



The Canadian Isshinryu Way Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu Canada

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Help Others and Be Enthusiastic

Helping others is a fundamental lesson most parents try to teach their children very young. Hopefully, anyone reading this newsletter has already learned that lesson.

Learning it, and applying it aren't always the same thing. When in the Dojo, try to be conscious of whether you are contributing to your Dojo-mates success or focused on your own. I suspect you'll see lots of opportunity to help others out that you previously overlooked.

It can happen in many different ways, a senior student giving tips to a lower rank, or simply working together to inspire them to try a little harder.

That's the natural case, but what about with equals and those who outrank you? Trying your hardest in the dojo can be contagious, as a student, it was always an attempt to out do the others that pushed us. If you are complacent to just do enough, everyone else can be as well.

Putting all your effort into whatever task you are doing will benefit your entire dojo. It of course extends beyond the dojo, but for now lets focus on your Karate.

Approach your next class with a focus on putting all your effort in, don't do it blindly, still be attentive to learning, but do it with gusto. You'll be amazed how much different your training is.

Essential Isshinryu has been Released!

For more information on the first Canadian Isshinryu book, visit www.essentialissheinryu.com!

ATTENTION NEEDED!

Do you know of someone great in Isshinryu? If so, please e-mail Sensei@issheinryu.ca with the contact details to be profiled in future newsletters.

Upcoming Events

Seminars

May 3-5—Kenora, ON—Hanshi Albert Mady

Tournaments

April 27th, Lake of the Woods Tournament, Kenora, ON

June 15th, KIAI Championship, Detroit, MI

July 11-13th, IWKA, Akron, Ohio

July 27th, Issheinryu Hall of Fame, Gatlinburg, TN

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Organizational Changes

Since the last newsletter there has been an upheaval in the organization structure for the American Okinawan Karate Association.

In Early November, the board members of the AOKA (Grand Masters Steve Young, Mitch Kobylanski and Albert Mady) decided to part ways and work independently to continue to grow Isshinryu in their respective regions.

The American Okinawan Karate Association is of course the first Isshinryu organization and will continue under the leadership of Steve Young and his many students and other members of the AOKA.

Former President Grand Master Kobylanski plans to continue leading his very strong organization in the southern US and working closely with the many other Isshinryu Karate groups in the region. On the weekend of February 23rd they are hosting a huge workout scheduled and I strongly suspect they will continue to be a great example of friendship in Isshinryu in the future.

Grand Master Albert Mady is of course continuing to be extremely active in the Isshinryu as well as Kickboxing and MMA communities. He recently announced that in order to support his many students scattered around the world he will be forming an organization in order to keep people connected and improve the standards within the Isshinryu community.

Through my long membership with the AOKA and involvement in a variety of committees, I was able to meet many great people in Isshinryu. Masters that I have tremendous respect for and good friends I would have been very unlikely to meet otherwise. The history of the AOKA is long and very proud, from it's founding by Shimabuku Tatsuo, it's leadership by Steve Armstrong and Lewis Lizotte and continuing leadership by Steve Armstrong makes it the longest living organization in Isshinryu.

I hope that the American Okinawan Karate Association continues for many, many years and grows stronger and stronger.

The ultimate goal in my opinion should be for a union of Isshinryu where we have no need for divisions and only sharing and growing in the Martial Arts.

Loyalty is an often undervalued attribute in our modern society, people tend to place focus on their immediate goals and gains seeking quick fixes rather than long term improvement. As an individual, I'm much more content to focus on improving my own skills ignoring rank than to chase ranks and titles.

Regardless of who you train with I'd like to recommend you be loyal to your instructor, not all people are meant to train together, but discuss any concerns you have and try to resolve them. Work with your instructor to figure out the best plan for yourself and figure out where you want to go. Being loyal and trusting your instructors plan to help you develop is very important.

Let's all keep working together to improve Isshinryu and support each other, do your part to keep improving yourself and others. Isshinryu is only as strong and effective as those practicing it. If we don't keep our standards and knowledge at a high level, we are losing Isshinryu.

Knowledge isn't meant to be hoarded, share what you know and listen to what others are sharing. There's lots of room for everyone to be great at Isshinryu!



Ying and Yang in the Dojo

By Sue Matthews

The concept of yin and yang represents a balance of parts within a single entity. Dark and light, female and male, soft and hard - the whole is composed of the two balanced components existing together, each side encompassing a portion of the other.

A dojo and karate training may seem very yang with little yin incorporated, but in fact the yin aspect is already there, if only in a subtle manner. Our codes of karate indicate that there is an equal place for yin and yang in the dojo: the manner of drinking or spitting can be hard or soft; a person's unbalance is the same as a weight. But what are the yin and yang components of what we study in our dojo and how does one ensure the yin side is equally represented in the dojo?

