

## What You See is What Gets You

It is a truism of self-development that people tend to pay attention to what is happening in their environment in direct proportion to its value to them. In 1956, one of the deans of self-improvement Earl Nightingale made a famous 45-RPM record *The Strangest Secret* that, amazingly enough, was a million-seller without any singing. (You can find Earl's 10-min speech on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0r8isgQ6PM>). Instead, he elaborated on the theme "We Become What We Think About".

Oh, I know, you can think about being a lottery winner all day long and still not find yourself with a 27 million dollar check, nor a 27 thousand dollar check, not even a \$27 cash payout. But there are many people who found the partner they desired by picturing him or her daily for years or, more precisely, picturing what they would have to become to attract him or her. There are people who achieved greatness by constantly thinking about that which they wanted to accomplish. You become what you think about because your attention is focused on that which you value. Of course, thought is the initial motivator, while acting on the thought is the necessary culmination of the thought process. It might be better said this way: you get what you act upon, but in order to act upon it, you must highly value it and thus think about it all the time.

There are two related topics I would like to investigate here. The first is simply stated: Watch what you value! It is an old saw but a sharp one that states, "Be careful what you wish for—you just might get it." The other topic I will offer as a question: "If you get what you think about all the time, why do you spend so much time thinking about things that are already comfortable, rather than getting comfortable with the things/attitudes/accomplishments you may want, but don't have?" People tend to resist moving toward the unfamiliar and instead fortify rather than expand their existing comfort zones.

Things unfamiliar are things we fear and yet a University of Michigan study showed that 60+% of fear was unwarranted, 20+% was part of the past and thus beyond anyone's control, 10+% was petty enough to be inconsequential, and only 5% was real, but half of that percentage could be easily assuaged, solved, resolved, or otherwise corrected. That leaves people frozen in their unsuccessful comfort zones because of a 2.5% fear factor.

The Chinese ideographs for "crisis" are identical to those for "opportunity"—quite literally Chinese wisdom suggests that your stumbling blocks *are* your steppingstones. Hanshi Richard Kim once said something that, also a truism, is sadly ignored by most human beings: "The person who overcomes problems gets options." Options allow you to take the next step upward.

People often look outward to the symbols of success: a big bank account, a new car, a big house, but these things, although they are fine, are simply reflections of what the person had to become to earn them. Deep success is mental and the process of self-improvement is largely mental as well. If you do all the right things with the wrong attitude it will serve you no better than doing all the wrong things with a terrifically positive attitude.

I once knew a martial artist, a student of a well-known master from the west coast—skilled, intelligent, and a good learner—who was proud of being the dojo's senior student. He figured that he would someday continue the system and be honored by its students, amazing those who attended his seminars with his knowledge. What he pictured in his mind was of great personal value to him and, unconsciously or consciously, he worked to propagate the system he represented. He saw the system transporting him to martial arts success, a certain amount of fame, and internal satisfaction. After several attempts to open his own dojo and tweak what he was taught so that he could call it his own, he found himself stuck between pleasing himself by teaching his *tokui waza* (favorite techniques) and pleasing his students to keep them attending, thus further leaving behind the art which made him what he was.

That which you think about is what you picture in your mind, so what you see is what you'll get. Be careful however that you take action to climb the first hill, reset your sights and then climb the second, because if you concentrate on your idea of success without refocusing every once in a while, What You See can become a steppingstone that turns into a stumbling block. What You See can get *you* rather than you getting it.