

May 2006

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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 Quote

"It's the constant and determined effort that breaks down all resistance, sweeps away all obstacles."

~ Claude M. Bristol

Author of "The Magic of Believing"

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 Quick Tip

Did you ever notice that the most successful karate people are also the most relaxed? The finest teachers, the best fighters and the greatest coaches are calm, focused people. Sure, they have concerns from time to time like everyone else, but they've learned to deal with challenges and have made a solemn vow to themselves that...

They don't let anything "take them out".

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 Mokuso (part 2) by Jason Stanley

My students sat alert in seiza waiting for the command.

"Mokuso", spoke the head student of the 4-7 year old class and all the kids closed their eyes and began breathing.

His inward breath was relatively normal, but when Jack exhaled I'm sure it sent shivers down some of the other kid's spines. I imagined his vocal cords being played for the very first time by a miniature violinist sitting in his throat. As the violinist pulled the bow back across Jack's vocal cords the screeching that came from within made me think of nails on a chalk board.

I then realized that I hadn't been doing enough to educate my class, or my KarateTips subscribers, about "mokuso". In fact just today when I looked at the KarateTips articles archive, I realized that I had never finished part 2 of the article that I wrote in January...2 years ago. So today's article, while long overdue, expands on the [original article](#) from January 2004.

<http://www.karatetips.com/articles/mokuso.asp>



Today I want to share with you the breathing system I teach my class when they perform their meditation.

What's more, this method will help you:

- clear your mind because it gives you a seed to focus on (see part 1)
- oxygenate your blood and brain for peak performance
- stimulate your lymphatic system to remove toxins from your blood to keep you feeling great!

Yes, all this is possible when you know how to breathe correctly.

What I can tell you from majoring in Human Physiology is that the following process makes complete sense, is proven to work and is used in many health programs worldwide. I first learned about this breathing technique after I read "Unlimited Power" by author and personal success coach, Tony Robbins.

It's a relatively simple process, so long as you can count. =) This should tell you that this method can even be learned by a 4 year old.

Here's how it works...

1. Take a deep inward breath for 3 seconds...
2. Hold it for 12 seconds...
3. Exhale for 6 seconds...

Now if you take a closer look at the relationship between the numbers, you'll see that you hold for 4 times the inward breath, and then exhale for 2 times the inward breath count. So the ratio is 1:4:2

Depending on your experience with this kind of breathing you may find that you want to breathe in for a longer duration. That's great... just be sure to hold for 4 times that number and exhale over twice the inward breath count.

So for example if you...

- Inhale for 5 seconds...
- Hold for 20 seconds...
- Exhale for 10 seconds...

If you...

- Inhale for 6 seconds...
- Hold for 24 seconds...
- Exhale for 12 seconds...

Got it?

Build up your capacity over time. You might find that 3 seconds is good for you to begin with. When you become comfortable with the level you're at, increase your inward breath by a "one count" to achieve the next level.

Ok, so now you know HOW to breathe using this method... but WHY would you do this?

Here's where it gets interesting...

The inward breath should be for however long you desire. The objective is to fill your lungs with as much air as possible.

Now why do you exhale for twice the initial count?

Your lymphatic system is responsible for expelling toxins from your body and is stimulated by diaphragm expansion and contraction through deep breathing. Breathing out for twice the initial count is the optimal time for that quantity of air to be more completely expelled while stimulating your lymphatic system.

Why hold for 4 times the count?

Whatever quantity of oxygen you inhale will most effectively be passed through your lungs to your blood when you hold it in for 4 times the count. In other words you give your body the optimal amount of time to extract the most oxygen from the air in your lungs and absorb it into your blood, at the same time you're activating your lymphatic system. Hold it for longer and it's kind of like trying to squeeze more juice from an already squeezed orange.

Deep breathing has also been linked to why athletes and martial artists tend to have lower occurrences of diseases like cancer. They are continually oxygenating their bodies and stimulating the lymphatic system by breathing deeply and often, creating an environment that many diseases cannot survive in.

It's interesting that traditional martial artists from centuries ago knew deep breathing was essential for great health. Now, with help from modern science we can refine and improve those concepts for maximum results.

Next time you meditate, or simply feel like "cleansing your system" try this method of breathing. You'll find that this breathing technique will help you regain your breath more quickly after an intense training session too.

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 Web site update

After much consideration, many different ideas and suggestions from many different people, I've decided that the KarateTips newsletter will revert back to its original format (this one). This seems to be the format people enjoy and use the most. So with that said you can expect this newsletter every couple of weeks with the subject title as follows

, your "KarateTips" newsletter is ready

Each time, you can expect an interesting article or an interview together with a quote and a quick tip to help you improve your skills.

Also you'll notice that I've done some updating to the web site. People wanted to know more about the "75 Dynamite Drills" ebook for home practice and the dojo, so that's what the home page is now about. You'll also see that the "Six Secrets To Karate Success" is now available as a free ebook for you to download. Just visit <http://www.karatetips.com/download>

And I want to hear from you. If you have something you'd like to know more about, something you'd like to share, or simply questions you'd like answered, fire them in to me at jason@karatetips.com and I'll do my best to accommodate you.

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KarateTips Newsletter Archive - May 2006 - July 2007



"Karate tips, articles and information
helping you improve your skills since 2002"

Issue # 55

May 2006

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"Notice that the stiffest tree is most easily cracked, while the bamboo or willow survives by bending with the wind."

~ Bruce Lee

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Quick Tip

Take 5 minutes at the conclusion of your training session to stretch out and cool down. This is the best time to stretch for flexibility and also plays an important role in reducing injury. A good stretch and cool down prevents blood from pooling in your limbs, reduces lactic acid build up and helps your body deal with other waste products that have resulted from muscular activity.

In short, cool down and stretch out to keep fit and healthy and looking forward to your next session.

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Interview with Hy Dreksler

If you ache a little after karate... if you think that things are too tough... if you can't imagine training well into your seventies... then let Hy Dreksler be an inspiration for you.

This interview took place 12 months ago and I was saving it for another project I was working on... to cut a long story short, the project was aborted... but still I wanted to share Hy's story with you.

I hope you enjoy it.

1. Where were you born and raised? What was your life like as a kid?

I was born and raised in The Bronx in New York back when the streets were filled with horse and buggies. The neighborhood hangout was the candy store, where they sold candy, soda, ice cream and cigarettes. I was 11 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor so that I grew up during WWII. I was a chubby kid so that I was the one they made fun of.



2. At what age did you begin karate?

I started Karate at 43.

3. Why? Tell us about the chain of events that led you to karate.

I was 5' 10" and weighed 220. I sat behind a desk, was an Electrical Engineer, and jogging was the rage. I started jogging with some fellows at work and one of them suggested coming down to a karate class. I started and figured what can I lose. In 6 months I was down to a healthy 165 pounds.

4. What style do you currently study? Has it always been the same style?

I have returned to Shotokan Karate. My original style was Shotokan from 1973 through 1986. In 1998 I started Okinawan Style Karate and continued until 2002. In 2003 I started Tai Chi (which I still do). I took lessons in Jeet Kune Do for 6 months and now I have returned to Shotokan.

5. What rank do you hold in your current system and any other martial arts you may have partaken in over the years?

I have my Shodan in both Shotokan and Okinawan Style Karate. I was awarded a teaching certificate in Tai Chi.

6. What has karate done for your life? What doors has it opened for you?

Karate is a lifestyle that keeps me active and fit.

7. When I wake up in the morning, I'm feeling kinda sore sometimes and I've just turned 33. I certainly don't mean this to sound rude, but I can't even imagine training at age 75. You're obviously in great health and physical shape but what obstacles/challenges do you face and how do you overcome them at your age?

I take Glucosamine, Chondroitin, MSM, and Sam-e every day, and I ache. I practice Karate a minimum of 6 hours a week, and I practice Tai Chi a minimum of 6 hours a week.

8. What's your secret to keeping a young mind/body?

Taking vitamins, eating healthy, and lots of exercise.

9. What drives you to continue to pursue karate?

The people and my hopes for a 100th birthday.

10. Have you been involved in any self defense life-threatening situations in your life? Yes/No? Please tell us about it/them.

Fortunately No.

11. Do you / have you competed in karate competition over the years? What are your thoughts on karate competition?

I have watched many Kumite exhibits, but my Senseis always considered me too old to compete. I never thought I was good enough to compete in Kata.

12. What has been your greatest achievement?

Three grown kids, and being physically able.

13. What are you goals for karate from here?

I would like to become a Nidan on my 76th birthday.

14. What do you think is the most important attribute a karateka should have for karate longevity/success?

Spirit.

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🔊 Improve your skills and performance by 5 times...

Research shows that people who participate in a daily routine are 3 times as likely to stay on their program than those who participate 6 days a week - and fare 5 times better than those who participate 3,4 or 5 days a week.*

For most of us however it's not possible to be at karate every day. That's why regular home practice can help you do better. It doesn't have to be a full blown karate session, and you don't need a partner to practice.

Setting up a simple training area at your home with 2 or 3 simple training tools can give you a place to revise and refine your skills. Some simple tools you can use to get a good workout at home are:

- a makiwara or punch bag
- jump rope
- a pull up bar

What's more there are literally dozens and dozens of ways to practice at home if you get creative with a piece of string, a paper cup, a piece of wooden dowel, etc.

In my *75 Dynamite Drills for Home Practice and the Dojo* I explain loads of creative drills and exercises for you to develop your skills faster, retain more and do better. Plus if you teach you can easily adapt and apply these in your karate classes no matter what style you practice.

Hy Dreksler got his copy 12 months ago and at age 75 he's staying fit, healthy and energized.

"I have enjoyed receiving your tips and really think these 75 dynamite drills are sensational. I plan on sharing these drills with my fellow students here in Colorado Springs, CO.

In August I will be 75 so these drills are just right for me. Thanks for all your tips, as even an old dog can learn new tricks."

~ Hy Dreksler
Shotokan Karate
Colorado Springs, CO, USA

To claim your copy of "75 Drills" visit:

<http://www.karatetips.com>

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Issue # 56

June 2006

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Quote

"Goals: There is no telling what you can do when you get inspired by them. There is no telling what you can do when you believe in them. There is no telling what will happen when you act upon them."

~ Jim Rohn
Author and Speaker

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Quick Tip

Video yourself performing your kata. It will allow you to focus on what you're doing rather than trying to focus AND watch yourself while doing your kata. You'll be quite surprised when you play back the video. You'll get a whole new perspective of how you look -- you'll find things that you thought you were doing that you're not, plus you'll see just how fast (or slow) you really are. It's a great tool to analyze your skills.

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Block or Strike or Grapple?

From: Jason Stanley, 4th Dan Shitoryu

June 7, 2006

Three years ago I wrote an article titled "[Block or Strike](#)" which discussed some concepts of kata bunkai. This article is part 2 of that initial piece... you know what they say about a long time between sequels being a good thing, right?

Go here to read the first article - <http://www.karatetips.com/articles/blockorstrike.asp>

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"Sensei. What do these movements mean?" asked Sierra inquisitively as she blocked down gedan barai and stepped forward to make jodan age uke. She was practicing Pinan Nidan with the rest of the class, but instead of simply accepting that the movements were basic blocks, she started to think outside the box.

I folded my arms and tilted my head to the right as I pondered how best to answer a 10 year old in terms that she'd understand.

"Well, what do you think it means?" I asked her, trying to extract where she was going with her question.

"I think it means to block a punch to the body and then step forward to block a punch to the head," she replied.

"That's possible. You could have an opponent retreating and throwing a punch as the move backwards... but let's take a closer look at what else it might mean, ok?"

"Ok."

"I want you to think about the effectiveness of your opponent's punch when they are moving backwards. Could they generate a lot of power while their weight was moving in the opposite direction to their punch?"

"No... it would be kinda weak because their weight isn't behind them."

"Right!", I smiled. She'd be listening in class.

"Ok, so what else could those movements mean?" I asked.

"Ummm... I don't know," Sierra replied. "That's why I was asking... it looks like a block but if their weight is moving the wrong way for it to be a good punch, it doesn't make sense."

This is where a lot of people get stumped -- trying to figure out what other applications can work in their kata. That you're even asking the question is great. As you progress with your karate you definitely want to push the boundaries of what you know. So let's begin that process here.

For the purpose of this article, let's use Sierra's example and explore 7 different possible bunkai applications for the 6th and 7th movements in Pinan Nidan. This is as you move towards the front of the room blocking down with your left arm, then stepping forward with the right foot and blocking up.

Bunkai #1 - Block and Block

So as 10 year old Sierra told us above, the application of gedan barai (lower block) followed by stepping forward with jodan age uke (upper rising block) could mean you're blocking as your opponent is retreating.

However, as we discussed, moving backwards and punching isn't very effective. It's hard to think that the creators of the kata would have considered this as a serious application. There are other bunkai (applications) that would better suit these 2 movements... so let's take a look at some of them. Let's begin with...

Bunkai #2 - Block, Capture and Strike

As your opponent makes their attack with right oizuki (lunge punch) to the stomach, block down in the usual way with your left arm in left zenkutsu dachi (forward stance). This time, after you block immediately capture the wrist of their punching hand. As you step forward to make your upper block, change your way of thinking and actually make jodan age uchi (upper rising strike) instead of jodan age uke (upper rising block).

That's right ... this time you're striking upward with the forearm under their chin. Same movement, different meaning. As you make the strike, be sure to pull your opponent towards you with your left arm as you make your hikete (pull back hand). You've just performed a simple grappling and strike application.

Bunkai #3 - Strike and Strike

Another possibility of the first gedan barai movement is it being gedan yoko barai (lower side block) or tetsui (hammer fist) to the inside of the leg as your opponent kicks mae geri (front kick).

Your target with tetsui is the soft tissue area on the inside shin just below the knee. Note that you must slightly change your line of defense so you do not meet your opponent's kick with your forearm! That would most likely result with you coming off second best. So as you apply this technique move slightly to the inside to position yourself for the strike.

Follow up with the rising strike to the chin as discussed in bunkai #2.

Bunkai #4 - Block, Capture and Grapple

For yet another twist, consider the first movement the same as in the second example where you capture

your opponent's wrist after making the first block.

As you capture the wrist pull it back to your side (as you make hikite) and twist. As you step forward, use your upper blocking movement as a grappling application. This time as you step over, grab your opponent's hair and pull up and forward as you force their head backward exposing the throat.

Follow up with a takedown or strike... whatever you're in the mood for.

Bunkai #5 - Block, Capture and Trap

Ever accidentally stepped on your partner's foot when practicing bunkai? You just may have discovered a plausible application to trap your opponent. Yes, this really is possible when you consider the roots of Okinawan karate which deals largely with close range applications of trapping, tripping, grappling and striking.

Trapping your opponent by stepping on their feet is another example of bunkai. When you've got your opponent trapped by their wrist and their foot, it makes it very difficult for them to escape.

So, as you step forward to block your opponent's punch, step on their foot to secure their position. Then follow up with your rising strike to the chin as discussed in bunkai #2.

Bunkai #6 - Block, Capture, Strike and Trip

Expand bunkai #2 but this time as you step forward, step to your opponent's blind side. As you make the upper strike, step behind your opponent's right leg so that the backs of your knees are touching. From here push forward with your forearm under their chin, or to the front of their throat as you take them down over your leg.

Bunkai #7 - Block, Capture, Break

Expanding again on bunkai #2, this time lift your opponent's arm up to shoulder height after you've captured your their arm on the first movement. Be sure to twist their arm counter-clockwise to turn their arm so their elbow faces down. Now step forward and make your age uchi (rising strike) with the target now being the elbow joint. Ouch!

