



# The Global Center for Spiritual Awakening

*Helping you master the art of living by walking the spiritual path on positive, practical, prosperous feet*

GCSAcommunity.org • 919-530-9417 • revsbilcher@gmail.com  
1405 Autumn Ridge Drive, Durham, NC 27712

## Inner Strength

*Our inner strengths, experiences, and truths cannot be lost, destroyed, or taken away. Every person has an inborn worth and can contribute to the human community. We all can treat one another with dignity and respect, provide opportunities to grow toward our fullest lives and help one another discover and develop our unique gifts. We each deserve this and we all can extend it to others.*

*(Mark Twain)*

### Our Definition of Inner Strength:

**The fortitude to use your internal resources, mental skills, and physical capabilities to defeat difficulties of all kinds by connecting with your Extraordinary Nature.**



When you develop inner strength as one of your core qualities, you'll be able to meet any challenge, difficulty, and disappointment with a high degree of confidence and poise. This core ability is the epitome of tenacity, determination, and fortitude which you already possess at a deep level.

Having such strong inner fortitude means connecting with your Extraordinary Nature (your Divine Self) so you can use your internal resources, your mental skills, and your physical capabilities to confront difficulties of all kinds. When you are tenacious, you draw upon your energy and stamina, so that when you face challenges that deplete you of energy and material resources, you still have enough willpower left within you to act confidently and decisively.



“When we peered into the heart of resilience” says Barbara Fredrickson, “tracking heart rate, blood pressure, and constriction of blood vessels before, during, and after the public speaking task—we saw that even though these physiological measures spiked just as high for people with more and less resilient personality styles, they came down faster for those with the most resilient traits. Within seconds, their hearts calmed. By contrast, the hearts of the others remained perturbed. This pattern of data tells us people with resilient personality styles are emotionally responsive. They are not disconnected, head-in-the-sand, unflappable robots. They are emotionally moved like the rest of us. But they are quick to move, to let go (*Tugade, M., and B. Fredrickson, 2004, “Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences,” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 86: 320-333*).

Willpower is the inner strength, the internal engine that can move you toward the successes and achievements you want. It's the inner muscle that helps you accomplish what you want in life. Willpower is erroneously considered as a quality belonging only to highly successful people, who depend on strength and force to achieve their goals. The truth is inner strength can be developed by everyone. It's one of the Core Abilities that will help you discover (uncover) the Extraordinary You that's been within you since you arrived in skin school!

**Self Reflection Question:** Think back on a time when you surprised yourself by doing something you did not think you would be able to do. (Examples could be completing a difficult project, handling a tough task, competing in an event, learning a new skill, etc.).

As you reflect on that experience, what specific things did you do that helped you keep going when you thought you wanted to quit?

Willpower, which is inner strength in high gear, manifests as the ability to control unnecessary and harmful impulses. It also manifests as the ability to make decisions, abide by those decisions, and follow them with perseverance, until you successfully accomplish what you want to do.

People who have a low level of inner strength succumb to what Daniel Goleman calls 'emotional hijacking.' What happens is that small stresses pile up over time and cause many people to lose control. As a result, their decision-making skills, productivity, and effectiveness plummet (Goleman, D., *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam New York, 1998, pg. 77). Inner strength also gives you the courage and moxie to endure and overcome any and all resistance and opposition, difficulties and hardships.



**Simply put, Inner Strength means having more willpower than won't power!**

### **Self Reflection Questions:**

Think of times you wished you had more inner strength (willpower, self-discipline, tenacity, resolve)—where you lacked enough persistence and inner stamina to follow through on your decisions and plans? Can you spot any trends or patterns?

Who do you admire and respect because they have overcome obstacles and difficulties, and persevered despite traumatic experiences or tragedies? What can you learn from them?



When tough times trigger your insecurities, you can call upon your inner strength to get you through anything the world throws at you with poise and confidence. And we call confidence poised courage.

A compelling amount of research from the field of positive psychology tells us that all of us have these qualities. All of us are born with more unique capabilities and skills than we realize, and the way to build our inner strength is to focus on all seven core abilities and 'grow' them.

When it comes to mental muscle, there's been significant work done in the past decade on identifying signature strengths. Most notable is the work of Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania, the founder of the positive psychology movement, and Chris Peterson at the University of Michigan.

## Spiritual Practice

### Putting It Into Practice

Take a moment to reflect back on a challenging life experience you went through successfully. Be sure you think about something that is complete. How were you able to work through it? What lessons did you bring from the experience that have made you stronger? What Spiritual Practices helped you handle it? Is there anything going on in your life now that you can apply those lessons to?

