

## Inanimate Anger

I have to admit to a character flaw: I get angry at inanimate objects. When the computer does not do what I direct it to do, it's not long before I want to practice my stepping side thrust kick into the screen. Luckily, I realize that it would cost a pretty penny to replace it, so I settle for nasty curse words that only the neighbors in the adjoining condo can hear. Oops. When the cover of the smoke detector refuses to open despite my efforts with an array of levers and tools, I would like to lunge punch it forcefully against the ceiling if only I would not have to replace the smoke detector and repair the ceiling. The vague thought process occurring in the back of my brain is something like this: no inanimate object has the right to defy a human being! What does it think it is, anyway, a biological entity?

Warning! Do not hire me to do handyman repairs around your house. I will likely take thrice as long as a real handyman and will increase my blood pressure to a dangerous level. Your ceilings may suffer and your neighbors may also complain.

Ironically, there is a good side to this embarrassing characteristic: I do not easily get angry with human beings. I figure that I cannot possibly know what kind of day, week, month, year, or life they are experiencing, so I should be a little patient. For all I know, both their computer and their smoke detectors have defied them and, in addition, they have an annoying slow leak in two of their car tires that became obvious just as they ran out of gas after having forgotten to renew the auto club membership.

I tend to withhold foul language from any incident where I “disapprove” of a human action. I feel that spitting blue invectives will not help either the perpetrator or this writer better his disposition. That doesn't mean I have mastered my emotions to the extent that I do not get angry. Rather, it means when I get angry (with the exception of anger at inanimate objects), I do not get animated. Should I feel an internal seething, I exhale, shake it off, and try to make a joke of the situation, not externally (which action others might misinterpret), but internally. *I learned this from kata.*

Once in a while I do a kata that feels nearly perfect in form, speed, and energy. Of course, if I were looking at it from the outside, I might internally seethe, but from this performer's perspective, it feels decidedly excellent. Most of the time, however, I feel that I do adequate kata. Some say they are better than adequate, but frankly, I take my own counsel in these matters. If it doesn't feel right to me, it is certainly not “nearly perfect”. Still, at the end of the kata, I return to proper *kamae* (posture) with *zanshin* (spirit of awareness) as if I had just won the gold medal in international kata championships. My emotions are both under control *and* animated enough so that judges can tell there is intent behind each movement. I ignore my anger at having stumbled

right after the *kiai*-point, and having executed a poor *sokuto* (side-edge) on my side snap kick. In fact, the disappointment I feel may not be considered *anger* at all. Rather, it is a signal for self-correction.

Most of the time when we get angry at either inanimate objects (whether or not they actually have a secret conspiracy to ruin human lives) or people, we want the object of our anger to self-correct. That's why our anger is animated. Because it is not externally expressed, inanimate anger, like the emotion I feel when my kata performance is not up to my elevated standard, feels more like a mark in a notebook: remember this and try to improve this flaw. This "inanimate anger" is a tool for self-development.

Now, if I could just do that with faulty smoke detectors and computers.