The fact that yin has already been incorporated into our active training may not be obvious, but the way we execute our blocks can be hard or soft, and our focus on making kata flow through smooth transitions from one section of movements to the next can be seen as a demonstration of yin.

The cleanliness of the dojo and the pride and respect the students and instructors show for their training space is a way to demonstrate yin in the dojo itself. A dojo typically feels like a masculine space and there is really no need to make the dojo so yin that it begins to look like a day spa. Simple things like keeping the dojo clean and the equipment well maintained and tidy will enhance the yin. This is also important when inviting new students to train - the space should be seen as a safe place to learn and train. A dilapidated dojo with aged blood stains on the floor is more intimidating than welcoming and demonstrates neglect. If the dojo is neglected, it may indicate indifference towards creating a safe and healthy place to train, indifference toward the time and care taken to instruct the students, and may create a higher risk of injury.

The way we train in the dojo can also demonstrate yin and yang. A dojo that focuses most of the

training time on one element of karate loses balance in other elements. Students who spend most of their time sparring will lose their proficiency in basics, weapons training, kata and bunkai if time is not spent maintaining and perfecting these elements. Well planned and organized classes maintain a balance and simplify learning for the students as consistent structure leads to more frequent and focussed training in all aspects of karate and will result in students achieving higher skill levels more quickly.

My Sensei has incorporated these aspects of yin and yang into his teaching. Sensei has set in place an effective, balanced teaching plan where each week of the month is devoted to a specific aspect of our karate training: Week 1 is basics and kata, Week 2 is weapons instruction, Week 3 is sparring, Week 4 is bunkai and in those months with a 5th week of training, we have "Sensei's Choice". During one week five, we held our own internal tournament, on another, we had a guest instructor, sometimes we focus on self defence or review techniques from a seminar we have hosted or attended.

When asked specifically what could be done to make our training more yin, my suggestion was to modify our normal training cycle to include "maintenance" time, to teach the walking wounded ways to help repair and stretch the muscles and heal the bruises we proudly earn during training, tournaments, and testing. Another option would be to include sessions about sports nutrition and how to develop an appropriate training schedule particularly for those students who are preparing for shodan testing. As we are generally a dojo of the young at heart if not necessarily young in years, sessions on injury prevention and how to modify training while recovering from injury would likely be of significant value.

Participating in organized events outside of the normal karate classes can also equalize yin and yang in a dojo. Something as simple as participating in a social activity after training or an annual



Ying and Yang in the Dojo Cont'd

By Sue Matthews

barbeque or holiday party can help to achieve balance, but more formal, organized activities can also be an effective way to cross-train. Recently, our dojo participated in a private hot yoga session arranged by a student who uses the practice of yoga as cross training for his other physical activities. The students who participated were made aware of new ways to help open and stretch their bodies and will hopefully be able to apply these methods to aid them in their karate training. The breathing techniques and stretching techniques we learned will allow better focus, better mental and physical balance and improved flexibility which can only help to focus and improve kata and sparring skills and may help prevent injury.

Yin and yang can both be observed in the dojo, although you may have to be more aware of the yin in order to see it. The balance of the yin and yang could likely be equalized, but it has to be accepted by all members of the dojo as important and necessary in order for the time focussed on the yin to be valued and effective.

Explosive Power

By Richard Ruberto Sensei

More often than not, I see students and teachers alike, staying way to stiff and tight during kata and or kumite. No one can argue the fact that tightened muscles/bodies move slower than relaxed muscles/bodies. That tightened state gives us an illusion of power when we are actually weaker and slower. We can increase power and speed and become a lot more fluid by staying relaxed or calm prior to delivering a strike or when making changes in our direction (which I call transitions).

The best thing to do is experiment with this and decide for yourself. Remain relaxed and explode when striking, then return to a relaxed state. The same hold true when being hit. Tighten the body to handle the impact, then become relaxed again. I will term this as explosive power. We develop this through prolonged chinkuchi found through the practice of parts of Seisan, Seiunchin and throughout Sanchin kata.

Promotions in Thunder Bay

On January 24th, the Chitora Dojo held a promotion and after a well done grading and strong fighting, the follow promotions were made.

Carter Sakiyama—Sankyu (Purple Belt)
Colin Nagy—Yonkyu (Green Belt)

Congratulations!



Zen In the Martial Arts—Continued

By Matt Morin

Continued from the previous newsletter..

Attachment vs. Commitment

I believe that true power comes from being committed to an idea without being attached to how the goal will be achieved. Commitment is fluid, attachment is rigid.