Wrapping it up

Do you see how many possible applications there are in just these two movements? It's not just simply, block and block any longer. We've already covered 7 possibilities in this article that many people don't even consider... and right now I can think of at least another 6 without straining the grey matter.

There a loads of possible bunkai for each movement. Now that you've been exposed to more of the concepts and possible applications, become analytical when you next practice. Don't immediately assume that all you're doing is blocking...

There is a famous karate saying - "A block is a strike and a strike is a block". I think we can add to that, don't you?

"A block is a strike and a strike is a block... or sometimes a grapple... or maybe a trap, a break or a takedown."

What do you think?

What would you like to see more of? Send your opinions, comments, questions and testimonials to me at jason@karatetips.com and I'll do my best to accommodate you.

I'll answer questions in upcoming newsletters plus get a good idea of what you really want to learn about.

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Quote

"The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow, but do good anyway... The biggest person with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest person with the smallest mind, think big anyway. That's my philosophy."

~ John Scaini

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Quick Tip

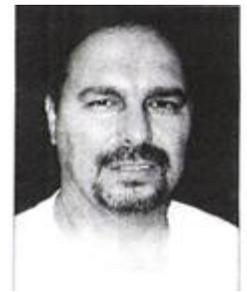
Take a moment to share your knowledge and help somebody else. Through teaching you will be rewarded in more ways that you can imagine. For starters you'll learn more about your own understanding of karate as you have to break it down to bite size pieces. You'll soon discover important points you're taking for granted or missing altogether.

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Interview with John Scaini

Recently I had the good fortune to speak with Sensei John Scaini of Kime Karate Dojo in Toronto, Canada. John is a "can do" kind of guy, who went out and formed his own non-profit karate club. You might be thinking "So what? I could

do that!"... well that's not half the story. At 45 years old he was diagnosed with Parkinson's and yet still found a way to stay positive, enjoy life and build a successful karate club. Let John's story be an inspiration to you.



Q1. Tell us about how you first came to begin karate. What were the circumstances that led you to take it up? When was that?

When I was a 15-year-old teenager, I had a friend who had started to take karate. The club was just started, so that fees were not too high; and with the encouragement of my friend I joined the club. In two years I obtained my orange belt. The club became franchised, the fees went up, and so I had to stop because I had to funnel my money to pay for my university in Toronto, Canada.

Fifteen years later, I was married and had two children. I enrolled my 5-year-old son in an introductory karate program at the local community center. The instructor invited the parents to join the class, so I did. The sensei gradually formed his own club and ran it as a charitable organization. It is now 20 years later and I am still practicing and continue to learn the art of karate.

Q2. What style do you study / teach currently? Have you any experience in other types of martial arts?

I started to study the Chito Ryu style of Karate, but now I have added some Shotokan to my teaching. I also study Tai Chi, and have some experience in judo and wrestling.

Q3. What rank do you hold currently?

I currently hold a san (3rd) dan black belt in a mixed style of chito ryu and shotokan.

Q4. What has been your biggest challenge with karate? How has that impacted your training and life? What good things have come as a result?

When I restarted the practice of karate at the age of 30, I had high cholesterol and asthma that was triggered by some pollens and by hard cardio exercises. There would be times when my wheezing would be louder than the class's kias. With my puffer on hand I would take a puff and push myself even harder. Over time my cholesterol level decreased, my lung capacity grew larger and my asthma disappeared.

I thought this was a great challenge until I reached the age of 45, when I was diagnosed with having Parkinson's disease. This is a degenerative neurological disease where a person will gradually be confined to bed. The first thing to go would be balance strength and co-ordination. I said to myself, if you don't use it you'd lose it. I will not give up without a fight, so I continued my practicing as usual, if not harder.

People that have been diagnosed much later than me and who are not exercising are in much more worse condition than me. Karate has enabled me to maintain my strength, balance and co-ordination. There are two things I tell my students: "I will not have you do anything I cannot do." as I work out side by side to prove it; and "I may be a bit slower, but I'll still kick your asses."

Q5. Have you or your students had to defend yourself in a real life situation? If so, what

happened? Would you mind sharing the story(s)

I tell my students that the best defense is to walk away, its like taking the wind away from a sail. If you are trapped and cannot defuse the situation, then you may protect yourself with one strike. If you require more than one strike you are in deep poo poo!

I am a high school mathematics teacher in an all boy's school. One day while I was supervising the hallway during lunch, a student came up to me and took a swing at my head. My instant reaction was to take that swinging hand, twist it to his back and gently place his face against the locker. I calmly said to him that next time his face would be through the locker door. It is strange how this brought me more respect from the students, who nicknamed me "the tank".

One day I was teaching a class in tough neighborhood in Toronto when a short student said something about the mother of a student three times his size. As the chase was about to begin, I grabbed the bigger student from behind and after asking someone to open the locked door, I threw him out the door and closed the door behind us. I gave him a chance to cool off before I sent him off. The next day he apologized and said "Sir you must be pretty strong, the other day it take three policemen to hold me down.". He learned that the whole world is not out to get him!

Q6. You mentioned to me that you run a non-profit karate organization. Why did you decide to go that route? How did you set it up? What challenges do you have doing that? Tell us a little about how you got started and when that was...

Two years ago our club folded. Being the most senior sensei, I gathered the black belts who wanted to continue and we formed our own non-profit club " KIME KARATE DOJO". Kime (focus) was chosen because we wanted to always remember why we continue to practice the art.

I approached the pastor of my church to arrange to use the church's hall. We were able to get the hall, which has a fantastic 30 by 30 foot wooden dance floor, now called dojo on Monday and Thursday evenings from 7:00 pm to 9: 00 pm. In return, we the members of the club will give a donation twice a year to the church's building fund, for which we would get a tax receipt.

Next we had to protect ourselves and the church against lawsuits, so we had to find some one that would insure us. I was lucky to find an insurance agent who also studied karate and was well aware of what we were about. All the senior belts got together and agreed that no one will get paid and that the only money that would be collected would be to pay for the insurance (split evenly among all the club members, if they can afford to pay it.).

Our next task was to name our club. The name "Kime" was selected and approved by all members quickly. We had to do a business name search, which was also approved, before we could register the club as a non-profit corporation.

This involved a lot of paper work. Fortunately one of our black belts is a lawyer, who helped out with the wording of the forms. This route was decided so that we would qualify for some government funds to buy some equipment. Eight members of the former club had decided to continue to practice with us. Today we have 30 registered members, this was done with no advertising.

Q7. How are your classes structured?

We run a non competitive club that offers a chance for parent to practice with their children. We all do 30 minutes of stretching and cardio exercises and 30 minutes or mandatory punching , kicking and kihons. It is inspirational to see a 5 year old working out beside a 72 year old.

The next 30 minutes we split into groups, according to belt level not age. So it could happen that a younger student is teaching an older student. It may be a humbling experience for some, but we can learn something from anyone. One night we focus on katas, the other night we focus on kumite and self defense techniques. The last 30 minutes is reserved for the higher-ranking belts to enhance their learning and practice.

Q8. Does anyone else in your family do karate? If so, please tell us about them and their achievements.

All three of my children have studied the art of karate, but have dropped off after receiving their orange belt, just like their pops.

Q9. What are the greatest achievements of your students?

The greatest achievement is watching a child grow while learning the art of karate into a mature adult black belt. Knowing that karate has given him or her the discipline to be successful in life.

Q10. What's the funniest thing that you've witnessed in your years of training?

Watching 72-year-old "sensei crowbar" do 100 knuckle pushups without breaking a sweat and watching the reaction of the younger hot shots. They don't call him "crowbar" for nothing, just have him block one of your punches!

Q11. When you're not doing karate, what do you do?

Beside being husband and father, I read on Sundays at my church's mass. My wife and I give talks to couples preparing to get married about responsible parenting. I am a member of the knights of Columbus. I still take tai chi classes. I do water colour painting. I help facilitate a group of newly diagnosed parkinsonians. I run fund raising activities to create public awareness of Parkinsons in my city of Vaughan (the city above Toronto). And I am a committee member of the National Parkinsons Advocacy Committee. My life is filled with excitement and joy.

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 Be rewarded for your help!

Parkinson's is a chronic progressive neurological disease that affects all cultures and races. Globally, it is estimated 6.3 million people have the disease.

Around 1 to 1.5 million Americans have it and 1 in 10 people with Parkinson's are diagnosed before the age of 50 years (15% before the age of 40 years). Slightly more men than women have Parkinson's.*

*Men's Health (www.menshealth.com)

This month to thank John Scaini for his interview and to help raise funds for Parkinson's research, I'm donating the profits from my ebooks to help fight this crippling disease.

Simply visit the link below, choose your favorite product and 100% of the profits will be donated to Parkinson's research.

<http://www.karatetips.com/fightparkinsons>

There are also 2 more articles here where you can learn more about John Scaini and his battle with Parkinson's.

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"Karate tips, articles and information
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Issue # 58

July 2006

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude."

~ Thomas Jefferson
Third President of the United States

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Quick Tip

Keep a karate journal. It will increase your retention, accelerate your learning and improve your skills more quickly. It's easy too, just take 5 minutes when you get home to jot down what you learned in class. Plus you'll appreciate yourself for being disciplined enough to do it. Be sure to include the basic concepts and the finer points of what you did, because without it, you'll forget 80% of the detail of what you've learned within 24 hours.*

* Statistics courtesy of Buzan Learning Centers

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Circular Defensive Footwork

"A circular defense will always outposition a straight line attack," said Sensei Oliva.

I was at a closed door kumite training session with the world's leading tactical competition coach, sensei Antonio Oliva. For the 6 of us in the room, we were in for a treat. And what an informative session that was. Although it was only 3-4 hours long, what I learned that night helped crystalize some of the ideas and concepts that I'd been kicking around in my head for a long time.

I let his words sink in a little before contemplating whether or not I believed this to be true. It's been 4 years since that night and to date I still haven't found a situation where it's proven to be false.

A circular defense will ALWAYS out-position a straight line attack.

A circular defense will ALWAYS out-position a straight line attack.

A circular defense will ALWAYS out-position a straight line attack.

No it's not a typo - it's just a very critical part of your defensive strategy and I want it to have as much effect on you as it did me.

So what does this mean, exactly?

Let's take a look at the way people usually defend themselves when presented with a straight line attack.

What do you most often do?

- 1) Stand still and get hit?
- 2) Move back?
- 3) Move forward?
- 4) Move to the side?

Many people think that they move laterally but in reality most opt for #1 and #2. Obviously the problem with #1 is that you're a static target. Static targets are easy to hit.

Option 2 is a little better, but the problem is that most times a powerful straight line attacker will steamroll you in an instant if you simply move back.

Option 3 is a little different and provided you do it correctly you can close the gap and hit before your opponent completes their technique. Problem is that "forestalling" or "anticipating" can be a dangerous option. It's like fighting fire with fire head on. If you get in first, you're good. If you're last you get burned.

Option 4 has many benefits. It:

1. Removes the target (you) from the line of fire.
2. Repositions yourself for a counter attack.
3. Frustrates your opponent because you force them to miss with their technique by altering the distance and line of attack.
4. Gives you another opportunity to set up your next attack

All good things, in my book.

So I thought I'd share with you a little drill that I do with my students to help them be nimble on their feet and make their circular defense an instinctive reaction. After all, you don't want to have to think how to move... it should happen as naturally as walking or catching a tennis ball.

Take a partner and have them stand in their fighting stance. Position yourself in front of your partner at middle distance (this is where you can hit with a slide-in punch). Your partner can hold their arms out straight to signal their space.

Your job is to move in a circle around your opponent similar to skipping when moving side to side, however you've got to retain your fighting stance as you do this.

For example, let's assume you have your left foot forward and you're moving counter-clockwise around your opponent. From your start position on the balls of your feet, move your right foot out (to the right) and push with your left until you bring your left foot about 18 inches from your right (returning to your fighting stance). Again move your right foot out in the same direction and again push with your left. Repeat until you've completed a full circle.

As you do this you should be "light on your feet" as if you were "skipping" side-to-side in a circle facing the center. Once you complete your circle, slide in and make a reverse punch, slide out and reverse the direction of your circle, this time leading with your other foot first. Once you complete your circle again slide in with reverse punch and again slide out and change direction. Repeat until you've done 10 circles with 10 slide in punches.

This is a great drill for circular defense and dynamic footwork.

Of course you can substitute a different technique, or have your partner yell "now" when they want you to slide in with your attack. This spin on the drill makes it a "reactive" drill that's great for sharpening your attack skills.

Ask yourself how many times you've been fighting and missed an opportunity because you weren't light enough on your feet and sharp enough to react. If you're like most people you're going to be counting for quite some time...

So in order to increase the chances for you to score, you've got to sharpen your skills in both your attacking and defensive skill sets. Take one aspect (like circular defense) and work on 4 or 5 different drills to bring out and hone your skills. Soon those actions will become subconscious and you'll do them with ease. Why not start right now by using this drill to hone your circular defensive techniques?

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📞 Teleseminar - Defensive Strategies for Tournament & Dojo Fighting that will frustrate, confuse and foil your opponent's plans!

It's been 2 years since I did my last teleseminar so I thought I might do another one to share with you some excellent defensive strategies for competition fighting.

How does it work?

It's simple. I give you a phone number, time and date to call. You call the number at the time of the teleseminar and join other KarateTips members and me on the call. I'll teach you 3 defensive strategies and drills to help you sharpen your skills.

Just go to this form, register and I'll send you the instructions.

<http://www.karatetips.com/teleseminar>

It's going to be a lot of fun, informative and I'll share with you a fantastic strategy to make it just about impossible for your opponent to hit you in the final few seconds of the fight... and no, it's not running

away - you'll be penalized for that under Category 2 of the W.K.F. rules!

[Click here to register](#)

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Quote

"You are what you repeatedly do. Excellence is not an event - it is a habit."

~ Aristotle

Greek Philosopher and Scientist

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Quick Tip

Applying pressure to the small joints of the fingers is a very effective way to have your enemy release their grip. This could involve twisting the fingers, or pulling one or more in opposite directions. This kind of application is especially useful when you find yourself in a choke or hold where it's difficult to strike. However you might find that you can peel your opponent's grip away by leveraging the small joints of the body.

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Keep It Simple Stupid!

It should come as no surprise that the number one reason people begin karate is for self defense.*

It was the reason I began all those years ago. I remember the incident clearly. My friend Tim and I witnessed an old man being badly beaten by two younger thugs. We were kids and we were scared. We wanted to help him but we didn't - we didn't know what to do. We felt as helpless as lambs watching the slaughter, not knowing if we were next. It was a horrible experience and yet it is the reason that I'm here today writing this article.

Last night it occurred to me that I haven't been doing enough to educate my KarateTips members in this area so important to us all - self defense . What put me over the edge so to speak was when I was watching some *alleged* self defense videos online, and I became EXTREMELY frustrated!!

I saw this particular video where the supposed master defends against a lunge knife attack. He steps to the side removing his body from the line of fire (that part was good) and then TURNS his body 180 degrees so his back is to his opponent (that part wasn't good). At the same time he captures the arm by looping his arm over the attack, and from there grabs the wrist and applies a wrist lock with a take down.

