



Question and Answer Series:

The 36 Strategies

By Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Introduction from Sifu

The Thirty Six Strategies are actually not strategies in the sense of overall plans of action, but rather ruses or tricks to overcome particular problems. In Chinese, the 36 strategies are called ji, whereas the strategies in the Art of War, for example, are called fa. These 36 strategies or tricks were used at different times in history by strategists, generals and important people, but are collected into a book by an unnamed author.

The 36 strategies are conveniently classified into six groups as follows. Like Shaolin kungfu patterns, the titles of the 36 strategies are poetically described in four characters.

Winning Strategies

1. Deceive Heaven to Cross Sea
2. Surround Wei to Save Zhao
3. Borrow Knife to Kill Another
4. Use Rest to Wait for Labour
5. Rob while Fire is Burning
6. Sound East Attack West

Battling Strategies

7. From Nothing Born Something
8. Secretly Escape via Chen Cang
9. Across Beach Watch Fire
10. Knife Hidden in Smile
11. Plum Sacrifices for Peach
12. Snatch Goat Along Way

Attacking Strategies

13. Hit Grass Startle Snake
14. Borrow Body to Reincarnate
15. Trick Tiger Leave Mountain
16. To Catch So Release
17. Throw Stone Attract Jade
18. Catch Bandits Catch Leader

Confusing Strategies

19. Beneath Cauldron Withdraw Firewood
20. Troubled Water Catch Fish
21. Golden Cicada Sheds Shell
22. Close Door Catch Thief

- 23. Far Befriend Near Attack
- 24. Borrow Passage Attack Guo

Deceptive Strategies

- 25. Steal Beam Change Pillar
- 26. Point Mulberry Scold Acacia
- 27. Fake Madness Not Insane
- 28. Ascend Roof Remove Ladder
- 29. Tree Top Blossom Flowers
- 30. Turn Guest Become Host

Sacrificial Strategies

- 31. Beauty Strategy
- 32. Empty City Strategy
- 33. Double-Cross Strategy
- 34. Self-Torture Strategy
- 35. Continuous Strategy
- 36. Escape Strategy

I am sure we shall have a lot of fun as well as benefit from the answers to the questions submitted.

Epilogue to Introduction

Some of us may have the impression that the 36 strategies are tricks to deceive other people. As scholar-warriors we want to defeat our opponents in honorable ways, which was the tradition of great masters in the past. So some of us may think the 36 strategies are not suitable. But this is not so. In fact, knowing the 36 strategies help us to win honorably.

Firstly, we are aware of tricks our opponents may use on us. The 36 strategies are comprehensive, and so include any tricks opponents may think of, regardless of whether they know the 36 strategies. This is following the advice of great strategist, Sun Tze, i.e. know your enemy and know yourself, and you will win hundred battles out of hundred. Sun Tze himself used these tricks frequently. These 36 tricks are effective tools to implement the strategies described in the Art of War.

Secondly, tricks by themselves are neutral. It is the intention behind that makes our action facilitated by the tricks noble. You will be pleased to know that the great Guan Yin Bodhisattva used the first of these 36 strategies, Deceive Heaven to Cross Sea, on Monkey God. The result is that not only it brought a lot of benefit to the Monkey God, but also it brings a lot of benefit to people all over the world, including us.

After being released by the Venerable Xuan Zhang, or Triptaka, from the Five-Finger Mountain which imprisoned Monkey God, he became a disciple of Xuan Zhang to protect the master in the journey to the West to bring sutras back to China for translation. (If this did not happen, most of the Buddhist sutras which were originally written in Sanskrit would be lost.) But Monkey God was mischievous and would not always listen to Xuan Zhang.

So Guan Yin Bodhisattva appeared as an elderly lady with a crown in the form of a golden ring and a magnificent robe, and presented them to Monkey God who gladly wore them. Then Guan Yin Bodhisattva taught Xuan Zhang a ring-tightening mantra. Whenever Monkey God did not follow Xuan Zhang's instructions, the master would recite the mantra, which would tighten the ring on Monkey God's head causing him inextricable pain. Monkey God knew 72 transformations. He could, for example, change himself into a fly, but the ring would contract accordingly. The pain would stop only when Xuan Zhang stopped chanting the mantra.

In fact two of the 36 strategies originated from the stories of Monkey God and Immortal Li, namely Rob While Fire is Burning and Borrow Body to Reincarnate. We shall read about these interesting stories in the relevant answers.

This itself makes the Thirty Six Strategies Course very special. Monkey God and Immortal Li, who have frequently guided, protected and blessed us, are the source of two of the Thirty Six Strategies.

So the Thirty Six Strategies Course during the Valentine Festival in Ireland is not about learning how to trick people doing something which they would not normally do, but about learning to be cost effective so as to enrich our lives and the lives of other people. These strategies, collected over many centuries, are still being actively used by military strategists, business leaders and top people all over the world today.

Shaolin Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Question 1

It would be great to hear some of your experiences using the 36 strategies. Do you have any particularly memorable moments when you applied them, whether with patients, in work or in combat?

Andrew

Answer

Although I know the 36 strategies well, interestingly I do not consciously apply them to solve problems. A main reason is that since actively putting our Shaolin Wahnam philosophy into daily life, I do not have any problems. What other people regard as problems, I regard as opportunities for improvement, which is quoted from Emiko who mentioned this some years ago.

Another important reason is that, regardless of whether we call them problems or opportunities for improvement, I look at them with a Zen state of mind. The solution often appears immediately, without the need to think of suitable strategies.

But this does not mean that it is not useful to learn the Thirty Six Strategies. In fact, it is because I know the strategies very well that solutions appear easily to me. Just like in our kungfu and chi kung training. I have learnt so many kungfu and chi kung techniques, that now I can respond spontaneously to any attack or meet any chi kung need without having to think of what techniques to use.

Knowing these 36 strategies is also very useful in a reverse manner, i.e. you can quickly know if someone attempts to use any tricks on you.

I recall an interesting occasion many years ago when a salesman tried to sell something to me. He said he had a present for me. I told him straight away that I didn't want the present. He was shocked. "Don't you want a present?" he asked, "it's free." "No, thank you. I'm not interested in the present." He was trying to use the trick, Deceive Heaven to Cross Sea, on me, though he probably did not know the name of the strategy. He might not even know he was using a strategy; he just followed the training he was given.

In my younger days, some masters would tell me that other masters criticized my kungfu behind my back. "What do you think of my kungfu?" I asked. "Of course, it is very good," they said. "That is good enough for me," I said, "I don't have to worry about what the other masters said." I knew they were

using the strategy, Borrow Knife to Kill Another.

Yet, looking back with hindsight in my healing work I often use the strategy, Deceive Heaven to Cross Sea. The title of this strategy is not quite appropriate here as it connotes a sense of deception. It would be more appropriate to call it Admire Plum Quench Thirst, which connotes a sense of inspiration, and is actually another name for this type of strategy. When someone couldn't stand unassisted, I told him to imagine how wonderful it would be when he could walk and run unaided.

In combat, the strategy I use often is Sound East Strike West. It is extremely effective. In the no-shadow kick, which is one of my specialties, I could kick slowly yet hit an opponent when I use this strategy effectively.

Question 2

I must be sincere. Before this course was coming I didn't even know that "The 36 strategies" existed. I read a lot about "The Art of War" because it is world famous and very extended. So, What makes "The 36 strategies" so special?

Santiago

Answer

In the world the Art of War is more famous, but in Chinese societies both inside and outside China the Thirty Strategies are more well-known. During conversations, Chinese often mention the names of some of the strategies, such as Rob While Fire is Burning or Borrow Knife to Kill Another like common sayings though they may not know about the strategies.

Strategies in the Thirty Strategies are different from strategies in the Art of War. The 36 strategies are called ji in Chinese, which means tricks for particular occasions. The strategies in the Art of War are called fa, which means overall plans of action.

The Thirty Six Strategies are special because they consist of 36 different tricks of an extensive variety that spanned across many centuries. One learns not just 36 tricks themselves but the principles behind the tricks that give rise to countless other tricks which because of their extensive variety can be used for any situations. In other words when you are familiar with these 36 tricks and their principles, you can have any tricks for any occasions.

Let us take an example of the trick, Rob While Fire is Burning. This strategy came from the famous novel, Journey to the West. While journeying to the India to get sutras back to China, the Venerable Tripitaka and his disciple, the Monkey God, stayed a night in a temple in a wilderness. The abbot knew that Tripitaka had a magnificent robe presented to him by the Tang Emperor. He requested Tripitaka to show him the robe. But seeing the robe was so magnificent that he became greedy and wanted the robe for himself.

He thought of a trick. He said that he was old and feeble and could not see the robe properly. He requested that Tripitaka lend him the robe for a night so that he could admire it in his own room. Being an embodiment of kindness, Tripitaka consented.

The abbot called his monks together to scheme to have the robe for himself. A monk suggested that they set on fire the room in which Tripitaka and Monkey God were sleeping. While the monks were preparing the fire, Monkey God

changed himself into a bee, flew out of the room and discovered the scheme. With a few somersaults he landed in heaven and borrowed a fire-prevention shield from a Heavenly King.

With the fire-protection shield, no fire could harm Tripitaka and Monkey God. Monkey God decided to play a little prank on the monks. He gently blew on the fire with the result that now the whole temple was on fire with the monks busy attempting to stop it.

In a nearby cave, known as Black Wind Cave, lived a titan called Black Wind Titan. This titan was a friend of the abbot and frequently visited the temple. Seeing the temple on fire, he flew over to help to put out the fire. But he chanced upon the magnificent robe. He too became greedy. He just leisurely took the robe while the fire was burning.

The temple was burnt to the ground. Of course Tripitaka and Monkey God were safe. Eventually Monkey God got back the magnificent robe for his master.

Cao Cao, the famous prime-minister-cum-general of the Three Kingdom Period made good use of this strategy, Rob While Fire is Burning. He led an attack on the territories of Yun Tan. Yun Tan sought the help of his younger brother, Yun Xiang. Despite numerous attempts, Cao Cao could not defeat the combined armies of Yun Tan and Yun Xiang. So Cao Cao and the attacking force left.

Soon disagreement broke out between Yun Tan and Yun Xiang. It became so bad that Yun Tan sought the help of Cao Cao to protect him. Cao Cao exploited the situation. Pacifying Yun Tan, Cao Cao led his attacking force against Yun Xiang and vanquished him. Later, using an excuse he also vanquished Yun Tan.

In the Art of War, Sun Tzu described this principle as “luan er bai zi”, which literally means “troubled, then defeat it”. When a state is in trouble, it is good time to vanquish it. Sun Tzu categorized three types of trouble – internal disorder, external attack, and combination of internal and external trouble. I learned an invaluable lesson while studying ancient world history in Form Six. The great Roman Empire fell because of internal disorder and external attack. Internal disorder was the more important factor. External attack just sealed its fall.

We should all learn an invaluable lesson from here. In future if Shaolin Wahnam ever crumbled, it would be due to internal disorder. We must all guard against this.

Question 3

My question is what famous strategists would have used the 36 Strategies in the past?

Dominic.

Answer

All great strategists in warfare, government, business, industries, professions, home and all other aspects of life from ancient times right to the modern world have used the 36 strategies.

Let us take the second strategy, Surround Wei to Save Zhao.

It originated with the real even of the Qi army besieging the state of Wei to save the state of Zhao in the 3rd century before the Common Era, and it involved Sun Tzu, the author of the Art of War.

Sun Tze was not the real name. Sun was the surname, and Tzu was a polite address for a highly respected master. There is a debate still going on whether the real person for the title Sun Tze was Sun Wu or his grandson, Sun Bin.

This story of besieging Wei to save Zhou concerned Sun Bin. When the state of Zhao was attacked by the army of Wei, the King of Zhao asked help from his ally, the King of Qi. The King of Qi amassed his troops and was about to set out for the state of Zhao. The great strategist, Sun Bin, intervened. "My Lord," he said, "you should not go to Zhao!"

"We have to save our ally from being vanquished," the King of Qi said.

"We can achieve this objective not by going to Zhao but by besieging the capital of Wei," Sun Bin advised. As Sun Bin had proven himself to be a great strategist, the King followed his advice.

Learning that the Wei capital was being besieged, the Wei general withdrew his attack on Zhao and hurried back to Wei. Sun Bin had laid an ambush in a steep valley on the way, and the Wei army was devastated.

In modern time, this strategy of Surround Wei to Save Zhou was employed in the annexation of the Sinai Peninsula by Israel. In 1956 Egypt nationalized and controlled the Suez Canal, which was earlier built by British and French capital. This resulted in serious conflict between Britain and France on one

hand and Egypt on the other.

Israel sent her defence minister and foreign minister to London and Paris to form an alliance. In October 1956 Israel attacked the Sinai Peninsula but was fiercely resisted by the Egyptian army. A few days later British and French bombers attacked many cities close to the Egyptian capital. This forced the Egyptian army to retreat to defend the capital, leaving Israel easily annexed Sinai in just a few days.

The strategy is also skillfully employed in business. The making of huge profits by the housing industry in Singapore was a good example. Before 1990 the increase in housing prices was normal, about 3%. But by a skillful application of Surround Wei to Save Zhou, company strategists of the housing industry could raise housing prices to 41% in 1993!

How did they do it? Did they raise the price of houses and market them in beautiful brochures? No, they artificially jacked up the price of land. They got sellers to sell their land, especially small pieces, at high prices, and they bought it! This created an impression that land was becoming scarce, with the result that people rushed to buy houses. The demand pushed housing prices rocketing high.

Great strategists in the past as well as in the present, in war, business and all walks of life have used the 36 strategies in numerous ways. The answer here gives some applications of just one strategy. At the course participants will interact and deliberate how these strategies can be used to enrich their lives.

