

Awareness

After deliberating as to what would be an effective and meaningful first topic, I came to the decision awareness would be an appropriate starting point; it is because of awareness, you have ventured to this website and are seeking martial arts training...this sensation prodding you, needling you, the quiet voice inside which has prompted you to seek martial arts knowledge and skills. Due to this sensation, you have started a journey, and your journey has started by way of awareness; an awareness that something must be done to enhance your knowledge and skills. You should be glad this awareness is within you - it can be developed, enhanced, and refined.

On any given day, we go about our lives in routine, scheduled, and predictable ways; unfortunately, we grow accustomed to operating in this fashion. We go about the day's business: school; work; groups and functions; and home life, "turning on the auto pilot." Hey, let's face it, this is normal brain functioning. If you processed every single activity as though it were the first performance, you would not accomplish very much in a given day...right?

However, I want to draw your attention to finding, and becoming mindful of, such tendencies in your mental actions. If you do so, you will increase your ability to recognize circumstances requiring you to widen your perception, and thereby, elevate your awareness beyond low-level.

Please read the following. As you read, become "the subject" as you view the event happening in your mind:

"You are walking downtown on your way to a long-awaited event. You have been looking forward to this event for a number of months - today is the day! The sun is shining, you are feeling good, and everyone is happy - truly awesome! As you are walking down the sidewalk, you are approached by a young man, and he courteously asks if you could tell him the time? You oblige. As you look at your wristwatch, you suddenly feel crushing pain on the side of your head, and you start to lose consciousness. You feel someone push you to the ground, strike you once more, and start emptying your pants pockets. What is happening?!?"

Sadly, you have just become a statistic. The young man was working his favorite scam to misdirect your attention. He then, savagely attacks you with a roll of quarters, held within his fist. Now, while you struggle to regain your bearings, he quickly lifts your wallet, watch, and any easily accessible valuables; then, quickly runs away. All, while you try to clear the fog in your head, and determine what has just occurred.

Right now, you might be saying, "I would never have fallen for that old trick." Are you certain? Again, how often are you thinking about awareness skills; let alone, practicing them? We like to think we are unique and would never let that happen. Truth is, we can become mentally lazy, or preoccupied, resulting in our awareness levels becoming negligible.

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I offered the aforementioned scenario, to prompt your thinking, and force you to be honest with yourself. Did you place yourself in the situation, and feel, as though you were having a firsthand experience? Did you experience fear, apprehension, or helplessness? I hope so. Every day, people fall for these types of ploys and become victims. So, what's the answer: never trust anyone; live in paranoia; experience anxiety every time you encounter a stranger? No!

Let's examine the situation:

Victim's Mindset - Relaxed, pre-occupied with the day's planned activities, unobservant of surroundings and those present, mentally disarmed.

Victim's Physical State - Low muscular tension (no threat perception), striking range established, and visually misdirected.

1. Did the victim notice the man from a distance methodically watching approaching pedestrians?
2. Did the victim notice an unnatural swing of the arm, and a cupped hand of the approaching attacker?
3. Why did the victim allow the attacker to invade social space; thereby, getting within striking distance?
4. Did the victim notice eye movements of the attacker checking the surroundings as he was speaking to the victim?

I could continue, but, no need to beat a downed man. (pretty bad, huh?)

At this point, I am soliciting your opinions and insights. What steps could the victim have taken to increase awareness, and thereby, increased his or her safety as well as enjoyment of the day?

Next month, we will pick up the discussion with your responses in mind. In the meantime, start looking around, listen carefully, and keep your mind alert; otherwise, you may miss something amazing.

Yours in martial studies,

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