



Showcasing Karate in Newfoundland & Labrador

Train Your Body, Master Your Mind

Mindfulness Tip

Mindful breathing before Karate sharpens focus and calms the mind. Try the 4-7-8 method

- + Breathe in for 4 seconds
- + Hold your breath for 7 seconds
- + Release for 8 seconds

Tributes: Dr. David Bell & Dr. Bruce Mann Page 12

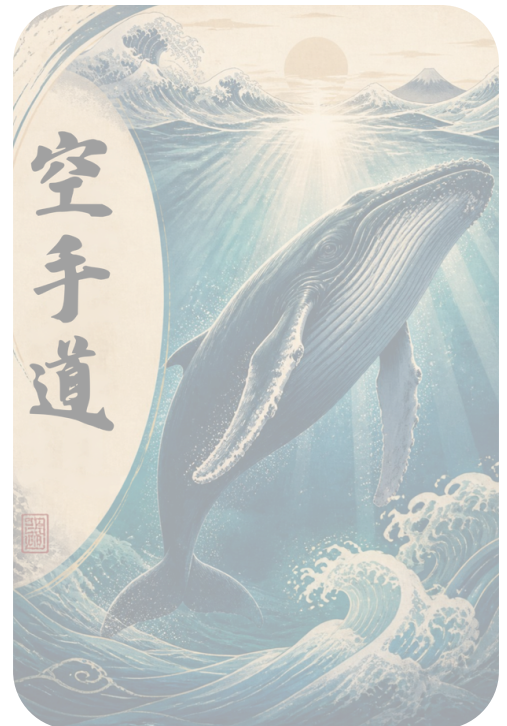


When students become coaches Teaching them to give back Early

How Shotokan Karate Became Divided, Hanshi Jan Knobel, WJKA

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Kata in Times of Stress Sensei J. Hutchings



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Article

Relaxed, Not Weak!

A new perspective on the importance of relaxation in Karate.

Sandy Hounsell 2nd Kyu, Budokai Traditional Karate

While it may seem counterintuitive, relaxation is essential in creating power and speed. Before considering such a concept it is important to understand when we are relaxed, we are not weak, nor are we unaware. In karate, our strength and speed begin with a keen understanding of our surroundings and an ability to adapt to those surroundings, and to do so with intent and focus.

Essential to relaxation is controlled breathing. We all breathe naturally and without thinking, but in karate deep and focused breathing is essential in reducing tension and stress, which in turn allows us to remain calm and prepared. None of this is to suggest we are not engaged. In fact, in karate, to be relaxed is to be always engaged and always ready to transfer energy with speed and focus.

Equally important, however, is the ability to apply intense tension at the precise moment. The concept of transferring energy from a relaxed state to an instantaneous tensing of muscles at the right moment is referred to as kime and is arguably one of the most important principles of karate. Kime, as I understand it at this point in my Karate journey, is generally defined as a decisive moment of impact characterized by a brief, sharp tensing of the muscles to maximize power, focus and speed, followed by an immediate return to a relaxed state. This return to relaxation allows for quick recovery and immediate readiness for a defensive response or a follow-up attack.

While the physical aspect of kime is essential, the mental ability to focus and fully commit to the technique is equally important. Karate derives its effectiveness from the physical and mental aspects of kime, lending support to its importance to all martial arts. It is here we must understand the essential connection between relaxation and power.

Simply put, both the physical and mental aspects of kime cannot exist without relaxation. In other words, if you are not able to maintain control of your body and conserve energy through relaxation, you will never be able to maximize your power, speed and intensity. This is particularly important as we age.

Prolonged tension is exhausting, both mentally and physically, and as we get older we need to strategically conserve our energy and maintain mental stability in order to allow us to continue creating power and speed well into our advanced years.

If you try to hit a golf ball, shoot a rifle or stick handle a puck with tension in your body, you are doomed

to failure. To hit that ball straight, to fire that rifle true, to handle that puck with finesse, you must be relaxed and focused. In karate, this relaxation and focus leading up to the moment of impact is essential in delivering a powerful, quick and targeted blow. All of your energy and focus must be concentrated at that moment of impact, not wasted on the anticipation.

The greater our ability to relax, breath and move with fluidity, the greater our success in martial arts and...the greater our success in all aspects of our busy lives.



