

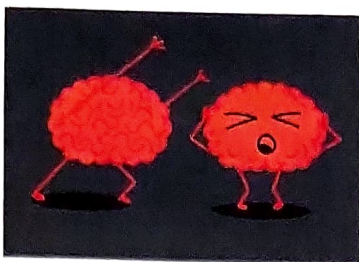


THE MARTIAL ARTS
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Why You Should Say More “Woo Hoo!” and Less “Boo Hoo”

The “Threat or Challenge” Question



Your pulse races and your palms get sweaty, a new obstacle has reared its head. It can be anything from a difficult new boss at work, a project at school, or a new technique or kata in the dojo. Think about the last time something like that popped up in your life, now remember what your initial reaction to it was...

If you thought “ugh, oh no” maybe even... a few expletives, this is a **threat reaction**. If you thought “this is a great opportunity to grow or show my worth”, this is a **challenge reaction**. Here’s the science behind why you should train yourself to have a “challenge” mindset”.

Our brains are still working on old software. The threat response was to prepare you for an old world full of serious threats that may cause harm or loss. It helped by signaling the brain to divert blood away from your brain, and release cortisol for frenzied energy. In modern times though our perceived “threats” are things like deadlines, pop-quizzes, and meetings, and we definitely can’t afford to be anxious and dumb for those. So why do our minds keep doing this to us? Science says it’s because anxiety and negativity are addictive. The good news is that we can fight it.

Here’s how we train our craniums to come away from the dark side. Ask yourself these questions: “Is this situation going to harm me?” “Are there benefits to success” “Am I capable of handling this?”. You can also tackle the problem by hijacking your physiological response. We may think a quickened pulse and nervousness mean danger so we try to stop or avoid the situation. The fact is that these biological responses are also what physically prepare us for **success**. Remind yourself that the adrenaline in your body is a gift and a tool, and use it to win. Athletes who view competition as challenge, not threat, show increase in flow of oxygenated blood to the brain; win more often, are happier with their performance and have better motor control. So next time you or your kids are up against an obstacle, hack your brain, and accept the challenge.