Question 4

The 10 Shaolin Laws teach us to be compassionate, helpful and fair to others.

The 36 strategies aim at personal advantage and could be interpreted as “dirty tricks” and betrayal in a paradigm of high moral standards.

How can the tricking of the 36 strategies be harmonized with the moral values of the 10 Shaolin Laws and does a morally aim (like helping oppressed people) legitimate dirty means.

Leo.

Answer

Like money and power, strategies or tricks are by themselves neutral. It is the intention and result of their application that are moral or immoral. Whether the 36 strategies aim only at personal advantage or at others' advantage, whether they are dirty or clean, and whether they lead to betrayal or loyalty depends on the intention of the strategist and the result of his action.

But it is true that for many people, money and power as well as the great advantage that comes with skillful use of strategies can easily corrupt. It is important that first we know this fact, and then guard against their corruption.

Our Ten Shaolin Laws provide an excellent basis against such corruption. Everyone must follow the Ten Shaolin Laws before he (or she) can start learning our arts.

One of the compliments paid to me for which I am proud of is a student (who is also an instructor) telling me, “Sifu, you are rich, but you haven't changed.” Of course, what he meant when he said that I hadn't changed was that I hadn't become corrupted by money.

I have changed for the better. Previously I could only encourage poor students to study hard. Now I can give them scholarships. Previously I can only give sympathy to poor people, now I can give them money on a routine basis.

It is also worthy of note that it is good to aim at personal advantage. It is doing good. When one is sick and practices chi kung to get well, he is aiming at personal advantage, and it is doing good. When you develop internal force, you are aiming at personal advantage, and it is doing good.

The 36 strategies not only give us personal advantage but also enable us to bring advantage to other people.

Let us take an example of the strategy “Borrow Knife to Kill Another”. At surface meaning, it is evil, mainly because of the connotation of killing. And it is mean. Not only the strategist does not do the killing himself, but he gets someone else to do the killing.

But the onus of the Thirty Six Strategies is not the actions themselves, but the principles underlying the actions. When a person employs an agent to sell a house or any product, and earns a profit, he employs this strategy. In this case, everyone benefits. A lot of companies use this strategy.

There is another strategy that is similar, but has favorable connotation. It is Borrow a Body to Reincarnate, and it originated from the story of Immortal Li, our patron immortal.

Immortal Li was a handsome scholar named Li Xuan. He practiced Taoist spiritual cultivation. One day he had to travel to heaven to meet Tai Shang Lao Jun, or the Supreme High Old Lord, a very high-level Taoist deity. He asked a disciple to look after his physical body while his spirit travelled to heaven. He told his disciple that if he did not return in seven days, the disciple could cremate the body.

On the sixth day a messenger came to inform the disciple that his mother was critically sick and desired to see him before she died. At first the disciple hesitated, but persuaded by the messenger, he cremated his master's body and left to see his mother.

When Li Xuan came back on the seventh day, he had no body to enter. A lame beggar just died on a street. In his desperation, Li Xuan entered the beggar's body and eventually became Immortal Li.

While I was training with Sifu Ho Fatt Nam and Immortal Li often came down to help people, I was tempted to ask the immortal whether the story was true. My siheng, Ah Heng, who practiced Taoist cultivation, warned me seriously, “Don't ever mention this story in front of Immortal Li!”

“Why?”

“It will make him very sad.”

But this strategy of Borrow Body to Reincarnate has made many people very happy. In terms of national reserve, China is reputed to be the richest country in the world today (although many Chinese are still very poor). China has become rich because of this strategy. China does not have the capital or

technology to industrialize, but she has a lot of land and people. So she opens to multinational corporations, which has a lot of capital and technology but lack cheap land and cheap labour.

It is a win-win situation. Not only China and the multinational corporations benefit, you and me too. Now you can buy a shirt made in China for one-fifth the price it cost in Europe.

The Ten Shaolin Laws

1. Required to respect the master, honour the Moral Way and love fellow disciples as brothers and sisters.
2. Required to train the Shaolin arts diligently, and as a pre-requisite, to be physically and mentally healthy.
3. Required to be filial to parents, be respectful to the elderly, and protective of the young.
4. Required to uphold righteousness, and to be both wise and courageous.
5. Forbidden to be ungrateful and unscrupulous, ignoring the Laws of man and heaven.
6. Forbidden to rape, molest, do evil, steal, rob, abduct or cheat.
7. Forbidden to associate with wicked people; forbidden to do any sorts of wickedness.
8. Forbidden to abuse power, be it official or physical; forbidden to oppress the good and bully the kind.
9. Obligated to be humane, compassionate and spread love, and to realize everlasting peace and happiness for all people.
10. Obligated to be chivalrous and generous, to nurture talents and pass on the Shaolin arts to deserving disciples.

Question 5

What is the relationship between the 36 Strategies and other Chinese classics such as the Yi Jing, the Art of War, the Dao De Jing, the four great Chinese literature classics, or others?

Sifu Mark Blohm

Answer

They are related because these classics are mentioned in the Thirty Six Strategies. On the other hand, we may say they are not related because one does not need to know any of the classics to apply and benefit from the 36 strategies.

The name Thirty Six is taken from Sun Tzu's Art of War, which mentions word by word as follows:

Six six thirty six. Calculation inside is technique. Technique inside is calculation. Yin yang change law. Opportunity is inside. Opportunity cannot be nothing. Nothing means fail to hit.

The meaning of the description above is as follows:

Six times six is thirty six. When we calculate the pros and cons of a situation, we need strategies. When we use strategies we must make calculations. The universal law of change is such. Opportunities are found in every situation. When planning a strategy, one must consider benefit. If there is no benefit, the strategy is not useful.

In Yi Jing (I Ching) terminology, "six" refers to a broken line, and "nine" refers to an unbroken line. Three broken or unbroken lines form a trigram, known as "gua" There are eight such trigrams, or "bagua".

Two trigrams placed one on top of another form a hexagram. Thus the eight trigrams or bagua form sixty four hexagrams, which constitute the basis of Yi Jing.

"Six six" refers to six broken lines, which form the hexagram called "kun", which represents "earth". On the other hand, six unbroken lines form the hexagram called "chien", which represents "heaven". "Kun" symbolizes extreme yin, while "chien" symbolizes extreme yang.

“Six times six is thirty six” may be interpreted as there are countless situations on earth, thirty six being taken to mean infinite. Hence the 36 strategies can be used to meet any situation in life.

Situations are constantly changing. This is a universal law. When facing any situation, we must consider its pros and cons, which leads to using strategies. Reversely, in using any strategy we must consider the pros and cons of the situation.

There are opportunities in every situation. This is what we mean by saying that every problem is an opportunity for improvement. If we calculate the pros and cons, we can always work out advantages, which will lead to benefit. We must bear in mind the benefit when we plan a strategy. A strategy that does not bring benefit is futile.

The hallmark of Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching) is flow, which is also the hallmark of the 36 strategies. Even when we are at a position of strength, we try to win the situation in a pleasant way instead of bulldozing over opponents.

A good example is the strategy, „Borrow Knife to Kill Another”, which is frequently used by big companies. These big companies are at a position of strength. Even when other people or their employees object to their policies, they can still implement them if the policies bring them profits. But they would not bulldoze them even when they can.

What do they do? Their objective is to make profits, not to please other people or their employees. So they use one of the 36 strategies. They use consultants. In fact, they already have the “solutions” to their “problem”. They supply the solutions to the consultants to make it appear that the consultants recommend the policies which actually came from their board of directors.

All the four great Chinese literature classics – Romance of Three Kingdoms, Dream of the Red Chamber, Journey to the West, and Water Margins – contain a lot of stories using the 36 strategies.

Here is a story from Dream of the Red Chamber applying the strategy “Fake Madness Not Insane”.

Madame Jia, the head of an important household, invited all female relatives to a party in her huge mansion to celebrate the 15th night of the Chinese New Year. After a sumptuous meal, Madame Jia chatted heartily with her guests.

Wang Xi Fong, a very intelligent lady known for her humour, suggested they play a game called “order of the flower drum”, which is similar to our modern musical chair. A flower was passed round while someone played a drum. When the drumming stopped, whoever was holding the flower would

have to tell a humorous story to make people laugh.

It so happened that in the first round when the drumming stopped, Madame Jia was holding the flower.

“I’m not good at telling humorous stories, but I’ll try” Madame Jia said. “At a party celebrating the 15th night of the New Year, someone drank the urine of the Great Sage Equal to Heaven.”

Everybody laughed, including Wang Xi Fong who pretended not to know its hidden meaning, though she knew very well Madame Jia was making fun of her.

According to a legend, anyone who drank the urine of Monkey God, bestowed by the Jade Emperor as the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, would be very flippant with his or her mouth.

Then the game continued. Meanwhile someone secretly communicated with the drummer that the drummer would stop on hearing her gently cough. This was because everyone wanted Wang Xi Fong to tell stories, as her stories would make people roll on the floor.

Accordingly, the drumming stopped when Wang Xi Fong was holding the flower. She knew it was a trick but she pretended not to know.

So Wang Xi Fong set out to tell a story. But it was badly narrated and nobody laughed.

Wang Xi Fong was very smart. She rather offended the whole party than Madame Jia. She did not want to appear cleverer than her important host.

Within a short period Wang Xi Fong used the strategy, Fake Madness but Not Insane, three times. Do you know when were the other two times?

Question 6

What benefits and advantages are there, for Entrepreneurs and established Business people, to have an in depth knowledge of the 36 strategies as taught by a Shaolin Grandmaster?

Sifu Joan Browne

Answer

Entrepreneurs and established business people can benefit a lot to have an in-depth knowledge of the 36 strategies. Indeed all of them are using these strategies though some may not be aware of it. Having an in-depth knowledge of the strategies will enhance their application of and benefit from the strategies.

Many entrepreneurs and business people, especially outside China and Chinese speaking countries, may not have heard of the 36 strategies, though most of them are familiar with the Art of War. In practical terms these 36 strategies may even be more useful.

This is because the strategies described in the Art of War are overall plans, like being guided by a noble vision, having good leadership, and studying the market, whereas the 36 strategies are specific tricks or tools to attain desirable results. Companies already have their policies, which determine their overall strategies. But changing situations occur all the time which need tricks or tools to overcome them. Hence, the 36 strategies, which are actually tricks, are relatively more useful than the strategies in the Art of War, which are overall principles.

All the 36 strategies are useful to entrepreneurs and business people. Here we shall examine a few examples, which are Use Rest to Wait for Labour, Sound East Strike West, and From Nothing Born Something.

The strategy, Use Rest to Wait for Labour, which means conserve your energy while letting the enemy tire himself in action, originated from an event during the Warring Period in China in the year 684 BC. The state of Qi planned an attack on the state of Lu.

As the Qi army was superior, the King of Lu was anxious and consulted his ministers. But no one could come up with a feasible plan. At last the ministers suggested to the King to seek the help of a sage called Cao Gui.

Cao Gui accompanied the King and his army to the battle front. The Qi general sounded his battle drums, led his army to the front of the high wall of the Lu fort, and issued a challenge for battle. The King of Lu gathered his army and was about to respond. But Cao Gui stopped him.

The Qi army made a lot of noise in front of the fort, but Cao Gui ignored them, though the King of Lu was very nervous. Seeing no response from the Lu army, the Qi army returned to their camp, but not before making a grand show of strength and teasing the Lu army.

After a few days the Qi general sounded his battle drums again, led his army to the fort and issued another challenge for battle. Again Cao Gui ignored the Qi army, though the Lu army was ready to fight. The Qi army again made a lot of noise and teasing outside the fort, but finally they returned to their camp.

After a few more days, the Qi army came again, more for teasing and making noise than for a battle. But to their utter surprise, this time the Lu army rushed out fiercely to slaughter them. The Qi army was ill prepared. The Qi soldiers dropped their weapons and ran for their lives.

The King of Lu ordered his soldiers to give chase. But Cao Gui stopped them. He came down from his chariot and examined the retreating tracks of the Qi army. Then he said, "Yes, now we can chase after and destroy the Qi army." The battle was a disaster for the Qi army, despite being superior to the Lu.

After the resounding victory, the King of Lu asked Cao Gui, "Why didn't you respond to the challenge to battle the first two times, and why did you stop me from chasing after the Qi army at first?"

"The first time the Qi soldiers were in high spirit for battle, so we didn't fight them. We wanted to wear them down. The second time they were also in high spirit, but we wore them down further. When they came the third time, they were not ready to fight, while we have built up the fighting spirit of our soldiers. It was the best time to fight."

"When they ran, I wanted to make sure it was not a trap. So I examined their retreating tracks and found them in disorder, which show that their retreat was unplanned. Then it was safe to give chase."

Successful entrepreneurs and business people make use of this strategy of Use Rest to Wait for Labour, or conserving our energy while letting our opponents tire themselves in unfruitful activities, to make huge profits. A good example is the City Development Limited of Singapore. It waited for its competitors to tire themselves, through economic downturn and poor management, before it made its move. In 1989 it had only 6 hotels. By 1987 it had 62!

Another example was Raffles Holdings also of Singapore. In 1997 it bought the world famous Four Seasons Hotel in Hamburg for 80 million deutsche marks, which was about one-third the price its previous owner had paid a few years earlier.

The strategy, Sound East Strike West, is often used by entrepreneurs and business people. They send out false signals to disguise their real intentions. In 1995 Cycle and Carriage expected new models of the E series of Mercedes cars to arrive, but it had to clear off its old models to make space for the new ones. So not only it offered its E series of Mercedes cars for sale at slashed price but augmented its features as a masterpiece model. The strategy was very successful.