Now to the beginner this might look impressive. This might make you "ooh" and "aah" with a warm fuzzy feeling in your stomach. But the reality is this:

- Who attacks you with a lunge thrust and leaves their arm out for you to grab?
- Most knife attacks are short, fast, repeated thrusts or slashes**, not *step-over-and-leave-your-arm-out-there-for-the-person-to-do-what-they-want* attacks!
- Capturing a fast, thrusting blade is very difficult and turning your back in my opinion is not such a great idea. If you miss the grab, or the attacker recoils it quickly your kidneys are exposed for a secondary stab. Yikes!

Think about it ... would you as an attacker leave your arm out there? Or would you thrust and pull your arm back quickly?

Then it dawned on me - many instructors teaching these types of defenses have never experienced a real life situation, let alone been confronted with a knife. Instead they've been taught by their teacher, who probably had the same limited experience as them. Subsequently these impractical defenses have wound up in schools all over the world. The downfall is that many students don't know any better and automatically believe what their teachers tell them.

The best result of this unfortunate situation is that students end up with a false sense of security. Perhaps their confidence might work as a bluff to an assailant. But unless they can support their bark with an aggressive bite, they might find themselves the ones being bitten... and bitten badly.

In reality, static self defense doesn't work. In reality encounters are dynamic, intense and viscous, yet most schools don't prepare for this type of thing. Most teach static pre-arranged attacks - and stop right there.

Very few schools go to the next level and really prepare students for a real life encounter. And most practicing these static types of knife defenses will find themselves being stuck deeper than a skewered pig if ever confronted with a knife attack out on the street.

Now I understand that ippon kumite training teaches the BASICS of distance, line and timing which is *critical* to making anything successful and this is a good start. But it's kind of like learning to walk and thinking that you'll win a 100 metre sprint.

For advanced grades I recommend that you start practicing/teaching more realistic applications, using the K.I.S.S method. That's the *Keep It Simple Stupid* method. And what that means is this...

KEEP IT SIMPLE STUPID!

- Use defenses that are *simple* and produce *predictable responses*.

Eg. Think about what your reaction is when you get poked in the eye?

Did you know that it's impossible to close just one eye in a flinch reaction?

If you poke someone in the eye, it will *definitely* cause them to flinch and close both eyes. It also has a very high probability of them releasing their grip and covering their eye with one or more hands. This frees you up to strike again or run.

This technique is simple and the reaction is practical and predictable.

- Use defenses that *inhibit your opponent's vision, breathing and balance*.

If your opponent can't see, it's hard for them to attack. If they can't breathe it's hard for them to attack. If they can't balance, or fall to the ground it's hard for them to attack.

- Simulate real life applications by *using typical modern "street" attacks*, not textbook karate attacks

Have your partner run at you with full intensity as if they were going to grab and throw you. Or have someone hold a fake knife and make short stabbing, slashing movements and see just how difficult it is to defend effectively.

Start to move away from standard "step over punch to the head" defenses and move toward more unconventional attacks and defenses. If you're not sure what that might be, ask some untrained friends to attack you (slowly of course) and see what they do. Work with these attacks and see how you can defend effectively.

Conversely have a friend who is trained in another fighting discipline, like boxing or grappling attack you and see how you can defend against their methods.

- Simulate real life applications by *wearing regular clothes*

Put on a heavy jacket and see how that affects your skills.

Practice your self defense in shorts, a t-shirt and flip-flops and see if the dynamics of the fight change.

- Simulate real life applications by *changing the environment*

Practice in low light, or outside. Put obstacles in the way like chairs and tables. Obviously you need to take care doing this, but this will give you a more realistic experience.

The aim of all this is to bring you as close to the real deal as possible without doing anything illegal, stupid or dangerous. Obviously the best experience for a real life encounter is to have a real life encounter, but like I just said, that's illegal, stupid and dangerous. Plus unless you want to spend the rest of your life dead, or sharing a prison cell with a guy called "Bubba", then I highly recommend avoiding it altogether.

So again the challenge is to get AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE to the real thing through simulation training. That's why the military practice real strategies and applications before going into battle. That's why lawyers practice before heading into the courtroom. That's why pilots use simulators before flying the skies.

Why should karate and self defense be any different?

* Source: KarateTips survey 2002

** Statistics courtesy of Integrated Street Combatives, Canada

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"I have trained for 11 years and never taught until 8 months ago and I am opening a 2nd club tonight after the 1st being so successful as a result of using techniques from you karate tips. Adults and kids love them!"

Wow - that made me feel pretty good..Thanks Mike. Glad I could help!

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August 2006

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Quote

"So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable, and then when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable."

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Quick Tip

In any self defense situation you need to be able to think on your feet and use what you've got available. Depending on the situation you might be in a confined space or there might be obstacles in your way. What's around you? Can you use it to your advantage? Can you block the path of an aggressor with a chair or table? Can you exit the scene easily without fighting by making use of a door to your right? If a fight breaks out can you use the wall behind you to your advantage? These are all things that far too few of us think about or practice. Next time you're training or teaching try to think how you can use a particular environment to assist you.

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Mixed Martial Arts - How to avoid the pitfalls!

Do you know someone chasing the latest and greatest karate moves to improve their skills? They cross train in 3 different martial arts thinking that their skills will improve at 3 times the rate compared to studying just one martial art. You know the people I mean... the one's whose karate bags are bursting at the seams with 3 different uniforms, 2 pairs of nunchaku, a bo staff and some boxing gloves. When they're not at karate, they're at taekwondo, and when they're not there, they're at the aikido school. Well don't worry, so long as you remain focused, I've got good news for you... but first a little history.

Fourteen years ago when the UFC was dominated by grapplers, the buzz in the martial arts community was that Brazilian JuJitsu was the ultimate art and that someone who trained solely in traditional Japanese karate couldn't cut it with a grappler...

Recently when Matt Hughes defeated UFC pioneer Royce Gracie in what ultimately ended with Hughes winning with repeated punches to Gracie's unprotected head, commentators started saying that mixed martial arts is *now* the solution to all problems; that the time of the grappler was over and that cross-training is now the ultimate experience. The word was that if you're missing out on something in one style you should just supplement your training with another martial art to easily pick up the missing links. People shouted from the rafters that the mixed martial arts warrior has now come into his own era...

Is that true? Is the mixed martial artist the ultimate warrior?

Well, yes and no...

While I agree that cross training is important to round out your skills, it has its downfalls. I want to help you uncover some common traps and misconceptions that many students fall into when mixing their martial arts.

Trap # 1 - Cross training too early

I remember when I first started karate. I was so jazzed to start learning... and so impatient. I wanted to

know EVERYTHING immediately. I loved my training and spent every spare moment I had down at the dojo or practicing at home.

Today I also see this excitement in many of my students just beginning their karate learning. I encourage them to practice often to strengthen their understanding of karate and to set the foundation of what will hopefully be a lifelong involvement in karate. There is so much to learn, understand and be able to apply, I want them to get as much time to study and practice as possible. That is one reason why I advise against cross training within the first 2-3 years of their development.

Cross training too early on can overload and draw the focus away from the basics of your *major martial art*. It's like going to college/university and taking on 4 degrees at once. True, there are a handful of geniuses out there who can handle something like this and earn their degrees at the head of the class. But very few people will graduate from any of the courses, let alone all four -- and those who do will most likely pass with mediocre results simply because they tried to focus on 4 totally different things. How can you focus 100% of your efforts on four separate areas? It's more likely that each of the four areas will earn about 25% of your efforts instead.

For this same reason I believe the first few years of your martial arts should be spent honing good skills in ONE area. Understand your body's limitations, know what areas you excel in and uncover those areas that need attention. If you study traditional Japanese karate then study it like you mean it. Learn the basics of distance, timing, clean-hitting, etc. Learn to become an effective striker. Understand the intricacies of your katas, the bunkai, applications, etc.

How do you know when you're at that stage? Easy -- test your skills with a self defense simulation drill. See if you can think on your feet, when you're under pressure. How do you react? Do you freeze up or do you apply the skills you allegedly possess? This is an excellent indicator of whether or not you're ready to cross train.

Trap # 2 - Cross training in two or more similar arts

I've had several students over the years cross train in karate and taekwondo. And I don't mean that they used to do TKD and now do karate. I mean that 2 days a week they practice TKD and the other 2 days a week they practice karate.

I've witnessed first hand the struggle that students have when they choose this path. The reason is simple. While both arts are very different technically, they are similar in that they are "standing martial arts". Both rely on striking as their primary objective. However the difference in the way those punches and kicks are performed can be like chalk and cheese or water and wine.

It's difficult for students to kick one way on Monday and another on Tuesday. I'm sure you've heard of the term "muscle memory". It's the way your body reacts when asked to perform a selected action; basically your subconscious technique.

So if what you learn from martial art A conflicts with martial art B and you're trying to develop muscle memory in order to react a certain way under pressure, the biggest battle will be within yourself. Your body won't subconsciously know which way to perform since it has no regular memory of it without you thinking "which class am I in?"... Isn't the aim of your training to develop skills that become second nature? Skills that you know will work EXACTLY the way you've programmed your mind and body to do? How is this possible when the information you rely on is conflicting with itself?

Choose ONE martial art as your primary art and choose to excel in that area. If you really want to cross train, choose another martial art to supplement *different* areas.

For example a good cross training idea would be to cross a standing MA like karate with a ground-based MA such as BJJ or maybe judo. The skills you learn in each won't conflict with the other since they cover different areas so you'll improve your overall ability.

Trap #3 - Taking everything you learn as gospel truth

Analyze what you learn, don't just accept it as scripture. Question each and every part of the technique you're practicing and see if it makes sense to you. This is a particularly useful philosophy to adopt when cross training. Consider these questions when being taught something new:

- Does this technique really work?
- Will it work under pressure?
- What are the downfalls of the application?
- *How* is it effective?
- Why is it important that I learn this?
- Does it conflict with what I already know? Which is better for me?

Many students simply think that because their sensei *says* it's a good application that it's a good application. They blindly trust their instructor's teachings. Now don't get me wrong... you shouldn't outwardly challenge your sensei in front of the class telling them that what they are teaching is crap, because you might have missed a key point. But you won't *know* you've missed the point unless you think it over for yourself!

What I suggest is that you ANALYZE and then evaluate. Ask the question if you don't understand. A good sensei will not become emotionally involved if they know the answer to your question. Instead they should acknowledge your query and be glad you asked. If they become angry or upset at you they may just have been caught off guard and not ready to deal with as deep an understanding of what they are teaching as they might believe.

So analyze and see if the glove fits. If it does, great. If not, leave it for someone else.

The whole goal of cross training is to find what works for YOU. It's to find the things that you're missing from your primary art and fill in the gaps to become a better all-round fighter. If you don't understand anything about your primary art, there's no inner spark for you and you don't believe any of it is useful, perhaps you're studying the wrong one!

Try something else until you feel you've found the martial art for you. And if you have found one that fits, stick with it until it's second nature. *Then* supplement it with something that will enhance it, not compete with it, to help make you a well-rounded martial artist.

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Quote

"Take things as they are. Punch when you have to punch. Kick when you have to kick."

~ Bruce Lee

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Quick Tip

When working with a partner provide feedback to assist their learning process. Let them know how effective their technique was, if it was on target, and what they might have overlooked. It helps them understand what they're doing right, what's missing and what's next. By assisting your training partners,

you'll also deepen your understanding of karate and become a better communicator. Ask for feedback and assistance with your own techniques also.

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🥋 Learn How To Do A Spinning Hook Kick!

by Jason Stanley

The spinning hook kick is probably the most spectacular kick but sadly has the least value in karate outside of the tournament arena or Hollywood. Like anyone who has ever watched any martial arts movie, I'm sure you've been impressed by the ability of the hero to magically pull out a spinning hook kick to save the day (of course after being brutally beaten for 10 minutes by the villain). Go on, admit it.... you've jumped up and punched the air and yelled "Yeah!!!" at the likes of Jean Claude Van Damme and Chuck Norris... =)

Well I can't teach you how to take a beating and THEN be able to pull off possibly one of the most difficult karate kicks to end a fight. But I can teach you the basic steps of what's involved in the kick, give you some exercises to improve your kick, and then show you how to put it all together... and who knows, maybe one day you'll be able to pull it off on the big screen.

Before we get started, here are 3 handy things to remember when learning anything complicated.

Handy tip #1 - Break it down!

As M.C. Hammer said... "Break it down!"

Who'd have ever thought we'd turn to 80's rappers for advice?

Well in this case breaking it down is exactly what you have to do if you want to learn something complicated quickly, including the spinning hook kick. Break it down and practice in sections, mastering each as you go. You need to have ALL sections working before piecing the entire kick together, or you'll just end up looking like (and feeling like) a newborn foal trying to balance for the first time.

Handy tip #2 - Work backwards.

Yep you heard right. Work backwards. I can already hear you saying, "But if I can't do it forwards, how can I possibly do it backwards?"

Don't worry we're not actually doing the kick in reverse, we're just going to work backwards as we learn it. This is a concept I learned from possibly the world's greatest lateral thinker, [Edward de Bono](#). His ideas are great for problem solving, goal setting and clear thinking. And for most people performing a spinning hook kick is a problem, requires goal setting and clear thinking.

I explain more in a minute, but for now you're gonna have to trust me... work backwards.

Handy tip # 3 - Persistence

Once you have each individual part working for you, it's just a matter of linking them all together in the correct order. And yes, it takes a some practice even after you have each section correct. This is when

you iron out the bugs, learn to increase your speed and then put it into action against a real target. Keep persisting in your endeavor. Remember that persistence is the father of success!

So without any further adieu let's learn how to make a spinning hook kick!

Breaking it down...

What are the most obvious parts of the kick? Let's look at the name - Spinning Hook Kick. From that it should be plainly obvious that there are 2 major parts to the kick.

- The spin or turn and...
- The hook kick

Yes, you need to be able to do the hook kick before you can do the spinning version of it. But don't be disheartened - after reading this, watching and practicing the drills I'm about to show you, you'll pick it up in no time.

Our technique can further be broken down into...

- The spin or turn
 - Finding the target
 - Performing the spin/turn
- The kick
 - The motion of the body to the knee high position
 - The motion of the leg from the knee high position

Now we have the basic components... let's **work backwards** starting with...

Step #1 - The motion of the leg from the knee high position - the final part of the kick.

Using our concept of working backwards we need to master the final part of the kick first. Most people start at the beginning without knowing how to actually do the kick so they end up losing balance, falling over or at best making a horrible kick.

So what's the final part of the kick?

It's the motion from the knee down.

For many people making this part is challenging. Most of us are accustomed to "flicking our kick" with mawashi geri (roundhouse kick). Making the opposite motion starting with a straight leg is somewhat foreign but absolutely necessary in order to have a successful kick.

An easy way to learn this motion without worrying about losing your balance is to practice the kick lying down. Simply lie on one side with your head propped up with your hand (see image below). Now take your top leg and pull the knee into your chest and practice the motion of the kick from here.

Do this by extending your kick straight out as if making a side kick. Once you reach full extension, push with your toes until pointing straight. At this point you'll notice that you'll want to start bending your knee, which is exactly what you want to do.

Continue to bend your knee until your leg is bent at 45 degrees at which point it's time to recoil your kick in the exact opposite motion. Begin by straightening your leg like you were kicking roundhouse kick. When your leg reaches its straight position, pull your knee back towards your body.



Practice this 20 times and then switch sides. Do this on a daily basis and within a week or so you'll have the motion down, often much sooner.

Step # 2 - The motion of the body to the knee high position

So now you know how to do the actual "kick". Let's look at the position from which you should kick and how to get the knee up to that point.

For an effective hook kick it's good to have your body turned side-on with your kicking hip facing the target. That is, your supporting foot should be pointing 180 degrees in the opposite direction... or at an absolute minimum of 90 degrees to the target. The greater the angle you can achieve, the better your kick will be as it helps stretch out your hips and get your body in position to achieve the greatest possible range.

