

The Glower of Negative Stinking

A couple of decades ago, when *Personal Power* was the #1 infomercial on TV, Tony Robbins decided to hold a focus group for a new infomercial intended to reach even more people. In the group, of the 13 men and women who were unfamiliar with his work, all but one of them felt that Robbins was a liar, that the program would not work, and that infomercials like his were just expensive rip-offs. Asked to leave the safety of an observation room and face the group, Robbins hesitantly introduced himself and, with his patient manner, delved more deeply into why these people were so negative about his product, even to the point of their putting down the only person among them that had successfully used similar products.

Robbins discovered that the majority of these people had been disappointed so often in the past that they not only jumped to conclusions about what his audiotapes represented, but also were afraid to accept even the money-back guarantee that went with the program because they “knew” using the it would only mean yet another failure.

Recently, I received a phone call from a customer who was interested in traveling from another country to train privately with me on minimal motion and internal arts. I quickly disabused him of the idea that I was any sort of expert in internal martial arts while stating honestly that I believed my minimal external motion was leading me on a path to more internal application. We discussed some of the items he had seen on YouTube, what he had seen me do during the one seminar he had attended, what he had witnessed other people do, and what he had been able to do himself by studying various methods. He said he had invested several thousands of dollars in instruction and videos from guys who were less than stellar in their teachings and who managed to disappoint him again and again.

He liked the fact that I always try to explain whatever I do in a manner that people can not only follow, but also emulate. Having been disappointed so often, he felt he was now in a position to discern the wheat from the chaff. I explained that some techniques *look* phony and that I sometimes get comments on YouTube from those to go out of their way to tell me how badly I stink. That negative glower, he suggested, was simply because they had not learned enough to know what was really possible.

“Yes,” I said, “and because there are so many phonies out there that depend on cooperation from their partners, advanced *budo* often looks like just another case of programmed cooperation.”

Those who felt obliged to extend their glower of negativity toward me, interpreting advanced *waza* as “stinking” were in the same position as the majority of the people in Tony Robbins’s focus group: they were angry and negative mostly because they were afraid of taking

even the first step toward suspending their disbelief on the grounds that they refused to be disappointed (and embarrassed) again.

When a person fails, he does not want to repeat the failure. When he fails several times, he is more likely to use negativity as a defense than he is to learn from his failures and become more discerning. “Fall seven times, rise eight” does not occur to him. But, as my wise customer noted, albeit with different words, “you can’t get to the rooftop if you fear every rung of the ladder.”

Others had “failed” him several times, but he was not about to let that make him negative, glowering, or make his technique stink.