

# Soaring through

# Fear

When we can give ourselves totally,  
then we burn away the fear that holds us back.  
-Terrence Webster-Doyle

## **Lightening the Load: The Art of Empty Self**

In the 60's Gene Roddenberry, genius that he was, created a television series that still captures audiences worldwide called Star Trek. One of the premises of the show is that Earth has solved conflicts and is now a peaceful planet. The crew of the Enterprise can now explore the galaxy knowing Earth is a place of peace. The way that Earth evolved, in the Star Trek future, is by eradicating hunger and poverty, this was Roddenberry's dream. Yes, I am a sci-fi fan, I have to admit it.

Conflict and war come from fear, specifically the fear of lack. When the human body feels fear it goes to either fight or flight mechanisms. This is evident in the sparring ring with students. The student who is in fear will try backing up, turning away from their opponent or running out of the ring. In this way she is operating in the flight mechanism of fear. Another student with fear will hold his breath and start punching the air, or his opponent, wildly without targeting or strategy. This is operating in the fight mechanism of fear. Neither of these methods is

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successful in the ring, nor are these mechanisms beneficial in our everyday lives. These are purely survival mechanisms, not for use daily, and not strategies for thriving.

Fear causes tension and stress increasing cortisol in the body. Cortisol is a hormone that will burn your energy out over time. A fearful opponent is full of tension and is bent low. In contrast, an opponent who has no fear is relaxed and stands more open and seemingly taller. Without cortisol, this opponent has natural endurance. This opponent will have more power because in the relaxed state, energy flows. He will also be able to use the fear of his opponent against him.

There is a way to face the fear, while still keeping your wits about you and being able to strategize. We call this a relaxed intention. We use mind, body and spirit in action and response committed to the strategy of creating a result. In the sparring ring, the result is winning. Through winning and losing we get the confidence to replace fear and the mechanisms of fight or flight. This takes much practice in the ring. In life, it also takes much practice; practice not to defend or react, but to give ourselves fully to the outcome the practices of presence and surrender to what is.

Karate, according to Terrence Webster-Doyle, as his book is so aptly named is ‘the art of empty self.’<sup>1</sup> One learns through Karate to empty oneself of fear by the discovery of self and by the emptying of personal agenda. The emptied self is loving and without agenda.

Karate literally means “empty hands.” This can mean many things to different people. To most it means that the hands hold no weapon. If we look deeper, the hands hold nothing, so there is nothing to take from them. The hands are empty and thus

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<sup>1</sup>Karate: The Art of Empty Self, Webster-Doyle, Terrence ©1989

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open. If you watch someone in anger and fear, their hands are usually clenched into fists. Closed hands are for fighting, defending or hoarding. Open, empty hands are for receiving, giving and embracing. Thus the deeper meaning of Karate is the empty, open hands of giving and receiving fully with no fear of scarcity or lack.

Kung Fu literally means “learned skill.” By developing the skill of the martial arts we develop the form and the attitude of confidence, balanced with humility. By learning the form and attitude, and repeatedly practicing we gain confident efficiency. It is from this that the internal power of peace develops, since peace is a learned skill or practice.

In the martial arts students come and go, succeed and fail, begin, quit and come back. What I know about people starting their training is that many begin for the purpose of getting over their fear. It can be frightening to be alive in this day and age. We have already created lists of fears at a young age. People hit us, make fun of us and betray us, and that usually has happened to us by the time we reach kindergarten, if not sooner.

Yet, it is this fear we develop all of our lives that is at the root of all conflict, violence and hate. People who are full of fear react instead of respond causing injury and harm to the people around them and more reason to fear. Parents emotionally react and teach their partners and children to react creating triggers and patterns of continuous reaction and even addictions to those same emotions and reactions.

A frequent scenario is that someone encounters a frustrating circumstance with a government agency or business. He may take his anger and add to it the fear (belief) that he does not have the power or resources to create something different for himself. Anger and fear turn to rage and violence and he blows up a building in the name of retribution or worse, in the name of justice.