Another example was the acquisition of Yeo Hup Seng, a manufacturing company, by Far East Organization. Far East Organization is a major property developer with hardly any experience in manufacturing. Yet it paid a high price to acquire Yeo Hup Seng. What Far East Organization was interested in was the land Yeo Hup Seng owned. Not surprisingly, soon after its acquisition by Far East Organization, Yeo Hup Seng diversified into property development.

Another strategy often used in business is From Nothing is Born Something. The bidding for special car plate numbers and telephone numbers is a good example. These numbers have to be given out anyway, but by creating a demand for them the relevant authorities or agencies can make a big fortune. For example, in 1993 the car plate number 2 belonging to the Hong Kong government was sold to a businessman for HK\$9.5 million!

Another example of this strategy of creating something from nothing is a listed company buying back its own share. This is one way to return surplus funds to its shareholders. It is also a good strategy to create an impression that supply is insufficient to meet demand, thus pushing up the price of its shares.

This strategy should be an inspiration to our instructors and healers. If entrepreneurs and business people can create a demand for their products or service when there is actually none, and make a fortune, our instructors and healers should not have difficulty getting many students and patients when the demand for genuine arts and overcoming illness is real. Understanding the 36 strategies will be a great help.

Note: The examples of City Development Limited, Raffles Holdings, Far East Organization, Yeo Hup Seng and other illustrations are taken from “39 Strategies of the Chinese” by Wee Chong Hou and Lan Luh Luh.

Question 7

A common saying is that of the 36 strategies, running is the best 三十六计，走为上计）。How true is that in kungfu application and combat? Some commentators have translated the text to explain "running" as yielding in order to attack (以退为进) while others have interpreted this to mean to retire at one's peak or victory. I would like to humbly seek Sifu's views on this strategy. Also, would running away be the best strategy in some cases?

Sifu Zhang Wuji

Answer

“Shang ji” means superior strategy, but is sometimes mis-interpreted as the best strategy. Hence, the expression means that of the 36 strategies, running away or escape is a superior strategy. It is the best choice in a situation where beginning or continuing to fight will end with sure defeat.

This philosophy is important. In some culture, it is considered cowardly to run away. A samurai, for example, would kill himself if he failed in his mission rather than escape to fight again. In kungfu culture the values are different. It would be silly to kill himself. He should escape, and fight again, not any time but when he found himself in a strong position.

In combat, both in real fighting or figuratively as in business, when an opponent is definitely stronger and you are sure to lose if you fight, you have three options – to surrender, to negotiate for peace, or to escape. To surrender concedes total defeat, and you are at the mercy of the opponent. To negotiate means that you still have a chance to fight but usually are in a disadvantageous position. Escape does not indicate defeat; it shows you are smart to conserve your energy or resources so that you can fight again when conditions are more favorable.

This strategy originated from the story of hong men yan, or the Feast of the Hong Gate in 206 BC. Chu Xiang Yu and Liu Bang combined forces to defeat the Qin Dynasty (of Shi Huang Ti). Xiang Yu's force was superior but he was suspicious of Liu Bang, and wanted to eliminate him. So he threw a grand feast at Hong Gate and invited Liu Bang to attend, with the intention to assassinate him. Liu Bang knew the scheme but was in a dilemma. If he attended he could be killed, but if he did not attend he would give Xiang Yu an excuse to kill him.

But his advisor, Zhang Liang, who was another great strategist in Chinese warring history, advised him to attend. During the feast, one of Xiang Yu's

generals gave a sword demonstration, but the real objective was to assassinate Liu Bang. Zhang Liang asked one of Liu Bang's generals to give a simultaneous sword demonstration too. The real objective was to provide bodily cover for Liu Bang, giving no chance for assassination by the enemy general.

Liu Bang pretended to be drunk, and asked leave to go to the toilet. As he could hardly walk, his general and Zhang Liang escorted him. The real intention, of course, was to protect him. Later only Zhang Liang returned to the feast.

"My great Lord," Zhang Liang addressed Chu Xiang Yu, "my master is not good at drinking. He has to return home early."

Chu Xiang Yu regretted this fatal mistake. Years later Liu Bang reversed his fortunes and with the strategies of Zhang Liang eliminated the force of Xiang Yu and drove him to the edge of a river. There was a lone boat with a solitary boatman. Xiang Yu thought he was lucky, and ordered the boatman to take him across the river.

When they reached the middle of the river, the boatman removed his disguise. He was none other than Zhang Liang. In his bravado, which was typical of his character, Xiang Yu killed himself. I could not help thinking that had Xiang Yu attended the 36 Strategies Course in Ireland, or even had just read this answer, he might escape to fight another day.

Liu Bang became the first Emperor of the famous Han Dynasty. Soon, Zhang Liang took leave from the Emperor to retire to the countryside. He changed his name and lived inconspicuous amongst unnamed folks. Just as Zhang Liang had anticipated, not long after that Liu Bang started eliminating those who helped him to the throne.

In this short story, Zhang Liang applied "Escape is a superior strategy" twice. Do you know when?

In kungfu application and combat, escape here does not mean that while fighting you turn your back and run. This will expose your back to your opponent, which is giving him a free offer. In the past, opponents might send secret weapons like flying daggers after the escapee.

It means you escape the situation which may lead to fighting. You escape before a possible combat begins. If you know that the chance of winning is slim, you may escape by saying, "This is not a good place for fighting, it is too public" or "It is our school policy not to accept personal challenges. I shall report it to my Grandmaster and let him decide whether to take up your challenge".

“Running” may be interpreted differently by different commentators, like yielding in order to attack as in Taijiquan Pushing Hands. But I would not interpret it in this way. The Chinese term for “yielding” here is “hua” which means “neutralize. It is not “zou” which means “running”.

This is different from “escaping in order to attack”, or “using retreat as a means to advance”. This, in fact, is implied in the Escape strategy. This attacking or advancing after escaping or retreating, may be immediate as in some kungfu patterns, such as Fierce Tiger Descends Mountain in Shaolin and Green Dragon Shoots Pearl in Taijiquan, or after some time as in the case of Liu Bang.

Yes, the Escape strategy can be used to mean retiring at one’s peak or victory. That was what Zhang Liang did. That was also what the great statesman, Li Kuan Yew, of Singapore did. The difference was that Zhang Liang escaped from possible persecution, whereas Li Kuan Yew retired from glorious achievements.

Running away is usually not a good strategy in most cases. There are 35 other excellent strategies to use. But when he is sure to be defeated, escaping (but not necessarily running away) is the best strategy in that situation, though it may not be the best of the 36 strategies. Indeed, I believe one should use the Escape strategy when the other 35 do not serve the purpose in question. It is not for no reason why it is listed as the last of the 36 strategies.

Question 8

Is there any link between the 36 Strategies and the I-Ching? And if so, could you elaborate on the connection?

Sifu Andy Cusick

Answer

As it is often the case, the answer can be yes and no.

Yes, the 36 Strategies are linked to Yi Jing (I Ching) because many descriptions of the strategies come from Yi Jing. No, there is no connection because without knowing the Yi Jing, one can still apply well and benefit much from the 36 Strategies.

Descriptions in Yi Jing are used to explain many of the 36 strategies in a very concise manner. For example, the explanation of the eight strategy, “Escape via Chen Cang” was taken from the Yi hexagram in Yi Jing which symbolizes “Wind”. The explanation reads word by word as follows:

Make show as moving Benefit its silence, thus with purpose Development moves like wind.

Without background understanding, even those who knows Chinese, especially modern Chinese, may not know the meaning above. The figurative meaning is as follows.

You purposely reveal certain signals to your enemy. But your real intention is hidden and different. In this way you can attain your purpose. The development of your hidden plan is swift and inauspicious like wind blowing through any holes.

The strategy originated from the story of Han Xin defeating Zhang Han in a critical battle. In 206 BC Hang Xin was a great strategist and general under Liu Bang, who later became the first Emperor of the famous Han Dynasty. Zhang Han was a general under Xiang Yu, who was a rival of Liu Bang after the fall of Shih Huang ti of the Qin Dynasty.

Han Xin led an army, the Han army, to meet a stronger army of Zhang Han, the Chu army. The Han army encamped at a place called Shu, which was surrounded by mountains. It was therefore difficult for the Chu army to attack them, but the Han army could leave the mountain to attack the Chu army.

Han Xin ordered his men to repair main roads leading to the Chu army to facilitate transportation in the attack. Zhang Han therefore strengthened the front line to meet the coming attack. The Chu army waited but the expected attack did not come. They waited but still the attack did not come. Eventually the Chu army relaxed their defence.

Then, unexpectedly, the Han army came from behind, not in front from where the roads had been repaired. The Chu army was devastated.

The Han army repaired the roads to give a false impression that they would attack from the front. Secretly they went on a detour via a small town called Chen Cang to attack from behind.

During the Second World War in 1944 the allied forces used this strategy of Escape via Chen Cang to defeat the Nazis. The allied forces were concentrated in England to cross over to the European continent for their offensive. The most obvious landing would be at Calais, which was the closest to the English coast.

The allied forces held landing exercises opposite Calais. Secret intelligence was intercepted by the Nazis indicating that landing would be at Calais. The Nazi army accordingly focused their defence at Calais. They were taken by surprise when the historic landing was at Normandy.

This strategy, Escape via Chen Cang is similar to but not the same as Sound East Strike West. Can you tell the difference?

The explanation for the next strategy, Watch Fire from Other Shore, was also taken from the Yu hexagram in Yi Jing which symbolizes “Pleased”. as follows;

When yang in process disorder Yin should wait and avoid
Violence and disagreement Their momentum self destroy
Flow like pleased movement Pleased movement like flow

The figurative meaning is as follows:

When the enemies are fighting amongst themselves, you should stay low and avoid them.

The fighting and description among the enemies will lead them to destroy themselves.

Then you can move in without much effort and reap the benefit of your mission.

In 342 BC the Wei army attacked the state of Han. The King of Han appealed to the state of Qi to help. The King of Qi held an audience and sought the

advice of his ministers. The ministers were busy deliberating the issue but could not come to a conclusion, except Sun Bin, the great strategist, kept quiet at a corner.

The King of Qi asked Sun Bin for his advice.

Sun Bin said, “The state of Wei thought themselves very powerful. Last year they attacked the state of Zhao. Now they attack the state of Han. Eventually they will attack us, the state of Qi. It is not right if we do not help our ally, the state of Han. “

“But not now. If we enter war now with Wei, we would weaken our army. The Han army is only at the start of a war, and is still strong. We shall reply to the King of Han that we shall support Han. This will give the Han army confidence. Let the armies of Han and Wei fight themselves. When they have worn themselves out, we can enter the war.”

The King of Han was happy that he had support from Qi. The Han army fought gallantly. But the Wei army was stronger. Both armies wore themselves out. When Han was about to be defeated, Qi sent its army and easily defeated Wei.

In modern times, a good example of this was found in the Sino-Japanese War which erupted in 1937. Chiang Kai Sheh’s nationalistic government asked the United States for help. But while supporting the Chinese, the United States reaped much reward from the its tremendous export to Japan.

For example, whereas its earlier exports averaged US\$1.7 billion, in 1937 the United States exports to Japan reached US\$2.9 billion, of which 60%. Consist of petroleum and steel, the very material needed for war. In 1938 the United States sold to Japann airplanes worth US\$17,150,000 million, which exceeded the amount of the previous year by US\$15,000,000 million.

This led the United States business circles to comment that all the planes used in the Sino-Japanese War were brought from the United States. For the first three years of the war, Japan used 40,000,000 ton of petroleum, of which 70% was from the United States. The Chinese Communist leader, Mao Tze Tung, commented that the United States was sitting on a mountain observing two tigers fighting.

But whom do you think was the eventual fisherman who took both the clam and the stork? There is a story of a fight between a clam and a stork. The stork pecked its beak into the clam attempting to eat it. The clam closed its shell tight so that the stork could not fly away. A fisherman came along and took both the clam and the stork away.

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States woke up from its mistake. When all the warring countries had worn themselves out after the Second World War, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Tze Tung set up the People's Republic of China in 1949. They benefited the most from the Sino-Japanese War between the the Chinese Nationalistic government and Japan.

Question 9

Which of the Thirty Six Strategies do you personally find the most beneficial and effective in term of profundity in simplicity, in order to enrich private and business life?

Sifu Roland

Answer

The strategy I find most beneficial and effective is the first one, Deceive Heaven to Cross Sea. It is simple. Basically it consists of making a feint move to accomplish a desired result. Actually all other strategies are covered in this strategy. All other strategies consist of making feint moves to accomplish desired results. Hence it is very profound.

A special feature of this strategy is that the deception does not appear to be very special. In fact it looks common, so that the enemy will not suspect the deception. Kungfu classics are a good example. A lot of secrets are hidden in the open, but unless they are initiated, people will not realize these secrets.

Hiding secrets in the open is found not just in classics but also in practice. Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan are good examples. When I first learned Wuzuquan more than 40 years ago I did not know how to use its patterns for combat. I believe many Wuzuquan practitioners today, despite having practiced for many years, are in a similar situation. But I am sure those who attended the recent Wuzuquan course in Penang are amazed that the patterns from San Zhan, the fundamental set of Wuzuquan, can be used to counter any attack! It is an excellent example of profundity in simplicity.

Another excellent example of profundity in simplicity is Xingyiquan, known to be the kungfu for generals. I knew for a long time that of all the kungfu styles, Xingyiquan is the closest to Western Boxing, and thus will be very helpful to those who want to win free sparring competitions as most competitors today fight like Boxers and also that most competitions follow rules closely related to Western Boxing.

But in terms of techniques, I did not know what a Xingyiquan practitioner would do if an opponent went beyond the simple techniques found in Boxing and Kick-Boxing and used sophisticated techniques like those found in the Shaolin Seventy Two Chin-Na Techniques or the little know felling techniques of Taijiqian. I reckon that the Xingyiquan practitioner would compensate his lack of extensive techniques with his tremendous force, for which Xingyiquan as well as Wuzuquan are famous. (In my case, it was not a big

concern because I could always fall back on my Shaolin and Taijiquan counters.)

