

Letting Go!

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Over the past month or so, Sukh Sensei has spoken to us about **goals**, inspiration, and **missed opportunities**. I am writing this as a therapeutic way of slowly letting go of toxic emotions and events that have haunted my life and how training at the Gi Yu Doo is giving me the courage (YU) to do so.

When I was seventeen the one thing I loved above everything was playing football. I played my last game as a senior in high school and felt a little lost afterwards because I felt I might never put those pads on again. As time passed and by the end of my senior year, Ohio University approached me about playing football for the “Bobcats” on offensive line. As excited as I was at the time I was so beat up and damaged from all the years of football, that I could not capitalize on this opportunity, at least that is what I told myself at that young age. Truth being told, I was too scared and dumb to take advantage of what I was afraid of, playing in college at a much higher level of athletics. **I missed an opportunity!**

Two years after graduating high school, I reached out to the Ohio University football coach and asked if he was still interested in having me be on his team. The coach remembered me and said he wanted me to come to the college for a workout that spring. As I began my training I realized that my right knee was not responding to my movements very well. In fact, it was getting to the point I could no longer bend it, it was just numb all the time. I let the coach know that the spring workout was off the table until I could figure out what was going on with my knee. I was sent to many doctors and specialists and they performed many tests. After two long months of testing, they had no diagnosis or resolution to my knee issue. I was told that they did not know what was going on. While the doctors were busy testing me, the numbness had expanded to include my whole leg. I finally was sent to one last doctor that performed tests on me in his office that were different than any of the other tests I had. When he finished he told my father and I that I had one of three things wrong with me; I had either a tumor on my spine, cerebral palsy, or multiple sclerosis. He told me that he had already made an appointment for me to see a neurologist to do some more testing.

To say the least, as a young twenty year old, I was dumbfounded, scared, overwhelmed, and upset. All these emotions and no guidance, slowly turned to depression as I went through the next round of tests. By the time the neurological tests were complete, I was told they thought I may have multiple sclerosis, but the doctors were not 100% certain. By this time both my legs were pretty much gone and I was not walking well and I had many days where I was not able to walk at all. I was a young strong twenty year old, and as I thought back then, I was pretty well shut down from doing anything I wanted to in my life, especially in athletics. My depression took me to a place in my mind that I never want to go back to ever again. I found myself having suicidal thoughts and behaving very irrationally. Obviously, I did not follow through with those negative thoughts, but the depression did not go away. I could not find inspiration or positivity in anything I saw or got involved in. Then one night I was watching the ESPY’s on ESPN and watched Jimmy Valvano (basketball player, coach, and broadcaster) talk about his life and facing the harsh reality of having terminal cancer. I heard his speech and began to set **goals** for myself by being **inspired** by a dying man. A man that was living life to the fullest and not feeling sorry for himself. Below are the words he spoke that **inspired** me and I hope they **inspire** you. (excerpts)

“Time is very precious to me. I don’t know how much I have left, and I have some things that I would like to say. Hopefully, at the end, I will have said something that will be important to other people, too. But, I can’t help it. Now, I’m fighting cancer, everybody knows that. People ask me all the time about how you go through your life and how’s your day, and nothing is changed for me.

When people say to me how do you get through life or each day, it’s the same thing. To me, there are three things we all should do every day. We should do this every day of our lives. Number one is laugh. You should laugh every day. Number two is think. You should spend some time in thought. Number three is you should have your emotions moved to tears, could be happiness or joy. But think about it. If you laugh, you think and you cry, that’s a full day. That’s a heck of a day. You do that seven days a week, you’re going to have something special.

I always have to think about what’s important in life, to me its these three things. Where you started, where you are and where you’re going to be. Those are the three things that I try to do every day.

It's so important to know where you are. I know where I am right now. How do you go from where you are to where you want to be? I think you have to have an enthusiasm for life. You have to have a dream, a goal. You have to be willing to work for it.

And that's what I'm going to try to do every minute that I have left. I will thank God for the day and the moment I have. If you see me, smile and maybe give me a hug. That's important to me too. I know, I gotta go, I gotta go; and I got one last thing, and I said it before, and I'm gonna say it again. Cancer can take away all my physical abilities. It cannot touch my mind, it cannot touch my heart and it cannot touch my soul. And those three things are going to carry on forever."

After I heard that speech, I started a new journey and set new **goals** for myself. I used the words of a man dying of cancer who was still enthusiastic about life to inspire me. I learned later watching a documentary about Jimmy Valvano that he used to write his **goals** down on index cards and put them in his suit jacket pocket to have them with him so he could remind himself of where he wanted to be. Just like Sukh Sensei always says, write down your goals and put them where you have to look at them every day...your written words will become your reality. Coach Valvano's wife said on this documentary after his passing, that she was going through his clothes and the last jacket he wore, she found an index card and the only goal left was "to beat cancer". My only goal at the time was to walk again. It took me around 2 years to fully get use of my legs to the point I could walk without a cane. I was later told by doctors that I was misdiagnosed and that I had type of syndrome that acted like MS, but the whole experience left me very bitter because it was years of my life that I could not get back. More **missed opportunities!!**

I needed something to **inspire** me again and I found it in my wife and daughter. As happy as I am I still could not get over the bitterness I felt from the events of when I was in my twenties. As I watch my daughter grow, I realized that I needed to do something to ensure that I am here with her for as long as I can be. I also realized, as she grows, I want her and I to share something that we will always bring us together. I knew I was going to have to do something to lose weight and get healthy, but more importantly teach myself to let go of the toxic bitterness that has had its grip on me for years.

That something was Gi Yu Dojo!!! As I progress through my training I slowly feel my body getting in better shape. I feel stronger in body and mind and most importantly spirit. Now it is not easy, trust me, if you ever get to train with Sukh Sensei or any of his Black Belts, these guys will wear you down. But it is worth it! It reminds me of when I was that 17-year-old kid playing football. I feel he is still in me and I talk to him every day, he helps me to push forward and to simply let go. The weird thing I have found about toxic emotions and bitterness is there are times I am afraid to let them go as they are slowly melting away. When you have held on to something for so long, no matter if it is positive or negative, it is still scary to let go because that is what you have conditioned yourself to be. The opportunity to train with the fine people at Gi Yu Dojo has been an absolute blessing in my life. When my daughter turns five and can join the CORDS Kids program, she will be a part of the Gi Yu Dojo. This will help build her confidence and teach her early on not to hold onto toxic emotions. I want her to have the ability to not miss opportunity, and to be inspired by wonderful leaders and mentors to meet her goals whatever they may be. I think back to the saying that it takes a village to raise a child and I am glad that I found that village at the Gi Yu dojo!!!

My Training is teaching me the Justice (GI) of holding myself accountable, Courage (YU) to Let Go of the bitterness I have held onto for many years, Budo by finding my inner warrior and refining my spirit and polishing my character and realizing it is a never-ending venture, Nin Po to learn a new way of perseverance.

God Bless!