

## Principles Mentality in Karate Do

In karate practise with the body is necessary. Any student who starts karate has to put his effort in the execution of all kinds of new techniques. The more experienced the karateka, the more the movement must be corrected and perfected. After long and hard training the techniques should be executed nearly perfect. However, karate is not just merely the execution of physical technique. Therefore the correct attitude of budo, and thus karate, is presented on this page. Knowledge of these Japanese semantics is surely not a luxury. If everybody would use the same terminology, techniques can be easier explained and demonstrated during international seminars. Some principles can only be understood from someones own experience, but by using the correct terminology the experiences become recognizable and they will point in the direction that the karateka should grow. If you are familiar with the used terminology, will understand the techniques quicker and will be able to do them better.

If you are end up in a fight and your opponent is just as strong and has the same technical ability, the one with the strongest spirit will be victorious. The following terminology has to do with a strong and pure spirit/mind.

Zanshin means alertness, full awareness of the body and mind. Awareness is not the same as a situation of being worried or nervous. The keypoint is a relaxed body and at the same time a ready alert state of mind and body, ready to respond to any movement or situation. It is difficult to explain what is going on in someones mind who has good zanshin. The outer appearance show some aspects of zanshin: the focus remains aimed at the opponent (mostly the eyes), the body remains erect, there is attention for correct distance and timing, the movement is controlled and kiai is present at certain point. Kiai should not be done because you have to, but because it comes automatically from within.

A karateka should strive for efficient techniques, karatedo is budo (the art of fighting). Kime means something like resolved or definitive decision. In karate kime is used for the effort in a technique that brings the decision and the end of the fight. So if you enter kamae kime is expressed by the mental part, to be sure to overcome your opponent. This is in combination with zanshin. I also heard from a Japanese friend that he learned about kime to be related with the moment of energy transfer of the technique. He explained to me that it had to do with the moment of contraction. Many are tensed on the way towards the target, while you should create an explosion of energy at the moment of contact. He explained to me that the body (and breathing) action/manipulation creating an explosion of energy at the moment of contact.

So one way or the other, there should be good kime present in all of your technique. Ki ken tai no ichi: mind (ki), technique (ken) and body (tai) are one. If one of the 3 is not optimal, the technique is considerably less effective. As well in kihon as in kata and in the different forms of kumite the techniques have to be performed with maximum kime once the techniques are learned correctly. If you train years of karate, you will react with those techniques when encountered in a fight like you have been practising all these years. So, always train with good kime, so you will have kime in that particular moment too. Also, when you practise, always try to hit faster every time. If you don't want to be faster, you will never become faster.

**Mokuso is the meditation that is part of the rei ceremony before and after karate practise. This meditation has its roots in the mushin-training from the Zen-Buddhism. It is also part of the mental training of karate. (before martial arts and religion were not seperated, this was until the 2nd World War. The "shomen" or Shrine can still be seen in some dojos). However, the goal of mokuso is to attain a state of mushin, litterely translated "no mind". This means a state in which someone is not effected by emotions such as fear for cold, pain etc. For most people there is a very very long way to go before even coming close to attaining such a state. A karateka that is just starting should focus on a single karatetechnique that he likes or does not do that well yet. If you have better focus you can start focussing on relaxed breathing. If you master relaxed breathing you can start training a calm mind. After intensive practise this focus is no longer needed and one will approach every situation fully natural, calm and spontaneous, even a fight.**

**One who focusses on a pretty flower, is usually only aware of the flower. This is not mushin. One who focusses primarily on defense, limits oneself to defensive technique. With an open mind (and enough experience) the body is able to move automatically. These movements will therefore be naturally and relaxed. It is essential to move instinctively. Mushin is the state that forms its fundament.**

**One that practises karate learns quickly that you can learn how to fight and still can loose the fight. The one with most practise, has often the best percentages to win, but nobody is invincible. Kikioji, mikuzure and futanren is about the 3 possible causes of defeat.**

**to fear your opponent because of his reputation. The karateka is so insecure about himself, that it will be improbable that he will fight correctly.**

**to fear your opponent because of his dangerous appearence. The opponent only needs his look to make the other insecure which makes the others percentages practically zero to win the fight.**

**to fear you opponent by inadequate training.**

**If one is not influenced by his opponent, then he can still be insecure, because one knows that he is not prepared enough for the fight. The only way to solve this is more practise.**

**If you want to keep making progress in karate, then you should have a malleable mind. For example, someone can train and work hard on his technique and/or his mental attitude, but he has to remain very critical to himself and also he has to accept criticism from others (for example the teacher or more experienced students). Only he who keeps his eyes opened for what he is not doing well enough can make changes in his movement and thus learn.**

The relationship between teacher and student is very special. By taking class the student obligates himself to work as hard as possible to gain progress and to develop himself physically and mentally. It is the teachers duty to help his students as much as possible and to lead them. Both teacher and student are part of a long tradition of teacher and student who learned from each others experience. It occurs that students change of teacher like they change their jackets. Some even go that far, to say that they never even have trained under their teacher. They have no respect (shi no on) for their teacher. Such people are looking for confirmation of what they already know and thought. As soon as they receive comments that can help them grow, they are not using the opportunity, but they leave. Except for not having junanshin, they show by lack of respect for their teacher, that they know very little of real karate. In karate their should be a reciprocal respect between teacher and student and between the students too. This should be the fundament of all actions in life.

This is a Japanese saying which means: "who falls seven times, has to get up eight times". Sometimes it may seem if the karateka doesn't progress anymore, even if he is training with full effort. But who wants to learn karate has to remain in practise. It's like a long journey through a landscape full of hills, after each hills lie other hills. Continuous, serious practise will always lead to improvement even though it may not seem so at certain point. Patience is an important principle of budo. With the correct effort, you can learn anything from karate.

This is a Japanese saying which means: "At the bottom of the lighthouse it is dark". The light of the lighthouse shines in the distance, but not at the bottom of the lighthouse. In the dojo you may find similar things.. Someone has continuous comments on others, but doesn't see his own errors. It's easy to comment others, but to critise yourself is for some very hard to do. But correcting yourself is a necessary cause to improve. He who doesn't correct, doesn't learn and therefore doesn't grow. Growing is the concept of budo. (winning is the concept of competition) Off course you can help somebody else, but it should be done from the point of view that he is not perfect himself.