Someone else who mastered stick-to-itiveness was Apple Computer's co-founder, Steve Jobs, who said:

*Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.*



One final piece of research coming from Harvard Graduate School of Education's Inner Strengths of Successful Leaders program:

Inner strength deepens your presence, wisdom, focus, and ability to stay calm and centered. It helps you better manage uncomfortable feelings and difficult interactions, think more clearly and compassionately, discern where to direct your time and energy, sustain your enthusiasm, and achieve results. These inner strengths will help you take stress in stride, make wise decisions, and savor the joy of leadership. Through guided mindfulness practices and exercises, meditation techniques, case studies, reflection, presentations, role playing, and large and small group discussion, you will gain new perspectives on your inner strengths and renew your commitment to action guided by the values that inspire you to make a difference. (*Faculty, Inner Strengths of Successful Leaders Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Fall 2013 Session*).

Terry Dobson tells this often told story of a train, a man in pain, and the inner strength of an older man that saved the day in an uncertain time:

“The train clanked and rattled through the suburbs of Tokyo on a drowsy spring afternoon. At one station the doors opened, and suddenly the quiet was shattered by a man bellowing violent curses. The man staggered into our car. He wore laborer’s clothing and was big, drunk, and dirty. Screaming, he swung at a woman holding a baby. The blow sent her spinning into the laps of an elderly couple. It was a miracle that the baby was unharmed.

This so enraged the drunk that he grabbed the metal pole in the center of the car and tried to wrench it out. One of his hands was cut and bleeding.

I was young then, some 20 years ago, and in pretty good shape. I’d been putting in a solid eight hours of Aikido training nearly every day for the past three years. I thought I was tough. “People are in danger!” I said to myself as I got to my feet. “If I don’t do something fast, somebody will probably get hurt.”

Seeing me stand up, the drunk recognized a chance to focus his rage. “A foreigner!” he roared. “You need a lesson in Japanese manners!”

I gave him a slow look of disgust and dismissal. I planned to take this turkey apart, but he had to make the first move.

He gathered himself for a rush at me.

A fraction of a second before he could move, someone shouted, “Hey!”

We both stared down at a little old Japanese man. He must have been well into his seventies, this tiny gentleman, sitting there immaculate in his kimono. He beamed delightedly at the laborer.

“C’mere,” the old man said, beckoning. “C’mere and talk to me.”

The big man followed as if on a string. He planted his feet belligerently in front of the old gentleman and roared, “Why should I talk to you?”

The old man continued to beam at the laborer. “What’cha been drinkin’?” he asked. “I’ve been drinkin’ sake,” the laborer bellowed back, “and it’s none of your business!”

“Oh, that’s wonderful,” the old man said, “absolutely wonderful! You see, I love sake, too. Every night, me and my wife — she’s 76, you know — we warm up a little bottle of sake and take it out into the garden, and we sit on an old wooden bench. We watch the sun go down, and we look to see how our persimmon tree is doing. My great-grandfather planted that tree, and we worry about whether it will recover from those ice storms we had last winter.” He looked up at the laborer, eyes twinkling.

As he struggled to follow the old man, his face began to soften. His fists slowly unclenched. “Yea,” he said, “I love persimmons, too . . .”

“Yes” said the old man, smiling, “and I’m sure you have a wonderful wife.”

“No,” replied the laborer. “My wife died.” The big man began to sob. “I don’t got no wife, I don’t got no home, I don’t got no job. I’m so ashamed of myself.” Tears rolled down his cheeks, a spasm of despair rippled through his body.

The train arrived at my stop. As the doors opened, I turned my head for one last look. The laborer was sprawled on the seat with his head in the old man’s lap. The old man was softly stroking the filthy, matted hair. (“Another Way,” from *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, p. 55-58)

We share this story because it vividly illustrates how people who have a well-defined sense of inner strength—like the old Japanese man in the story—are able to see through uncertainty and chaos. They remain calm in midst of a troubled world, and can move through difficult situations with ease

and grace. This is true inner strength for uncertain times: the strength to risk reaching out; the strength to risk listening, hearing, holding, and understanding. This is true inner strength for chaotic times: the strength to risk being heard, to risk being held, to risk being helped; to risk letting ourselves be vulnerable, to be fully present and poised in the midst of chaos. The inner strength for outer action is in our DNA.

We can tell you with absolute certainty that you have a deep reservoir of inner strength within you. And when you align your ordinary self with your Extraordinary Self, you'll achieve the inner peace, serenity, health, wealth, and happiness you seek.

*Never consent to creep when you feel an impulse to soar.*

*(Helen Keller)*

*This is the essence of inner strength – if you're finding that opportunity isn't knocking – build a door or install a loud doorbell.*

*(Bil and Cher)*

