

FEARLESSNESS



Fearlessness allows one to remain calm under pressure. It gives the skilled practitioner many options. The mind is clearer and the body responds better when fear is set aside. This is a high level skill that anyone can achieve. It is not a magical feeling at all. In fact most people know it! Consider how you feel as you go about your daily life, at work or at school or at home - most likely not afraid. Fearlessness is a common every day experience. We must practice this until it is natural in a tense situation. The practice of relaxing, reverse belly breathing and letting go of everyday fears will serve the practitioner well.

Musashi, the great Japanese swordsman, was once asked which of a certain lord's retainers was most skilled. While sitting with his lord and all the lord's senior retainers, Musashi described a lower level samurai he had passed in the hall. Everyone was stunned by his choice. They asked to speak to the man. Musashi asked him what type of training he did to achieve the focus and skill he so obviously displayed. The man said he did nothing particularly different from his comrades ... except that each night he hung a sword above his head by a thread. In this way he learned to let go of fear and go to sleep.

While this is not a practice Shoshin Ryu would advocate, it does make a point. Anyone can become fearless with training. Train it daily in the small things that you do or do not do. Do not interpret this to mean you should jump off high buildings, walk into bars and challenge people, or drive extra fast! It means learning to chat nicely with a mean clerk or boss. It means to face responsibilities in household chores, at the workplace or within the community. To see and meet really courageous people, go to a children's cancer ward and watch children with their parents. Visit the spouse of a person with advanced Alzheimer's disease. Go next door to see the couple who each work two minimum wage jobs to provide for their children, who are smart, polite and motivated to succeed. Courage is all around you. You need only to be fearless to see it.

One of Shoshin Ryu's secrets is to completely master fearlessness. This does not mean simply conquering the fear of a fight. Many people can do that, but are overwhelmed when confronted with the passions of greed, anger, lust or the delusion of fame, wealth or responsibility. You must master fearlessness of both inner and outer fears. This teaching comes to us from Yamaoku Tesshu, 1837-1888, the founder of Itto Shoden Muto Ryu.



SHOSHIN RYU
— MARTIAL ARTS —