, I get angry, and MY body hurts? Something is wrong here. Shouldn't it be the other way around? The world would certainly be different if, when someone violated someone else, it was their own body which started hurting until they stopped violating! Instant Karma.

But it isn't this way because we are meant to be self accountable. If I get an itch, I need to scratch it. We all need to take care of things for ourselves in life. But it's the response that you choose to give to an action that's going to make a difference. That's just the way it is. You have to know that things are the way that they are and just being upset that they are the way that they are is not going to help the way that they are. Do you understand this? It's a very powerful understanding. Things are already the way that they are, so be willing to do what you have to do, but do it at the level of intent that is necessary.

What does all this mean in regards to you having a great 98 and being willing to expand your possibilities? If you don't know and understand what makes you powerless in a given situation or how you or others have moved past their fears you may never get the opportunity to fulfill your destiny of having a greater life. I encourage you to go for it and become a great martial artist in the process, for yourself.

Commit to excellence in 1998!
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