So, from a side-on standing position pick up your right front foot as if making a front kick directly in front of you (that is 90 deg to the real target) but look at the hook kick target to your right. This is the "knee high" position from which to make the kick.

Now we need to practice how to get to this position without losing balance. We don't actually want to kick yet; just learn how to get the knee up quickly to the chamber position.

Do this by standing with your right leg forward with your back to the target. From here look at the target over your right shoulder and push off with your front foot until you reach the knee high position. Practice just this motion 20 times a day until you feel comfortable getting to this point without losing your balance.



Steps #3 and #4 - Performing the spin and finding the target

Now for the spin! Stand with your left leg forward and with your eyes on the target. Quickly twist clockwise on the balls of your feet until your back faces the target.

As you make this twisting/turning motion, be sure

to whip your head around quickly and sight-up the target, just like the way an ice-skater moves their head before their body when spinning in place. This gives you a point of reference and tells your body where to aim.

Practice this 20 times a day or until you feel comfortable with it.



Key point: Do the spin this way and bring your knee up (keeping your leg compressed) at the 9 o'clock position. Most people who lose their balance do so because they pick the leg up too early or allow the kicking motion to begin before they reach the chamber position.

Wrapping it up

Now it's just a matter of pushing off the front foot (now your right foot), bringing your leg up to the knee high position and extending the kick to hit your target.

From here recoil the kick but keep your body turning clockwise to complete your circle. Once you have put the sections together and have this basic motion sorted out, concentrate on building speed and working with moving targets. Remember, persistence!

Well, there you have it. All the basic components of the spinning hook kick complete with drills to practice and refine your technique.

Good luck with it!

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November 2006

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

~ Sun Tzu
The Art of War

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Quick Tip

Sun Tzu's "Art of War" is probably the most famous military book in history. It's been translated into many different languages over the centuries. If you've never read it, here's a link for you to take look at an English version:

<http://www.wealth4freedom.com/wns/suntzu2.htm>

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Achieving Combat Speed

by Jason Stanley
November 9, 2006

There's a famous saying amongst sporting clubs: "Train like you play."

Perhaps you've heard it or say it yourself... but do you REALLY mean it and practice it?

On a recent visit to the United States, my Sensei talked a lot about achieving combat speed when practicing. Too often it seems that students tend to just go through the motions and not give 100% when practicing their technique while performing basics, striking pads, or doing kata.

If you really "train like you play" and you train at 50-75% of what you're capable of, I hate to be the one telling you this but you're setting yourself up for a big fall. Practicing slowly and cruising through your class teaches you to do mediocre technique. It sets your "muscle memory" at a slower pace than you actually want it... and when it comes time to do it for real, do you think that you'll truly be able to increase your speed to 100% while maintaining your focus and composure?

It's highly unlikely.

That's why it's so critically important that you train like you play, or in our case, "train like you fight"... for real.

Train with as much speed and power as you would to achieve maximum COMBAT SPEED.

Speed is just one of many vital components in making effective technique, but it's probably THE MOST IMPORTANT. The others being timing, distance, kime, hara, kiai, angulation, etc. All must be present to give yourself maximum opportunity to finish a fight... and quickly.

So why is it important you achieve combat speed?

There are a couple of reasons.

1) To deliver as much force and energy as possible to the target.

Remember in Newton's 2nd law of physics that:

Force = Mass x Acceleration.

And the physics term "work" refers to the transfer of energy through motion.

Work = Force x Distance

so we can expand this to:

Work (Transfer of energy) = Mass X Acceleration X Distance

So now you see that increases in mass, acceleration and distance will result in an increase in energy transferred and the force applied to the target.

Therefore it makes sense to launch your technique at the target as quickly as possible using as much mass as you can! Not just punching slowly with your arm without using your body, etc.

An increase in force and energy transferred will basically lead to a greater destruction of the target (of course there are a few other variables involved, but that's the gist of it).

2) To avoid, block, and counter if required.

Again working at combat speed will give you the best opportunity to effectively deal with an attack. If you're too slow to react... well, I'm sure you can figure out what will happen!

So how do you achieve combat speed?

1) Relax your muscles...

Prior to moving, relax your muscles but stretch those that will be involved in the actual movement. Think of your technique as an elastic band. The more your muscles stretch the greater the potential energy they hold and the greater acceleration they can generate. We know again from physics - this time "Hooke's law of Elasticity" for this to be true.

2) Think fast, think explosive!

Really think about launching your technique as quickly as you can. Everyone has a different body build, different number of fast twitch muscle fibres, etc, so don't be concerned if you're not as fast as someone else.

Your job is to work with what you've got and MAXIMIZE your ability. Use your mind to think "explosive"

or "fast" and through NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) we also know that this will put your body in the most resourceful state to achieve what you tell it to do.

3) Remain calm

Throughout your technique try to remain as calm as possible; not to tense your body. Sometimes it might be necessary to contract those muscles involved in striking just at the point of impact to reduce the damage of the force coming back at you. For example, with a reverse punch or lunge punch. However, by being calm and not "tensing up your body" you will deliver your technique more quickly.

How do you practice (safely) at combat speed?

If we simply practiced every technique every time at combat speed with every part of our training, most of us wouldn't be around to talk about it due to the efficiency of the striking technique.

There are times when you shouldn't practice at combat speed and times that you should achieve it. Below is a table that might help me get my point across.

Training Type	Go at full combat speed?	Comments
Learning a new technique	No	Learn the mechanics of the technique first.
Hitting a bag, makiwara, pad, etc	Yes	But only after learning the mechanics of the technique first.
Practicing bunkai with a partner	Yes	But only after learning the mechanics of the application first and <i>with extreme control with the striking techniques. You can go fast but don't follow through and break, hurt or kill your partner.</i>
Practicing kata	Yes	Really think about what you're doing and how fast you'd have to react if it was really happening
Practicing line work, basic technique by yourself	Yes	As above
Sparring	Yes	Again as above with control. Your intent shouldn't be to destroy your opponent.
Ippon Kumite (prearranged one step fighting with a selected defense)	Yes	With control on the striking aspect.

So from the table above you can see that you should be explosive all the time once you've learned your technique, taking care not to injure any training partner you might be working with.

Which raises an interesting question - if you "train like you play" and are always explosive but pull back before the point of your "killing blow" (because of the control required), won't you *do that when the real*

thing comes around?

Well that's why we have other training tools like impact pads, makiwara, heavy bags, etc. I believe that any technique that you learn should be practiced by oneself slowly at first to develop the muscle memory. Then that technique can be done with a partner slowly to help bring you into a more realistic situation. Build up to combat speed taking care with the striking aspects. Finally use a bag, makiwara, etc if possible at full combat speed to ensure you can deliver it as you would for real with focus.

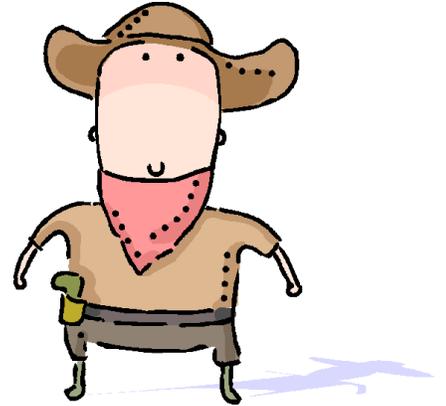
If you're familiar with Taikyoku kata, specifically Taikyoku shodan (the I-pattern lunge punch kata) you might find it interesting to know that when done at combat speed, it can be completed in less than 10 seconds. That's pretty quick when considering there are 20 actual steps... but at combat speed it's possible. Difficult yes, but possible...

Take a moment to think of what the purpose of your training really is...

Doesn't it make sense that *achieving combat speed* should be high on your list of priorities?

As my Sensei says, nobody's ever heard of the "Slowest gunfighter in the west"...

There's a reason for that of course.



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November 2006

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Quote

"Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them - a desire, a dream, a vision."

~ Muhammad Ali
American Boxer

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Quick Tip

It's that time of year again when things seem to get out of hand. So much happening so little time... but try to take 10 minutes to evaluate and acknowledge your successes this year. Did you achieve what you set out to do with your karate? Did you attain a new level, gain flexibility, or improve your skill sets?

And what are your goals, hopes and dreams for next year? Take a moment to make a list of where you want to be this time next year with your karate. Save it somewhere safe and in 12 months time see if you achieved what you set out to do.

Think goal setting is a waste of time? You might find the following statistics interesting...

In the 1950's a Yale University study did some research on the results of goal setting. The results they discovered over a 20 year period were astounding. When they investigated the success of the graduates 20 years later they found that the 3% of graduates who had clearly written goals in the 1950's were worth more in terms of wealth than the other 97% put together.*

*Source: <http://www.iamnext.com>

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Transition and Technique...

From: Jason Stanley
November 29, 2006

Back in high school I remember a classmate doing a martial arts demonstration for his year 11 presentation. Alex was a black belt in karate and everyone knew this... Nobody messed with him because of his 'status' and when he got up to speak silence fell across the room like a blanket of snow in the middle of the night.

As part of his presentation Alex gave a little history and broke a board with a punch - and when that happened the guys in class raised their eyebrows, while the girls glanced at each other quickly and admired him with delight.

He had our attention...

Alex then went on to talk about the importance of body movement, knowing how to turn and what technique should follow the previous one. He explained that although you might be able to punch and kick, you need to know how to turn from one direction to another seamlessly and put your techniques together so they flow like water through a pipe.

He explained that without this connection between technique and transition, a martial artist could really find themselves in hot water, unable to completely defend themselves... particularly in a multiple attacker situation.

For example it would be foolish to try to kick to the front and then use the same leg while unbalanced to kick in another direction. This would result in an ineffective technique - and we all know that ineffective

techniques can get you killed. Learning how to make a particular technique, then transition to a stable position before attempting the next technique is crucial.

I was just a beginner at the time and my head was still spinning from him breaking the board, but I guess some of what he said actually engrained itself into my memory... which today is the basis of this article - transition and technique.

So we've established WHY it's important for us, as martial artists, to be able to shift from one stance to another, or change direction faster than a pinball bouncing off a rubber cushion, but we haven't yet taken a look at...

How to change direction quickly...

Let's assume you've got to turn 180 degrees. How should you make this transition? Should you pivot by moving your front foot across or your back foot across? Should you step as you turn? Do you move your back foot up or your front foot back? Why? Does this work every time? Can you think of any conflicts? In kata do you sometimes move the front? Sometimes the back? Why? The list goes on.... and on... and on...

Yikes!

That's a lot of questions... and to not know the answers prior to combat might just leave you deader than Elvis.

So which do you choose?

The general answer is it depends on the situation. It depends on from which direction the attacker is approaching, how they're approaching, and what you want to do...

To illustrate an important point let's assume there were 8 different directions the attacker could come from... and assume that there were 8 different attacks he might use... and you had 8 different responses for any of those attacks...

$8 \times 8 \times 8 = 512$ possibilities! Aaahhhh... the power of multiplication!

What if there was a second attacker?

1024 combinations...

Are you starting to see how complex this can become?

This is why it's SO critically important that you learn to control as many of the variables as possible... let's start by mastering our footwork. Thankfully many of the transitions you make are similar in nature and we can simplify the situation a little. Let's master the connection between transition and technique with...

The Left Behind Drill

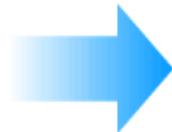
The basic concept of this drill is to first turn to your left and then turn behind. Repeat this process 4 times and you'll end up at your starting point. During the drill you'll make 8 transitions. Pick a technique for the drill and carry that through every transition.

Here's how it works:



LEFT

The drill starts from yoi dachi (ready stance) and the first move is made to the left. For example, make your lower block as you step out with your left foot into your forward stance.



BEHIND

Now it's time to turn behind. Let's assume you want to make your transition by moving your back foot across and pivoting in a clockwise direction 180 degrees, making your downward block... this time with the other side of your body.



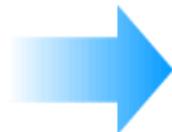
LEFT

Next transition to the left again, this time by stepping 90 degrees to your left with your rear foot and making your downward block. Notice that you've switched sides of the body again... you should have your left leg forward at this time, making your lower block with your left arm.



BEHIND

Turn behind again by moving your back foot across and pivot 180 degrees. You should now be facing the back of the room, or 180 degrees from your starting position, with your right foot forward and blocking down with your right arm.



LEFT

Again step in with your rear foot 90 degrees to your left...



BEHIND

Now pivot behind by moving your back foot across...



LEFT

To the left again!



BEHIND

And finally behind, so you end up facing the front in your left forward stance. You can end the drill here by returning to your ready position.

This is a great drill for developing fast, sharp turns and transitions. Of course what we've covered today is the SIMPLE version. You can switch it up by changing the variables. Remember the variables are:

1. **The techniques you wish to practice**

For example - you can plug in a combination here like block down, then step forward and punch.

2. **How you wish to make your transition**

Are you going to step, or pivot, and with which foot?

3. **What stance(s) are you going to use?**

Forward stance, cat stance, sumo stance, etc?

My advice is to start off simple... otherwise in the Left Behind drill you'll find yourself literally left behind.
=)

Of course if you really want to mix it up, there's whole other side of your body, right? But then it wouldn't be as much fun if it was called the "right behind drill" now would it?

If you teach, try this with your class. I guarantee you that if you've not done this drill before it will create more chaos than protestors at the G8 Summit.... but after the chaos has subsided you'll find that your class will be in possession of an important new skill, and have started the connection between technique and transition.

Until next time...

Train hard and stay safe.

Jason Stanley
www.karatetips.com

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see if you REALLY KNOW your kata. These are great to challenge yourself, deepen your knowledge, and expand your mind.

For example, try doing your kata as a complete mirror image, or just use your upper body - no footwork allowed. Both of these CAUSE your mind to create a visual image and think about EVERY single step... can you do this right now without mistake?

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Quote

"There is nothing training cannot do. Nothing is above its reach. It can turn bad morals to good; it can destroy bad principles and recreate good ones; it can lift men to angelship."

~ Mark Twain

Quick Tip

If you haven't already done so, map out your goals for 2007. Where do you want to be karate-wise one year from now? Do you want to earn your black belt? Do you want to become a national competitor? Do you want to open your own school? Do you want to expand your student base? Whatever your goals are it's important that you make them clear and be sure to commit to them. That means not letting ANYTHING get in the way from you achieving your objectives. Make karate *part of who you are*, not *what you do* and life won't get in the way.

📖 Decisions, Decisions, Decisions...

by Jason Stanley
January 17, 2007

Have you ever wondered how a single decision can change your life? Or how *not choosing* can lead you down a different path?

Have you ever stopped to consider how your beliefs can determine your fate in a self defense situation? Have you every wondered what you believe to be morally right or wrong might be the difference in you being killed or staying safe? And making a decision about your beliefs BEFORE you're threatened might be the most important choice you'll ever make?

Decisions shape our destiny...

And regardless of the choice we make, the result of this process leads us to SOMETHING, but PROCRASTINATION leads us nowhere. Being clear on what we want, what we BELIEVE, and making up our mind DECISIVELY will lead us in one direction or another.

However, the choice of 'not choosing' limits our growth and ability to complete tasks, in life in general but specifically (for the sake of this article) in a self defense situation as well.

To illustrate this point first let's talk about making decisions in your life.

