

I HAVE FALLEN MORE THAN EIGHT TIMES

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I have lost count of the times I have fallen. I have lived a long time so I have had more opportunities to fall and get up. And it is true, every time you get up you get up stronger and smarter. The stronger is not usually physical, but mental, emotional and spiritual. It also has to do with attitude. Some people don't like my attitude, but they are not the ones getting up off the ground, so it doesn't matter. It is your attitude that has a play in whether or not you pick yourself up to begin with.

This spring and summer my health gave me two opportunities to fall and get up. In the spring I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I had to go through many tests that were uncomfortable both physically and mentally. I am currently under treatment and hopefully the treatment is working. I think that it is. The second opportunity came when my doctors told me that my heart was beating too slow and that I needed a souped up pacemaker called an *implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)*. The doctors told me that if I did not have this device implanted I had a high risk of suffering a stroke or dying in my sleep. I agreed to have this done and the ICD was implanted on June 21, 2004. The results have exceeded my expectations.

Physically I had fallen...I did not feel well, I had no energy and much of my strength had gone. I really felt that the odds were catching up with me and I did not have much time left. But my attitude was that I was not going to give in. I kept teaching my classes, working in my yard, going to my aerobic class and working on different building projects around my house.

The most difficult during all this time was the mental and emotional stress of going through many diagnostic tests and having to wait for answers from the doctors. But my attitude was that whatever they found I would do my best to beat it or live the best I could with whatever time I had left. And I was glad that good or bad, I was going to find out what was wrong with me and face it. That is how I have always dealt with mental and emotional stress...rather than giving in to fear of the unknown, face it and deal with it. Rather than letting worry and fear drain you...turn that fear into positive energy by getting rid of the problem, finding a way to make it more manageable or making it work for you. If you give in you lose an opportunity to learn and learn about yourself.

Dealing with the physical part of the post operative recovery period was very frustrating and the most difficult because I was fighting with myself. I was told that I could not do anything strenuous for at least **TWO MONTHS!!** For two weeks, my left arm had to be strapped into place at night so I would not move it in my sleep, for two weeks I had to have a sponge bath and for two weeks I could not move my left arm above my shoulder. When I could finally start moving my arm I was told I still could not lift anything above five to ten pounds. None of the doctors were familiar with the martial arts, so that when I asked if I could work kata or weapons slowly and lightly they all said **"NO!"** One doctor

even asked me if I knew how to do anything that was gentle? Because the ICD was doing such a wonderful job, I felt wonderful and continually had to fight with myself not to overdo. It was very difficult to stay positive when you are accustomed to doing for yourself and much of what you took for granted now you had to have someone do it for you or ask for help. I found myself getting down and a little angry. However, after six weeks, enough was enough and I went back to YMCA and started on the treadmill and stationary bicycle. I knew how far to take it from my cardiac rehab. So far so good and next week I plan to return to my aerobics class. I also plan to start doing my stretching exercises and start working with my bo.

Even that first week after the ICD was implanted; I would go out for a few minutes and watch my class. (I have a wonderful black belt student by the name of Carlos Uribe who ran my classes while I was recovering.) During the second week I started to coach from the sidelines. This had two purposes, it kept me involved and that was good for my recovery (mentally and emotionally) and it showed my little ones that even though life has its challenges you must still keep your commitments. It also assured them that Hanshi was ok and would soon return to class.

The other factor that kept me going was all the prayers and good thoughts from my students, friends and family. Many of my black belts came and helped Carlos during this time and to check up on me to see how I was doing. All the telephone calls from my good friend Chris Hoshiyama also helped. Least I forget the wonderful back up from my wife, that without her it would not have been possible.

So I say to all of you, when you are down no matter what **GET UP!!** None of us know how many times we will fall and get up, but if you decide to get up there is a good life waiting for you around the corner. Remember to live one day at a time.