

## I Meant To Do That

*I look at the inner game as a healthy balance. One's modesty is not false—a rational mind informs one that any lucky blow or unusual attack can put one down, but the positive thinking mind knows it is wise to assume confidence once a conflict starts. The inner game became the root of one of Takeshin Sogo Budo's okuden (advanced teachings): "See yourself as invulnerable; act as if humanly vulnerable."*

The inner game is not an easy game to play fairly. To what extent can a person feel that he is invulnerable and not be kidding himself?

I had a boss who, when caught in a contradiction, would always manage to suggest that he intended to say what he said. The employees assumed he was a comedian saying, "I was just testing you," but he was neither testing them nor being comic. It was therefore embarrassing for both the employees, and I am sure, for the boss. No doubt, he was trying to keep his status by feigning flawlessness and ended up losing status for his unwillingness to accept reality. But there was something educative about the boss's ability to quickly reframe the situation so that maybe, just maybe, his reinterpretation of the details could have worked. It is this rapidity of reframing that Takeshin Sogo Budo's *okuden* is aimed toward.

If you are super competent at any skill, you do not assume that nothing will go awry, rather you assume that you can handle any way it *could* go awry—and handle it with blithe elegance, as if you actually meant it to happen. Highly skilled people not only get things right more often, they also extricate themselves from the less-than-right more often. Assuming yourself invulnerable is an exaggerated way of saying that you can handle any attack from any angle at anytime. That way, in a training exercise, you not only keep your cool, but you develop a constantly reinforced experience of living up to the assumed potential. Self-development gurus would call that "Fake it until you make it."

Consider how your training would develop if you did not make such an exaggerated assumption of invulnerability. Face Crunch McVisage in a one-step sparring drill. You know it's his turn to strike and his posture tells you he'll be coming in with a right punch, but you don't know at what level or exactly when. You'd hate for him to lose control and even clip your chin with his lump-like fist, so you figure you'd better get your hands up when he launches at you. But what if he dents your athletic supporter instead? Or makes you surrender that half-digested pre-training food bar? That would be embarrassing and painful, so you'd better jump out of the way altogether. But then you'd look like a chicken and even smaller guys would have your number in the next round of the drill. He launches, you avoid, but find yourself unable to retaliate convincingly or in a timely manner. You survived, but have begun to ingrain a less than stellar performance in the part of the brain that controls your reaction skills.

You look over to your left and find that Vinny McCool, has narrowly avoided his partner's attack, but he is almost smirking at his ease of defense and his proximity for a retaliation. The retaliation

seems to come late, but his opponent, McCool, and you know that he could have flattened the fellow at will, and was just holding back. Objectively speaking, your performance and his were nearly identical, but your attitudes were diametrically different. You didn't do what you meant to do, while his attitude, both physical and mental, was silently screaming, "I meant to do that!"

Now ask yourself who will do better next time? If he keeps the positive attitude but does not work on improving the details of his actions, you might just catch up. But if you work on your physical skills and don't change your vulnerable attitude, he'll always be at least a little bit ahead.