**Collaborative Practice and Martial Arts – two sides of the same coin?**

**What can conflict resolution professionals learn from martial arts philosophy?**

Workshop by Katja Ziehe, IACP Forum, Chicago, October 24 – 27, 2019

**12 self-management principles of Chan Buddhism**

* **The principle of the present moment** *(Prinzip der Gegenwart)*

You can only be aware of a conflict and the state-of-mind of your client (and your own state of mind) when you a present. This is more difficult than you maybe think. What are you thinking at this moment?

The monks of Shaolin who practice their own Kung Fu style use martial arts to help their minds to be in the present moment. When I am practicing Kung Fu I have to be there with all my mind and energy. Otherwise, I will be hit or injured.

* **The principle of attentiveness** (often in therapy: the principle of mindfulness) *(Prinzip der Achtsamkeit)*

The principle of the present moment is very closely connected to the principle of attentiveness. Only when your mind is right here now you have the control about your emotions and about your actions and only then you are able to see the situation as it really is. The principle of attentiveness (or: mindfulness) is quite popular at the moment. It is not only used in therapy to cure depression or in addiction treatment but also to train managers etc.

* **The principle of unexpectedness** (or non-expectation) *(Prinzip der Erwartungslosigkeit)*

The principle of unexpectedness is on one hand avoiding disappointments because the other person will never react or act the way you want it. But more importantly it gives you the most possible flexibility to react properly in a certain – unexpected situation.

* **The principle of “giving way”** *(Prinzip des Nachgebens)*

Then we have the principle of “giving way” – which probably does not sound like martial arts or winning a fight at all. But by giving way you can put yourself in a safer or more comfortable position. Look at the bamboo in a storm. It gives way to the wind and after the storm it is standing upright again but hard objects that don’t move can be destroyed by the wind. Water gives way to hard objects like a rock. And still it is a very powerful element.

* **The principle of composure** *(Prinzip der Gelassenheit)*

The principle of composure helps to be the master of your emotions and not vice-versa. We should learn to know ourselves, our emotions, our hot-buttons so we have control of ourselves. In martial arts as soon as you are afraid or angry or hateful, you already have lost the fight, because you give away the control over yourself to your opponent.

* **The principle of “letting go”** (or relinquishing) *(Prinzip des Loslassens)*

The principle of letting go means that you don’t hold on things, persons, situations, plans etc. But let it go instead. It does not mean that you don’t set yourself any goals or don’t make any plans anymore. But you know and accept that nothing is forever and everything changes – even your own wishes and goals in life. There is more than one way to Rome. And maybe on the way there, you notice, you would rather go to Florence…

* **The principle of determination** *(Prinzip der Entschlossenheit)*

Pursue your goals with all your energy and determination. If you are lost in the middle of the woods you will only get out if you decide on one direction and follow it until you find your way out instead of changing your mind all the time and running around in a circle. In Kung Fu: if you are confronted with a situation where you either have to run away or fight, make your decision and keep to it until the end: either you run away as fast as you can or you fight as hard as you can. An only half running / half fighting Kung Fu brother of mine ended up in hospital!

* **The principle of Slowness** *(Prinzip der Langsamkeit)*

An old Chinese proverb says: grass will not grow faster if you pull on it.

Everything (and everybody) needs its (his/her) time. Like in mediation or collaborative practice (or mountain climbing for ex.): the slowest party determines the speed of the team. And when you slow down yourself you are more likely to be in the present moment and to be mindful and attentive.

If the collaborative process seems stuck take a break and look what happens.

* **The principle of imitation** *(Prinzip der Nachahmung)*

If you cannot understand your client, try to “imitate” him/her. Try to put yourself in his/her shoes for a moment by asking curious questions and listening carefully, “feel” yourself in his/her skin. You might understand him/her better.

Our clients will be inclined to follow our example of communication if they think it is helpful for them. And their example will teach their children.

* **The principle of opportunity** *(Prinzip der Gelegenheit)*

Be mindful and in the present and do not expect something specific. Then you will recognize – and take – the best possible opportunity to reach your goals.

* **The principle of superiority** *(Prinzip der Überlegenheit)*

Difficult to explain: let’s say this is a state of mind which subtly tells your opponent that there is no use in fighting you. Therefore you will win without having to fight.

* **The principle of self-knowledge / self-awareness** *(Prinzip der Selbsterkenntnis)*

Only if you know yourself, know your “hot buttons” and state of mind you are able to be in the present moment attentive and mindful and of best support for your client. So – get to know yourself ☺!

***“Conflicts are not the exception in human relationships – it is the rule. Its roots are deep, common, and various, and not easy to deal with, and there is no substitute for simply wading out into the deep waters of conflict with honesty, fierceness, and a willingness to plunge into the depth of human feeling when necessary. Regardless of how calm, good, and nice we think we have become, as long as we and others have desires and needs, we will clash, and if we don’t expect this and learn how to deal with it, we will either have to live in some sequestered self-protective way, or be embroiled in stressful controversy much of the time.”***

*(Norman Fisher, poet, author and Zen Buddhist priest; he has worked with the Center for Understanding in Conflict on inquiries that focus on bringing the calmness and insight of meditation practice directly into conflict situations)*