

Prof. Bob Karnes 3-6-24

“Discretion is the better part of valor”

The most common English idiom people use when they want to express the idea that they would rather be a living coward than a dead hero, or that to speak out for something they felt strongly about could weigh heavily against them is ‘discretion is the better part of valor.’ It is a slight warping of the actual Shakespeare quote: ‘the better part of valor is discretion.

This Shakespearean Play has many ways of looking at valor

<https://nosweatshakespeare.com/quotes/famous/discretion-better-part-of-valor/>

Another use of this quote is it is better to avoid a dangerous situation than to confront it.

Working with a harder style Martial Art dealing with a kill or be killed situation as a last resort is good to practice as well as being Uke with a Tori that has the skill and control to use the striking and takedowns gives you a better view of possible dangerous attacks, the effect, and possible repercussions. You may need these arts and the drills to find your “It’s On button”. Your survival is the goal. Possible repercussions are going to prison for excessive force in a non-life threatening attack or your death if you missed the opportunity to escape or to use sufficient force to defend yourself. If you are set up by armed professionals to harm you, your awareness to spot the signs of deception is needed to not fall for the trap.

The book Meditations On Violence by Sgt. Rory Miller is a comprehensive book on knowing and effectively dealing with the mentally ill in crisis to the Psychopathic killers.

For now, as I look at my version of Drunken Uncle Jujitsu after following my suggestions in my self-defense course, I continue to use the country western song lyrics “You’ve got to know when to hold them, know when to fold them, know when to walk away and when to run” as a basic guide for teaching ethical self-defense.

“Discretion is the better part of valor” is what I see when a person uses a calm and aware approach looking for conflict resolution when dealing with less harmful attackers. Talking your way out, using redirection and a detached compassion approach was very useful for me working in the mental health units. A few stories demonstrate this advantage of using the gentle way.

If you have a few minutes take a few deep breaths and scan the environment as nonintervention may be a good choice.