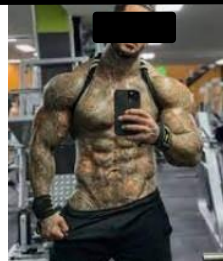




AS WE NAVIGATE TOWARD THE END OF ANOTHER YEAR, A YEAR CLOSER TO RETIREMENT FOR THE WORKERS AND A YEAR CLOSER TO THE GRAVE FOR LITERALLY EVERYONE, THE NOTION OF NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS REARS ITS HEAD YET AGAIN. WHY DO WE COMMIT TO RESOLUTIONS THAT ARE OFTEN TOAST BEFORE THE END OF JANUARY? THE ANSWER IS POSSIBLY BECAUSE WE ALL WANT TO AVOID AS MUCH REGRET AS WE CAN AND TO LIVE LIFE TO THE MAXIMUM OF OUR POTENTIALS. HERE'S THE REALITY; YOU'LL WIND UP REGRETTING MORE WHAT YOU DIDN'T DO THAN WHAT YOU DID BECAUSE THAT CHANCE YOU DIDN'T TAKE, OR THAT COURSE YOU DIDN'T DO, OR THAT TOXIC PROFESSIONAL OR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP YOU STAYED IN TOO LONG, PREVENTED YOU FROM REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL. SO WHY THEN DO OUR RESOLUTIONS (OR GOALS IF YOU LIKE) FIZZLE OUT? MOST PEOPLE PREFER TO DO WHAT'S EASY, SAFE, COMFORTABLE OR CONVENIENT. NOTE THE POSITIVITY OF EACH OF THOSE WORDS AND THE GOOD FEELINGS THEY CONJURE UP. THAT'S THE DANGER! THEN THERE'S THOSE WHO SACRIFICE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR SHORT-TERM GRATIFICATION. DRUG USERS, PHILANDERERS, CRIMINALS AND CHEATS. DOPAMINE IS PRETTY ADDICTIVE AND LIKE ANY ADDICTION, DESTROYS THE ADDICT IN THE END. SO, HOW DO WE STAVE OFF THESE TERRIBLE THREATS TO THE LONG-TERM FULFILLMENT THAT ALL WHO LIVE PRODUCTIVE LIVES AND PURSUE PATHS THAT EVOLVE CHARACTER AND REPUTATIONS, DESERVE TO ACHIEVE? WELL, IT HELPS IF YOU'RE TOUGH. SO, LET'S EXAMINE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TOUGH, THE WAY SOCIETY DEMONISES IT, HOW IT'S MISUNDERSTOOD AND HOW THE MEEKEST OF PEOPLE CAN DISPLAY BEING TOUGH.

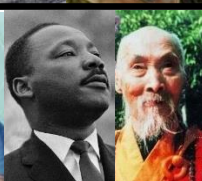
Let's define TOUGH. Forget the dictionary, let's examine the two pics to the right. The guy on the left is all about ego. He thinks he's a warrior. He gets a dopamine rush when he's pumped, inked, sees his reflection in the hundred mirrors he's surrounded by and liked on Facebook. He thinks he's a warrior because he intimidates. He combats the steel in the gym and enemies on Xbox. The guy on the right has no ego beyond what fuels him to risk his life in the face of tyranny. The tank is intimidating. So is the regime.



Just like a book, never judge toughness by its cover. The 'toughness of our covers' is meant to ward off enemies and prevent confrontation or death. The images to the right are examples. True toughness however comes from habitual disciplines that are ingrained in our characters or sometimes in our DNA. They fuel the journey to whatever it is we achieve. The journey to blackbelt status requires a lot more toughness for example, than facing up in the next tournament.



The opposite is also True. Regardless of your religious persuasion, as an observer, Jesus Himself displayed a 'cover' of meekness. Turning the other cheek etc and was tough enough to die for what he believed in. Practicing what you preach is tough. Martin Luther King Jr's 'cover' was reverence, civility and respect. Shi De Chan's (Shaolin priest pictured) 'cover' is serenity and humility. Messing with any of them was met with patience, forgiveness and the power of defiance



### LET'S WRAP THIS UP BY EXAMPMINING TWO TRAITS OR QUALITIES THAT DEFINE OR EXEMPLIFY TOUGHNESS

**RESILIENCE:** The capacity to recover or endure is practically the definition of resilience. Handling pain is toughness and it doesn't have to be merely physical. Pressure and stress can be devastating. They cause collateral damage often not in proportion to the problem that caused it. Emotional toughness, true grit, recovery time and the attitude that hurdles or failure leave you with afterwards are definitely measures of your toughness. Good news: You tend to get noticed for the better when you're confronting such challenges. Examples: Londoners during the blitz, Gandhi.

**PREPAREDNESS:** Preparation requires patience, foresight and courage. These traits are evidence of toughness. Steroids are shortcuts taken (refer above) because managing patience is harder. Foresight requires introspection, honesty and wisdom. Wisdom is attained only through patience. Courage without wisdom or foresight is foolhardiness. A lack of preparation is a hallmark of fear. People who shortcut often think they are streamlining. This happens when there is an element of denial or a delusion of grandeur involved. Honesty is the casualty and the hardest person to be totally honest with is yourself. Consider that your New Year's resolution may be about building something but it could also be about bouncing back. This could prove even more rewarding so don't rule it out OK!



Hmmm...what depresses kids today?  
Phone taken away?  
Unfriended on Facebook?

