



We owe it to ourselves and our children to show them that no matter what life throws at us, we can choose to use it to our advantage whenever possible. I do not think everyone who reads this will like it. But I also think it's crucial to examine what got us here and how we can move forward in a meaningful way.

The following comes from a talk on how to approach the situations we or those we care about are in from the perspective of how we can become stronger, more capable, and kinder people as a result.

Petty Tyrants

(Reposted with permission)

"A petty tyrant is a tormentor. Someone who either holds the power of life and death over warriors or simply annoys them to distraction."

—Carlos Castaneda

The inspiration for this, and the quotes I refer to throughout- come from the book "The Fire From Within" - the 8th in a series of books by Carlos Castaneda, a man who goes through transformative experiences that shape his life and his destiny in ways unimaginable to him at the beginning of the series. And certainly, for me, that has been my experience of transformative experience. Starting from a certain point, having an earth-shattering experience, being left standing in the same place, yet knowing everything has shifted. I know that I would prefer the earth shattering experiences not happen, but also recognize that without them I wouldn't be able to continually be in the process of evolving back into being what Joseph Campbell describes as being "fully human." This means living a life that is truly yours- the one you were meant to live, the one that's been imprinted in you from the moment you were born, rather than anything else.

I don't subscribe to the belief that just because we are breathing and go through life that we are automatically fully human. Most don't ever wake up from their slumber. Most sleepwalk and if they do get one a wake-up call - they slap that snooze button as soon as they can, roll over, and continue snoring away.

Now I am not saying this is good or bad. I'm saying it depends on what we want. For those who wish to be warriors- this means giving up wishing it were some way other than it is. It means - they aren't seduced by the notion that when that "thing" happens- like finding love

they feel is missing, getting financially secure enough, (whatever THAT means), getting enough control over the things in their life- whatever... THEN they will be happy, warriors have decided to give up most everything they've found comfortable and familiar.

Certainly, no small resolution. Certainly, no small task. And - it will be riddled with plenty of pitfalls, mistakes, and messy situations.

I don't think deciding to be a warrior is something one casually comes up with one day pleasantly chatting over a cup of coffee with a friend at the local Starbucks. I do think though, that when cross-roads in life appear - that with some idea of a roadmap - a point from which to start and refer to along the way in the midst of upheaval and change - that it IS possible to use what can seem like the worst situations to decidedly move forward in the journey to having the lives we've always wanted for ourselves.

So- what is the biggest obstacle to becoming fully human and how can we overcome it? Carlos Castaneda says, "Self-importance is our greatest enemy. Think about it-what weakens us is feeling offended by the deeds and misdeeds of our fellow men. Our self-importance requires that we spend most of our lives offended by someone."

When we are reactionary, we are easy targets of upset and manipulation by those who wish to gain power over us. We fall prey to manipulative flattery as well as deliberate words and actions designed to agitate. **The truth is, little of what anyone says or does to us is about us at all. It is about their playing out their own perceptions of the world onto others.**

Carlos Castaneda goes on to say, "Every effort should be made to eradicate self-importance from the lives of warriors. Without self-importance we are invulnerable."

This makes me think of a serious misconception can arise when thinking about what he is saying. Many people mistake taking offense or being upset as taking a stand; a way of demonstrating strength. **It ISN'T.**

Any of the martial arts traditions point out that in battle, the person who is most upset will lose.



It is the person who remains calm, quiet, and focused who will win. This is because he or she turns their focus on what is happening outside and what needs to be done or not done in that moment and with how much intensity, in order to deal with the situation. **It**

does NOT mean doing nothing, or allowing unacceptable behavior to happen without a response.

Think about it. What could we do if we couldn't be offended or upset? No matter what someone did or said in front of us- we could quickly perceive it was about them and their perceptions and not us at all?

And so, for warriors, there is a process of moving from being offended and easily upset, to invulnerability. Some encounter someone or some situation in their lives that can become the fire for burning away self-importance. Carlos refers to these as petty tyrants.

He continues, " Warriors take strategic inventories. They list everything they do. In the strategic inventories of warriors, self-importance figures as the activity that consumes the greatest amount of energy, hence, their effort to eradicate it.

One of the first concerns of warriors is to free that energy in order to face the unknown with it. The action of rechanneling that energy is impeccability.