Yet, as in the case of Wuzuquan earlier, when I went deeper in both the practice and philosophy of Xingyiquan in preparation for teaching the course at the UK Summer Camp, I found to my delight that even leaving aside internal force, simple looking Xingyiquan techniques do have counters for sophisticated attacks! Xingyiquan is not just bulldozing into opponents, as many people mistakenly think, but incorporates covering opponents adequately in its apparently straight-in advance. It was an aha experience for me to discover why this simple-looking style is regarded as kungfu for generals.

I am not sure whether the early Wuzuquan and Xingyiquan masters used this strategy of Deceiving Heaven to Cross Sea to hide secrets in the open. Personally I do not think so. The profundity in the apparently simple-looking arts evolved spontaneously. But I am sure that knowing this strategy by reading the answer here, or better still attending the course in Ireland, will enhance our ability to go deeper and obtain more benefits not just in kungfu and chi kung but in whatever we do when most other people merely skim the surface.

There is a lot of depth and benefit in the kungfu and chi kung we practice. For those who have not practiced Wuzuquan or Xingyiquan, let us take an example of Single Tiger Emerges from Cave from Shaolin Kungfu and Immortal Waves Sleeves from Taijiquan, and Lifting the Sky from chi kung.

The form is simple, and most other people merely practice their form. Any benefit they get is incidental. For us in Shaolin Wahnam, not only we know that the form is only a means to obtain benefit, but we get benefit deeper than what its surface suggests.

Single Tiger Emerges from Cave or Immortal Waves Sleeves is not only a counter where we can use minimum force against maximum strength, but is also applicable against any attack, be in striking, kicking, felling or chin-na! Lifting the Sky not only generates an energy flow, but gives us benefit ranging from just being relaxed to expanding into the Cosmos.

The past masters did not use the strategy, Deceiving Heaven to Cross Sea, but understanding the strategy enables us to see depth beyond surface.

An American businessman used this strategy to save a lot of money, as well as make a lot of money – legally. He probably had not heard of Deceive Heaven to Cross Sea, but what he did was applying its philosophy.

To protect local industry, the United States imposed a lot of tax on foreign imports. A lot of American women loved elegant French gloves but they were expensive because of heavy import tax.

A smart American businessman thought of a way to save a lot of tax and also make a lot of sales. He bought 100,000 pairs of these expensive, elegant gloves from France. But he did a strange thing. He unpacked them and sent only the left gloves to the United States, with a clear indication they were left gloves.

When the 100,000 pieces of left gloves arrived at United States, he did not claim them from the customs and therefore did not pay any import tax. As it was the practice, unclaimed items after some time were auctioned away. No one would bid for only left gloves without the right gloves. So this businessman could buy back his left gloves at a very low price.

The customs officials were alerted. They kept a close track on this businessman. They paid special attention to any future consignment of right gloves. Soon a consignment of 50,000 pairs of gloves arrived. They were normal, with left and right gloves. But the custom officials were careful. They still checked the consignment thoroughly to see if any right gloves were hidden. But they found nothing wrong. The businessman dutifully paid the tax and claimed the gloves.

The businessman sold the expensive, elegant French gloves below normal price. As it was a bargain, many people bought the gloves and the businessman made a fortune.

The customs officials continued to look out for any consignment of right gloves. The police and immigration also helped to ensure that no right gloves were smuggled in. But nothing of that sort happened.

Did the businessman get the right gloves, and if so, how did he get them? I would let you have fun working out the answer, which will be provided later.

Question 10

The 36 Strategies seem to be war tactics to overcome an enemy (win-lose). Can we use them, when our aim is to create a win-win outcome in a private or business conflict?

Sifu Andrea, Switzerland

Answer

Although the 36 strategies originated from warfare, we can use them to create a win-win outcome in private or business conflict. This is in fact a main reason why Joan is organizing the Thirty Six Strategies Course in Ireland.

While most of the 36 strategies were used by strategists in the past in a war situation to defeat an enemy, thus resulting in a win-lose outcome, there were also occasions when a win-win outcome resulted. Two good examples are how the strategies From Nothing is Born Something, and Empty City Strategy originated.

During the Warring State Period between the 5th and 3rd century BC, a strategist, Zhang Yi, attempted to seek a career with the King of Chu. But the King was not interested in him.

“If Your Majesty do not find my service useful, I beg Your Majesty’s permission to leave Chu so that I can go to the state of Jin,” Zhang Yi said.

“Yes, you can leave any time you like.”

“Although Your Majesty may not want me, I have great love for Chu. Is there anything Your Majesty would like me to bring from the state of Jin?”

“The state of Chu has everything. We have a lot of gold and silver, pearls and ivory. We do not need anything from Jin.”

“Don’t Your Majesty want beautiful women? The women of Jin are the most beautiful in the world. They are like fairies. They have rosy cheeks and pearly skin. When they speak, they sound like crystal bells. When they walk, they are like breeze blowing through willows.”

The King was excited. “Bring me some if you can.”

Zhang Yi purposely let out the news that he was to go to the state of Jin to find beautiful women for the Chu King. The Chu King had two beautiful concubines. They were alarmed that the Jin women Zhang Yi brought back from Jin might replace them. So they sent a lot of gold and silver to Zhang Yi to appease him.

Zhang Yi sought an audience with the Chu King to arrange for a date of his departure for Jin.

“Your Majesty,” Zhang Yi said. “The road to Jin is long, but I shall get the most beautiful women for Your Majesty. It would help me a great deal if Your Majesty could hold a banquet with your most beautiful women present so that I could have a basis for comparison.”

“That is right,” the King said, “I shall ask my two beautiful concubines to be present. People say they are the most beautiful women in the whole state of Chu.”

A banquet was held, and the two beautiful concubines sat on each side of the King. Zhang Yi rose and knelt before the King.

“Your Majesty, please punish me.”

“Punish you? Why?”

I lied,” Zhang Yi answered.

“You lied?”

“In all my travels I have seen many beautiful women, including the beautiful women of Jin. But I have never seen anyone more beautiful than your two concubines. My trip to Jin is not necessary. Your Majesty, you have not just the most beautiful women in the whole of Chu, you have the most beautiful women in the whole world.”

The King was very happy. He appointed Zhang Yi as a minister who proved himself to be very useful to the state. Zhang Yi received not only favours from the King but also a lot of gold and silver continuously from the two concubines. This strategy made everyone happy.

Although this strategy happened during a warring period, it was not used in warfare but in private life for the King and the concubines, and in business for Zhang Yi.

The origin of the Empty City Strategy occurred in warfare.

In the Three Kingdom Period, about the 2nd and 3rd century CE, Zhu Ge Liang, who is more known than Sun Tzu as a great strategist in Chinese societies though Sun Tzu is better known in the West, was defending the city of Yang Ping with only 10,000 soldiers. Cao Cao's army under general Si Ma Yi was advancing with 200,000 soldiers.

Zhu Ge Liang ordered all the people and his soldiers to leave the city. He opened all the gates into the city and sat on top of the city wall playing a Chinese piano and enjoying wine. When Si Ma Yi arrived he was very surprised to find the city empty, with Chu Ge Liang alone confidently enjoying himself.

Si Ma Yi stayed outside the city for a while, deciding what to do. Finally he gave the order to retreat.

His son, Si Ma Zhao, came forward and asked, "The city is empty. Why don't we just enter to capture it?"

"Don't you know that Zhu Ge Liang is a great strategist? He must have laid an ambush inside the city. Don't fall into his trap!" Si Ma Yi replied.

In the West, this strategy would be called a bluff.

Although Si Ma Yi missed the opportunity to capture the city and more significantly capture a great strategist, no one was killed, or even injured. It allowed Si Ma Yi to live long enough to become the eventual victor of the three kingdoms and start the subsequent Jin Dynasty.

The strategy From Nothing is Born Something is frequently used in business circles. Innovative people can make a fortune using this strategy by creating a demand for their product or service when there was originally none. Good examples are the yoyo, pet rocks and digital dogs. Their inventors, who are certainly very smart entrepreneurs, have created something out of nothing and made a big fortune. Everyone wins in the application of this strategy here.

Another good example is the auctioning of antiques and collectors' items. Auctioneers are very skillful in applying this strategy though they may not have heard of the name of the strategy. Successful buyers are happy with their purchase though the price they have paid may be ridiculously beyond its practical usefulness. The result is a win-win outcome.

We must, however, be careful of unscrupulous people using this strategy to cheat. Many of you would have the experience of receiving e-mails from charlatans claiming to be agents or authorities telling you that you had won a fabulous prize or asking you to supply your bank particulars so that large

sums of money could be temporarily transferred into your bank account to be channeled out later but a huge commission would be given to you. Some might think they had nothing to lose as they would receive money first. These are international scams. Victims would be asked to pay large administrative fees or be arrested and blackmailed to pay large ransoms.

The other strategy, Empty City Strategy, is also often used in private and in business with a win-win outcome. However, the result could be disastrous if the plan did not go through.

Many kungfu masters (more correctly kungfu gymnastics masters) use this strategy without being aware of it. They know they would have a difficult time fighting Karate and Taekwondo black-belts. To cover their inadequacy they use their reputation as well as the belief that kungfu can be deadly. They give an impression that if they were to fight they could kill their opponents.

Indeed some years ago a grandmaster on our Shaolin Wahnam Discussion Forum used this trick. His views on our forum, which were incorrect, were systematically refuted by us. In the end he challenged our instructor who was debating with him to a sparring match. He thought, wrongly, that his title as a grandmaster would scare our instructor.

But we knew he could not fight well. How did we know if we had not sparred with him? We knew from the posts he put up on our forum. In fact, judging from the way the public debate went, we also knew that he would challenge us to a sparring match. Our instructor promptly took up the challenge, which must have surprised him. He backed out with an excuse.

For us the result was a win-win outcome. Although we could beat him, otherwise we would not fight, we prefer not to have the fight at all.

In the 1970s there was a housing boom in Malaysia. Some developers who did not have sufficient funds to build houses, still went ahead using this strategy. They had luxurious offices and attractive marketing material to impress buyers, who took loans from banks to pay progressively as the houses were being built. Hence, with the progressive payments from the buyers, the developers who would otherwise not have sufficient capital, could successfully build the houses. It was a win-win outcome. Everyone was happy. The purchasers had their houses, the banks had business, and the developer made huge profits.

Later, this scheme could not work. Despite attractive marketing, there were insufficient buyers to provide working capital. Many developers abandoned their projects and ran away, and the poor buyers who earlier invested their money lost their savings. The scheme could not work not because it was ineffective but because of changing conditions. There was over-building and

an economic depression.

The Yi Jing, from which the Thirty Six Strategies drew much of its philosophy, emphasizes that situations are constantly changing. When employing any strategy, one must remember these changes.

Question 11 (A Bonus)!

Can we use the 36 Strategies in non-conflict situations? Can we for instance use them to enhance our scholarly pursuits to become better poets, better artists, etc?

Kevin

Answer

Yes, the 36 strategies can be used in non-conflict situations.

Yes, these strategies can be used to enhance scholarly pursuits in becoming better poets, artists, etc.

Let us examine some examples of two strategies, Beauty Strategy and Double-Cross Strategy.

The Beauty Strategy originated from the story of Dian Chan, regarded as one of the four most beautiful women in China. At the beginning of the Three Kingdom Period, 2nd and 3rd century CE, the premier, Dong Zhuo, became very powerful and ruthless, especially after adopting Lu Bu, regarded as one of the best warriors in history, as his god-son.

A patriot, Si Tu Wang Yun, decided on a strategy to eliminate the ruthless premier. He invited Dong Zhuo to his residence for dinner, and had his beautiful maid, Diao Chan, whom he treated like his daughter, to serve Dong Zhuo. As expected, Dong Zhuo was enticed by the beauty of Diao Chan. Si Tu Wang Yun offered to present Diao Chan to Dong Zhuo.

On a separate occasion, Si Tu Wang Yun invited Lu Bu to his residence, and as if by chance Lu Bu found Diao Chan sobbing. She told Lu Bu that she was given to Dong Zhuo as a concubine against her wish. She used her charms to entice Lu Bu and asked him for help. She promised to marry him if he could help her. Lu Bu, like many heroes in history, could not resist the entrapment of a beauty. They exchanged gifts of betrothal.

A series of events aggravated discord between the god-father and god-son. Eventually, by a skillful arrangement of events, Dong Zhuo found Diao Chan in the arms of Lu Bu. Dong Zhuo was jealous and furious. He drew his sword and wanted to kill Lu Bu. Lu Bu ran, but killed Dong Zhuo with his crescent-moon spear instead. Diao Chan kept her promise. She married Lu Bu, the most beautiful woman becoming the wife of the most formidable fighter of the time.

The Beauty Strategy can also be used beneficially, and in a non-conflict manner. A beauty, Li Xiang Yu, was a great inspiration to the Southern Tang Emperor, Li Hou Zhu, in the 10th century. Southern Tang was a small kingdom under the suzerainty of the Song Dynasty. Li Hou Zhu, which literally means Li the Last Emperor, was a great poet rather than a capable ruler. He created a new poetry form, called ci, which for a better term may be called poetic prose.

Many of his poetic works are still widely read and admired today. Some of the lines of his famous work, Yu Mei Ren or the Beauty Yu, have become common quotations in Chinese today, like the lines below in Cantonese (which I believe is closest to how they originally sounded), Mandarin and English.