It is fear that drives people to control and manipulate others. They judge those

different from them out of fear. They force or coerce others to do what they want. This force does not come from real power, only an imaginary control. Those who have control issues, have fear issues. They cannot allow others to possess power because they fear their own impotence. This is what leads to anger, rage, malice and eventually conflict and violence.

People who know happiness, love and freedom, have no need to control others, or to exert force on others to lessen their fear. Happy, peaceful people live in abundance. Like our Star Trek friends they have all that they need and are free from lack. They are just here, empty, open hands, ready to give, receive and embrace. Happy people are grateful people, because once you recognize how abundant life really is, there is no other emotion to feel but gratitude for all that is available to you.

I see many new martial artists who begin fearful of not being able to defend themselves. We teach, many an awkward beginner, simple things that help him feel confident. After a few months they will begin to be more confident. As training and practice continue, they begin to move out of the fear mentality. Working out fear in the studio and moving it out into other areas of life however are two different things.

The principles, used to create control and awareness of our bodies in martial arts, transcend the art at some point and students begin to live the training. A black belt typically lives in confidence that she can handle any situation. He learns to live his personal power. As fear decreases, conflict disappears. As a student masters his fear in the sparring ring and develops the confidence to handle any circumstance the fear begins to melt. The student we hope begins to open up to the world and give herself to it.

We encourage students to begin to own their personal power elsewhere in their lives. This philosophy of martial arts, is a way to transcend powerlessness, and leads to inner peace. Some people do this completely outside of martial arts training, which

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is not the only path to peace. I have read of the use of horsemanship, religion, meditation, and other means to the realizations that lead to inner peace. It is however crucial in developing peace to work through the fear. Leaders, who demonstrate the most peace and love also, have the least fear. Fear and love do not exist together.

This overcoming of fear comes in stages; it ebbs and flows as a student takes what is learned out to the world. We try to be confident in an area and then we fall short. We come back to our training and learn some more. With each lesson or skill mastered we move toward that confidence. It takes a while to filter into other areas of life. For some people, the lessons are never fully applied, yet that is the goal.

As instructors, we hope that with proper training the student will come to realize that the black belt training is a way of living in peace. It is learning how to fight so that we never have to. Few get to that point since many are unwilling to trust the process or even understand the goal of transcending their fear.

Instructors walk a fine line of responsibility in training people who may not complete the training to that level. There is a risk with responsibility. Therefore in our system we are particular about who we will train. We choose only those motivated toward peace. Still, few reach the black belt level and even fewer continue to train toward greater excellence. Fortunately there are many ways to transcend fear and create peace. We hope the seeds we have planted in our students will grow to that end.

Many students quit at the brown belt level thinking that they have learned all there is, and not realizing the most important lesson is yet to come. It is like the famous scene in the Science Fiction film, "Return of the Jedi," when Luke Skywalker learned about his enemy. He went into the cave to meet the ultimate enemy and he saw only himself. Our enemy is our own fear. It is what causes our suffering, our quarreling, our conflicts and our own lack of internal peace. The truth is that we get in our own way.

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## Replicating Abundance

In the Star Trek universe there are these cool wall units called replicators that will create anything you want. They are programmed to make elaborate meals, luscious desserts, coffee to your perfect taste and temperature, clothing of elaborate design, or uniforms and weapons. They even once replicated an antique black and white television set.

The crew has everything. They have all the food they want, they have all the clothing they need, and they have access to the ship's library for all the movies, music and entertainment they want. They are all healthy and have available medical care from the ship's doctor. They exist with no needs except the desire to explore and challenge themselves. Alien races have little to entice them into conflict with the fear of lack. Not so with us.

We are easily enticed into conflict by the fear of lack. We are also inclined toward our national sport of blaming someone else. Because of this we have a huge sense of powerlessness. We feel a lack of resources, lack of connection, lack of understanding. This is what causes so much conflict. Even the first century Apostle James knew and wrote of this in the Book of James<sup>2</sup>. Fear of lack or scarcity is not a new thing facing our planet.