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Sensei Jeff Hutchings, recently reached out to his students to ask for a volunteer to write a few words for the upcoming Budokai Newsletter. Sensei Jeff's request," was to provide insight from a student's perspective into the value in being given teaching opportunities, as well as coaching opportunities like the Samurai Program." After reading the email request, I said to myself, I am a student and perhaps I should share my perspective and humble opinion. Well, here is my personal observation and point of view!

I feel that a Karate student at a very young age, no matter their rank, somewhat becomes a teacher. Also, a qualified Karate teacher/instructor with many years experience and holds a senior rank, at times becomes a student. In fact, throughout the world of the "Martial Arts" most Sensei are students and have teachers themselves. The study of our karate, one will never learn it all in a lifetime. Therefore, we are a student forever in the true sense of seeking meaning and perfection of our Karate. "Nothing is ever Perfect"

I don't intend to write what many experts have already written and to say I am an expert, I am not, I am a Karate student. Forever learning from higher and lower ranks and from my peers. I will try to briefly explain! I have seen children with a yellow or an orange belt rank and higher help white belt students tie their belt, adjusting their Dogi, to shouting out a KIA or demonstrating a basic movement. This to me is the start of teaching at a very young age. As Karateka progresses in ranking and maturity, I have seen many senior color belts help their peers and junior belts with proper form, stances, kata and movements. Many times Sensei Jeff will ask for a color belt to help a new student learn the basics. Or ask to take on the task of doing a class warm up and cool down. Could this be teaching, I feel it is! Our confidence becomes stronger and we learn from helping others.

Personally, I have learned from junior belts, be careful as you don't know what to expect and a Jodan Age Uke block just didn't come but a good punch in the belly did. That's a learning value, don't you think! In fact, being given teaching opportunities helps improve our own Karate and gain confidence. I feel if we are asked in advance or on the spot to coach/teach it keeps us sharp and to realize how much more there is to learn. Some of the very best Karateka are not always great teachers. Each student is truly different, age, ability and learning curve. Some people try their best and want to learn but there are others who just show up and not try their best.

Sensei Jeff's students are a special group that bring positivity, the willingness to learn with enthusiasm. And yes, teach each other along the journey! It may not be in front of the class but between themselves before class begins, arriving early and in the hallway outside the dojo. I would like to make a special mention to Sho Dan Renee Robichaud, who teaches students at her home dojo along with other colors and Black Belts.

The value of being able to partake as a coach with the Samurai Adapted Karate Program is an opportunity and honor. For me to help teach and assist a student being some of the most enthusiastic folks learning Karate is a privilege.

When a student accomplishes a move and tries their very best, I personally feel proud of the progress being made. For the short while that I have been involved helping coach the students of the Samurai Program, I have witnessed student progression, determination individually and as a team. I see students teaching each other and supporting each other continuously. I must mention the fabulous coaching/teaching taking place at every class and Samurai demonstration. I have learned from these coaches and feel that the true Budo spirit lives on.

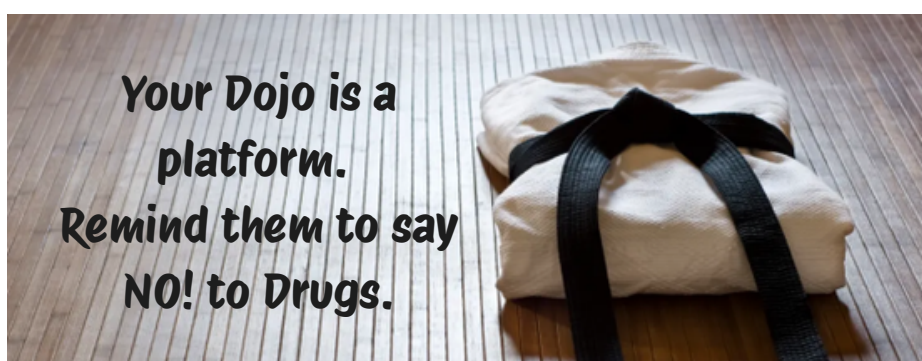
Bravo!



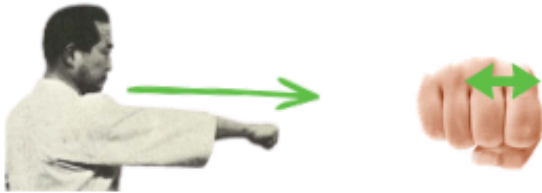
Members of the Budokai Samurai Embu and Kata competitive team.
(Sensei Brian Power Sr. on the right)

Notable Quotes!