Choon fa chow yue ho shi liu, Wong shi zi tor siu
Chun hua qiu yue he shi liao, Wang shi zhi duo shao

Spring flowers autumn moon when will they end,
How much of the past is known

Meng khun nang yau kei tor sau, Ka yew yeit kong choon shue heong toong
lau
Wen jun neng you ji duo chou, Qia shi yi jiang chun shui xiang dong liu

Asking my lord how much worry you still can hold.
Just like a stream of spring water eastward flow

The beauty who inspired the poet or artist needed not be a lover. She could be a sister or even a stranger. The English poet laureate, William Wordsworth was much inspired by his sister, Dorothy. He wrote about her in the poem Tintern Abbey as follows

In thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Oh thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister!

Leonardo Da Vinci who lived in the Renaissance period of 16th century and regarded as a genius without parallel, was inspired by a stranger to paint Mona Lisa, acclaimed to be the best known and most visited work of art in the world. It is priceless and is now exhibited in Musee du Louvre in Paris.

The origin of the Double-Cross Strategy shows the ingenious skill of Zhou Yu, a great general and strategist of the Three Kingdom Period (2nd and 3rd century) who turned a spy's maneuver against himself and his boss without

their knowing. You may have seen this event in the outstanding movie, Red Cliff, which showed majestic warring scenes in classical China as well as incredible application of strategies.

Cao Cao led a huge navy to attack the state of Wu. The Wu general, Zhou Yu, was alarmed when he learned that Cao Cao's navy was commanded by two capable admirals, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, who recently surrendered to Cao Cao. Just then, a messenger entered to inform him that his childhood friend, Jiang Gan, wanted to see him. "Aha," Zhou Yu murmured to himself, "the problem is solved."

Jiang Gan was a spy sent by Cao Cao to find out military information of the state of Wu. He was nervous at first, worrying that Zhou Yu would know his intention. But to his surprise, Zhou Yu was very happy to see him, treating him as in the old times, and even showing him around his military base. They talked about everything except military matters, and after much drinking and merry making, Zhou Yu was drunk, but he managed to tell Jiang Gan that just as of old times he must spend the night and share the room with him. Jiang Gan grabbed the opportunity.

Zhou Yu slept soundly. Jiang Gan crept out of bed to examine Zhou Yu's military documents. He was shocked to find a letter from Cai Mao and Zhang You, written in clumsy writing characteristic of the two rough warriors. The letter read as follows.

"Circumstances forced us to surrender to Cao Cao. We manage to cheat Cao Cao, and now have him in the middle surrounded by our boats. When the time is ripe, we shall present his head to General."

Jiang Gun left in the middle of the night with the letter and showed it to Cao Cao. Cao Cao was furious. Immediately he ordered Cai Mao and Zhang You to appear before him.

"I want to attack Wu now," Cao Cao said.

"It is not a wise thing to do, my Lord," they replied. "Our soldiers are not used to fighting on water yet. We have to train them first."

"By that time you'll have my head for Zhou Yu." In his haste and anger, Cao Cao executed the two capable admirals.

Without capable leadership on water warfare, Cao Cao's navy was almost wiped out in the Battle of Red Cliff by fire attack from Zhu Ge Liang, whose master, Liu Bei, allied with the King of Wu.

Zhu Ge Liang, who later outwitted Zhou Yu, did not have an army. Even the arrows he used in the fire attack against Cao Cao were “borrowed” from the enemy. The Battle of Red Cliff is an example I often mention for our instructors and students to win free sparring competitions – even if our opponents were stronger than us, but actually they aren’t. The strategy is to fight in a way our opponents are not used to, i.e. using our combat sequences. If needed, we can also use arrows borrowed from them to burn their ships, i.e. use their jabs, kicks and shoots to defeat them.

The Double-Cross Strategy is often used by modern poets and artists. Though business consultants, research scientists and marketing agents may not paint pictures or write poetry, their work is poetic and artistic. They are privy to corporate secrets, and it demands high moral values to resist selling these secrets to competitors who offer high prices.

Even when they do not reveal these secrets to other people, the work they have developed for their clients, for which they are handsomely paid, can be used for further clients, albeit in different forms. This may not be called double-crossing, but the underlying philosophy is similar, i.e. using the secret of one party for another party for one’s benefit.

We can go a step further from here. In the Double-Cross Strategy, one party is harmed. It is a win-lose outcome. Having understood its underlying mechanics, we can transform an otherwise immoral strategy into a moral strategy where everyone benefits in a win-win outcome.

In fact this happens frequently in information technology. A lot of computer software is invented based on previous success, and we all benefit. This is what we do in Shaolin Wahnam. A lot of secrets are hidden in kungfu and chi kung classics. We digest them, and share them with our Family members in particular and with the world in general for everybody’s benefit. The Thirty Six Strategies Course is a formal attempt in this direction, understanding and applying classical strategies in a poetic and artistic way to enrich our daily life.

Answers to the questions from the second Q & A thread

Question 12

Which of these strategies would be the best for me to improve my business in terms of getting more customers and increasing my income and how would I apply this strategy to have these outcomes?

Dominic.

Answer

Any one or more of these 6 attacking strategies or of all the 36 strategies can be used to improve your business. The choice depends on various factors, like the goods or service you are selling, the type of customers you target at, and the economic situation of your region.

Hence, those who know all the 36 strategies will have a big advantage over those who know just a few.

Let's say that your business is managing houses for other people. Let us see how the 6 attacking strategies can be useful to you.

Suppose the economy is quiet. House owners are quite happy with their present situation, and are not ready to spend money to beautify their houses. If you approach them to repaint their whole house, they are not likely to accept your suggestion. So you approach those you think can afford some money to repaint just their gate at a fairly low price.

While you are about to complete repainting their gate, you tell the owners that their gate looks outstanding, but their house, which is more important, pales in comparison. You supply them with brochures showing the great difference of the same house before and after repainting. This will encourage many house owners to ask you to repaint their house. It is employing the strategy of "Hit Grass Startle Snake".

Suppose you are new to the business, and advertising yourself can be expensive. Also, you do not have an impressive office. A strategy you can use is to approach property agents. When the agents sell houses to customers they can offer to have the houses repainted. You give the agents an attractive commission. If you are ready to travel, you can have agents acting for you in various places. This is the strategy of "Borrow Body to Reincarnate".

The situation for the next strategy, “Trick Tiger Leave Mountain”, is the opposite of the previous situation. You are established and have an impressive office. Your clients are wealthy with big mansions. Instead of you visiting their mansions to negotiate with them, you invite them to your impressive office. You send an impressive car with a chauffeur to fetch them.

You arrange your meetings with your clients so that one arrives about 10 minutes before the previous one leaves. When your new client arrives, have your assistant manager entertain him very well, with choice wine and cigars if necessary. Prior to this coming, you have his permission to take photos and make drawings of his mansion. Your assistant manager will then present him proposals, which he studies in the 10 minutes of waiting, that can change his mansion into a palace – at a price he can afford.

If you manage your timing well, you will give both clients the impression that you have a lot of business, and they have to fight for your service. This strategy is “Trick Tiger Leave Mountain”.

In a situation where you have a monopoly and your business is good, you can use the strategy, “To Catch So Release”. When a client comes to you for some minor work, you decline saying that you are too busy, but suggest he comes to see you again at a later date. When he sees you again, you decline his business again, and suggest he sees you later. When he sees you the third time, you propose to enlarge his original work, saying that since you have allotted time for him, he should take advantage of it instead of waiting for the next opportunity.

When you are about to complete some minor work for a client, suggest to him to have some bigger work, telling him that since you are already working in his house with your equipment, you have economic of scale and thus can give him a discount. For example, before completing your work of mending his fence, you suggest to do some landscaping for him. Before completing your work in cleaning the chimney, suggest to repaint his house. You must have attractive brochures to show him. This strategy is “Throw Stone Attract Jade”.

Time and resources are limited. Instead of spending your time and resources to market to poor house owners in a small village, spend your time and resources to market to wealthy clients in big cities. Your profession as house management is mobile. Even if your workers stay in a small village, you can bring them to work in a big city where your wealthy clients are. After deducting extra expenses for your workers, you still make a bigger profit. This strategy is “Catch Bandits Catch Leader”.

Speaking generally, this strategy is fundamental. In other words, instead of using the other strategies in a small village for poor clients, you can use the same strategies in a big city for wealthy clients.

You can also apply this strategy on yourself. You may start as a one-man house manager. Later you may have a team of workers to work for you. But you are not going to remain as a house manager, even with a team of workers. You can become an architect, building houses instead of just painting them.

The journey from being a house manager to an architect takes time, but all journey starts with the first step. The first step is the vision. The second step is to chart the direction. The third step is walking firmly and briskly to your destination. With this strategy of three steps of vision, direction and walking towards destination, an additional attack strategy to the six, you may become an architect in five years. Those without this strategy will remain where they are in twenty.

Question 13

We could say that chi flow is the hallmark of our school. Sifu has said that high level masters in the past might have utilized it, though even then they might not have had the philosophy which highlighted it as an essential part of their art. Is emphasizing chi flow in our teaching, learning and practice an example of "Borrow a Corpse to Resurrect the Soul"? Also, how important is reflecting on wisdom from the past in order to be creative and solve problems in the present time?

Sifu Mark Blohm

Answer

Yes, chi flow is the hallmark of our school. It was Tim Franklin who first said to me that in the future, perhaps 50 years later, perhaps 100 years later, when people pointed to our school, they would identify us with chi flow.

Past masters utilized chi flow to develop internal force, but they did not understand the philosophy as we do. That was a main reason why they took a long time, in terms of years, to develop internal force whereas our students take only months. That was also a main reason why there were only a few masters with internal force amongst countless practitioners, whereas virtually all our students have internal force.

Whether the strategy, "Borrow Body to Reincarnate", was used, and in our case is used, in developing internal force is a matter of semantics. For some of the past masters with internal force, it can be described that utilizing chi flow to develop internal force was applying the strategy of "Borrow Body to Reincarnate". In the legend of Immortal Li, our patron immortal, after returning from his visit to see Lao Tzu via astral travel, he had no physical body to enter as his student had cremated his body earlier. So he reincarnated using the body of a lame beggar who just died.

When these past masters realized that chi flow was necessary, or learnt from some source that chi flow was necessary, they used chi flow to develop internal force and achieved their aim faster than other masters who did not consciously use this strategy though they still developed internal force eventually but they took a longer time.

These other masters who took a longer time did not consciously use chi flow, but chi flow still happened, albeit haphazardly. After a long time through sheer dedication, figuratively described as "ku lian" or "bitter training", this haphazard chi flow accumulated enough to give them internal force. They

did not consciously borrow a body to reincarnate, though they did so unknowingly. They did not consciously use chi flow to develop internal force, though they did so unknowingly.'

In our case, especially after I have clearly explained the philosophy of internal force development, we purposely use chi flow to develop internal force. In the Iron Wire course in Barcelona, all course participants found the flow method more effective than the force method in developing tremendous internal force, even though the force method is the orthodox method!

So, in emphasizing chi flow in our teaching, learning and practice an example of "Borrow Body to Reincarnate" As mentioned earlier, it is a matter of semantics.

I would say no, it is not applying this strategy. My reason for the answer is both practical and theoretical.

In practical terms, when I myself developed internal force using chi flow, and later taught students to develop internal force using chi flow, I did not think of this strategy, "Borrow Body to Reincarnate". In theoretical terms, while chi flow was an aid and was supplementary in the case of past masters, in our case it is the essence and fundamental in our training. To the other masters, it was their technique that gave them internal force. To us it is chi flow that gives us internal force.

To continue having fun with semantics, we may, if we like, argue that yes, this strategy of "Borrow Body to Reincarnate" is an example in our teaching, learning and practice. Like Immortal Li who would not reincarnate without the borrowed body, we would not obtain remarkable results without chi flow. Like Immortal Li who could reincarnate immediately, we can enjoy remarkable results in a very short time.

There are two invaluable points we can get from this answer besides its content.

One, semantics is fun. We can argue that a chair is a table, or a table is a chair. But we must not be a slave to it. Indeed many people have become slaves to semantics without realizing. They use grandiose terms without knowing what they say, especially in subjects on internal force and internal arts. You can find a lot of examples on the internet and even in some books.

Two, the answer here trains and illustrates mental clarity. We can answer the same question at different levels sensibly. This is possible only with mental clarity. And with mental clarity, we can, amongst other benefits, not only prevent ourselves from being confused by semantics, but also apply semantics to make things clear for our advantage.

If just reading a question connected to the course can bring us such benefits, we can imagine what more benefits we can get by attending the course itself.

It is very important and beneficial to reflect on the wisdom from the past, and to be creative to employ the wisdom to solve problems in the present time.

We can get so many benefits because we are able to reflect on and make use of past wisdom. I have, for example, a huge collection of classics from past masters. These classics represent a crystallization of their teaching and wisdom.

There is no doubt that without the wisdom of the past masters passed down to us through their classics, we would be unable to derive the tremendous results we get. Our cost-effectiveness and progress are unprecedented. We could develop internal force in a few months what past masters would take years. We could practice various other styles of kungfu, like Baguazhuang and Xingyiquan, better than practitioners who have been practicing these arts for their life times.

Many people would think us arrogant and be angry at us for making such statements, but they are true. How long does a master today take to develop internal force? How many Baguazhang practitioners could get to the back of their opponents in sparring, for which Baguazhang was famous? How many Xingyiquan practitioners could apply their signature pi-quan to counter any attack?

We should not just reflect on the wisdom of the past. We should be able to employ this wisdom for practical benefits. Then we could go further. We could be creative and use the benefits derived from past wisdom not only to solve problems in the present time but to change problems into opportunities for improvement.

This is what we have done, and are doing. Our chi flow, for example, has helped countless people overcome so-called incurable diseases. Our internal force has given us good health, vitality, longevity, mental clarity and spiritual joys. The 36 Strategies have enabled us to be more efficient and successful in daily life.