Now if some alien came up to Captain Piccard and said, "I have this orbital sphere that will feed you, entertain you, and protect you, all you have to do to have the orb is to be my slave." Captain Piccard would not go for that. He already has everything that he needs. No one in his crew would either. He would say, "No thank

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<sup>2</sup> The Apostle James brother of Jesus a leader in the Jerusalem Church. Book of James canonized in the Christian Bible Chapters 1 and 4.

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you.” He might offer something from his abundance. Say either the most luscious of desserts or a sample of classical music from the ship’s library.

Here, in the real world, when we feel lack and scarcity we fall for this trick all of the time in different ways. Gang members get new recruits promising to provide for a lack of power, safety, and family connection if you join us and do what we say. Credit card companies say promise to give you a loan to buy things to fulfill your sense of importance. All you have to do is be a slave to debt, giving them a portion of your future earnings. Others come to weak, lonely people lacking love and offer co-dependence saying do it my way or I will leave you, or worse.

We are trapped by our fear of lack. The truth is, we do not have any lack we have abundant resources. We each have a replicator. We have the power of choice; we have always had it. We just don’t own our choice anymore; we have forgotten the abundance we have. Somewhere we just got so wrapped up in our fear and reactions, we forgot to believe we have the power to respond with choice. We choose self-protection instead of self-involvement. We choose to believe we have no options rather than stop and list all of the possibilities. We get stuck in fear. Enter the art of empty self.

We have unlimited opportunity all around us. There are people in our midst willing to help us find the resources we need. If we want it, we must be willing to choose to ask! There is abundance and plenty around us to meet our need for food, clothing, loving relationships, money and work. Yet, we defend ourselves in fear and reaction. We have cut ourselves off from our power of choice.

If we are afraid of commitment, we may not make decisions; this is a choice. If we are afraid of rejection, we may not be truthful with others; also a choice. If we are afraid of being seen as needy or weak, we may not to ask for help; a choice. When we do this, we allow fear to cut us off from receiving. We also rob others from

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demonstrating their generosity and love. Worst of all, we create the things that we fear. We create rejection and loss because of our fear of rejection and loss.

By creating a confident and trusting environment, [The Art of Karate] allows students to become aware of their pent-up aggressions, tensions and conflicts. Allowing everything that was hidden or resisted to be observed is the central most important aspect in the process of “emptying self”; that is the heart of the Art of Karate. Where the traditional martial approach in Karate develops the though hide of invulnerability, the Art of Karate fosters flexibility, suppleness and sensitivity. It allows one to be vulnerable-and, paradoxically, this is a great strength. Real power comes from being open, questioning, being susceptible to oneself and others.

-Terrence Webster Doyle  
Karate: The Art of Empty Self

## **Crash Landing or Discovery**

Fear of soaring is always really a fear of crashing. What happens when things plans fall apart, relationships fail, businesses fail, finances fail? We believe and can find evidence for some real lack. What do we do then? Things don't always go as we think they should. They don't always go as planned.

I once found myself alone in a new town, with another failed relationship, in a new apartment surrounded by moving boxes and a mess. “Now what?” I cried for days. Where was my abundance, where was my usual fearlessness. What I had was this new experience of groundlessness, of a continual falling. That feeling you have in a nightmare that you wake up while falling. I experience severe anxiety for a few weeks as my internal dialogue spun round questions and answers; I could not seem to turn off my internal conversation. I asked myself, “How did I create this? How did I get here?” After all this wasn't part of my flight plan. Or was it?

I realized through this that I felt a huge loss. What was it exactly that I lost? I never had anything that I lost. I realized that I had created a huge attachment, a false security. I realized that security is an illusion. We are groundless, nothing is ever

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promised, nothing is ever permanent. There is only change and impermanence. When the plane of our plans goes down on an uncharted island, we get a choice. We can panic and think about the illusionary destination of our plans and feel loss, lost, alone and helpless or we can become explorers. We can explore who we are and what we are made of. We can explore our attachments and our illusions. We can explore how much of our world is made up of the ego: me, myself and mine.