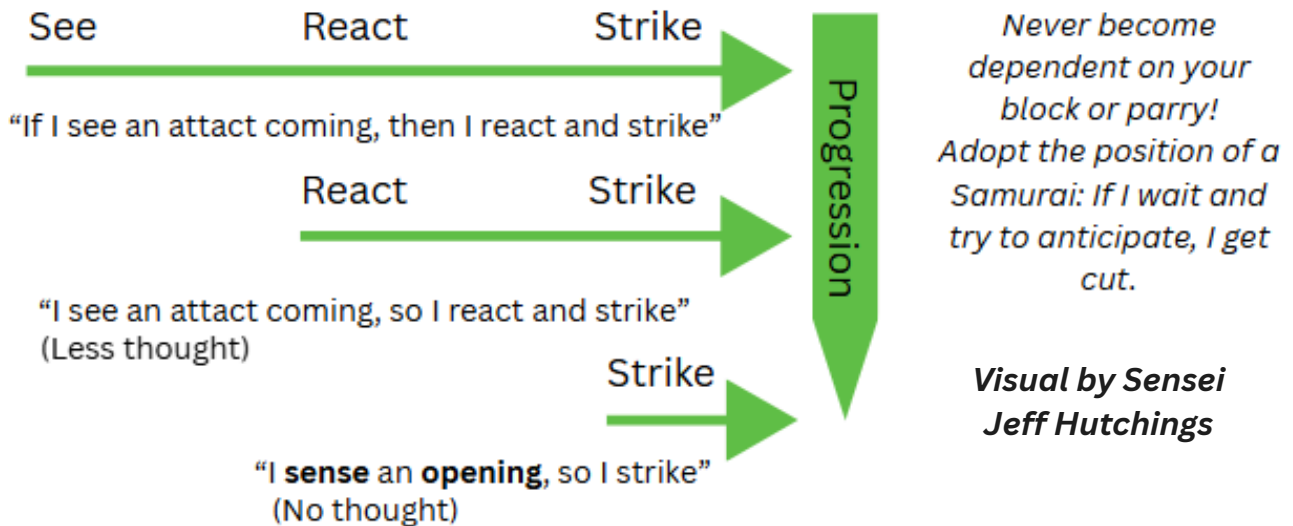
"A kata is not fixed or immovable. Like water, it's ever changing and fits itself to the shape of the vessel containing it. However, kata are not some kind of beautiful competitive dance, but a grand martial art of self-defense – which determines life and death." – Kenwa Mabuni (founder of Shito-ryu Karate)



The Punch - Align it



Mind. No Mind



'**Chansu**' = Opportunity. We consciously train this early on, and we often only see an opportunity/ opening AFTER an opponent attacks. As we progress, we react to the very beginning of the opponents attack/movement. Ultimately, we need to **MAKE** the opportunity: no thought, just strike. (Recognizing the opening will be unconscious and our **intention** to unbalance the opponent will be the leader of our actions).

Recommended reading by local author Stephen L. Randell

stephenrandell.com

MY CHILD IS AN
ADDICT

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YOUR CHILD'S ADDICTION



Events!



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Karate Newfoundland & Labrador

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October 17th, Tournament



Workshop

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HOW SHOTOKAN KARATE BECAME DIVIDED

Jan Knobel, 9th Dan, WJKA

When people speak about Shotokan today, it is easy to assume that there has always been one standardized Shotokan system.

Historically, that is not the case.

Gichin Funakoshi brought Okinawan karate to mainland Japan in 1922 and spent the rest of his life developing and teaching what he increasingly called Karate-do. He established the Shotokan dojo in Tokyo in 1939. The name Shotokan came from "Shoto," Funakoshi's pen name, meaning "pine waves." (jka.or.jp)

But Funakoshi's karate did not develop in isolation.

His son, Gigo (Yoshitaka) Funakoshi, played an important role in the development of Japanese Shotokan technique. He introduced and developed significant changes in areas such as deeper stances, longer techniques, kicking and kumite methodology. Consequently, what became modern Shotokan was influenced not only by Gichin Funakoshi's Okinawan karate but also by the technical development undertaken by his son and senior students. (shotokai.com)

Then came the organizational question.

