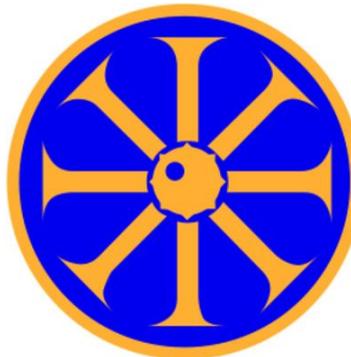
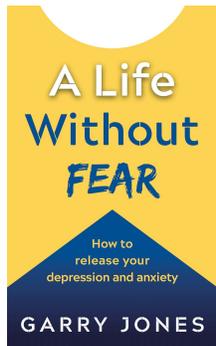


A Life Without Fear

Zen Smiling



My all consuming passion for martial arts, compliments my work in self-development coaching. They are intertwined in one particular way. The mind and body relationship.

Like Ivy around an Oak tree.

I relish the application of self-development techniques such as hypnosis and Neuro Linguistic Programming in developing fighters in Muay Thai Boxing and Mixed Martial Arts to study this relationship.

Why? Because the realm of full contact combat is an ultimate test of the theories, strategies and techniques used in coaching and development.

If it works under the pressure of a full contact fight, it will work at home, work or general daily life. Agreed?

So yes, the application in martial arts has relevance to us all.

The boxing ring then becomes my laboratory of controlled pressure testing.

There are numerous day to day issues that are all experienced in the arena of a fight. Let us focus on one. Fear.

Maybe we could label that Stress.

We are comfortable saying fear when it is something large and big impact. May I suggest the smallest of stress is still fear, though there are many levels of it. Science studies confirm this. Chemically our response is the same if the stress is large or small. Both release the chemicals that cause the fight/flight response (I would add freeze to this).

I have previously delivered a presentation where I gave a real time example of this. I have shown how our view of reality becomes totally distorted by the impact of stress. (A perceived stress at that). Have you found that it is good to be wrong? The audience was wrong and it saved them experiencing a great deal of pain.

It is good when your recollection of the past, imagined terrible outcomes or current view of how things are turns out to be wrong, in the best possible way.

Mark Twain quoted "I have lived through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened." Quite.

Here are some facts about Stress in the U.K.

Stress, anxiety and depression accounted for 13.4 million lost days to business in 2011 (H.S.E figures). Much more than musculoskeletal which includes backache.

MIND the mental health charity have the cost to U.K. industry at £8 Billion.

The biggest killer of men under 50 years old is suicide.

It has big and very personal consequences, not being able to manage our fears.

Let us return to the fighters as an example to address this. Modern labels of Zen are “The Zone”, “The Flow” or Mindfulness. Whatever label we give it the experience is one of being totally in the present moment. A fighter does not have the physical ability to react to an attack. The process time of the brain and a physical response will be too slow to defend or attack back. If the fighter gets lost in a world of remembering or imagining what may happen, there will be one result. Pain.

It is direct, instant and unforgiving.

General life does not perhaps have such immediacy but the outcome is the same. Failure.

I am not advocating we only live in the moment. What I am advocating is to make 80% of our time action. Powerful word action. More powerful I suggest than Mindfulness. We do action. It is different from “take action” which implies in the future. Action is now.

Back into the arena of a fight. Action is defending, moving, feinting, attacking, breathing, observing.

What actions can we take in life to reduce fear/stress?

There are things you do instinctively as a coach. In teaching martial arts I have understood from the beginning that supreme performance comes from a relaxed body and mind state. The simple physics of power involves speed and mass. The mass of a body is constant. The speed is achieved through a relaxed body.

How? How to be relaxed. I have always taught:

Smile while doing the activity. Punch, kick or perhaps general daily activities.

Try it now, smile. Now tense your upper body and try to smile.

No, that is a grimace.

The smile is a direct feedback that you are relaxed. (Research numerous science papers to confirm the results of smiling).

Simple and effective. Like my martial arts preferences I like simple and effective.

Smile while doing an activity. You have no need to be happy to smile.

Now if this works in a zero tolerance environment, it should correlate to work in daily life.

The worst that can happen is you feel better for smiling. I am suggesting a smile will increase your performance in work, relationships and life.

Do not take my word for it. Test it. Your own laboratory called life.

It is a small act of action. Smile.

In the now. In the present time, where a physical action draws your attention to your mind and body.

Try it for 24 hours. Nothing taxing, and record your results.

24 hours of 3 simple acts to succeed.

Breath, smile, do.

We will visit Breath another again, another time.

Good luck to a brighter future.

Bye for now

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