Question 14

After reading the attacking strategies, I kept thinking about the first one of them: "Stomp the grass to scare the snake." As I had no idea about what this strategy meant I searched for some information on Internet. What I understand is that one can launch a brief and direct attack and observe their opponent's reaction. That will uncover his strategy.

I am unsure if this is the real meaning of this strategy. I would appreciate if Sifu could correct or confirm the meaning/purpose of this strategy.

Based on this understanding, I formulate my questions below:

If one launches a direct and brief attack in order to undercover the opponent's strategy, wouldn't that be too risky? Should he then use this strategy only when he is totally ready for attack? Then, in which situations would it be good to use this strategy? Would it be a fake punch an example of this strategy?

Santiago

Answer

What you said was only a part of the strategy. The main aim of the strategy is to defeat the enemy, not just to know his strategy.

To make it clearer, let us list the steps of the strategy, "Hit Grass Startle Snake":

1. Make a feint move.
2. The enemy responds.
3. Defeat the enemy in his response to your feint move.

What you described was only Step 1, or at most 1.5. The enemy might revealed his strategy as a result of your feint move, but he had not responded in action, and you had not defeated him.

To be successful in applying this strategy, you do not just make a feint move, but also anticipate what your enemy would do, and have all the preparation ready to defeat him when he makes the expected move. If you have sufficient resources, you may have a second and a third anticipation, and a second and a third preparation. If you don't have sufficient resources, you have to modify your response if the enemy does not move as expected, or call off the

counter strike. Strategies, like kungfu moves, are alive.

Safety first is the first principle in all combat – in kungfu as well as in warfare. When you make a feint move, you must ensure that yourself or your soldiers are safe.

When you make a feint attack to an opponent's head, for example, purposely leaving an opening to your ribs for him to attack, you must be ready to exploit his attack to defeat him, not to be hit by him even when you anticipated his attack. But if he retreats, which is your second anticipation, you should be able to move in safely to defeat him.

When Dr Daniel of Belgium took me to visit Waterloo many years ago, I bought all the military books available. I was very surprised that all the books described the same thing – victory depended on sheer number. If a general had more soldiers than his enemy, he would send his soldiers in to charge, sacrificing the front lines, and defeating the enemy with the remaining extra soldiers.

This contrasted sharply with what happened in the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979. The Chinese general, who was Shaolin trained, sent in dogs to test the ground before sending in soldiers.

The success of a strategy depends on the skill of the person using it. If one launches a feint attack and uncovers his opponent's strategy but does not follow up with victory, he is not a strategist, at best he is a reader of strategies. In the hands of a strategist, a feint move is never risky.

Yes, a strategist should use his strategy, any strategy, only when he is totally ready, not necessary for attack, but sometimes for defence or other purposes. In the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979, for example, the aim was not to attack Vietnam, but to demonstrate to Communist countries in particular, and the world in general the inability of Soviet Union to help Vietnam even when Vietnam was used as a pawn in the Sino-Soviet quarrel.

At that time China constantly addressed the United States as a paper tiger, i.e. a tiger for show but without real power, like flowery fists and embroidery kicks. China could be using the strategy of "Point Mulberry Scold Acacia", i.e. pointing at the United States, but actually scolding Soviet Union. The Sino-Vietnamese War was a demonstration of this strategy.

This war had long term consequences that many people may not realize. I believe it had great influence on the subsequent break-up of the Soviet Union and the emergence of many new countries, including present day Russia.

The strategy, “Hit Grass Startle Snake”, is very useful in situations when you are not sure of defeating your opponent openly, or not sure of your opponent’s next move, and tempting him to make a move so that you can defeat him even when at normal times he is superior.

A feint punch by itself is not an example of this strategy. When used in the strategy, it is only the first step, as illustrated in the 3-step procedure above. The other two steps are to tempt him to respond and to defeat him in his response.

You must be ready with more than one main anticipation. If he does not respond as expected in your first anticipation, you are ready with other moves to defeat him in other anticipations. If his response is very odd, different from all your anticipations, you have to let the strategy pass, and wait for another opportunity.

You must live to fight again, in sparring and in real life – a very important principle many martial artists today do not appreciate even when they talk about it. They just fight without knowing whether they would win, but they do not bother if they die in the fight. Looking at sparring today, it is shocking that combatants have no regard at all for their own safety.

This strategy, “Hit Grass Startle Snake”, is used in a Chinese saying in a reverse way with a different meaning, similar to but not the same as what you suggested. The Chinese saying is “Don’t Hit Grass Startle Snake”, i.e. don’t arouse your enemy’s attention by making any move.

If a general wants to launch a secret attack on an enemy, he would not hit the grass to startle the snake. That was what Israel did in the attack on Egypt in the Six-Day War in 1967. Egypt was caught by surprise.

If a general announces his intending attack before he actually does it, it is for other purposes and using a different strategy. In the United States-Iraq War of 2003, the United States publicized her intending attack long before it actually took place. This was to distract Iraq and the world so that American secret agents could infiltrate into Iraq and prepared a situation where the United States forces could just “walked” in. This was the strategy of “Sounding East Striking West”.

When a housing developer wants to buy premium land, for example, he would do so quietly, instead of making a public announcement which may arouse the interest of other competitors. If he publicizes his intention, it is for other purposes using a different strategy, like purposely raising the price of land so that he can later raise the price of his houses for sale, using the strategy of “Throw Stone Attract Jade”.

Strategies are alive. Their success depends much on the strategist. The Attacking Strategies course in Ireland is going to be a lot of fun where course participants will learn and practice how to be strategists making their strategies alive so as to enrich their lives and the lives of other people.

Question 15

Are any of the 36 Strategies found in our 12 Wahnam Taijiquan or 16 Shaolinquan combat sequences?

Sifu Kevin

Answer

Historically the 12 Wahnam Taijiquan and the 16 Shaolin Kungfu combat sequences are not composed with the 36 Strategies in mind. Their composition was based on certain themes which include combat tactics and strategies.

The meaning of “strategy” in combat strategies and the 36 Strategies is quite different. A combat strategy refers to guidelines for general action, whereas guidelines for specific action for the combat situation in question are referred to as tactics. In the 36 Strategies, a strategy is a trick.

For example, avoiding an opponent’s strength and attacking his weakness is a strategy. When we hit grass to startle a snake is to trick it to come out so that we can catch it.

When we meet a particular opponent who is good at kicks but has poor balance after kicking, we use the tactic of avoiding his kicks and moving in immediately after his kicks to fell him. This tactic is based on the general strategy of avoiding an opponent’s strength and attacking his weakness.

In a different situation, a Boxer is very fast in his punches, but he is untrained in taking kicks. The former is his strength and the latter is his weakness. We use the same strategy of avoiding an opponent’s strength and attacking his weakness. But the tactic in this case is different.

When he punches, instead of warding off his punches, we move back to avoid them. When he hesitates, we move in to kick him, instead of striking him. This is a tactic, and for convenience we may call it “retreat and kick”.

If we use our brain besides our brawn, instead of sacrificing our brawn in free exchange of blows as many martial artists do today, we discover that we need not have to move our feet to avoid his punches, we just shift back our body. We also discover that we can shift back our body and kick him at the same time.

Nevertheless, it may be fun trying to see if any of the 36 strategies are found in the Taijiquan and the Shaolin combat sequences, focusing on the initiator's mode. Keep in mind the examples below is just one way of looking at the combat sequences with reference to the 36 strategies, there can be other ways.

12 Taijiquan Combat Sequences

1. The first Taijiquan combat sequence uses "Turn Guest Become Host", defending an opponent's attack, then attacking him.
2. The strategy used in the second combat sequence is "Sound East Strike West".
3. This is "Continuous Strategy".
4. This is "Close Door Catch Thief".
5. Here the strategy is "Use Rest to Wait for Labour", striking an opponent as he attacks.
6. The pattern "Striking Tiger Poise" manifests the strategy "Across Beach Watch Fire".
7. The strategy here is "Troubled Water Catch Fish", confusing an opponent with hand attacks, then kicking him unexpectedly.
8. This strategy is "Across Beach Watch Fire".
9. This is an interesting application of the strategy "Turn Guest Become Host", but used differently from that in Sequence 1. Here, when an opponent thinks he has felled you, he finds himself felled instead!
10. This is "Snatch Goat Along Way", striking an opponent following his momentum.
11. This is "Troubled Water Catch Fish", confusing an opponent, then striking him.
12. The strategy used is "Beneath Cauldron Withdraw Firewood".

16 Shaolin Combat Sequences

1. The strategy in the first combat sequence is "Turn Guest Become Host", first defending an opponent's attack, then attacking him.
2. The strategy in the second combat sequence is also "Turn Guest Become Host".
3. The trick is to feint a top attack, but the real attack is below, using the strategy "Sound East Strike West".
4. The "Continuous Strategy" is used here.
5. The "Continuous Strategy" is also used here.
6. The trick is to tempt an opponent to attack with a punch so that you can strike his ribs, using the strategy "Throw Stone Attract Jade".
7. The strategy "Troubled Water Catch Fish" is used here, causing confusion

with a low punch, then chopping an opponent's head.

8. The strategy used here is "Snatch Goat along Way". After striking an opponent's arm, while he is still startled, strike his neck.

9. Here the strategy "Use Rest to Wait for Labour" is used. Let an opponent move in to attack, then kick him.

10. Here is the "Continuous Strategy", pressing on an opponent.

11. This is "Sound East Strike West", often used in combat.

12. This is "Beneath Cauldron Withdraw Firewood", closing an opponent, apparently giving him no chance to defend, and kicking him.

13. This is also "Beneath Cauldron Withdraw Firewood" but used in a very different way, apparently giving an opponent no chance to escape.

14. This is "Snatch Goat Along Way".

15. Here is "Ascend Roof Remove Ladder".

16. This is "Golden Cicada Sheds Shell", escaping from an opponent's attack, and countering from a side.

The 36 Strategies originated from warfare. Using the 36 Strategies in combat sequences reminds us of Sun Tzu's advice that whatever that could be used in mass warfare could be used in personal combat, including non-physical combat in daily life.

Question 16

As these strategies are to be used during attack, could Sifu please tell us what non-combat actions would be analogous to attacks? Is, for example, applying for a job an attack of sorts? How about negotiating the purchase of a property? Studying for an exam? Composing a piece of writing?

Also, what would the benefits and limitations be to viewing non-combat situations in martial terms?

Sifu Charles David Chalmers

Answer

All the 6 strategies to be taught in Ireland are called Attacking Strategies. They originated from mass warfare, but can be beneficially used today in non-combat situations.

You are right. Many non-combat situations in everyday life, like applying for a job and negotiating the purchase of a property, can be considered an attack of sorts. Any situation where there may be no physical fighting, but if it involves another or more parties, and you wish to be successful in the interaction, it can be considered an attack of some sorts.

Viewing these situations in martial terms enables you to apply these 6 attacking strategies or other strategies for your own, their or mutual benefits. If a person does not use these strategies, all other things being equal, he allows fate to control him. If he is skillful in applying these strategies, he create fate for his advantage.

Any limitations in the application of these strategies are due not to the strategies themselves but due to a failure to apply them successful, which may, in turn due to various factors like a lack of resources, not being flexible in the application, or being outwitted by the opponent.

The strategies themselves have no limitations simply because if a strategy is not beneficial, you just do not use it. If, for the sake of discussion, all the strategies you know are not beneficial, you do not use them. On the other hand, if you are a strategist, even when a strategy is not beneficial in a situation, you can use another strategy that is useful, or modify the current strategy to make it useful, or modify the situation so that you strategy can be useful. As Emiko has profoundly said, every problem is an opportunity for improvement.

Let us take some examples you have mentioned to see how applying these strategies can bring benefits.

Suppose you apply for a teaching job in an expensive private school. Others who have no understanding of the 6 attacking strategies will have to patiently wait for the decision of the interviewers. If you are skillful in applying these strategies, you can influence the interviewers' decision to your favour.

You may, for example use the first of these 6 attacking strategies, "Hit Grass Startle Snake", to uncover any pressing problem the school faces, and suggest a good solution to overcome the problem. When an interviewer asks you a question, you turn the table round on them, using the strategy "Turn Guest Become Host".

"Mr Chalmers," an interviewer asks, "why do you want to work in our school?"

"I love children, I love solving problems for children. I suppose an expensive private school like yours have a lot of problem children."

You pause for a while for your stunning statement to sink in.

Then you continue.

"Let's have fun. Please tell me a pressing problem you children face, and see if I can help to solve it."

This will make all the interviewers sit up. After looking at one another for some time, an interviewer says, "Rich children don't like to study. They like to attend parties."

"Right," you say, "We'll change the problem into an opportunity for improvement."

You pause for a while to let them look at one another, or at you, with amazement. Then you continue.

"Organize a party. But only those who can answer some simple questions, which they have to study for, can attend. During the party, have some games where we can teach them lessons in a funfilled and non-official way."

If not one of the interviewers' son is also applying for the same job, you already have the job in your sleeves. Any employer who does not employ a person who can turn a problem into an opportunity for improvement, is a fool.

If you are skillful, you can use any of their questions to “hit grass startle snake”.

Suppose an interviewer asks you, “Mr Chalmers, how old are you?”

“I’m 35, and for the past 5 years I have been helping rich children solve problems. I am sure the rich children your school have a lot of problems.”

Or an interview may ask, “Do you like Brunei, Mr Chalmers?”

“I love Brunei. But I love more helping rich children solve problems. I am sure the rich children in your school have a lot of problems.”

Like sparring, it does not matter what moves our opponent makes. As soon as he makes a move, or we can “hit grass to startle snake” to trick him make a move, we can apply our planned combat sequence to press on him.

