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The Warrior Spirit

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The real issue we must confront is one of power. Not political power or military power, but the power of our human resources - the power of self-determination, of creativity, and of will. We can meet any challenge, solve any problem, and obtain our goals if we develop and use our personal power. An appropriate model is the samurai warrior of ancient Japan.

Lessons From the Samurai

To many Westerners, the samurai seem like blood-thirsty sword fighters. In reality, the samurai was a powerful, creative force in Japan. He was the philosopher warrior who determined the leadership, and often the direction, of ancient Japan.



The samurai never worried about a "level playing field." He simply trained himself to use any circumstance to his advantage.

The samurai was a man of thoughtful, skillful action in a world

where the stakes were life and death. Of highest importance to the samurai was his code of personal integrity and honor, called *Bushido*, or the Way of the Warrior. It is based on self-control, humility, fearlessness, knowledge and wisdom. It was *Bushido* that separated a true samurai from those who were contemptuously referred to as mere "sword fencers," violent men with no self-control and little or no self-knowledge and wisdom.

A symbol of courage and skill, the samurai himself was the critical factor. Even without a sword, he remained a potent weapon because he was the weapon. The samurai never worried about a "level playing field." He simply trained himself to use any circumstance to his advantage.

Self-Mastery: The Secret of Power

A samurai became a samurai by mastering his inner resources, *the power of his own mind*. Through self-knowledge, he conquered fear. In harmony with his inner nature and strength, he was never vanquished, even in defeat. In this way, the samurai gained mastery over life, and achieved personal (and professional) fulfillment. Miyamoto Musashi, one of Japan's greatest samurai warriors, characterized the warrior's path in his classic exposition *The Book of Five Rings* (GO RIN NO SHO). For this samurai master, success was built through mental and physical balance, attention, flexibility and timing. These are the very skills that we need today in our corporate as well as our political and social leadership.

Inner Balance: The Key To Health

The foundation for the samurai was inner balance and harmony. The samurai recognized that to think clearly and be effective during conflict, he must maintain mental and physical balance. In our modern world we must perform under pressure and deal with conflict on a daily basis. Stress has become a constant. We need the balance skills of the samurai. Without inner balance, we end up with high blood pressure, poor decisions, and lowered productivity.

Free of stress, we can use the creative force of our mind to solve real problems, build effective teams, create new opportunities and markets, and take command of our destiny.

This requires more than learning a simple relaxation exercise. We must learn to manage our nervous system as well as our thoughts and emotions. We must skillfully turn conflict into productive exchange, and eliminate the two major mental mistakes of fear (worry, anxiety) and self-rejection (depression, regret, guilt), or we can never be free of stress and its consequences. There are specific techniques, such as breathing exercises, deep relaxation and concentration, that lead to a high degree of skill. Many of these are the same that were used by the samurai.

With our systems in balance, we can easily use the creative force of our mind to solve real problems, build effective teams, create new opportunities and markets, and take command of our destiny.

Attentive Mind: The Ultimate Skill

Of all his skills, the samurai knew that the power of attention was the most crucial. The samurai practiced a variety of concentration techniques every day, including meditation. Through deep concentration, the samurai developed the power of his mind, which, in turn, led to a powerful will and unlimited self-confidence. Moreover, his increasing inner awareness led to enhanced use of his instincts and intuition.

No matter what skills you bring to your work or profession, the day you cannot pay attention, they aren't effective.

These mental resources are no less important for us today. Through concentration we focus the power of our mind for problem solving, for learning, for insight and understanding. Look at your own experience. Think of the time when you were so focused on what you were doing that you forgot about time. All of your attention was on your task, and you weren't worried about tomorrow, or regretting what happened yesterday. You were totally focused on what you were doing at that time. Isn't that when you did your best and most creative work? You worked hard, but instead of "burn out", you had a "peak experience"-- performance that transcends everyday experience. All created through concentration.

No matter what skills you bring to your work or profession, the day you cannot pay attention, they aren't effective. Concentration plays a critical role in performance, in learning and memory, in our ability pull out the key elements in a mass of information. In contract negotiations, for instance, key opportunities or subtle problems are often missed because someone didn't pay attention. Even our safety depends on it. How would you like to be flying in to Chicago's O'Hare Field at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon knowing that the air traffic controller's attention is distracted by a fight he had earlier in the day with his wife or by an argument with his supervisor over a union problem?