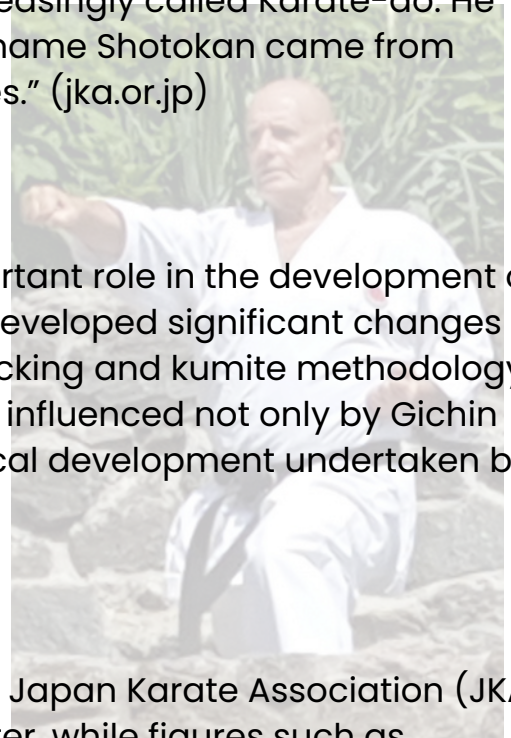
In 1949, senior students of Funakoshi established the Japan Karate Association (JKA). Gichin Funakoshi was regarded as its Supreme Master, while figures such as Masatoshi Nakayama became central to the organization's technical and instructional development. (jka.or.jp)

However, not all of Funakoshi's senior students followed the same path.

The Shotokai organization continued to emphasize preserving Funakoshi's karate-do and was particularly critical of the increasing movement toward commercialization and competitive karate. Students such as Shigeru Egami and Genshin Hironishi developed their own interpretations of Funakoshi's teachings. (shotokai.com)

This created one of the fundamental divisions within the Shotokan tradition.

The JKA increasingly developed a structured system of kihon, kata and kumite, including a formal competition framework.



“It means that Shotokan became a family of traditions rather than a single universally controlled curriculum.”

The Shotokai tradition moved in a different direction, placing greater emphasis on karate as a martial way rather than competitive sport.

After Funakoshi died in 1957, these differences became more pronounced. He had not left behind a single universally accepted successor or organization that controlled all Shotokan karate. His students therefore continued his teachings through different organizations and interpretations. (jka.or.jp)

And this is where the politics of karate becomes important.

As different instructors established organizations, associations and federations, each developed its own grading structures, competition rules, teaching methods and technical interpretations.

Eventually, even the JKA itself experienced major organizational divisions, particularly after the death of Nakayama in 1987. Different factions emerged and disputes over leadership and the JKA name eventually resulted in separate organizations. This explains why two karateka can both legitimately identify themselves as Shotokan practitioners, yet perform the same kata with differences in timing, stance, hip movement, hikite, embusen, kumite methodology or interpretation.

It does not necessarily mean that one learned “real karate” and the other did not. It means that Shotokan became a family of traditions rather than a single universally controlled curriculum.

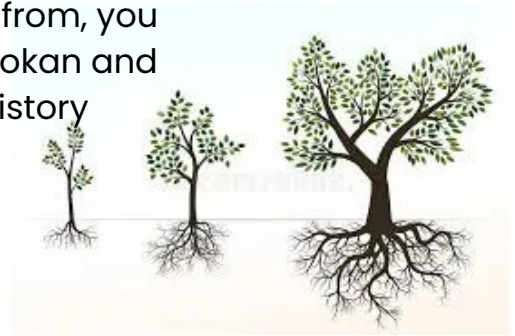
Today we have JKA Shotokan, Shotokai, JKS, SKIF and numerous other organizations and independent lineages. Some differences are technical. Some are philosophical. Others are simply the result of organizational history.

The important historical point is this: Funakoshi created the foundation. His students interpreted, developed and organized it in different ways. Therefore, modern Shotokan should not be understood as one perfectly uniform system handed down unchanged from Funakoshi.

It is better understood as a large lineage of karate traditions that trace much of their identity back to Gichin Funakoshi and the Shotokan dojo. And perhaps that is why studying the history of Shotokan is just as important as studying its kata.