One needs resources to apply any of the strategies successful. Two important resources are mental clarity and quick thinking. Fortunately for us, our school, like the Valentine courses in Ireland, provides these resources.

Let us take another example, composing a piece of writing, and see how we may apply the second attacking strategy, “Borrow Body to Reincarnate”, with benefit.

For the sake of illustration, presume you are not a good writer, which of course is not true. You want to write a beautiful piece on Brunei. You can borrow a beautiful piece of writing on another town or country.

The following beautiful paragraph on Muscat, the capital of the Sultanate of Oman, is taken from the internet.

“It is spring in the Arabian Peninsula's most enigmatic capital. Temperatures are perfect for ambling through the city's back streets, and the sea air is deliciously fresh. Unlike many cities in the Gulf, Muscat offers plenty of history, a pervasive air of tradition and, crammed between the mountains and the sea, a distinctly exotic location. This is winter sun with a twist.”
We can use it to write about Brunei.

It is summer in the Borneo Island’s most tranquil capital. The weather is a bit hot for the ocean air is sparkingly clean. Unlike many busy cities on the Borneo Island, Brunei offers a lot of tranquility, a pleasant feeling of quietness in a city and, situated between the hills and the ocean, a charmingly magnificent place for a holiday. This is summer all the year round.

I have leave the other examples for other forum members to have fun on.

Question 17

Can “Borrow a corpse to resurrect the soul” be used as an effective strategy for product or service innovations? And if so, how?

If there is room for an add-on question (similar to Mark Sisook’s question):
Can this strategy be applied to "innovation" in teaching?

Some examples of innovations which might have benefited from this strategy are as follows.:- Wearable Fitness Trackers (Fitbit and others) - they borrow the shape of a watch, but have a different purpose (track your movement and other data).; Messenger pigeons - in the past used to transport messages/letters, they have been "re-purposed" to track/measure geographical, meteorological and other data; Washing machine - one of the first mass-produced washing machine (the Miele Hera) was based on a butter-machine

Sifu Andrea Zilio

Answer

Yes, “Borrow Body to Reincarnate” can be used as an effective strategy for product or service innovations.

We may, for better understanding of how we may benefit from this strategy, classify inventions related to this strategy into three categories:

1. Inventions analogous to the strategy but the inventors may not be aware of it.
2. Inventions that are development or modifications of existing appliances.
3. Inventions that are direct results of applying this strategy.

There is often overlapping between the categories. We should not be worried about the overlapping, like worrying whether the invention of a wearable fitness tracker should be placed under category 1 or 2, or even 3 above.

The classification is not a scientific definition, which will limit its usefulness. As mentioned earlier, and it is worthwhile to emphasize this point, the classification is for our better understanding so as to have more benefits. Many kungfu and chi kung classifications are of this kind.

Whether the invention of a wearable fitness tracker falls under the first, second or third category above depends much on the inventor original state of mind at the onslaught of his creation.

If, in a flash of inspiration, he suddenly realized that a person anxious about his fitness when jogging or just shopping in a supermarket, could trace his fitness status if he could carry a machine with him, then his invention belonged to the first category.

If, while eating his dinner alone at a restaurant, the inventor intellectualized how the steak he was eating would affect his fitness, and then looked at his watch to check the time for his subsequent appointment, the idea of modifying a watch from telling the time to telling the fitness status of a wearer might occur to him. His intention, therefore, fell into the second category.

Incidentally this example also shows that intellectualization can be useful. In fact it is useful when used fruitfully. It is detrimental when used during chi kung or kungfu training as it would bring a practitioner out from his heightened state of consciousness, and also making the practitioner stressful. Our second golden rule of practice, don't intellectualize, does not mean that intellectualization is not useful, but highlights that it is detrimental during chi kung and kungfu training, or carried out excessively and purposelessly.

Returning to the wearable fitness tracker inventor, his invention falls under the third category if his state of mind during the invention is as follows. He was thinking, or fruitfully intellectualizing, of inventing an appliance that people could carry about on their person to measure their fitness status.

He might, for example, have thought of a pen, a wallet, a ring, a watch and a pair of shoes. After much fruitful intellectualization, and if he survived from being clinically depressed due to the prolonged intellectualization, even when it was fruitful, he came to the conclusion that the watch would be the best "body" to "reincarnate" his invention.

All the other innovations or inventions you mentioned, followed the same explanation above, which also shows how the strategy can be effectively used for product or service innovations.

The inventors might not have heard of the strategy, "Borrow Body to Reincarnate", but if they had learnt it at a course, like at the Valentine courses in Ireland, they would be more cost-effective.

On the other hand, for those who wish to be inventors, they can apply the three categories above to help themselves.

The three categories are in descending order, with the smartest inventors in the first category.

“For the sake of giggles” (to quote Anthony Spinicchia), suppose you are not very smart, which, of course, is not true, but you want to invent an appliance or any product or service innovation. So you start with the third category, which is the most cost-effective for those who are not so smart.

There are two approaches. You can start with your proposed invention and look around for a suitable “body” to “reincarnate”. Or you select the most suitable “body” from a range of choices, and think out an invention to “reincarnate”.

Suppose you take the first approach and want to invent a special dress which you can wear at a lakeside in summer, but still can keep you warm when you go up a mountain. So you look around for a suitable “body” to “reincarnate”.

You find one in a heated bed, the type of bed with electric lining attached to the electricity supply of the house that can heat it up in winter. Instead of a house electricity, you can use a powerful battery hidden under the clothing of the wearer. When you are at a lakeside enjoying the fresh air, you turn off the power supply. When you go up a mountain to enjoy some snow, you turn on the power supply, still wearing the same light dress.

But as a responsible person, you must first of all find out whether this special dress has any unfavorable effect on a wearer’s health. If it does, you throw out the intended invention even if it might bring you a lot of money.

Or you may use the second approach. You look around various “bodies” to find one suitable for “reincarnation” or invention. You may consider cars, bicycles, computers, ear rings and clothing.

Eventually you decide on clothing, because not everybody has a car, a bicycle, a computer or ear rings, but everyone wears clothing, except when he or she is enjoying a shower.

Next you have to work out how you will use the “body” to “reincarnate”. You may come out with the special dress like the one described above. Or instead of changing temperature, you may have a special dress that changes colours. Press a button, and you have a yellow dress. Press another pattern, the same dress you are wearing changes into blue. You friends may think you are a magician.

You may also change design with the clothing. Tug in the collar, and you have an open-neck T-shirt for lakeside wear. Pull it out, and you look like a China doll. Release some hidden buttons and you have a flowing gown. Fold the

long ends in and you have a mini-skirt. You may also take out the dress and fold it into a handbag!

All these inventions, or at least ideas of the inventions, can come to an Inventor or innovator if he applies the strategy, “Borrow Body to Reincarnate” even when he is not very smart.

If he is smarter, he can save much time and effort, though the process is similar. He looks at an ordinary dress, and thinks to himself, “I can develop or innovate the dress to make it change temperature, or colour or design.”

If he is very smart, the ideas flash upon him spontaneously. On hindsight he may relate his invention or innovation to the “Borrow Body to Reincarnate” strategy. Our Zen courses are meant to train this kind of smartness. Our 36 Strategies courses are meant to put this smartness into application.

Yes, this strategy, and any other strategy, can be applied to innovation in teaching. In the Ireland courses we shall learn and practice how to do so, not just in teaching but in any endeavor.

If we examine our teaching we can find many innovations that can be traced to this strategy. In our case our innovations belong to the first category. The innovations are made to meet expedient needs without any conscious thought of the strategy. It is only on hindsight that we find co-relation.

We are very smart. It is not because of vain-glory that I mention this, but to highlight that being very smart is a logical result of our training. If we are not very smart, then we have failed to realize a main training aim.

Regional courses, for example, is a manifestation of this strategy, related to week-end motivational and stress-management courses given to top executives. The results are incredible. Other students spend months or years to develop internal force or apply kungfu for sparring, our students spend just a few days. Indeed some students who are top executives, told me that they benefited more in marketing and business management from a few days of our Zen and Strategies courses than they had in their expensive business courses.

The venue of our lessons is also a manifestation of the strategy. Instead of building our own halls, we rent space from hotels or community centres for our lessons.

In our teaching methodology, we often use this strategy, usually unconsciously. When you teach your students the Three-Circle Stance, for example, you may use the image of a pyramid. Recently when I explained that the different types of force in Taijiquan, like ward off force, roll back force, etc, was due to their application and not to their nature, I used this strategy in an analogy of money as rent-money, food-money, etc.

Some of our instructors, who are school teachers, use our teaching methodology in their school teaching, and have found it very effective. The structure of our combat sequences, for example, can be effectively used for teaching English conversation.

Applying the strategy of “Borrow Body to Reincarnate” is best represented in using analogy in teaching. Many people, including those who have practiced chi kung for many years, mistakenly thinking that if they have some right techniques they could overcome some illness. In the earlier years of my Question-Answer Series, many people wrote to me asking me to supply them some techniques to overcome cancer. Actually this was quite ridiculous. If this could be done, there wouldn’t be so many people suffering from cancer.

Many people may not comprehend if I tell them that it is skills not techniques that are crucial in chi kung healing. They would have a clearer understanding if I use an analogy. I explain that they may learn the best techniques from an e-mail or a book on swimming or driving, but without appropriate skills they would still be unable to swim or drive even when they have the best techniques. This is “borrowing a body to reincarnate”.

Question 18

Dear Sifu,

"To Catch So Release" seems to contradict how we learn to fight opponents from other styles i.e. don't let your opponent escape, keep pressing. It does not seem useful to throw away the advantage you have once you are able to press an opponent into a corner. Is there a way to use this strategy in a fight against an opponent from another martial art?

Thank you for your time Sifu,
Roeland

Answer

"To Catch So Release" is not a contradiction of the pressing strategy. In fact it is a development of the pressing strategy for further purposes, though other attacking strategy other than the pressing one can also be used.

It is worthy of note that the strategy "To Catch So Release" does not imply not defeating the opponent. You release the opponent after defeating him, not before. Hence the issue of throwing away your advantage when you have succeeded in pressing an opponent into a corner, becomes irrelevant.

This strategy originated from a story of the Three-Kingdom Period in the 3rd century when the great strategist Zhu Ge Liang physically captured a brave warrior, Meng Hua, seven times and released him six times. Zhu Ge Liang's plan was to have Meng Hua and his large army surrender to his lord, the King of Shu. If he killed Meng Hua, Zhu Ge Liang would have to continue fighting against the remaining of Meng Hua's army.

Zhu Ge Liang's plan worked excellently. On the seventh capture, Meng Hua surrendered. Not only Zhu Ge Liang enlarged the army of Shu, he won the loyalty of a brave warrior.

If your opponent is a Karate instructor, for example, and your objective is to defeat him in sparring, and your aim to show the superiority of Shaolin Kungfu over Karate, you can apply the pressing strategy.

If you train any one of our combat sequences well and apply it on him, it is likely that he has no chance against you. You can defeat him easily. You have won the match, but you may not have won his heart. He and his students will still continue practicing Karate.

Besides the objective of defeating him, and the aim of demonstrating the superiority of Shaolin Kungfu, if you also aim to win him and his students over so that they will practice Shaolin Kungfu instead of Karate, the strategy of “To Catch So Release” is very useful.

You may still use the pressing strategy to defeat him the first time or every time, but it is better to reserve this drastic strategy, which overwhelms your opponent, towards the end. You start with a less drastic strategy, or tactic, working up to a more drastic tactic, and eventually ending with the most drastic tactic, which is the pressing attack. In this way you also demonstrate the wide range of tactics and strategies in Shaolin Kungfu.

Whether we refer to a pressing attack as a tactic or a strategy is a matter of semantics. Unlike science where a definition has to be specific, terms in kungfu are relative, and are meant for convenience and better understanding. In this case, if we use a pressing attack for a particular occasion, we call it a tactic. If we use a pressing attack for all occasions in general we call it a strategy.

The first time you defeat him, you may use strikes. A good tactic is that as he attacks you, you brush off his attack and strike him in return. You have to stop an inch from target, or just gently touch him. You must not hurt him. After convincingly striking him a few times, you suggest another sparring session another time.

The second time you can defeat him using kicks. As he attacks you, lean back your body and kick him simultaneously, stopping an inch from target or just gently touching his body. You highlight to him that in kungfu, we do not hurt one another. We take sparring as fun. Invite him for another round of sparring fun.

The third time you may use felling techniques to defeat him. As he attacks you, fell him onto the ground gently, taking care not to hurt him. As he pants for breath, tell him that in our training, you have more energy and mental clarity after the sparring session than before, and the energy and mental clarity are used not just for sparring but more importantly for health, vitality, longevity, peak performance and spiritual joys. You then suggest that he and his students can also have these benefits if they practice Shaolin Kungfu.

The fourth time you may use chin-na to defeat him. As he attacks you, grip him and subdue him. Release your grip and ask him to attack again. Explain to him that our kungfu training is not just to win sparring but to enrich our daily life. Ask him whether he and his students would like to train with you to have these benefits.

The next time when he spars with you, you may use a pressing attack. This will overwhelm him, giving him no chance to respond. Explain to him that in Shaolin training, there is a great range of tactics and strategies which are used not just in sparring but to make our life meaningful and rewarding. You have been very patient and generous with him, giving him and his students an opportunity to have such training to enjoy the benefits. If he and his students prefer to stick to Karate, don't waste further time with him.

This strategy is useful only for certain situations, like when you have a lot of resources and you want to win over your opponent. If you are not confident in handling him easily, or if you are not interested in winning him over, this strategy is not suitable.

You release your opponent because you are confident of defeating him easily. This also means that there are many ways to defeat your opponent, not necessarily pressing him into a corner.

