

CHAPTER 6  
*Persevere*

# DISCIPLINE NUMBER SIX

The noble warrior never gives up.



## Lesson

There is nothing harder than spiritual struggle because it is the clash of opposing wants, desires, and loves within one's own being. The lower self fights with the higher self, the spiritual fights against the natural, the darkness against the light, the evil against the good. During the throws of spiritual combat the warrior can feel torn apart inside. The pain can be so great that the warrior sometimes would rather die than go on. Especially when the warrior experiences defeat against the darker forces of his or her nature, does the warrior tend to lose hope and to despair.

Struggle is inevitable to one who desires spiritual growth. Periodic defeat is also inevitable and quite natural. No one goes through life without suffering defeat. The real trick is what you do when you are defeated. Do you prepare to try again? You will fail in your spiritual struggles, and so you must learn to get back up. You will feel alone in spiritual struggle, and so you must learn to call out for help. You will want to give up in times of battle, and so you must learn to persevere. The reason is because it is through rising up after defeat, and trying again, that the warrior gains wisdom and the ability to move forward. It is through the struggle itself, and the eventual victory in such struggle that the warrior achieves lasting growth, peace, and happiness. As the psalmist says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5). The spiritual warrior struggles through the night, with the hope and the faith that the dawn will come. And that dawn does come, and with it, joy, for the one who perseveres.

There are countless stories of people who refused to give up, even when they have failed repeatedly or been rejected. One author wrote a story and believed that it was very good. But publisher after publisher rejected him. He was rejected everywhere he turned. How many times would you be able to have your story rejected before you begin to believe that the story must be no good, before you give up? Five times? Ten times? His story was rejected 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24, 25 -- yes twenty five rejections from different publishers. But he didn't give up. The twenty sixth publisher loved the story and contracted with him to publish it. His name was ????? and his stories are inscribed in the minds and hearts of children all over the world. Have you heard of Dr. Seuss? Pete Rose, the professional baseball player, held the record for years as the man with the most base hits. He once held the record for the most hits. Guess what title he also carried along the way to his success--the strike out king. He struck out more than anyone else on the way to his success. He didn't quit. When Nelson Mandela sat in jail for years upon years for standing up for human rights and equality in South Africa, would he have ever dreamed that some day he would be president of the country which imprisoned him? Perhaps he did. He continued to study, dream, plan, improve himself with no guarantee of freedom, let alone a place in government. But Nelson Mandela never gave up the dream, and he rose up from prison to lead his country toward true freedom for all and to peace.

If you have the flame burning within you, but find that your efforts to succeed don't seem to pan out immediately, don't give up. That fire is real and it will manifest itself in one way or another. Not everyone fulfills their dreams, at least how they first imagined them. But genuine love never seems to die, and it finds a way of coming to fruition. Keep trying. If a change in course comes along the way, and it feels right, take it. If you can't seem to burst through one wall after trying again and again, try going over it, or around it. When you have struggled hard with a spiritual enemy, and you have fallen, do not lose heart. Repeat the phrase, "Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy: If I fall, I shall arise" (Micah 7:8). Then rise, and try again. Victory will come to the one who perseveres. In times of weakness, remember the words of the Native American Chief, who suffered greater than you, "Stahyu! Be strong!" These words will bring new resolve, and strength. You are not alone in your struggles. All the warriors who have gone before are with you in these words of hope. Your Creator stands ready to help you. All creation is there to support you. Do not lose hope. Though darkness may fall, surely the sun will rise for you.

## Gems from the Masters

Do not rejoice against me,  
O my enemy:  
If I fall,  
I shall arise.

Micah 7:8

Great works are performed  
Not by strength  
But by perseverance.

Samuel Johnson

It's hard to beat a person  
Who never gives up.

Babe Ruth

When you begin a great work  
You can't expect to finish it all at once;  
Therefore . . . press on,  
And let nothing discourage you  
Till you have entirely finished what you have begun. . . .  
As for me, I assure you I will press on,  
And the contrary winds may blow strong in my face  
Yet I will go forward and never turn back,  
And continue to press forward  
Until I have finished.  
Teedyuscung

It's not the size of the dog  
In the fight.  
It's the size of the fight  
In the dog.

Mark Twain

You cannot harm me,  
You cannot harm  
one who has dreamed a dream like mine.

Dakota Saying

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;  
Or close the wall up with our English dead!  
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility;  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tiger;  
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Let it pry through the portage of the head  
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it  
As fearfully as doth a galled rock  
O'er hang the jutty his confounded base,  
Swill'd with the wold and wasteful ocean.  
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,  
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit  
To his full height!

Henry in Shakespeare's Henry V

Better than a hundred years of idleness  
Is one day spent in determination.

Buddha

The essence of warriorship,  
Or the essence of human bravery,  
Is refusing to give up on anyone or anything.

Chogyam Trungpa



## Questions for Personal Reflection and Discussion

What do you think is the main obstacle to fulfilling your dreams about yourself?

How do you persevere during bouts of frustration and failure?

Who is someone you admire for achieving her/his goals? What do you think is it about that person that allowed her/him to succeed?