In the end, this was a great gift, through the most painful of times I learned to let go of my attachments and be open to life and abundance. I learned that anxiety comes from internal conversation, peace from internal quiet and resolve. I learned a new practice. I learned to be present with myself and my aloneness and allow it to be natural. I learned to acknowledge without naming, qualifying or thinking about the who, the why, the how. All that internal dialogue leads to anxiety, never answers. I learned to quiet my mind chatter and meditate.

Now when I feel an emotional twinge of loss and regret, I don't name it, I don't carry on an internal dialogue about it, I just honor it. I no longer have to justify my feelings or define them. I take a deep breath, acknowledge what I feel and let it go with my exhale. I choose to feel loved, abundant and supported. Then, I get on with what I am doing in my life, which is living my purpose and vision without regret.

### **Throwing Your Heart over the Bar**

One of our biggest fears is the fear of our own greatness. Fear of doing what it is we know that we can and should do. We fear the commitment to the end. We fear that we lack internal worth. What if I do everything I should and call on all of myself to be successful and it is not enough? What if in the end I find out, that I am not worthy? This fear keeps us in the mediocrity of life instead of in abundance. We

choose not to live in our greatness and purpose.

When I was in high school, I was on the track team. For a short time I competed in the high jump. Now, I have a long torso and short, muscular legs, not the perfect body type for the high jump. Yet I did it anyway, perhaps so that I could learn this concept. My coach said something that I still remember and use, “Throw your heart over the bar, and the rest will follow.” If you watch the high jumpers in the Olympics, you will notice that they lead with their chest going over the bar.

This is a metaphor for a successful, productive life of purpose. We think too much, we fear too much, we hesitate too much. We don’t lead with enough heart, enough vulnerability and enough love. To soar through the fear in what you are doing, “Throw your heart over the bar and the rest will follow.” Don’t worry about crash landing there is a mat on the other side, it will be fine. There is nothing to worry about, nothing to lose. Safety and security are illusionary.

What do we have to lose by following these practices? Nothing, but the fear itself. Face your fear squarely in the mirror, and see if it is as it seems. Remember there is no lack and you are never alone. You are always connected to everything alive around you, therefore you have all of the resources you need right this minute. Life is really an amazing journey of love if you choose it to be.

### **Practices:**

Breathing through fear  
Replacing fear with love  
Letting go of attachments  
Choosing to recognize abundance  
Being grateful  
Acknowledging feelings without internal dialogue  
Quieting the mind chatter

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### **Challenge Questions:**

What fear am I holding on to?  
What is the worst that could happen?  
What is the best that could happen?  
How is fear draining my creative energy and resources?  
In what areas am I self sabotaging?  
What areas of lack am I feeling that is causing fear?  
What would happen if I believed that I have all I need already?  
What can I do to put abundance in the lives of myself & others?  
How is fear driving my need for control over others?  
How is fear driving my frustration and anger?  
How does fear reflect in my openness to relationships?  
What harm can being really open to looking deeply inside me do?  
How can I build a confidence that I can handle any situation?  
What do I need to empty my hands of?  
What am I holding on so tightly to that keeps me from receiving?  
What can I give up control of?  
Who can I enroll to help me?  
Who can I reach out and help?  
How can I give back what I have learned to my community?

### **Affirmations:**

I have no fear of lack, I have everything that I need.  
I have the resources to accomplish meeting my own needs.  
I have the resources to accomplish meeting the needs around me.  
Nobody can hurt me unless I give them my permission.  
Hurt can flow through me, yet cannot harm me since I am open.  
I have open, empty hands that give and receive and embrace.  
I have no need to hoard anything; I am empty and yet full.  
My fullness and abundance comes from willingness to be empty.  
I am a conduit for fullness.  
I am protected, nourished, abundant, content and thankful.  
Abundant resources are all around me, I only need open my eyes.  
My only enemy is my own fear, I have overcome my enemy.  
Fearless living is my new choice.  
The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.

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He did not give me a spirit of fear, but of love and a sound mind.  
I will not fear for God is with me, His rod and staff protects me.  
If God be for me, who can be against me?  
There is no fear in love, full grown love expels fear