You may have thought about becoming a black belt, an instructor or perhaps a national competitor. But did you *really* DECIDE? I learned recently, the word decision comes from Latin - "de" meaning "from", and "caedere" meaning "to cut". I think Anthony Robbins sums this up well:

"Making a true decision means committing to achieving a result, and then cutting yourself off from any other possibility."
- Anthony Robbins

Have you *really* decided about becoming a black belt, an instructor, a national competitor, or opening your own school? Or are you "just along for the ride" to see what happens? People who are along for the ride usually don't have goals, are scared of failure and are afraid to commit. I know because I used to think this way, but when I realized how disempowering it was I changed my beliefs. I now 'decide' and put those choices it into action... and I use the same concept for self defense.

"Either karate *yes*, or karate *no*... if karate *guess so* then squish just like grape."
- Mr. Miyagi
The Karate Kid

If you haven't seen *The Karate Kid*, Mr. Miyagi asks this of Daniel when trying to establish a commitment from him. He asks him to decide to be in or out... for he won't waste his time with someone who can't decide. It's "yes" or "no".

Self defense is also a black or white decision, night or day, action or nothing. There is no gray area for this decision. You can't choose to "half defend yourself". You either commit to it and embrace it fully or not at all. It's almost like trying to dig half a hole... you can't. You do or you don't. Any in- between choice that leaves you to "half defend" yourself is simply procrastination. And you're simply putting off

getting hurt for a few moments longer.

That's not to say you won't get hurt if you choose to defend yourself, but at least you give yourself a chance of survival. It allows YOU to determine your fate, not someone else.

So have you DECIDED?

I know it's a complex question, so I'd like to guide you, if you permit me, through the process that will leave you with a clear view of where you stand. The BIG question is...

Have you decided that you'll use your learned skills for self protection or not?

One reason many karateka freeze up, and can't complete the task of self protection at *crunch time* is that they HAVE NOT DECIDED IN ADVANCE if they will actually use their knowledge. They may have entertained the thought of "Yeah, I would use my karate if I had to..." but they've never really DECIDED to cut off every other possible option.

And this is where it gets tricky...

There are powerful human traits called emotions, moral and religious beliefs that can get in the way of the decision-making process for self defense. In the animal kingdom, these don't exist. A tiger doesn't stop and think, *Hmmm should I defend myself against my enemy?* It simply makes a decision, fight or flight. Attack/defend or flee. They DECIDE in an instant...

But we humans... Isn't it ironic that despite our "advanced" mind set we are awfully good at *not* choosing?

Like I said, in the animal kingdom it's less complicated so the decision is easier. We tend to overcomplicate things and let our emotions and beliefs get in the way. Consider the following statements and note your feelings (emotions) as you read each. Answer TRUE or FALSE.

- I feel comfortable hurting somebody else in order to survive
- I would quite happily knock someone out during a threatening confrontation
- I feel comfortable kicking someone in the groin with all my effort to prevent them from hurting me
- I feel comfortable about putting my finger in someone's eye in order to protect myself
- I feel comfortable taking someone's life in order to defend myself or a loved one
- I would do whatever it takes to save my life

Note how you feel...

If you answered ALL TRUE or ALL FALSE to these statements, then that's EXCELLENT! You know where you stand. When the time comes you'll be better prepared.

I know you may have religious or moral beliefs that make you choose against defending yourself. And you may feel that it's "not right" to hurt someone else. When I asked a devout Christian friend of mine about his view on this, his response was "If you try to hurt me or my family, I'll shoot you first and pray for you later." The point is not to argue what seems right or wrong, just know where you stand.

If you had a mix of TRUE and FALSE then it suggests you haven't DECIDED if you will protect yourself when seriously threatened. You may have entertained the thought, but perhaps you haven't truly decided. Go through it again and see where you get stuck. If you still cannot choose ALL TRUE then I believe you should choose the "flight" option. You should flee when faced with a threatening situation.

If you chose all TRUE then it suggests you have chosen the "fight" option. Again, at least you know where you stand.

The point is this: There is no sense waiting until the moment to decide if you'll fight or not!

Years ago I was confronted by 3 youths with knives and I hadn't yet DECIDED. I thought I had but I found out I had not. I encountered the first with a kick to the knee and then I stopped. I never continued to finish the fight. Why? Because I hadn't DECIDED in ADVANCE how far I was willing to go. The result was that I was VERY lucky and I had to rely on my verbal negotiation skills to come out of it alive.

Had I DECIDED prior to the incident I probably wouldn't have gotten myself into trouble to begin with. Yet, had I gotten to this point I know now that I would have finished the first opponent. What would have happened after that I can't say.

And this is why it's a complex question... It's not just a matter of deciding IF you'll use your skills, it's a matter of HOW you will react; WHEN you'll use your skills; WHETHER you'll fight fire with FIRE or WATER; and how FAR you'll go...

So are you any closer to DECIDING?

By the time part 2 of this article arrives in your inbox, I hope you have chosen one path or the other. Make the choice either for YES I will use what I know, or NO I will not. Remember in simple terms, neither is explicitly the right choice, but knowing where you stand is.

In part two we'll explore the other supporting questions in detail, and I'll show you the process I teach my students in evaluating the situation.

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

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KarateTips Newsletter Archive - May 2006 - July 2007



"Karate tips, articles and information
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Issue #
65

January 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"Climb high; Climb far. Your goal the sky; Your aim the star."

~ Inscription at Williams College

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Quick Tip

Changing your position relative to your target can create more opportunity for attack and counter attack. For example moving six inches to the outside line of your opponent gives you targets that weren't present from the original position. Try to think how you can apply this concept to dojo fighting, competition and of course self defense. Experiment with a partner for your favorite attack/defense application and change the line of attack (and angle of attack) variables to see what you can uncover.

📖 Decisions, Decisions, Decisions... (Part 2)

by Jason Stanley
February 13, 2007

In last month's article we talked about how your beliefs and feelings are directly related to how you will act in a self defense situation. We also explored some of the reasons as to why this holds true, and how making up your mind BEFORE you're attacked can be the most valuable decision of your life!

In today's article I want to expand on what we've covered so far and help you answer questions like...

- The exact instance when you'll use your karate skills...
- What other choices you have available (besides physical confrontation)...
- Plus, I'd like to give you the self defense system I teach my students so you can put it in place immediately.

(if you haven't read last month's article, go here <http://www.karatetips.com/articles/decisions.asp>)

Before we get to any of that however, we first need to explore the mind set of an attacker. If you understand your opponent you'll have a much greater chance of surviving an encounter or defeating your opponent, whether that is by diffusing the situation verbally or in a battle to the death....

"Keep your friends close, your enemies closer."

-Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Analyzing where your opponent "is at" mentally and emotionally is critical to understanding the situation at hand. Without this understanding you leave little option but to battle it out, with one person winning and the other losing. Like many interactions in life, a self defense situation is a negotiation and we all know the best negotiations result in a win/win for each person.

If you're paying attention and are aware of your opponent's mental/emotional state there's a good chance you'll be able to diffuse an escalating circumstance or avoid it completely.

Why Do People Attack?

People might attack for several reasons unbeknownst to us at the time. Since we have little information to go on at the time of an assault, keep in mind some of these possible reasons people attack:

- **Out of sheer desperation** - perhaps they're suffering an incredible amount of stress that we aren't aware of... maybe they need money to pay someone off "or else"...

- **Upset and overwhelmed due to emotional, mental or financial pressure** - it's possible that a loved one died that morning, or their house was repossessed and they were kicked out on the street. Maybe they caught their other half having an affair and they hit the booze or took drugs.

In these cases maybe it's not your money they want, instead they express their frustration and anger by taking it out on you...

- **Mentally and emotionally unstable (they actually enjoy it)** - this is probably the most difficult and dangerous situation because your rational thinking and their mental state could be at polar opposites. It might be nearly impossible to resolve something without violence to a crazed psychotic.

The points to all of this are:

- you never know where a person is "at" so you might be the one who tips them over the edge. Eg. Trying to assert authority over teenage kids who are doing something illegal could escalate a shouting match to physical violence.
- by *understanding where they're at*, you'll have more options available to you to resolve it peacefully.

We'll explore this in detail a bit later, but first we must understand ...

The Traffic Light System

Here's the self defense awareness system that I teach my students. I didn't invent it, rather I simplified a similar 4 step system my sensei taught me so I could teach it to kids in an easy-to-remember way. It's called, "The Traffic Light System".

For most people there's a strong symbolic connection to the words "traffic lights" - and that's why we use it - it's easy to remember, especially for kids. Whether you know it or not, you are in one of the 3 following states at any given time. In order to use the system simply become aware of each phase. I've summarized it below to make it easy to understand.



Green

This means you are totally relaxed. You're not paying much attention to your environment. The only time you should be in green is when you're sleeping, or relaxing in front of the tv in your favorite armchair.

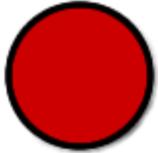


Yellow

This means you are alert. You are aware of what is going on around you. All five senses are working, hopefully even your sixth sense! You know that if you hear footsteps behind you that you should turn to see what is going on... is it someone jogging, kids playing or trouble approaching you?

When in the yellow state, you can assess if something is about to happen or if you can dismiss it as a regular event. Alarm bells should start ringing in your head when something appears out of the ordinary. This is when you need to make changes to your situation. Either remove yourself from the scene or tilt the balance in your

favor to give yourself a better chance of survival.



Red

Attack is imminent if you're in the red state. You have successfully determined that you need to do something quickly. You don't have the same options as when you were in yellow. Simply, it's crunch time. You are threatened and your life might be in danger so it's time to act. Strike first, strike hard, and strike repeatedly until you are threatened no longer. Do not wait for something to happen if you feel life-threatened. You might not get a second opportunity.

Unfortunately, many people spend their entire life in the green state. Many *helpless victims* were attacked because they weren't paying attention. The reality is you don't have to be a victim; you don't have to be helpless.

Now that we've covered the 3 basic states, let's explore the choices you have in each.

Green Choices

Being in the green state doesn't give you a lot of options. You simply do not know what is happening and if an incident is about to occur, you don't have time to assess it. You go immediately from Green to Red, and possibly dead.

Yellow Choices

1. Identifying the Situation

So now you've made the decision to be in the yellow state for the rest of your life. Great decision! What should you look out for? The best way to explain it is with some examples.

- You're walking alone at night to your car down a dark alley. An unknown man is approaching from the other direction. You change sides of the street, and he follows your lead... (alarm bells should be going off by now). You start considering your options.
- A stranger stops you and asking you for a light ... what are your options? (Careful here, it's estimated that over 90% of assaults begin with simple verbal communication like this.)
- Someone who you are having an ongoing disagreement with comes over to your house and asks you to come outside to talk about it. (Why outside?) You get outside and they signal to their friends to come out of hiding... uh oh.

These 3 examples are actual situations that happened to people I know. Thankfully each was lucky to survive...

In the first scenario, the attacker mugged the victim and beat him senseless with a baseball bat. Interestingly he was a black belt with many years of training, yet he was in the green state which almost cost him his life.

In the second situation, the defender was in "yellow" and saw the attacker clenching his fist getting ready to strike. He switched immediately to condition "red" and threw the matches on the ground distracting the attacker. The attacker lost concentration long enough for the defender to strike him twice... once with

a back fist strike to the head and the second with a kick to the groin. Needless to say, that was the end of the "attack".

In the third situation, the attacker was a "friend" of the victim. He signaled by whistling to the other assailants who appeared from behind some bushes. The victim was repeatedly punched and kicked until someone else jumped in and saved him. Again the victim was in "green" and lucky not to have suffered any serious injury.

In each of these examples choices were made. Only in example #2 was the defender listening to the alarm bells. In the other examples, the sound of the bells fell on deaf ears because the people involved were in the green state, not yellow.

The point is, as soon as you suspect something is wrong, trust your suspicions and take action, evasive or otherwise. This might mean avoiding the situation if possible or striking first to put an immediate stop to it. Either way...

"He who hesitates is lost."

- Joseph Addison, 18th-century English essayist

When you identify a potential situation in its early stages, you have a much better chance of retaining control and increasing your odds of survival. The longer you procrastinate, the more likely it is you'll be injured or killed.

2. Changing the Dynamics to Favor Your Survival!

This is the first thing you should do when you become aware of a potential situation. Look around you... what options do you have?

- Are there other people around?
- Is there a shop/store you can go into?
- Are there police/authorities that can help you?
- Can you call somebody on your cell/mobile phone?
- What other choices do you have?

3. To Run or Not To Run?... That is the question!

Many instructors say running is always your first option. You're about to discover this theory might hold as much practicality as a leaky bucket holds water.

The points covered in option #2 above should be enough to get you thinking about other options BEFORE you run, however if you're still not convinced here are some more reasons.

- **Firstly you must weigh up the odds...**

Remember this is all about awareness... so if you're going to run, where are you going to run to? Is there a place where you can find safety? If you're in an open area for example, running will do little other than tire you. Wouldn't you agree it's more difficult to fight when you're exhausted?

- **What clothes are you wearing?**

Are you wearing a suit and dress shoes, a dress and heels, or comfortable loose fitting clothes and running shoes? What is your opponent wearing? Can you run FAST in what you're wearing?

- **Are you carrying anything?**

Do you have any belongings with you? Eg. Brief case, groceries, backpack, or handbag? Will your belongings hinder your escape if you are to run? Will you leave these behind? Can you use these as weapons?

- **What condition are you in physically?**

What condition is your opponent(s) in? Do they look like they are going to run you down? Or do you think you can outrun them? Are you sure?

All of these kinds of things need to be taken into consideration before you start running. We don't want you ending up like the hysterical girl in a horror movie tripping over a log in the woods...

If you have no option but to run, try to gain advantage by waiting until you are out of sight of the potential attacker before you run, by turning a corner etc. Don't let them know that you're aware of their presence. Once out of sight, run like a cheetah on speed. If you simply run with no idea of where you're going and without a plan, you might be in trouble. So think before you run!

That sums up the the yellow state choices. Can you think of any more ways to change the dynamics of the situation before you hit the RED state?

In part three of this article we'll move forward to your red state choices. Just as in the yellow state, we'll explore what options are available to you and I'll give you a successful model of order/thought process that you might consider adopting as your own. You'll learn when it's the right time to fight fire with fire and I'll also give you simple ways to use water instead...

Until next time... Stay safe (that means be in the yellow state), and as always train hard!

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KarateTips Newsletter Archive - May 2006 - July 2007



"Karate tips, articles and information
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Issue #
66

February 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"A good defense is a strong offense."
- unknown

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Quick Tip

When push comes to shove, strike first, strike hard and strike multiple times. To preserve your life and the lives of your loved ones you might just have to employ those skills you've learned and practiced so many times.

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📖 **Decisions, Decisions, Decisions... (Part 3)**

by Jason Stanley
February 27, 2007

In this article we're going to wrap up what we discussed in Parts 1 and 2 of the *Decisions Series*...

To refresh your mind so far we've covered:

- How a single decision can change your life...
- How being decisive in a moment of crisis is critical to survival
- How procrastination simply prolongs a violent encounter
- How what you BELIEVE directly impacts your ACTIONS in a self defense situation
- Why people attack
- The basics of the traffic light system
- And why running could be a bad idea...

In today's article I'm going to give you the last part of the series so you can see how to pull it all together and make a educated decision should you come across a potentially violent situation.

If you've missed parts 1 or 2 please click here to read them now before proceeding with this article - <http://www.karatetips.com/articles/decisions.asp>

So let's get started...

"Knowledge is knowing; wisdom is when you make it work for yourself."