# Meditation

Get comfortable. Close your eyes. Take a few moments to become still. Let thoughts flow in and out of your mind. You are going to go on a journey. Imagine you are walking through a field. It is night. You are hiking up a grassy incline. You are tired. You've been traveling for a very long time. Your legs feel like rubber. Your back aches. You feel very heavy, and every step forward is burdensome, but you travel on. As the incline becomes steeper you feel that you can't go on. Your body tells you to stop and rest, but somehow you know that you must continue. You can see that soon the hill levels off and that you will reach the crest. You take a few more burdensome steps. You reach the top. As you stand at the top of the hill, tired, relieved, you gaze up at the stars above and all around you. Each twinkling star offers you a sense of wonder and of hope. Directly in front of you, just above, one particular star catches your attention. It is burning brighter than the rest, and seems to be growing. You immediately feel connected to this star as if it is a gateway to heaven, a light directly from the Divine. You smile at this star and it grows brighter. It gently fills your eyes with light, and seems to light up the sky around you. As your face is bathed in its light you sense its warmth. The warmth is so deep and penetrating, it can only be described as love. You feel perfectly loved in this light, and perfectly understood. The warmth and light grow far stronger than the midday sun, but somehow it feels completely comfortable, enjoyable, and doesn't hurt the eyes. On the contrary, you feel your sight is growing more keen, and your mind clear and aware. You reach your hands toward the light and invite it into your entire being. As you do this you feel a surge of energy flow into your body. Your aches and pains immediately recede and disappear. You feel your whole body renewing strength. The light first enters into your forehead, and from there moves into your entire body. You feel your energy level rise and rise, until it is flowing over. You sense your strength not only returning but growing more than ever before. You feel invincible, inexhaustible, light yet powerful beyond measure. As the light of the star begins to recede you continue to feel this new power. It does not go away, but you realize that the power you have inside of you isn't coming from you. It is coming from that light, and it continues to burn inside of you. This light is the Divine life and power itself. It is the Divine Love which gives you life, energy, strength, ability, and you know that if you rely on this source, your power will never wane. With this source of love and light, you are truly invincible. As the star returns to a sparkle in the sky, you smile at it and then glance down at your surroundings. Morning is beginning to break forth, and the sight of the green landscape of fields, trees, and the blue bodies of water in the lands below fill you with wonder and elation. You turn to walk back down the hill, with renewed strength and confidence for the future.



## Process

This first process can be conducted by the individual and as a warmup for a group. Stand up. Shake yourself free from stress by first shaking your hands free. Move your head in a circular motion relieving tension in your neck. Lift each foot and leg and shake out the tension before placing it back on the ground. Twist your torso to the right and then to the left, stretching a bit to gain further relaxation. Relax. What you are about to do is draw energy from the earth and sky. Think of the earth as a place of firmness, support, centeredness, strength. Think of the sky as a place of awareness, wisdom, sight, spiritual aid from the heavens. Gently and comfortably tuck your chin to your chest and look to the earth. With your arms outstretched on either side of your body, swoop down in a circular motion and gather the energy from the earth, as if you are gathering a bundle of straw on the ground. Bring the energy gathered in your arms and cupped in your hands up into your body. When your hands reach your head, stretch your arms outward again, swooping down again and gathering that earthly energy. Feel the strength, comfort, power of mother earth entering into your body and

heart. Repeat the process a few times. Now, stop and look upward toward the energy of the sky. With your arms outstretched, using the same circular motion, gather the energy of the sky. Bring your arms together over your head, sweeping in the energy and bring it down with hands cupped into the top of your head over your face and down into your body. As your hands reach your stomach stretch them out again and gather more energy from above bringing it back down into your body. Repeat this process a few times. Now pause for a moment. Sense within yourself what you need. Do you need more earth energy? More sky energy. Using the same process of scooping it into your being, go ahead and repeat either process of reaching to the earth or sky to bring in what you need. How do you feel when you complete this process? It feels rejuvenating, doesn't it? This is something you can do to gain strength to persevere before facing any challenge.

If you are in a group and want to focus more on perseverance you can conduct the following process. Form two lines of people, facing each other. For instance, form a line of four people on one side and four on the other, each facing a partner. Be close enough to be able to clasp arms. Take each other's arms and hold firm. You are forming a gauntlet for someone to break through. Now, one person volunteers to walk between the lines of people to push (not break or beat or punch or kick or run into) through the gauntlet. The person stands before the gauntlet and names something he or she would like to overcome (e.g. fear, anger, indecision, etc.). The person asks if the group is ready. They reply, "Ready." Then the person walks through, pushing hard against the clasped hands to reach the other side. People clasping hands use moderate resistance to allow the person to work through the gauntlet and experience perseverance. People clasping hands can hold on as tight as they feel they need to in order for the person to work, but should eventually let the person break through. (Don't be whimsical and let the person saunter through the gauntlet. The person won't learn anything. But also, don't make it so difficult that the person gives up, or has a bad experience. Use good judgment.) People can encourage the person as he/she pushes through. When the person breaks through the end of the gauntlet, participants can applaud. The next volunteer then heads toward the beginning of the gauntlet, the other person taking his/her place in line. The process is repeated until each has had an opportunity to practice perseverance. Afterwards, allow each to talk about what that was like for them.



What are your closing thoughts about Perseverance?

End this lesson with a prayer.