When you understand where the differences came from, you stop arguing about which organization “owns” Shotokan and start understanding the much more complicated history behind the art.

Osu. Jan Knobel



Article

The State of Mind in Karate Paul Healey, 1st Dan, Budokai NL

Training with a busy mind is very challenging but essential to my progression as a karateka. Karate is both a very technical practice as well as one that requires instant decision making and an almost impossibly short reaction time. Personally, I find that I need to concentrate very hard while training, either in the dojo or on my own in order to “absorb” the techniques into both my mind and body. I want to get the mechanics correct now, so that they happen naturally and quickly when I really need them. My focus is almost always on keeping my lower body in good contact with the ground while not becoming stiff in my upper body. The position and angle of my feet, how my weight is balanced and if my hips are in hanmi or shomen are all things that need concerted effort in order to become second nature. For my own body and practice, I feel that if my lower body is as dialed in as it can be, the arms and torso will naturally follow.

My own karate journey is similar to another interest of mine, music. Practicing scales, learning new chord shapes and piecing together songs takes a lot of thought and concentration. Very often, it involves a busy mind. There are often so many things to consider and countless ways you could make a mistake. However, after I’ve but the work in and out figured out the new chord progression or an intricate finger picking pattern that I’ve been struggling with, I’m able to play with a quieter mind. Hesitation becomes replaced by muscle memory and easier flow. Rigidity is replaced with fingers that move freely and quickly. This is very similar to having the confidence that your strikes, blocks and foot movement will happen naturally if you practice well enough.

My goal as a karateka is to be able to react as quickly as possible and with as little thought as possible. Particularly in kumite, as if my opponent attacks first, I don’t have any time to waste. Every action must be immediate and deliberate. They need to be unhindered by questions of which block or counter attack is right. By the time I’m able to make a decision my opponent’s attack might be over or the next one might be on its way. The only way I can get myself to that level is through focused practice with a concentrated effort. Countless repetitions done with good intent will lead to increased muscle memory, shorter reaction times and less second guessing. Starting with a busier mind, focusing on the nuances and fine details will help things quiet down in the long run.



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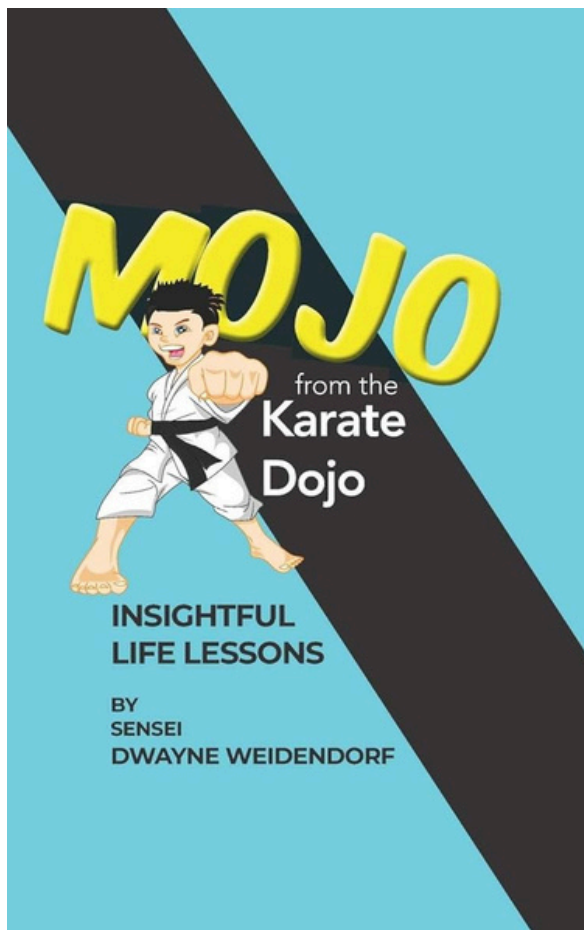


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Teachings of Inoue Yoshimi:

- > As you get older, **work with nature** – not against it. Anybody can beat him in arm wrestling. But when it comes to Karate, it's not just about size, strength or age. The older you get, the more wisdom, technique, feeling and experience you need to apply. Your body weakens as you get older, but other skills take over. It's a natural progression. Don't fight nature – take advantage of it.
- > **Open your mouth.** If your mouth is closed, your jaw tightens up, your shoulders get stiff and your techniques will become tense. So open your mouth. This allows air to flow freely to/from your lungs – making your techniques relaxed, natural and powerful.
- > “Karate is **99% feeling.**” Many people train hard, get sweaty and go home happy. That's great! But, according to Inoue sensei, they never really improve. To improve you need to use feelings, spirit and imagination in your training. 99% of improving is about connecting your body to your brain. Tap into your senses!