- Unknown

Remember in the last article we finished up with the Yellow Choices and why running might be a bad idea? It's much more difficult to fight when you're exhausted, right? Well let's assume we've now passed this point of the process and you're now faced directly with an aggressor. It's now down to...

Red Choices

In a heartbeat you need to reassess the situation. Are you now in a different location to when you were in the yellow state? Have the dynamics changed? What options do you have? If you're in the Red Zone it's past the point of running or moving away so you absolutely have to encounter your aggressor... the choice is "do you want to fight fire with fire or with water?"

Are you DEFINITELY in the red zone? Is attack CERTAIN or is a non-violent encounter still possible?

To help you make this CRUCIAL decision, here are some telltale signs of attack. (And it doesn't matter if it's self defense or competition, the body language and habits are virtually the same! If you own [Fighting Secrets Revealed](#) then you'll be somewhat familiar with this already. <http://www.karatetips.com/fsr>)

Signs of Attack

There are many signs of imminent attack and once you learn them you will be better prepared. In a study of 100s of hours of video tape of violent encounters, Darren Laur (a police officer and combatives instructor in British Columbia) researched and documented the actions of both aggressors and victims. It was determined that the attackers generally displayed one or more of the following basic animal instincts*:

- Flaring of the nostrils
- Complexion changing from red to white
- Baring of the teeth
- Widening of the eyes
- Shift in body movement
- Clenching of the fists
- Lowering of the center of gravity – as if about to pounce
- Zoning out

*For a full list of signs see the Ritualized Combat article in the articles section of the KarateTips web site - <http://www.karatetips.com/articles>

In addition to these findings you might already know from your martial arts training other signs of attack such as:

- Winding up of a technique or telegraphing
- Leading with the head
- Lifting of the front knee
- Crossing the gap between themselves and you

All of these things should be studied and remembered as they are your last warning bells before an onslaught...

So in a self defense situation take note of your aggressor... are they displaying these signs of imminent attack?

If so, my advice to you is to strike first, strike hard and strike repeatedly until the threat is gone.

If they're not showing any of these signs of imminent attack, then maybe you have an opportunity to fight fire with water BEFORE they start displaying these telltale signs. Here's how to...

Fight Fire with Water

I believe real fighting should never be about ego, but purely for survival or in defense of your family or friends. If you slip up by one quarter of an inch, it might be the difference between life and death. Are you willing to take that risk because somebody with a knife wants your wallet? It's your call.

Over the last 20 years I've been faced with several aggressive encounters, and I'm not afraid to admit that I could have avoided just about all if I'd made better decisions in the yellow stage.

It wasn't that I went looking for danger, it was more that I would become irritated with disrespectful people. At those moments I felt as if someone had violated one of my core values and I'd stand up for what I believed in. I wasn't looking for physical conflict, I just wanted an apology and for them to fix what they'd broken or to stop doing what they did.

It took me a long time to realize you can't make someone apologize for something when they believe they've done nothing wrong, even if it has violated one of your core values.

Although I'd truly entered the red stage, and my aggressors were displaying the signs of attack, in many cases I was able to REVERT back to the yellow stage. I was able to fight fire with water in all but three, and I'll show you how to do it too. It's actually very easy.

It doesn't matter if you did something foolish to escalate a situation by mistake (like telling a punk kid to take a hike), or if you simply walked into trouble by accident; you can apply this same strategy to diffuse a ticking bomb.

It all boils down to something that we've covered already in part 2 of this article - *WHY DO PEOPLE ATTACK?*

Remember if somebody is giving you a hard time it's usually because they are upset, desperate, or both. Possibly you've "started it" by violating one of their core values and they're pushing back, in which case they're emotionally hurt and are resorting to physical violence to deal with it...

Defeating Your Ego and Surviving

So if you're the one who "started it" and you realize the situation has escalated beyond what you imagined, just apologize! Get over your ego and empathize with them. Tell them you're sorry, it was totally your fault and that you don't want any trouble with them... Tell them it was wrong of you to express your frustration and it was a total misunderstanding.

Now I'm not saying to pick a fight and then back down - I'm saying use your head. Don't pick the fight at all. If you do and you get called on it, if you believe the situation has escalated beyond your ability, eat

some humble pie and live to see another day.

Here's an example for you. When I was 21 three mouthy teenage kids walked by as I was sitting in my car with my girlfriend at the time. They said something disrespectful to her and I told them where I thought they should go. The situation instantly escalated. Before I knew it I'd made 4 more bad decisions and I was faced with 3 kids with knives in a dark street with little room to move between parked cars...

I took note of their behavior, body language and verbal communication and realized that they were paranoid, edgy and clearly far more upset with me than I was at them. In their minds they'd done nothing wrong, yet in mine they had had crossed the line. It was apparent that they were "on something" and certainly weren't receptive to me attempting to assert my own authority.

What followed was a 15 minute negotiation all within combat range. Luckily for me I talked them down, apologized and diffused the situation. Clearly the state of affairs had risen above my own ability. I wasn't 100% sure I could deal with three armed attackers in a dark, confined space so I chose to not find out.

Sure my ego would like to say "the first kid picked up his teeth with broken fingers, the second won't ever be celebrating father's day and the third really got sick of eating hospital food"... but the reality is the chances of that happening were slim to none. There was a high chance of me being the one going to hospital or maybe even the morgue. So I played the percentages and not the ego...

Whether you instigate the conflict or come across it by coincidence, here are some important points to fighting fire with water...

- Take a non aggressive stance -- turn your body away at an angle to reduce your target area, and keep a minimum of 2 arm lengths distance between you and your aggressor(s). Keep your hands up in front of your body in a non-threatening manner.
- Know exactly where all aggressors are at all times. You don't want any surprises.
- Make the aggressor(s) feel important. This is a key factor in avoiding conflict. Stroke their ego, build them up.
- Apologize if the situation escalates beyond your ability. Ask them how you can help them. Become their "friend".

It's really that easy. You'll be amazed at the difference in attitude. Remember it's like landing a plane - it's all in the approach.

Now let's say you try all that but it still doesn't work. Your aggressor is displaying the signs of attack - you've got about 1.5 seconds to act. You simply have to...

Fight Fire with Fire

When the situation escalates and your assailant(s) are not responding to your "calming tactics" your only option is to fight fire with fire - to match aggression with aggression. If you do this, realize one of three things will happen:

- You finish the situation - and you better do it right.
- They finish the situation - and hopefully you'll live to tell a story of how you were young and stupid.

- Someone or something else finishes the situation.

Realize that if someone has started physical violence towards you, they've committed to hurting and possibly killing you. Your life is at risk. In order to increase your chances of survival YOU MUST BE RUTHLESS.

You must do everything in your power to remove the threat as quickly as possible. It's going to mean striking, striking hard and more than likely striking multiple times. The legendary "one hit kill" is rarer than hen's teeth... don't count on it happening. You're probably going to need more ammunition than just a single strike.

The point is DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU ARE CERTAIN that the threat is gone. Remember the "other bad decisions" I mentioned from my confrontation with those mouthy teenagers? Well one of the bad decisions was me not following through with my initial defense. As they came closer, I kicked one of them hard in the knee. He buckled and I stopped my attack thinking that was the end of it. That's when they all pulled out their knives. If I'd fully removed the threat instead of stopping to see if what I'd done was effective, I may have avoided facing those knives at all!

So although you might end up defending your actions in a court of law, wouldn't you rather that than the alternative because you didn't do enough to remove the threat?

"It's better to be tried by 12 than carried by 6."

- Shihan Tommy Morris

Now this doesn't mean you can beat up an old lady with a garbage can because you got spooked when she asked you for the time. It means that if the threat is real and imminent (because now you know the signs of attack) be the first to take action. If they get the first shot away, you've definitely got to finish it and finish it quickly.

Hit with the pacifier first - that's the technique that takes their attention away from hurting you to thinking about how much pain they're in. Aim the pacifier towards vital areas - throat, eyes, ears, nose, groin, etc. and then follow up with a secondary technique to knock them down or break their balance. Finish with a third and fourth to put them well and truly out of action.

Don't make the same mistake I made in the example above and then back off to see what happens... If they don't go down you've got to start over, this time with an escalated situation. You've just given them another opportunity to harm you.

Finish it immediately and get out of there ASAP being sure to remove any weapons by taking them with you for disposal later. I've heard too many stories of people knocking an attacker to the ground with a secondary technique but leaving the assailant with a knife or bottle in hand, only to regret it later. So make sure to take their weapons with you!

In closing...

It's important to realize that the information that we've covered is completely USELESS to you unless you put it into practice. Knowing it is not enough. You've got to take it onboard and use it.

Hopefully you now possess the tools to recognize a dangerous situation. Remember to:

- Use the traffic light system.
- Avoid conflict by changing the dynamics of the situation first in the yellow stage.
- Understand the signs of attack.
- Avoid conflict by changing the dynamics of the situation in the red stage.
- If necessary, be first and be ruthless until the threat is gone.
- Remove the weapons and live to see another day.

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

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"Karate tips, articles and information
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Issue #
67

March 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

- Muhammad Ali

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Quick Tip

Analyze those who you wish to fight like. Pay close attention to their body language, actions and mind sets. What do they do differently that separates them from the average karate-ka? What single attribute of theirs can you start to model today that will help you improve your skills?

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Introduction to Understanding Distancing

by Jason Stanley
March 26, 2007

"Control the distance and you control the fight."

I don't remember who first told me those words but they resonate in my head every time I step onto the mat... "Control the distance and you control the fight."

The beautiful thing about this concept is that it applies not only to the competition arena and the dojo floor, but to self defense situations as well. By controlling the space between you and your opponent you can decide what action to take next. Let your opponent control the distance and you'll be in reaction mode, trying to play catch up. On the competition floor this loses you points. In a real fight you might lose your life.

Control the distance and you control the fight.

Does this mean that distance is the ONLY factor that controls a fight?

Absolutely not. There are others*, but today's focus is on controlling this one factor; the distance.

So how do we define distance when referring to a fighting situation?

Well different instructors have different opinions. The model I like best is the one I teach my students and I've summarized it for you below.

Long distance - out of range of any technique

Middle distance - when you can hit your target with a kick but cannot hit with a punch. Stand toe to toe with a partner in your forward stance and make a rear leg front kick. What's the furthest point from your opponent at which you can hit? That's the point where long distance becomes middle distance.

Short distance - when you can strike your opponent with upper body techniques. Short distance ranges from where you can hit with a front jab to the point where you can strike with elbows, knees and head.

Of course the way we define distance will also be influenced by other factors, such as your opponent's reach. If you have a taller opponent, then surely their range is different to yours? So how would you then define what is short, middle and long distance?

To answer this question we have to ask another. Are you taking an offensive point of view, or defensive? An aggressor's view would be that the distance is measured by whether they can hit their opponent. A defensive person would measure the distance by whether their opponent could hit them. It all depends on your...

evitc9q2r9qperspective

Also consider how your distancing might be influenced by the inclusion of a weapon. Would this change what you consider to be long distance? What if you're the person holding a stick? How has your long range distance now changed?

These are some questions you'll have to explore for yourself over time and come to your own conclusions. Regardless of how you classify short, middle and long, one thing is for certain. To control distance you need to have great footwork. Without footwork you'll be a sitting duck... and in any fight I think we can all agree, that's not what you want to be.

A true master of footwork is Muhammad Ali. Over the weekend I watched some of his early fights on ESPN Classic. He truly did "float like a butterfly". When you watch his footwork, it's obvious Ali was a master of controlling the distance.

At times he would dance around just out of range, frustrating his opponents and forcing them to miss. At other times (such as when he fought George Foreman in the Rumble in the Jungle) you see another of his tactics in controlling the distance. Ali lures Foreman into his trap at short distance and covers. From there he rides Foreman's punches until he's exhausted, then Ali continues to move and sting like a bee.

Now why use a boxer as an example to karate-ka?

Ali is probably one of the most famous masters of controlling the distance. And if you have cable tv or the internet you can find and study his footwork on video and apply it to karate. In fact a quick search of YouTube turned up this clip which is a great example of Ali's footwork.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zzG1AuLb5o>

Another master of footwork is W.K.F World Champion Junior Lefevre. I first saw Junior fight back in 1999 in Germany and was amazed at his speed. He seemed to fight from well out of range and yet score with ease. He can cover so much ground so quickly and be on top of you in an instant, yet trying to score on him is a difficult challenge for he is rarely in the same position for more than a couple of seconds. As

Junior emphasizes...

"You must be like an insect... always moving."

- and that's exactly what he does. He's always moving and understands that a moving target is considerably more difficult to hit than a stationary one.

If you've never seen Junior fight, check out this compilation from the 1999 English Open Championships. Notice that he's a long distance fighter, but is able to close the gap in an instant and score with ease.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHmC8H4Qs-A>

Now it's hard to show you an example online of someone mastering the distance in a "real world" fight. For in a street fight the distance is often controlled just once. It's controlled as either party increases the distance to diffuse the situation, or when one person closes the gap and escalates the situation. Though I found it challenging to find a video for you to model, I did find this video of Bas Rutten on YouTube which has some useful self defense ideas, and is at the least, entertaining.

(Content Warning: Stick to the video, some of the written comments may offend)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcXTvRxAjwo>

Notice the different techniques he uses for different distances. You'll also hear him say "create distance and grab a chair" when his opponent is threatening him with a bottle, again an example of distance control. (This time his "long distance" has expanded even more.) Notice also that in each sequence of techniques he's more proactive rather than reactive, controlling distance in each case with various techniques.

And I'm sure you've heard self defense instructors say something like , "Turn your body away to remove the target and keep your distance from your attacker...". . Now of course not all instructors will tell you that, and some (myself included) will advise to close the distance at the first sign of imminent attack and strike first. Either way these are more examples of controlling distance.

So next time you're involved in a fight, whether it's in a tournament, the dojo or a self defense situation, give some thought to what we've covered today. Ask yourself "how can I control the distance to control this fight?"

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

* To learn more specific examples of controlling the distance and the other factors involved in controlling a fight, check out Fighting Secrets Revealed at:

<http://www.karatetips.com/fsr>

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So after 3 years of intense development I finally launched the online software that I've been using to manage my dojo. It's now available for you to use too. With the KarateTools Dojo Organizer you can:

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- Print hundreds of certificates in just a few clicks... no more messing around typing (or writing) student names on certificates. Just select the students you want and hit print certificates. The KarateTools Dojo Organizer does the rest for you... perfectly every time.
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- Kristina Ingham
Bermuda Karate Institute
<http://bermudakarate.free.bm>

and...

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- Carolyn and Kurt Schulenburg
Young Hong Karate Institute
www.WoodstockMartialArts.com

and...

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- Cheryl Lynch- Gardner
Budo Ryu Kempo International
<http://www.budo.com.au>

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"Karate tips, articles and information
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Issue #
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April 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and

do nothing."

- Albert Einstein

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Quick Tip

Running late for training? Miss class because something came up? Well don't despair... while you're sitting around exercising your TV muscles, use the ad breaks to crank out a few pushups and sit ups. Sure it's not going to replace your training for the day, but at least you'll feel as though you've done something. You'll gain some sense of achievement. Remember, people who participate in a daily activity are 5 times more likely to stay with it than people who participate 3 times per week.*

* [Peak Potentials Training](#)

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Is Reality Based Training worthwhile or is it just the latest Buzz Word?

