

DEFEATING PANDEMIC DEPRESSION

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Without a doubt, the current global pandemic and its manifestations—physical, mental, financial, familial, educational, social and tyrannical have, sadly, spawned depression in a large swath of the world's population. Understandable. The question arises, "How can people manage this pandemic without depression?" Martial Arts training, especially that of the Karate Institute of America™ (KIA) and the Kiado-Ryu™ system of martial arts, offers the following thoughts.

The first chapter of *The Black Belt Book of Life — Secrets of a Martial Arts Master* is entitled, "Martial Arts Is Life." In other words, there is nothing in life that cannot be addressed that is not an aspect of martial arts, even pandemics.

The first thing to keep in mind is that we live in a bi-polar world—a construct of positive and negative energies. Because of its bi-polar nature, this world will always be in conflict. We do not live in a fantasy world where conflict is absent. Conflict is an integral aspect of the architectural design of this creation. Therefore, one way to manage depression is to not set ourselves up to be depressed by wishing for something that can never be, i.e., a world without conflict. Maturity demands we acknowledge this truth and work with it, not against it, remaining psychologically and emotionally balanced and centered on a second-to-second basis.

Martial Arts is, by design, combative and adversarial. It doesn't pretend to negate the reality of conflict. In fact, it embraces it. Why? Because by learning to fight and stand up to our adversaries, we learn to become skilled in the combat, the fray, the clashing, the fight. We don't run away from it. We engage it. By doing so we become confident, capable, calm, stable, strong and . . . realistic, not depressed but skilled in the art of war in fighting our opposition, even if that opposition happens to come in the guise of a global pandemic, which is just another opponent. The warrior's goal is to defeat the opponent, not allow him to defeat us.

Another benefit of martial arts training, i.e., life training, is to not let "external forces" overpower and defeat our "internal forces." We should never allow that which is on the "outside" to disturb, let alone overwhelm, that spirit that dwells in our "inside." In order to do that, we have to become a true warrior and learn to fight back. Not being a warrior ensures our defeat. This is not good . . . at all. Like it or not, we have to become a true warrior in this life and learn to repel those forces which seek to defeat us, and if we become depressed the external forces win. Not acceptable.

How do we become a true warrior? We fight back. Simple as that. We never give up. We never give in or submit to that which is trying to depress or defeat us, ever. As the great Winston Churchill said, "Never, never, never, never give up!" We also never back down. We attack and keep attacking the opponent until victory is ours. There is no other viable option.

This COVID pandemic is an opponent and a worthy one, but KIA philosophy will never allow it to claim victory. We never give up. Rather, we force the opposition to give up and get gone. We stand strong, defiant and determined, never allowing anything to depress or defeat us. Glory to the fight and thanks to God for the victory. That's the point of view of the Karate Institute of

America™.

Furthermore, the magical thing is that when we stand up and fight we acquire a mindset, skill set and demeanor that will never give in, will never give up, will never die, and certainly will never succumb to depression. Rather, we become the valiant, glorious and heroic victors who not only slay demons . . . but also pandemics.

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