

# The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #30 – Adapt or Die.

In the day-to-day battles of life,  
we can weep or laugh or cry,  
but the indefensible truth is  
that we either *Adapt or Die*.

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*The wise adapt themselves to circumstances,  
as water molds itself to the pitcher.*

Chinese Proverb

*Fixed fortifications are monuments to man's stupidity.*

General George Patton Jr.

*The nature of war is ceaseless change . . .  
It is one of the most important tasks of command  
to effect timely and proper change of tactics.*

Sun Tzu

*All fixed set patterns are incapable of  
adaptability or pliability. The truth is  
outside of all fixed patterns.*

Bruce Lee

Life changes . . . ceaselessly. War changes . . . ceaselessly. Battles change . . . ceaselessly. It is a fact of life that one of the true constants in life is change. Like the waters of the ocean and their tides upon the shore, change is the order of the moment.

Adaptation. It is the antidote to change and critical to survival. Whether it is applied to life, war, personal battles, family situations or geographical occurrences, being able to adapt is the key to survival and success for any living species.

To adapt means to adjust. Therefore, the principle of adjustment is central to our well-being. If we're too fixed, too stuck, too locked into our own ways of being or to a mindset that will not bend, the result can't be good.

Warriors such as the famed Sun Tzu, Bruce Lee, George Patton and all great generals understand these principles as deeply as anyone, if not more, because in their worlds life is the cost of their inability to adapt. If they are not adaptable in war, many soldiers will die, a major concern, especially if one has a conscience.

This inability to adjust was no more obvious than in the 1991 Gulf War between Allied Military Forces led by General Norman Schwarzkopf against Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, who claimed that such a conflict would be the "Mother of all Battles." Although boldly labeled, it became instead the "Mother of all Defeats." In preparation to the Allied Forces' attack, Hussein entrenched his tanks, aiming them at a beachhead where he presumed the attack would start because of allied attack-landing rehearsals. But these rehearsals were all a ruse, a deception. This was a costly mistake for Hussein, who would have been well served to have studied warfare, especially paying attention to General George Patton's observation that *Fixed fortifications are monuments to man's stupidity*. Schwarzkopf faked a frontal attack on the beachhead and executed an "end run" around Hussein's entrenched armored defenses. This highly mobile flanking maneuver allowed the Allies to get behind Hussein's frontline fixed fortifications, laying waste to the Iraqi army in a mere 100 hours, initiating a re-titling of the "Mother of all Battles" to the "100 Hour War." Hussein was humiliated and defeated, a precursor to future events when Allied forces destroyed his murderous regime in 2003. Hussein was tried by his own people and died by hanging in 2006, ending his reign of terror.

This entire historic occurrence is a major example of one's inability to adapt. Hussein didn't or couldn't. He died. Perhaps he should have heeded the principle, *Adapt or Die*.

On the other side of the coin, especially during the Gulf War, the Allied Forces under the brilliant command of General Norman Schwarzkopf did adapt and they were victorious.

Such is the reality of life, war and battles. If we're to be successful in life, we must learn to adapt, adjust and modify our thoughts and actions as they apply to the circumstances at hand. How do we adapt? By being flexible, supple, like the branches of a willow tree. We need to *bend not break*, as the saying goes. This means we need to be open to change and modification. Having a strong will is good, but if it's too strong, too rigid, it will not be able to flex, and in that lack of flexion, it will collapse, like ill-constructed buildings in an earthquake. The same goes for our attitudes, principles, beliefs and concepts held dear, sometimes too dear. They must be flexible in all ways—mentally, emotionally, physically, financially. If we can't be flexible when circumstances demand, then we may well be victimized by our own inability to functionally understand the principle, *Adapt or Die*.

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