The most effective strategy for rechanneling that energy consists of six elements that interplay with one another. Five of them are called the attributes of warriorship: control, discipline, forbearance, timing, and *will*. They pertain to the world of the warrior who is fighting to lose self-importance. The sixth element, which is perhaps the most important of all, pertains to the outside world and is called the petty tyrant.

A petty tyrant is a tormentor. Someone who either holds the power of life and death over warriors or simply annoys them to distraction.

Petty tyrants teach us detachment. The strategy not only gets rid of self-importance; it also prepares warriors for the final realization that impeccability is the only thing that counts in the path of knowledge."

Carlos then goes on to say, "Four attributes are all that is needed to deal with the worst of petty tyrants, provided, of course, that a petty tyrant has been found.

The petty tyrant is the outside element, the one we cannot control and the element that is perhaps the most important of them all. The warrior who stumbles on a petty tyrant is a lucky one. You're fortunate if you come upon one in your path, because if you don't you have to go out and look for one.

The mistake average people make in confronting petty tyrants is not to have a strategy to

fall back on; the fatal flaw is that average people take themselves too seriously; their actions and feelings, as well as those of the petty tyrant's, are all-important.

Warriors, on the other hand, not only have a well-thought-out strategy but are free from self-importance. What restrains their self-importance is that they have understood that **reality is an interpretation we make.**

Petty tyrants take themselves with deadly seriousness while warriors do not. **What usually exhausts us is the wear and tear on our self-importance.**

To tune the spirit when someone is trampling on you is called control. Instead of feeling sorry for himself or herself, a warrior immediately goes to work mapping the petty tyrant's strong points, their weaknesses, their quirks of behavior.

To gather all this information while they are beating you up is called discipline.

A warrior knows that he or she is waiting and what he or she is waiting for. Right there is the great joy of warriorship.

Timing is the quality that governs the release of all that is held back. Control, discipline, and forbearance are like a dam behind which everything is pooled.

Timing is the gate in the dam.

Forbearance means holding back with the spirit something that the warrior knows is rightfully due. It doesn't mean that a warrior goes around plotting to do anybody mischief, or planning to settle past scores. Forbearance is something independent. As long as the warrior has control, discipline, and timing, forbearance assures giving whatever is due to whoever deserves it.

To be defeated by a small-fry petty tyrant is not deadly, but devastating.

Anyone who joins the petty tyrant is defeated. **To act in anger, without control and discipline, to have no forbearance, is to be defeated.**

After warriors are defeated they either regroup themselves or they abandon the quest for knowledge and join the ranks of the petty tyrants for life. "

We cannot have wholeness and completeness without embracing all aspects of ourselves and practicing control, discipline, and timing in all areas of our lives. A dedication to continually developing these skills lead to a diminishing sense of self-importance, and in so doing we become less and less of a target for which people can wear us down.

WE decide to be kind and generous people, not because anyone has necessarily been kind or generous to us, but because WE decide that's who WE want to be. And when we do it from the standpoint of being a warrior, we also possess the ability to become as fierce as we need to be should the situation call for it, because we have an internal reference point which is stable and unwavering, no matter what is occurring on the outside.

We are truly un-offendable.

We are empowered and empowering.

Here are what I would like to offer as take-aways from those who choose to be warriors:

1. We are going to make mistakes and it is going to be messy. And there will sometimes be big consequences. Keep going anyway.
2. Kindness and generosity are a choice we make, not something a reaction what someone says or does. Kindness and generosity are the true honoring of another person, not the avoidance of saying a potentially offensive thing.
3. We are going to make mistakes and it is going to be messy. And there will sometimes be big consequences. Keep going anyway.
4. To have those situations or petty tyrants in our lives that are unfair or cruel can either be viewed with misery and resentment or as an opportunity to become the fully developed human beings we have always wanted to be. The key is to do everything we can to rid ourselves of self-importance. To the degree we can do that is the degree to which we become invincible.
5. We are going to make mistakes and it is going to be messy. And there will sometimes be big consequences. Keep going anyway.
6. Getting knocked down or drawn in by people who are trying to drag us into their own misery is only as temporary or permanent a situation as we let it be. We can get up. And the way we get up is by getting up. We are aware of our own inherent inner strength and stability, and where we want to go, not waiting for a situation to change in a way we think it should change or to feel better before we act.

Male Warrior Photo by [Nick_H](#) (Pixabay)

Female Warrior Photo by [Mysticsartdesign](#) (Pixabay)