

Reminder

A month ago, I suggested that for the next month, as a personal development exercise, those of you who tend to do things late, make a point of doing things early and take the time to organize your schedules accordingly. I also suggested that those of you who tend to do things early do what you must to accomplish your work or register for a seminar on the last day or two. It is, I stated, an exercise in understanding others, in developing diversified skills, and in knowing oneself.

I realize that I am not your parental unit nor, in most cases, your sensei. And, if I were, I would not make this type of extracurricular assignment mandatory. As a result, I submit, no one out there tried it and therefore no one out there is prepared to submit a report on how the exercise related to martial arts. I guess that leaves me to suggest a few connections.

Do you respond to a potential threat as you respond to a real one? Do you respond to a real threat by delaying, or by taking immediate action?

If you respond with self-defense techniques immediately, have you considered all the options? If you delay your self-defense response to consider the options, have you missed opportunities to act thus even emboldened the opponent?

If you decide to employ self-defense techniques, are they partially committed (that is, they leave room for the antagonist to back off), or are they fully committed, going to Def-con One because the antagonist has “asked for it”? In other words, are the defensive or counter-aggressive?

Some of you may bristle, still feeling that responding to a sale or signing up for a seminar, whether early, late, or in-between has nothing to do with self-protection. Perhaps for your personality, it doesn't. Okay, so reject the analogy and consider the self-defense application directly. To help you, let me approach this in a different way: Do you have a policy about when to defend yourself, and does it cover most realistic situations? I know that may be a lot to ask of a martial arts student still having difficulty with applying a simple forearm block in a controlled one-step sparring drill, but I ask it because in the traditional martial arts, that concern is hardly ever presented. In most martial arts, the assumption is that you are attacked suddenly or find yourself in a “sparring situation”, facing off with the bad guy, both of you ready to exchange blows. In those scenarios, the attack or imminent threat has already been made. There is no time to delay and you are taught to act. Sure, you may temper your reaction by choosing certain type of techniques or a specific art with which to respond, but in any case, the scenario for which your art trains you is certain and specific, not a building threat, not a goading, or a taunting.

Your personality (and the arts you are most familiar with) will determine the speed and ferocity of your response. But only you can consciously adjust either of those aspects. And you can adjust them only if you have thought about them and put yourself in the position with which you are least familiar or most uncomfortable.

Experience has taught me that most people respond to sales at one of two times: in the two days after the initial offering or in the two days before the sale ends. Why do the early birds grab the sale early? I suspect that, although they are busy, their interest in the material prompts them to act *before they forget*. Would you respond quickly to a physical threat *before you lose the chance or before your courage wanes*? The latecomers put off their purchases probably not because of lack of interest, but perhaps because they have to check the budget before acting. Would you respond slowly to a physical threat *in order to make sure your martial ducks were in a row*? If you chose one answer, try putting yourself in a position where you have choose the other. It is not comfortable, but you will learn a lot.