Pick up any recent edition of Black Belt magazine and you're sure to stumble across Jim Wagner. If you've not heard of Jim, he's very popular at the moment for pushing his "reality based training". He's a special-ops, counter-terrorist kind-of-guy with zero time for kata and traditional karate training. He's creating quite a stir amongst traditional karate-ka. Me... for the most part I like what I've learned over the years and enjoy the traditional part of my training...however I also strongly believe in reality based training and simulating different scenarios.

Why? Because it makes good sense.

The military run through missions before going live...

Pilots fly with simulators before taking to the skies...

And if you're not simulating real situations before they happen, it's kind of like reading a book on the basics of flying but never trying it out. You learn how to take off. You learn how to land. You learn how to slow your air speed, turn, etc. But could you sit right down in the pilot's seat and take off safely? Probably not. At least not before simulation training! Simulation is when you start to make the connection between each basic component. It's like a springboard to the real thing.

Before we go launching off that springboard however, let's take a look at one of the major concepts behind traditional karate training. It's often called "The 3 Ks of Karate".



Many people often think of them as stepping stones. Kihon (or basics) comes first then Kata (forms), followed by Kumite (sparring). This seems to make sense doesn't it?

First you learn how to make basic punches, strikes, blocks and stances (Kihon). Then you learn how to

make transitions, and learn application (Kata). Finally combine what you've learned and put it into action against an opponent (Kumite).

Unfortunately this is where many schools STOP. Many instructors and students alike believe if they master the 3 Ks then they'll be able to handle a real situation.

After all, it takes years to get a solid grasp of all 3 areas... and by that time you should be an expert, right? And an expert MUST be someone who can defend themselves after all that training, surely?

The biggest issue with this model is that the "kumite" section is often ONLY taught as tournament technique. Now this is great if you want to compete (of which about 40% of people do*) and I personally love breaking down fighting dynamics and exploring the strategies and tactics for competition. That's why I wrote [Fighting Secrets Revealed](http://www.karatetips.com/fsr) - <http://www.karatetips.com/fsr>

However, while some fighting dynamics are similar from street to competition floor, the settings are poles apart. All the illegal techniques in tournament are now available to you AND your opponent in a self defense situation. Head butts, knees, elbows, biting, scratching, and attacking the joints are all fair game. Throw in a weapon or two plus another opponent, and you'll very quickly see that the competition floor is void of these hazards.

Isn't it ironic that people spend so much time preparing for competition by simulating the environment with an 8 x 8m area, judges and referees... yet most schools rarely if ever simulate the outside world and conditions?

Back in 1993 after I got my black belt, I felt like I had good basics, solid kata and my sparring ability was sound. I'd placed at national level so my competition skill sets were reasonably sharp, and we'd always had a few "bash sessions" at training where we went at it fairly hard... so I really felt like I could fight. I felt like I could handle myself...

"Oh, young grasshopper... It's time for a reality check!"

It took 3 kids with knives in a shady part of town to change my mind. I found out really fast that although my training had taken me to a solid level, I was not prepared for this...

Although I felt I was solid in the 3 Ks I failed to make the leap to reality. Basically I'd stepped to the 4th stepping stone (Simulation) a few times, but hadn't yet honed my skills. The 5th stepping stone was a big step again, and one I hadn't stood on since high school.



But don't the 3 Ks fall under the umbrella of simulation?

To a certain extent, yes they do. And then to a VERY big extent, they fall short.

When thinking of SIMULATION training, don't just think of simulating the types of attacks that you might be presented with on the street, or simulating the techniques you'll use. Think of duplicating as many of the potential variables as possible. Take a look at the following table...

Possible Characteristic	Dojo	Outside the dojo
Dangerous environment	N	Y
Wearing restrictive clothes	N	Y
Wearing prohibitive shoes for effective technique or escape. eg. heels or flip flops	N	Y
Low light / Darkness	N	Y
Obstacles. eg. cars, walls, sharp corners, chairs, etc.	N	Y
Carrying objects. eg. groceries, backpack	N	Y
Talking on cell phone	N	Y
Presence of live weapons	N	Y
Weather, eg. rain, snow, slippery ground	N	Y

From this short list we can see that there are numerous variables that we control in the dojo, and yet might cross paths with in a real encounter. Many of these characteristics can make your job of defending yourself extremely difficult and unpredictable. The flip side to that coin however is that you can also use your environment to your advantage.

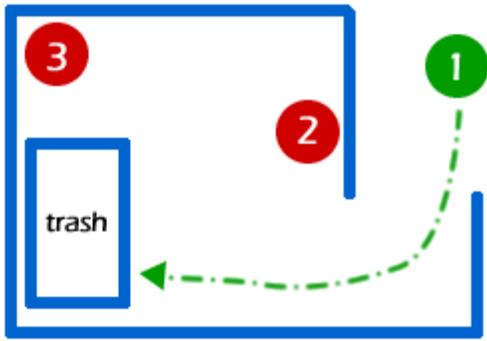
"Be Prepared!"
- Boy Scout's Motto

So how do you go about preparing yourself?

The answer is to replicate, duplicate, emulate, simulate, whatever-ate potential situations as best you can. Last night in class I had my senior students step outside for a simulation training session. We split into groups of 3 and conjured up 4 different scenarios.

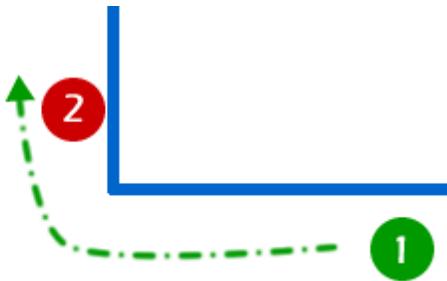
Simulation #1 – Confined space

Student #1 simulated taking out the trash to the parking lot dump bin, into an enclosed 10' x 10' area with one exit. Two assailants waited for them in the positions shown below.



Simulation #2 – Blind corner

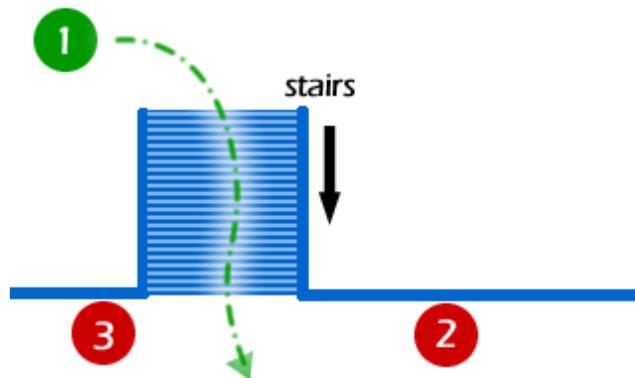
Student #1 walked around a blind corner to be confronted by two attackers as shown below.



3

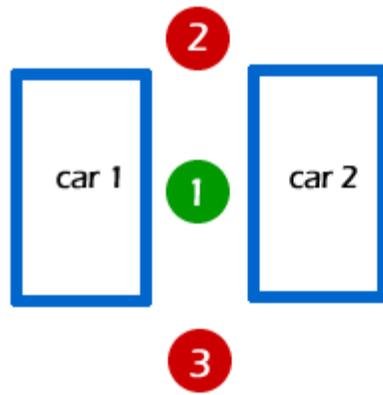
Simulation #3 – Uneven ground

Student #1 descended stairs to be challenged by 2 aggressors in the positions below.



Simulation #4 – Between cars

Student #1 turned to face 2 muggers while getting into their car.



In each of the situations above my students had to apply the following concepts.

1. Know their potential exits
2. Put one attacker in the path of the other
3. Use the environment to their advantage

Now of course having some common sense by not walking blindly around corners and paying attention while getting into/out of your car, etc, can help you avoid just about any situation. But every now and again whether it's through human error or just bad luck you might be surprised and find yourself in this kind of environment.

Remember the idea of simulation training is to prepare yourself as best you can for a volatile situation. The more familiar you are with the external variables, the less surprises you'll encounter. Then you can truly mesh together your polished karate skills with your newfound knowledge to give you the highest possible chance of survival.

Wouldn't you agree it's worth preparing for?

In part 2 of this article I'll explain the exact techniques we practiced for each of the four simulations above. We'll also explore how to identify the potential exits, how to position yourself so you don't get caught in the middle, and how to use your environment to help you overcome your opponents and escape.

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

- Jason

References

* KarateTips survey 2003

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skill sets, increasing your reaction speed and boosting your awareness. Plus there are a truckload of other drills to boost your fighting ability, sharpen your basic technique and increase your fitness...

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May 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms."

- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) Irish writer.

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Quick Tip

I'm sure you have a favorite technique that scores time and time again. Yet too many fighters keep their best techniques for a rainy day. They hope to pull it out for a big score in the last 10 seconds of the fight to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

The truth is that when you're down by a couple of points and there are just a few seconds left it is EXTREMELY difficult to score. Your chances of winning are slim.

To use a poker analogy, play your aces up front. If you've got something that you know has a good chance of scoring, use it early in the fight. The longer you wait and play by your opponent's rules, the less opportunity you'll have to take control of the match. Don't wait for "the river" to place your bet.

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How to do a hook sweep...

Years ago when I first started fighting, I planned out how I was going to get points in my match. Back then it was the first to 3 points, with 1 full point given for a kick to the head or for a sweep with a follow up technique. Just about everything else was awarded one half point.

So I used to think... "How can I get 3 full points quickly? What techniques do I have that score well?". These 2 questions led me to believe that I could without a doubt score a kick to the head (1 point), and sweep with a follow up (another full point). Throw in a couple of reverse punches and it'd all be over. Under today's WKF rules these same techniques would earn 9 points - again enough to win a match.

Many argue that there are easy techniques that can earn you a lot of points. Sure, some techniques are considered more challenging or more spectacular and therefore have a greater value. However although they are worth more, they don't have to be 3 times more difficult to execute.

Why would you want to throw 3 gyaku zukis (reverse punches) for 3 points when you can score the same amount with a single attack? Why would you want to put yourself in danger 3 times versus only once? You wouldn't...that's why we're going to look at a way to get maximum points with minimum risk...an ace

up the sleeve, so to speak.

One of my aces is the hook sweep and follow up, which is what I want to show you today. When you master this combination you'll have another arrow in your quiver that'll have the potential to score you 3 points under WKF rules, and one full point under AAU rules.

So what is a hook sweep?

A hook sweep isn't a regular ashi-barai (leg sweep) where you make contact with the sole of your foot just behind your opponent's ankle. Nor is it a high sweep where you take your opponent's legs out around the knees.

Instead, think of your leg as a fishing hook, where you tilt your ankle up and toes back to form the hook.



The idea is to hook your opponent's ankle and pull by lifting your knee high to your chest. The sweep can be executed off your front or rear leg and your target is your opponent's front leg.

Imagine that now by looking at the picture above. Picture yourself with your left leg forward. Imagine that your opponent hooks your leg and pulls upwards and away (to your upper right) unbalancing you... what would happen?

When to use the hook sweep?

The hook sweep works well against defensive fighters and counter attackers. It's much more difficult to employ it against a strong attacker, as setting up the technique most often involves you being the initiator. It is possible however, to utilize the hook sweep immediately after your counter punch should you find your opponent within range.

How to set up the hook sweep...

The hook sweep can be done as a single technique when you're facing a weak opponent who simply doesn't move (perfect!) or who moves back a little when threatened. As weak opponents don't "pick you off" when you move, there is no danger in fully committing to the sweep.

You simply move across the gap and scoop your opponent's front leg as described above, turning your body away as you pull them off balance. You can hook sweep using your front or rear leg, and once they fall follow up with a well placed gyaku zuki (reverse punch) or fumikomi geri (stomp kick).

The hook sweep can be done to the inner or outer side of your opponent's leg and when you do it correctly your opponent will fall very differently.

Please realize that some rules (such as the AAU rules) prohibit inner reaps - in other words you're not allowed to apply this technique to the inner side of your opponent's leg where they have the potential to fall face down. So as I always recommend... know the rules that you're fighting under and use your techniques appropriately.

Against skilled opponents your strategy will have to be more complex. Launching yourself directly at a strong pick-off fighter is tournament suicide, so you have to strategize against them. The question to ask is "How can I take his leg without getting hit, when I know he's going to punch as soon as I move?"

Discover the answer to that and your problem is solved!

Likewise against strong counter attackers, a different strategy will have to be used. You'll have to use your hook sweep AFTER another technique to avoid being trapped. How to fight, strategize and defeat each kind of fighter is a complex and often a confusing topic for many people. It's also outside the scope of this article, but if you're interested please see my Fighting Secrets Revealed where I explain this in detail.

The basic concept to make this sweep work however is to set up your opponent correctly. You want them in the perfect position with the majority of their weight FORWARD on their front foot. Then execute the technique, either as an attack or defensive combination, and finish with a counter.

If your opponent likes to lift their front leg every time you attempt the hook sweep, you'll become frustrated when the sweep doesn't work. The counter to that type of fighter is to allow them to lift their front leg, but take their rear leg instead! Can you imagine what might happen in this situation?

Some hook sweep combinations for you...

So to give you some idea of how to put your new found hook sweep to good use, I shot a couple of quick videos after training last night. Below are 2 attacking combinations you can use with your hook sweep. (Special thanks to Aaron and Alex for their help!)

Roundhouse Kick / Hook Sweep

After you make a roundhouse kick off your front or rear leg, instead of recoiling your kick, continue your forward momentum and drop your foot directly to the floor just behind or to the side of your opponent's ankle. Then sweep away as described above.

Click below to watch the video demonstration of this technique

<http://www.karatetips.com/articles/hooksweep.asp#roundhouse>

Reverse Punch / Hook Sweep

Slide in as if you're making a regular reverse punch. Then simply pivot on the balls of your feet so you're standing in forward stance facing the opposite direction - Similar to a Shitoryu kokutsu dachi (back stance). Hook your opponent and sweep away being sure to control their arm as you execute the technique. Finish with your counter.

Click below to watch the video demonstration of this technique

<http://www.karatetips.com/articles/hooksweep.asp#reverse>

In closing...

The hook sweep is a useful technique that can help you earn multiple points quickly. As many people don't like to sweep and conversely are fearful of being swept, they adopt the "head in the sand" approach - one of ignorance. When you come up against these types of fighters, it's a perfect time to use your hook sweep. You'll catch them off-guard, rattle their cage and more than likely score your points.

Good luck with your hook sweep... and be sure to let me know how it works for you.

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

Jason

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- Michael Greathouse
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KarateTips Newsletter Archive - May 2006 - July 2007



"Karate tips, articles and information
helping you improve your skills since 2002"

Issue #
71

June 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"Blood is just red sweat."

- Enson Inoue

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Quick Tip

I mentioned this one a couple of years ago, but I think it's worth mentioning again, and that is "how to remove blood from your gi".

For 15 years I tried all different approaches. I tried bleach, salty water, soda water, coke, soaking in this, that and the other - all with little success. At best a shadow was left where blood had been spilled.

But finally I discovered the #1 blood remover from cotton... shampoo.

Yep. Shampoo. Regular every day shampoo. Just wet your uniform and put a little shampoo on the blood, rub with your fingernail and ta-da.... as good as new!

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Ippon Kumite - The Foundation of Self Defense

"Ice pick!", he shouted. His voice like a sonic boom.

Six angry attackers rushed their opponents trying to plunge ice picks into their opponent's chests.

I launched forward to meet the descending attack blocking up with my left arm, deflecting then circling my opponent's attack from inside to out, trapping the weapon arm close to my body. Simultaneously I struck with my right palm to his chin, then extended and locked my arm. I rushed forward with my right leg and swept my attacker to the ground, securing him in position. I dropped my left knee behind his ear and thrust my right into his ribs, pinning him to the floor. I then carefully removed the weapon...