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"To search for the old is to understand the new. The old, the new, this is a matter of time. In all things man must have a clear mind.

The Way: Who will pass it on straight and well?"

Funakoshi

Dr. David "Sensei" Bell

June 2, 1943 to March 18, 2025

This picture of Sensei Bell is perfect as it indicates his humility and sincerity. He was a gentle giant of the Dojo and respect came to him naturally as he had a genuine interest in every student he encountered. His Karate was deep and stern, his attitude was one of positivity, and his heart was gold.



Sensei Bruce Mann

Passed September 22nd, 2026

Sensei Bruce was also a lifelong martial artist, holding a third-degree black belt in Shotokan Karate and a second-degree black belt in Judo. For Bruce, martial arts represented discipline, perseverance, lifelong learning, and the pursuit of excellence in character.





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Article

Look to Your Kata in Stressful Times

Sensei Jeff Hutchings, Budokai, WJKA

Marital Artists practice Karate for various reasons, not the least of which is to learn again to focus the mind on one thing at a time. We have seen in the Dojo that if you are doing Kata or engaging in Kumite, your thoughts are few, and if you have any, they are on the task at hand. In this way, we are using Karate to manage our minds.

Cortisol is considered the stress hormone (high levels interfere with thyroid function), and scientific studies have shown that the Martial Arts help reduce cortisol. Not fake news. Another fact is that “doom scrolling” on our electronic devices is numbing our emotions, and, when we couple this with the turbulence in national and international politics and affairs, it is easy to feel disconcerted.

Ahh! But here’s the good news! Winston Churchill said that “Never let a good crisis go to waste!” We cannot manipulate world affairs single handedly, but our reaction to them we can!

In this sense we have Karate, Kata in particular, as a tool for stress management. Mindfully moving through a Kata, or even a series of Kihon, while breathing deliberately in and out (exaggerate it) provides a reprieve for your brain.

Breathing deeply into your lower abdomen reaches stress-reducing nerve bundles, while chest-breathing incites stress-causing nerve bundles. Controlling your adrenaline levels and stress reactions are crucial to wellbeing. Yes, we need heightened adrenalin at certain times in our lives, but when adrenalin takes over, or stays elevated too long, it wears us down: it is a boom-and-bust scenario.

‘I don’t have time’ and ‘I don’t have space’, are excuses. Yes, coping mechanisms for stress get us by, but stress erodes our wellbeing like the ocean on the shoreline: we deal with it, or it deals with us.

If you take a few moments here and there to work through Kata, or even a single move in kata, two things happen, your physical Kata gets better, and you rest your noisy mind.

Take, for instance, the simple practice of mindfully going through the parts of a Gyaku-zuki: imagine the power generated for the floor when you push against it. Imagine that power going up your leg, to your hip. Now imagine your hip rotating forward to add to the existing floor power and sending it up your torso and out to your fist.

We can do this technique slowly and deliberately to 'feel' it, and understand its component parts, and, in turn, it is an equally beneficial practice for your mindfulness. Our best decisions are made when our minds are not muddled with thousands of thoughts.

We need to remember that Karate is a multi-layered, and multi-purpose Art that offers more than a means of self-defense. It is a vehicle to wellbeing.

Now, accept stress as a part of life, and decide to take it by the tail. In class I teach that when danger enters your space you say, 'Ok, I'm having none of this!' and you use your skills to destroy it. Stress is danger. Your tools to subdue it are your practice and your breathing.

In every roadblock and in every crisis, there is a lesson to learn (often about ourselves). Don't miss the opportunity.

We can't always control what happens to us, but we can always control how we respond.



The East Coast Karate Newsletter is a non-political publication designed to share Karate knowledge; raise the profile of Karate and it's benefits; serve as a networking opportunity; and give a platform to those who wish to put thier Karate knowledge and opinions into writing. The ideas and opinions of this Newsletter are not necessarilty those of the publisher.



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