Because we don't train our mind as the ancient samurai, our ability to

concentrate varies from day to day, even moment to moment. Yet, like any other skill, we can enhance our power of concentration through systematic training. As we do so, we expand our ability to use the more subtle resources of the mind.

Before an adversary could even strike, the samurai would already know of his intended move.



Timing: The Power of Instinct

The samurai Master had exquisite timing. He had little choice; his life depended on it. To develop his sense of timing, the samurai honed his instincts and intuition. Before an adversary could even strike, the samurai would already know of his intended move.

While the consequences are not quite as drastic, timing is also a critical element in modern executive life. It demands sensitivity to others as well as to the currents of events. The Swiss watch industry lost their pre-eminence when they failed to envision the impact of their own invention, the quartz movement. Insensitive to the demand for modern technology, they allowed the Japanese to step in, resulting in Japanese dominance.

Our instincts play a vital role. They tell us what is going on around us that affects our well-being. Through timing, we know when to move and when not to move. A refined instinct tells us who to trust and who not to trust, a sure-fire way of neutralizing sophisticated image-making.

Intuition: Vision and Inner Wisdom

Intuition is even more crucial. Our mind has the power of vision, of knowing in which direction to move. But this knowledge is subtle and quiet, and often buried in the noise of our emotional chatter. By creating a deep state of calm and awareness through concentration, we build pathways to our intuition, and make it a useful part of our life.

Studies clearly show that the most effective business leaders use intuition, not logic, to make the right choice. By being overly dependent on logic and analysis, we fail to develop our perceptual skills. This inhibits the creative and visionary abilities so crucial for effective decision-making and strategic planning.

Think of the time when you had a strategy all planned out. You were very sure of your approach. But right before you took the necessary steps, a very quiet voice seemed to say, "better not do that." But it was only a passing thought, and besides, you were really sure that you had planned the right course of action.

Then later, everything fell apart, and you said to yourself "I knew I shouldn't have done that." And you did. You just didn't know how to listen to that finer, more powerful part of your mind. How would it affect your decision making if you were skilled in the use of your intuition?

Fearlessness: The Flexibility Mind

Above all, the samurai was fearless. He recognized that fear clouded the mind and paralyzed the will, and in mortal conflict, would lead only to death. To act in fear or anger was a disgrace to the samurai, and great effort was made to free the mind from all fear, greed and pettiness.

Fear is a failure of self-confidence.

The losses we face seldom have such a price, but the fear remains. Fear keeps us from bringing out new products, from trying new marketing strategies, from making timely decisions, and from going beyond conventional wisdom. Fear damages morale, builds resentment, and inhibits performance. It interferes with every function of our mind. But like the samurai, we can live completely free of fear if we know how to tap our inner strength.

We don't need fear to survive, or to motivate us. We do need self-preservation, but that is quite different from fear. During self-preservation, our mind is focused on the present. Mind and body are coordinated, and our actions and thoughts are clear and unimpeded. But when we anticipate harm, we distort self-preservation and create fear. We never fear **what is**, we only fear **what might be**. Fear is a failure of self-confidence.

The Way of the Spiritual Warrior

The samurai were not religious. They were spiritual warriors who realized the full potential of their own human spirit through training their mind. Although highly competitive, they were free of the stress, fears, hatreds and emotional disturbances that characterized those who were merely "sword-fencers." By mastering themselves, they controlled their destiny.

We cannot become world-class competitors without effort. We can't wave a magic wand and create flexible, creative and dynamic leaders and corporations. It takes the dedication, knowledge and effort of each individual to build a strong organization. Above all, it takes leadership that has developed its own inner strengths and resources.

Developing the power of the mind is not the quick and easy answer, but it is the only one that will work. We must take our mental feet off the desk and go to work. The technology of inner development is available to access our inner strength and resources. We can train ourselves to use the power of reflection, to think clearly and deeply about the issues we face, and have the courage to meet our challenges directly. If you have chosen to be an executive, or a leader, why not become the very best?

*The penetrating
brilliance
of a sword
wielded by a man
of the Way
strikes at the enemy
lurking deep within
one's own
body and mind.*

**Morihei Ueshiba
Founder of Aikido**



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