

"A Life of Balance"

BY:

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Those of you, who know me well, know that I am a man of few words. I don't often make speeches, give advice or direction unless someone comes to me for help. Not because I'm selfish but because I'm shy. Maybe it's time to try something different and challenge my own self in conveying my thoughts. Please bear with my wordiness and forgive me for any oversight. Here it goes!



Last year I told myself that I would test for my YonDan at the 2016 Gi Yu Dojo seminar. As time went on, and given my barely manageable work schedule, I knew it would be a daunting task to absorb the volume of material and perform each technique in a sufficient manner to pass the exam. Nevertheless, I was willing to take the plunge. I had been thinking, almost obsessively, over the last several months on how much of my life has been donated to my work instead of those things that allow me to grow and evolve in the way I wanted to as a man and a warrior. I had been raised to value work, but in light of that fact, I have been quite unhappy in my daily life for several years. Steadily, over time, I began to speak up loudly about issues that I felt were unfair, could be managed more efficiently, or were simply a

hindrance to allowing the balance in my life that I felt I deserved. After my concerns were treated with apathy, I made the difficult decision in May to resign from my position as a Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery Physician Assistant where I have spent nearly a decade of my life. I walked away from a six figure plus salary and started living on the money I had amassed in my savings account. As you might imagine, this was not an easy decision for me to make as I knew that my "financial lifespan" is a finite venture ("until I run out of money"). I simply wanted more time to train, more time to prepare for my exam, as best as I could, and make the necessary changes to my life that I had ignored for many years. Therefore, another Gi Yu Dojo student, Sam Foster, and I began to train frequently together in preparation for our YonDan exam. In addition, I spent the next month, daily doing all the techniques, with some coffee breaks of course, committing the overwhelming volume of information to memory. I must say, I had a deep desire to pass but no real expectation that I would. This time around, I did not pass as I was not showing the proper KakiHeki (give and take) during the Rokushaku Bojutsu (6FT staff) and Jojutsu (4FT staff) portion of the test. It is my intention that I will pass this exam in the fall at the Atlanta workshop.

I recently spoke to another student who did not pass his exam and explained that I felt that the Universe gave us both a gift! We now know exactly what we lack and need to work on in order to achieve our next rank. The information has been narrowed down in its focus providing us the opportunity to drill and perfect that specific portion of material that we were deficient on. Fortunately for me, I have trained long enough that I have seen and done the techniques, at one time or another, so some portions of the test were easier for me than would have been had this not been true. But the one thing I have been guilty of is relying on my length of time in training to carry me through, rather than making the necessary life changes (which I should have done long ago) to give me the time needed to adequately prepare. Trust me when I say, you cannot "cram" for a YonDan exam, no matter who you are or how smart you think you are!!! You must remove those obstacles preventing you from progressing through to your goal. Sound familiar? This is war!



I have learned many things from attempting this test. First of all, without having strong basic movement, which Sensei Sandhu, frequently echoes, it would be impossible to achieve the rank of YonDan as all the techniques are built on top of sound and strong basic movement. From the various unarmed katas to any of the weapon work.

Secondly, I should have prepared and passed this test long ago (as Sensei Sandhu always says...time is ticking away...), had I had the courage to reevaluate my life and find that balance that I knew I needed in order to allow "me to be me". I pushed this feeling down every time it crept up, believing that, if I just worked hard enough, then the "powers that be" would "allow me" to have balance. The truth is that each of us has to make this balance for ourselves. Proper time is to be split between work, family, relationships, and involvement in those things that make you "who you are" (spiritually and physically). Any tip in the scale causes a person to take from one part in order to fulfill another. This imbalance will not work forever and is quite draining. Trust me!

And finally, the highest attribute of a warrior, in my opinion, is the development of Humility. But, make no mistake, by humility I do not mean passiveness. Humility can only be truly achieved after you have developed the ability to physically and mentally destroy any obstacles to you and those around you. That being said, there has to be proper

balance again. A high skill level should not make you overconfident where you overreact or misread situations. It should make you calmer, more forgiving, more open, more connected and involved.

In closing, I want to leave you with a thought or maybe a question. Something I came to ask myself and a realization to open the door to my future growth as a warrior and a human being.

"Who is ever in your way more than yourself?"