

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #12

COMPETENCE CREATES CONFIDENCE

Action and reaction;
Cause and consequence.
It is no mystery that
Competence Creates Confidence.

*Reason's whole pleasure,
all the joys of sense,
Lie in three words—
health, peace, and competence.*

Alexander Pope
[Essay on Man]

Nothing creates confidence more than competence. Telling someone they're good at something, giving them pats on the back, kisses on the cheek, big hugs and positive words of how great they are don't, nor can't, build true confidence. Only competence creates confidence.

Suppose a martial arts instructor, instead of teaching his students the skills, techniques and mindset of self-defense, simply tells his students they are good, gives them mantras to repeat, concepts to think about, a kind word, a pat on the back, a diploma of rank stating they are this or that belt designation, and then a smile of good will as they leave the studio. What can this possibly do to create any semblance of confidence? Not only does it do nothing to help insure the individual's self-defense capability, it does great harm because the student may potentially acquire a false sense of his abilities which could easily get him injured or worse. The name of the game for any competent martial arts instructor is to create competence in his students. This is done by giving them skills first and kudos second if they're deserved. Skills before kudos. This should be the mantric basis of the principle *competence creates confidence*. When we give kudos before skills, we weaken the individual and potentially disable him from defending his life if need be.

True story. One aspect of women's self-defense training at the Karate Institute of America is, when in public, to always be aware of "who's watching you?" In simple terms, be aware of your environment and don't assume a Pollyanna approach to life by being overly and illogically optimistic or being an ostrich

with its head buried in the sand, thinking that if you can't see danger, it won't affect you. The Pollyanna-Ostrich syndrome is a recipe for disaster. Look around. Take note of where you are. Don't assume you're not being watched, surveilled or targeted and that you need no defenses. The sad truth of this world is that we must always be aware and prepared to defend ourselves or our loved ones if need be. This is not paradise. It would be a mistake to believe it is.

As destiny would have it, two weeks after this particular workshop, one of the ladies was in a grocery store. Having been schooled in the principle, "Who's watching you?", she noticed a man kept watching and following her wherever she went. She'd go down an aisle, he would follow. She'd go down another aisle, he'd follow suit. When she went to the checkout counter, so did he. When she exited the store, got in her car and drove away, he followed in his car. Noticing she was being stalked, she drove right to the nearest police station and her would-be assailant drove on, never to be seen again.

What saved this woman was her awareness, her competence in managing her life on a daily basis. Her training protected her, as all training is designed to do. It was this competence that gave her the confidence to handle the situation. By her own admission, before the workshop she went about her day without an awareness of her environment. What could have happened had she not been aware of her surroundings and watching out for who was possibly watching her? Thank God she'll never know, and kudos to her for taking a few hours to invest in not just her well-being, but her life.

The bottom line in all this is that when we have skill, we have confidence. We don't acquire confidence by being skill less. In whatever we do in life, if we want confidence and the joy and peace that come with it, we must expend the time, effort and possibly money to create the competence insuring that confidence, which in turn, as in the case of this woman, could well save our life.

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