Of course, this strategy, or any strategy, can be used in a fight against an opponent from another martial art. In fact precisely because your opponent is from another martial art other than kungfu, it is easier to apply this strategy on him because his mode of fighting is quite limited. If your opponent practices kungfu, i.e. genuine kungfu, not only his techniques are varied but also he understands tactics and strategies that makes defeating him more difficult. If you cannot "catch" him, you cannot "release" him.

This strategy and all other strategies can be applied to benefit our personal or professional lives. If a person wants to find a wife (or a husband), secure a position or market a product, for example, he may use this strategy. He must have the required conditions, like sufficient resources and wanting a better result than the initial one.

"To Catch So Release", as your question implies, may be interpreted in a different way. Instead of pressing an opponent into a corner, you pretend to retreat to tempt him to advance, then counter attack in surprise. This strategy is often used in combat, both in mass warfare and in personal sparring, and is known as "Tempt an Opponent to Attack in Futility".

This interpretation of the strategy is also not a contradiction to a pressing attack. In a pressing attack, you are at a stronger position, but in tempting to attack in futility your opponent is stronger.

Question 19

Is there a strategy from this list that you are particularly fond of, or have found particularly useful in daily life or in fighting?

Thank you once again for your time Sifu!

Sifu Roeland, Holland

Answer

No, there is no one special strategy in this list of Strategies 13 to 18 shown below that I am particularly fond of, but on hindsight I found I used the strategy, To Catch So Release, quite frequently in my fighting.

- 13. Hit Grass Startle Snake
- 14. Borrow Body to Reincarnate
- 15. Trick Tiger Leave Mountain
- 16. To Catch So Release
- 17. Throw Stone Attract Jade
- 18. Catch Bandits Catch Leader

During sparring or actual fighting I did not employ the strategy consciously, but looking back that was what I did.

I remember quite clearly an actual fight I had with a good Muay Thai fighter many years ago.

I drove to Penang on some business, the details of which I could not remember. I wanted to park my car at an only space for parking opposite the famous Guan Yin Temple along Pitt Street. You know “Sifu’s parking”. I am always lucky, and can find a most suitable spot to park even in situations most other people would consider impossible.

Just after parking my car, a car in front backed along mine. The driver came out and started scolding in a loud voice. I wanted to move out of the parking space to let him have it, but his car was blocking mine.

Eventually he said, “Do you want to fight?”

“Well, that’s interesting,” I thought to myself. I had not been fighting for some time, but previously I went around looking for black-belts for friendly sparring.

Then I saw a woman in his car.

“Your girlfriend is in your car. It’s isn’t a good time to fight.”

“You’re a gentleman.” I still remember clearly he said that, exactly the same words. “She’s my wife. Please follow my car. I’ll drop for at work, and then we can fight.”

I did. We landed at a quiet place somewhere behind St Georges’ Girls School where no one watched us fight. He was a good Muay Thai fighter. His moves were fast and powerful, and I avoided his attack initially. Exploiting an opening I moved in to give a gentle tap on his groin.

He jumped back and attacked me again. After deflecting his attacks I gripped his throat gently, then let him go.

As he was panting as I said, “I thought the fight should be over!”

“I know you hit my groin and gripped my throat, but I can still fight.”

That was typical of Muay Thai fighters and exponents of other martial arts apart from kungfu. Kungfu exponents would have conceded defeat graciously. Other fighters would fight to the end until they couldn’t fight further.

So I thought that the next time I would put him in a position he could not fight further. As I was not prepared to smash his head or fracture his arm, I thought a good tactic would be putting him onto the ground.

This I did, with my grip again gently on his throat. He was agile. He turned his body and kicked, and I rolled away.

By then he was panting heavily. I calmly told him, “Have a rest, and when you are ready we can fight again.”

He did have a rest. Then he walked to me, the first time he appeared in a friendly manner.

“You’re a good fighter,” he said. “I have never lost a match!”

I gave him my name-card.

“Oh, no wonder. You’re a Shaolin grandmaster. When we meet the next time I’ll treat you to Hainanese chicken rice.”

Hainanese chicken rice, which is very fragrant, is a delicacy in Penang.

On my return home to Sungai Petani, when I told the story to my wife, she was shock. “How could you give your name-card to him. He may ambush you!”

Men are hopelessly careless. But no ambush came, nor the chicken rice.

Question 20

Sigung, at my work one of my main tasks and responsibility is to solve problems and to make decisions that must be then often executed by my colleagues. What would be a gentle but profound and cost-effective way to “attack” their listening and/or understanding when sometimes required? For my private and family life the word “attack” feels more uncomfortable and unnatural to me. Which one of these attacks would you consider the most elegant, soft and feminine that could help me to change my perception?

Binia, Switzerland

Answer generously given by our dear Sifu- Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit.

In your work situations, the strategy, “Borrow Body to Reincarnate”, would be most suitable as a gentle but profound and cost-effective way to get your colleagues act on your decisions. The “body” you use will be your boss, who is also their boss.

Suppose your boss has asked you to decide which of the three companies A, B and C you should work with in a project, and you have decided on A, and the action has to be carried out by your colleagues.

If you tell your colleagues, “Now I want you to work with Company A,” they may not like it, though they may still carry out the action, which may also be less effective due to their hard feelings.

If you say, “The boss wants you to work with Company A”, the instruction becomes more gentle and also more cost-effective as they are paid by the boss to do the work.

Your colleagues may or may not know that it is actually your decision, and not your boss. Suppose they say, “It’s your decision, not the boss’ decision,” you can sweetly reply, “Like you, I’m working for the boss, and he has the final say.”

This is profound because your colleagues will, consciously or unconsciously, want to be nice to you, so that your decisions on behalf of the boss may make life easier for them.

In your private and family life, the strategy, Throw Stone Attract Jade, will be useful. Suppose your friends or family are debating which of three restaurants, A. B and C, you all should go for dinner, and you have decided on

A.

Instead of saying, “I’ve decided on A, so let’s all go to A”, which may be taken by some as aggressive, you can say, “A is a nice restaurant. What do you all think?”

More often than not, all will agree to go to A, otherwise there would not be any deliberation which restaurant to go to if someone had a preference earlier.

If there is still some hesitation, though not objection, you can add, “Many people have said A provides good food.”

If someone counter-proposes Restaurant B, before he can elaborate you add gently, “We can go to B if you want I don’t know about the food in B. It may be good or it may not be. We can take a risk. But I am certain the food in A is good. There is no risk.”

You throw a stone, i.e. your decision. You attract jade, i.e. a perception that you are considerate.

Question 21

Assuming one particular strategy is the answer to Dominic's question above, could I ask; what secondary (or other) strategy has good applications in marketing and business expansion?

Sifu Andy

Answer

In my answer to Dominic's question, I have provided different strategies for different situations. But if I were to choose only one strategy for him, I would choose Catch Bandits Catch leader, which means marketing to rich clients instead of mediocre ones.

The time and effort for work are about the same, but the income is two or three times more, and complaints and clients' fussiness are usually less. You must, of course, provide high quality work to justify for your high price.

I would also recommend the same strategy, Catch Bandits Catch Leader, to you for your coaching or self-development business in your marketing and expansion. In other words, market to and expand amongst wealthy clients, not poor ones. For about the same amount of time and effort, you earn more money and has less complaints and clients' fussiness.

Your work, of course, must be of high quality, but not quantity. In fact, because your work is of high quality, the time taken for you to give advice to your clients and for them to carry it out will be less. A mediocre adviser takes 3 hours to give advice, and his clients 6 months to carry it out, yet without success. A good adviser takes an hour to give advice, and the client takes 3 months to carry it out and have good result.

If you have the best strategy, why go for second best? If you can market to clients who pay you 500 pounds an hour, why market to those who pay you 50 pounds. Nevertheless, for academic interest, I shall still provide you with a secondary strategy.

You may use the strategy, Hit Grass Startle Snake, which I took at random from the list for intellectual interest as a secondary strategy.

You can send letters to newspaper, articles to magazines, prepare pamphlets to be put in people's mail boxes on the importance of seeking professional advise. This may startle the awareness of some clients to come to talk to you for 50 pounds an hour.

Although you didn't ask this question, it would be beneficial to you and other readers to answer it. What advice should you give to your clients as a coaching counsellor or self-development adviser? Your advice should fulfil their need, not just talk about it.

Suppose a client comes to you and says he wants to get a wife.

You ask him to consider why he wants a wife, what qualities he looks for in a wife. You ask him to think over the answers carefully. Then you ask him what he thinks a wife would look for in a man, and whether he has these qualities.

Both of you talk for three hours, and he pays you 150 pounds for your advice, which is 50 pounds an hour. That is the last you see of him. That is also what many counsellors and advisers do.

Is your advice high-quality? No, your advice has not helped him fulfil his need. He came to ask you how to get a wife. He did not come to philosophize with you on a wife.

After attending some Zen and Strategies courses, you have become wiser. After some preliminaries which should take only a few minutes, you set out in steps to make things easy for your client what he should do, as follows.

1. Join a dancing class.
2. Secretly evaluate the background of the woman you would like to marry. For ethical reasons, she must be available, i.e. she is unmarried, at least at the time you meet her.
3. If you are satisfied with her background, date her. Your job is to make every date memorable and enjoyable for her, not for you.
4. After about 5 dates, ask her to marry you. In case she declines your marriage, repeat the same procedure with another woman in another dancing class.

You take less than an hour to give him this set of advice to fulfil his need. He pays you 500 pounds for your advice. If he follows your advice, getting a wife is a matter of time, usually sooner than expected.

As a matter of fact, he may or may not get a wife. If he joins a boxing class instead of a dancing class, for example, or intellectualizes on how and when he should ask the woman to marry him instead of actually asking, he is unlikely to get a wife.

That is his problem, not yours. Your problem, or opportunity for his improvement, is to give good advice. If he follows your advice, he may come to see you again with his wife to thank you, and you can compliment him for getting a beautiful wife – certainly beautiful to him.

Question 22

Can we use any of the 36 Strategies to encourage family and friends to learn this wonderful art and derive the many benefits its practice can bring?

Sifu Kevin (Ireland)

Answer

Yes, of course. We can use everyone of the 36 strategies to encourage family and friends to learn our wonderful arts and derive many benefits.

Let us briefly see how some of the strategies in this course can be used.

When reading a newspaper we can highlight a new item reporting someone suffering from a so-called incurable disease.

“It’s really a pity,” you may say, “she is so young yet suffers from this incurable disease.”

Hopefully someone may comment. But if no one says anything, you can continue, “Jane, do you know of any of your friends who suffer from this disease, or any incurable disease?”

This may or may not lead to a short discussion about chi kung. Eventually, you say, slowly and loudly, “Actually these diseases are considered incurable in Western medicine. From the chi kung perspective, every disease can be cured! My teacher and my teacher’s teacher have cured many people who suffered from these diseases.”

If someone asks a question, it is timely. If not, you can continue, “Better still, you don’t have to wait to suffer from these diseases to practice chi kung. Practicing chi kung will prevent you from these diseases which can happen to anybody.”

You conclude by saying, “I’ll leave some reference material here. If you are interested you can check it up. It may turn out to be the best things you have ever done in your life.”

This is the strategy of Hit Grass Startle Snake.

You may propose to take your family members or friends for an outing. After some initial fun, you say you have to drop in at some place on the way to get some important material. You have to arrange with your sifu or a suitable

instructor to have an elementary class running when you arrive.

Your sifu or the instructor invites you and the others to join the class for a few minutes for fun. Prior to this, arrange all chairs and tables to be taken away so that there is no place for anyone to sit.

These few minutes of chi kung should be exhilarating and hopefully encourage them to continue taking a class.

This is the strategy of Trick Tiger Leave Mountain.

When your friends or family members have difficulty performing some physical movements or are not agile, you ask them how old they are.

“I’m 32,” one may say.

Jokingly, you say, “By the manner you moved just now, I thought you were 50! But don’t worry, I’ll show you how you can be 25.”

Then you move quickly to show them some simple chi kung exercises, like Bear Walk or Swinging Hips, and ask them to follow you. The exercise must be simple so that they can follow you easily. Don’t correct their mistakes yet as this might spoil their interest.

When they are in a right mood, let them into some gentle chi flow, if possible, and let them enjoy themselves.

“Now you’re 25. Let’s go for a drink.”

Give them a phone number and say, “You can follow up with this phone number if you want more benefits.”

This is the strategy of Throw Stone Attract Jade.

Answers to the questions posed in the text:

Question number 5

„Within a short period Wang Xi Fong used the strategy, Fake Madness but Not Insane, three times. Do you know when were the other two times?“

Answer

The three times Wang Xi Fong used the strategy was as follows:

1. When Madame Jia joked about the urine of the Great Sage.
2. When the drumming stopped and she had to tell a humorous story.
3. When she purposely told a bad story so as not to appear better than Madame Jia.

Question number 7

„In this short story, Zhang Liang applied “Escape is a superior strategy” twice. Do you know when?“

Answer

Zhang Liang used this strategy twice as follows:

1. When he helped Liu Bang to escape.
2. When he escaped from Liu Bang as he retired to the countryside.

Question number 8

„This strategy, Escape via Chen Cang is similar to but not the same as Sound East Strike West. Can you tell the difference?“

Answer

There is one action, or attack, in Escape via Chen Cang, where as there are two in Sound East Strike West. In the first, false signals are given, in the second a feint attack is made.

This corresponds to Tim Hoorens’ excellent answer that “Escape via Chen Cang is manifested in secret, Sound East Strike West is manifested in the

open”.

Question number 9

„Did the businessman get the right gloves, and if so, how did he get them? I would let you have fun working out the answer, which will be provided later.”

Answer (given by Leo)

As the gloves are interchangeable, the businessman received 50,000 right gloves at the first shipping already. The "right" gloves were hidden in the open and the customs officials were too dazzled by the strange declaration to realize it.