I looked around the room and saw 2 others had done similar, while some of the other guys were struggling to make it work...

The attackers were allowed up and returned to their kamae (on guard) position.

"Kick!", yelled sensei.

The aggressors launched full speed rear front kicks at us. This time I slipped right and forward, scooping my opponent's leg (as in Bassai Dai) with my rear arm. I made palm strike to his unguarded ear, then thrust my left knee up and into his supporting leg, lifting my attacker from the ground, turning him 180 degrees on the vertical plane... then down to the floor, finishing with a left fumikomi geri (stomping kick) to the face.

"Yame! Change roles", sensei ordered.

Now it was my turn to attack.

"Grab!", yelled sensei.

I lunged at my opponent grabbing an old of his gi, twisting and drawing him in, ready to head butt. Before I could execute the next technique, he struck with both hands to each of my ears, then grabbed my shoulders and ploughed his knee up and into my chest cavity...

Luckily for me my opponent controlled his technique, and it didn't really hurt. But in reality it would have ended the fight when executed with full intent. Nevertheless, it was tough, hard training performed at combat speed. It was an exercise we did a lot to develop our self defense skills. Now it's an exercise I teach my students in honing theirs. It's called Ippon Kumite.

Of course you might be familiar with Ippon kumite, but in case you're wondering its simply "one step sparring". It consists of prearranged attacks and defenses, ranging from step over punch to the head, chest, or stomach to shooting for the legs, grappling, using a weapon, etc. Each attack/defense is executed over and over again, until they're etched in the walls of the mind.

The emphasis of ippon kumite is a single attack (ippon referring to "one point"), not continuous random sparring or tournament techniques. The underlying notion of ippon kumite is simple and effective defenses against real life attacks. Plenty of ippon kumite work helps your body and brain acquire muscle memory in a sense. In a real life situation, you'll react faster and with less hesitation since your body has already been through the attack so many times before.

Now I often teach the same exercises (plus some new ones) and ensure my students are working up to speed. Furthermore I've created a 5 stage model to explain step by step how you can practice with a partner, or if you teach, how you can structure a good Ippon Kumite class depending on the skill level of your students. Let's start with...

Ippon Kumite - Stage #1

Ippon kumite in its simplest form is when both the attack and defense are prearranged. This is how it's most commonly taught. One person makes a single technique and the other defends with a "cookie cutter" response. A typical example might be Person A attacks with lunge punch while Person B blocks with rising block and then makes reverse punch to the body.

The objectives at this early level are to teach timing, distance, and response to attack. This is a great beginning however it leaves a little to be desired. Not many opponents will ever step over and hold out their arm for you (unless you're in a bad martial arts movie).

Ippon Kumite - Stage #2

Once the foundations are laid (using Stage #1), we then build on the attack base. In this stage we're not limited to traditional karate techniques. Now we include typical attacks like front grab, hook punch, knife

thrust, etc. Again however, both attack and defense are prearranged. Both you and your partner know what you're going to attack and defend with ahead of time.

The instructor counts and one side attacks with Attack #1 while the other side defends with Reponse #1. The attacker and defender repeat the same attack/defense pair 5-10 times before switching roles.

Ippon Kumite - Stage #3

What I call Stage 3 is when only the attack is prearranged and known to each party. However, the defense is random and totally up to the defender...as long as it works!

Over your years of training you'll learn many defenses for the same techniques. For example you might know 5 different counter measures to a front grab or a kick to the body.

In this exercise the instructor nominates the attack (eg, punch to the head) and then signals to the class to attack (to the count) and the defender responds with any of the things he/she has learned. The same attack is executed 5-10 times while the defender responds with various counter measures. For example on the first count you might opt to block and strike, then pull in your opponent for a knee to the chest followed by an elbow to the back of the skull. On the second count you might block and capture your opponent's attack, follow up with a head butt, elbow and takedown.

Again the emphasis at Stage 3 is a prearranged attack, with an unknown (to the attacker) defense.

Ippon Kumite - Stage #4

Now this is when it gets fun...

This time the attacker and defender do not know the attack or defense ahead of time. The attack is only revealed a split second before it's done. How? Here's how it works.

Both sides assume their attack/defensive positions awaiting the call from the instructor. As soon as the command is given, the attacker must respond with the exact nominated attack at full combat speed. The defender must apply any of their known defenses in an instant. This is a great reaction drill.

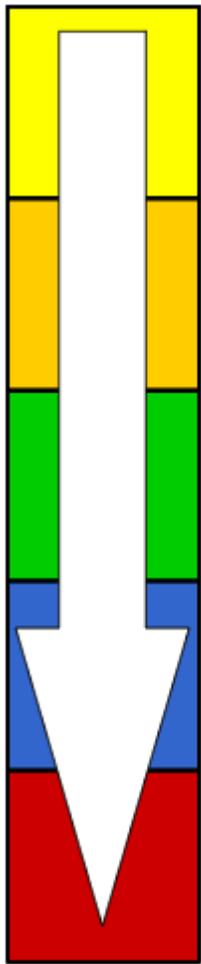
Unlike the previous stages, now each attack is only done once and in random order. There are no repetitions of the same attack. For example, the sensei might call "slash", in which the attacker would make a slash to the face with an imaginary knife. Next the sensei might call "front kick" in which the attacker makes mae geri to the body. The third time the instructor might call "shoot" in which the attacker rushes and tries to take their opponent's legs from under them. After 10 different attacks, students switch roles.

Ippon Kumite - Stage #5

The final stage is when only the attacker knows the attack, not even the sensei. The defense is random as in Stage #4. Basically 5-10 random attacks are executed in one set. The sensei simply counts and to each count the attacker must choose a new random attack executed at combat speed.

The defender may defend in any way, shape or form. The defender is not limited to "block and counter" type defense either. They may take the initiative and hit the attacker before the technique is fully executed. For example as soon as the sensei calls "One" or "Ichi", the defender notices a shift in body weight indicating a possible lunge to grab. The defender might elect to make a front kick to the attacker's abdomen before the attacker even grabs a hold of their gi.

5 Stages of Ippon Kumite



Stage #1

Both attacks and defenses prearranged. Only simple traditional attacks allowed. Each pair are repeated 5-10 times.

Stage #2

Attack base expanded to include more unconventional attacks. Both attacks and defenses still prearranged.

Stage #3

Attacks prearranged. Now defenses may be random. Each attack is repeated in sets of 5-10.

Stage #4

Attacks and defenses unknown and random. Sensei calls each attack by name and any defense may be made.

Stage #5

Attack only known to attacker. Defense is random. Sensei now counts and the attacker may choose any attack, defender any defense, executed at combat speed.

To make it even more challenging for the defender, they may close their eyes prior to the attack. Again this raises the stakes, as the defender is at a greater disadvantage. You can even limit the defender's defensive capabilities allowing them to use only one arm in defending themselves with the other arm tucked behind their back or against the wall so they cannot retreat, etc. The aim is to always push the limits, to always develop skills. Can you think of other ways you might be able to increase the difficulty level?

As is no doubt obvious by now if you as the defender can handle each level of the 5-stage model described above, you will have a solid foundation for practical self defense. The important thing to keep in mind is that you should strike multiple times, and to make each one count. It has to be effective. There are to be no backfists to the stomach, misguided punches to the arms, or other useless techniques!

Many schools' syllabus specify ippon kumite for grading requirements, yet many schools ignore ippon kumite altogether... just concentrating on "fresh air" techniques and line work. If you're not doing any ippon kumite at your club, I strongly suggest you find somewhere that does or pass this article along to your instructor, as it really is one of the foundations of self defense.

Consider this list below. By the time you reach black belt you should, in my opinion, be proficient in dealing with each attack, both traditional and unconventional.

Traditional Karate Attacks:

Lunge punch to the head, chest, stomach.

Front jab, reverse punch, hook punch.

Front kick to the body, groin.

Roundhouse kick to the body, head.

Front grab, wrist grab, rear grab, bear hug.

Other Possible Attacks:

Wild uncontrolled punches.

Headlocks, arm bars, etc.

Knife slash, backslash, thrust, ice pick

Stick, bat attack to the head, and body.

Shoot for the legs. Pushed up against a wall.

Of course this is just an outline. There are many variations and different variety of techniques. There are a load more kicks, combination attacks and of course multiple opponent situations. How many of the

above list can you check off as being competent in defending at the Stage #5 level?

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

Jason

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KarateTips Newsletter Archive - May 2006 - July 2007



"Karate tips, articles and information
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Issue #
72

July 2007

Welcome to the KarateTips newsletter "Kachi"!

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Quote

"You have to find something that you love enough to be able to take risks, jump over the hurdles and break through the brick walls that are always going to be placed in front of you. If you don't have that kind of feeling for what it is you are doing, you'll stop at the first giant hurdle."

- George Lucas

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Quick Tip

For our northern hemisphere subscribers, don't slack off over summer! Attempt to get to training as much as possible. I know it's easier not to do anything or come up with excuses NOT to train, but remember with every day you let slip by, the next time it becomes easier again NOT to train, until you eventually quit and become one of those people who says "Well I USED to do karate but..."

For our southern hemisphere subscribers, shovel that snow, battle the rain and break through any other barriers stopping you from training. Remember consistency is a key to success. Whether your goal is black belt, 3rd dan, or increasing your fitness level, each day you put in draws you a little bit closer to attaining your goals.

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Weight Training - Helpful or Harmful for Karate?

A question I receive often is, "Is weight training helpful or harmful for my karate?"

That's a great question and often a confusing and misunderstood topic. In this article I'll explain the pros and cons of weight training, how it affects your technique and finish up by setting you straight on what kind of training routine might suit your karate goals.

Before we get to that let's explore why we're training in the first place. According to a survey I held back in 2002 of over 800 karate students, the number one reason for karate training was (as you might expect) self defense (37.2 %) followed closely by fitness (25%). The remainder of the results were spread over self confidence, strength building, competition and discipline. Since our results showed that over 62 % of people train for the top 2 reasons we'll base our arguments on these two points -- that we actively participate in karate to increase our self defense ability and our fitness.

So how do our karate goals relate to weight training exactly? Consider for a moment, if you will, how weight training might affect your self defense ability. Will carrying more bulk inhibit your speed and make you slower? Or will the extra mass help with the power of your strikes and give you extra strength while grappling?

Fitness on the other hand - what exactly do people mean when they say they want to be fitter? Again most people don't understand fitness, just that they want to be "fitter" than what they are now. Are we talking about having more vitality or a stronger body, anaerobic or aerobic fitness? What's the difference? Can weight training affect these goals also?

Finally what kind of weight training are we talking about here? Do people generally mean going to the gym to bulk up or are they more interested in building muscles for endurance? Each of these methods affects how your muscles develop, which brings us back to... what do you want from karate?

If your reason is for self defense and you're practicing a striking art like karate, then it makes sense that you want to be "built for speed". We want to end a conflict within seconds, not let the fight continue for 15 rounds. As far as generating power, always remember a slow technique is a useless technique.

"Have you ever heard of the slowest gun fighter in the west?"

- Tommy Morris

So why is speed important?

Firstly without it you'll never hit your target or block/evade in time. The second reason why speed is so critical is more scientific. As karateka we should be interested in how to develop as much force as possible with our technique, of which speed is a critical factor. Newton's second law of physics reveals the following:

$$\text{Force} = \text{Mass} \times \text{Acceleration}$$

Now getting a little more technical we see that it's not actually speed but acceleration that is critical. It's how quickly you can develop speed from a resting position to its maximum velocity at impact. With that we now see that:

$$\text{Acceleration} = \text{Change in Speed} / \text{Change in Time}$$

Yikes... if your eyes just glazed over at the thought of high school physics, don't worry. I'll make this as painless as possible. Promise. =) Basically it boils down to this: the faster your technique is traveling at the point of impact, the more force it will generate. How do we get faster acceleration? Through faster contraction of our muscles of course!

As you may already know different kinds of muscle fibers are responsible for different muscle functions. Everybody has both slow twitch fibers and fast twitch fibers, about 50% of each kind, which are intermingled in different proportions in different muscles. The slow fibers utilize repeated slow contractions for strength and endurance, like maintaining your posture or marathon running. These fibers don't fatigue nearly as quickly as fast twitch fibers, which contract up to 10 times more quickly, and also fatigue much faster. Ever had the "lactic acid buildup" after doing something like 15 fast jabs with your front hand, or holding your arms above your head for an extended time? That's a byproduct of muscle fatigue and the fatiguing of your fast twitch fibers in that muscle.

Some experts say that the percentage of fast to slow twitch fibers is entirely controlled by genetics meaning that if you're born slow, there's nothing you can do about it. Other experts in the field of athletics say that although the ratio is genetic you can teach slow twitch fibers to be fast and vice versa depending on your training routine.

A marathon runner would be interested in developing more slow twitch fibers to help with endurance. Some people have been tested to have as much as 80% slow twitch fibers which is great for endurance, while a karateka should be interested in developing their fast twitch for more powerful strikes.

So what's all this got to do with weight training?

Everything!

You see the method by which you train your muscles will either develop more slow twitch or more fast twitch fibers. Regular weight training and plyometrics build slow twitch fibers, through repetition. That's what gives you your endurance. If you've ever lifted weights you know that the general concept is to do, for example, 3 sets of 10 reps for each muscle group. This repetition is what builds your strength. Over time you're able to lift more weight and increase the number of reps or sets.

If you want to develop strength then there's nothing wrong with weight training. In fact weight training and plyometric exercises are perfect for developing strength and endurance. This might be a great option

for you if you are simply looking to increase your strength and fitness, something that grapplers would be interested in doing.

If you want to develop speed on the other hand, regular weight training won't help in the long run. Sure initially as you build more muscle, you'll have a few more fast and slow twitch fibers created, but what we're really interested in for speed is focusing on developing our fast twitch fibers.

That involves a whole other method of training. Most people think that simply using weights and making faster curls develops speed... well, again this develops strength not speed as it doesn't target the fibers we want -- even if you do it as fast as you can. Actually it makes fast fibers act like slow fibers! Anything that involves repetition builds slow twitch fibers.

There's a very specific method of speed training to develop only fast twitch fibers. The entire process is outside of the scope of this article today, but the basic concept is to teach our muscles to be fast by teaching them to be elastic. Teaching a muscle memory if you will, so your muscles can "snap" into position, just the way a stretched elastic band accelerates from rest to its maximum speed in an instant when you stretch and release it before it returns to its unstretched state. Through this type of training, the muscle "learns" its length and twitches to produce the fastest acceleration to that particular length every time.

The basic method involves using a stretch band and an isometric contraction for a measured amount of time. Unlike weight training where the aim is to make loads of repetitions, this type of speed training doesn't use that method either... as repetitions build strength and not speed.

So what's the solution to develop both speed and strength? Basically your training program needs to contain both strength exercises and CORRECT speed exercises to develop both slow and fast fibers individually.

So if we go back to the original question "Is weight training helpful or harmful to karate?" we see it depends on whether you want to build strength or speed. If you want strength and endurance, sure it helps - and will help your aerobic fitness also. If you want speed, then the answer is no. Weights, plyometrics and endurance training don't help develop fast twitch fibers (anaerobic technique), which you need more of to develop more speed.

For someone studying brazilian jujitsu or other wrestling where strength and endurance is helpful, weights are great. For someone involved in primarily a striking art, weights alone without speed training and proper stretching can be harmful to speed.

In future articles we'll take a closer look at the strength vs speed dilemma and give you some ideas of how to develop both.

Until next time...

Stay safe, train hard.

Jason

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