Process not Product

In the book, Hyams talks about times when he was becoming very frustrated because he was not achieving his goals in a timely manner. He talked about having thoughts of giving up due to his frustration. During a conversation with his sensei, it was pointed out that he didn't need to be concerned with how or when, but to simply be in the process and let the rest work itself out. As he applied this advice to his life, he noticed that he was much more effective in all areas.

Many karateka would probably relate to becoming very excited and passionate about Karate when they first discovered it. I know that when I was a white belt, I was already planning my path to shodan. If there was a testing, it was very important that I would be ready for that testing so that I could progress accordingly. This worked well when I met up to my own expectations. However, during my blue belt testing I was injured and I needed to take some time off from training. During this time, life situations arose that also interfered with my training. I felt discouraged as my peers progressed through the ranks and I did not. There was even a point when I was told that I was not ready to test. I believe that this particularly has been an important lesson for me; I had to let go of what colour the belt was around my waist. This was not a single event but a process and I am much better for it. In a sense I have been forced to let go of where I thought I should be. This has allowed me to settle into whom I am.

Sobriety: Seeing things as they are

Know your limits

"You will never learn anything unless you are willing to accept yourself with your limitations. You

must accept that you are capable in some directions and limited in others, and you must develop your capabilities"

Bruce Lee

It is important to be able to look at yourself and see your current limitations. Personal limitations can be caused by a variety of different reasons such as injuries, age, or a need for further practice. Whatever the reason, do not be afraid to accept yourself as you are now. When you can do this, you can begin to own your own practice.

Lengthen your line

When you find yourself in competition with someone who is better than you it is important not to focus on their greater skill level as a problem. Instead, use this as an opportunity to see yourself more clearly and to work on yourself. You cannot control the skill level of anyone but yourself.

Recognize a true threat

In day to day life it is very common for the mind to perceive possible threats around you. Many of these threats come from false images of strength such as uncompromising people, muscle men, arrogant intellects, persistent salesmen etc. Not only is it very common to perceive these threats but also to react to them. It can be the same in karate. When facing off against an opponent, it is very common to assess how much of a threat the person is, and begin to react to this assessment. This very quickly becomes a waste of energy and throws us off balance.

A strategy to deal with this is to mentally draw a circle around you and keep an awareness of this circle at all times. If the perceived threat is a physical threat, trust that you will act only once that circle is breached. Otherwise, stay aware and calm. If the perceived threat is mental, assess if anything is really in danger. If there is no threat, stay relaxed and do not react. Then mental aggressor will run out of steam when you do not react to them.

To be continued in the next newsletter.



The Challenges!

Karate

Fighting has long been a large part of Martial Arts training. This set of challenges will be specific to improving your fighting skills. Naturally, you'll need to be fighting regularly with other Karateka to do it, but, who isn't fighting?

Try these three techniques while fighting and see if you can land each one at least ten times.

- 1) Side step an attack (punch or kick) and hook punch to the ribs behind your opponents elbow.
- 2) When someone tries a front kick on you, shift your body back slightly so it stop in front of you and immediately shift in and round that leg as your partner puts their foot back down.
- 3) Get close to your partner and try fighting using short range techniques, knees and elbows work well.

Kobudo

Following the theme for the Karate, here's your Kobudo techniques to work on.

- 1) A snappy parry, no one wants to lose their grip on the Bo, so you'll need to try attacking earlier and sharply if you want to knock the bo out of your partner's hands.
- 2) Focus on defense, ask your opponent to attack you for a minute and just defend well, as you get better see if you can increase the frequency of the attacks. The next level is then recognizing the opportunities you have to strike back.
- 3) Change heights, there are three levels of attacks, and just like regular fighting you can condition people to focus on an area. Try doing 4 or 5 high attacks and then striking low or middle. Force your partner to think about their head and then re-direct them elsewhere.

Training

Improve your condition through fighting! Fighting is a great way to get in shape, if you are doing bare knuckle training, it's also a great way to get some conditioning in.

While fighting, try to focus on your breathing a little and make sure you are breathing out when striking, and being struck. Regulating your breathing is an easy way to improve your fighting endurance, teaching your body how to be relaxed and function well while fighting gives you energy.

If you don't breath properly while fighting, you'll very quickly be tired and slow.



Contributors



Editor & Author—Chitora Dojo

Mike Fenton—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Mike lives with his wife Kyla and has been training in Isshinryu karate for over 25 years, and has been an instructor for over 20 years. He is currently head instructor of Chitora Dojo in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Author—Chitora Dojo

Guest Editor

Trevor Warren—Thunder Bay, Ontario

Trevor lives in Thunder Bay with his wife Maria. He has dedicated a great deal of his time to teaching and his own training with the realization that hard work is the key to success.



Jeff Long—Assistant Editor

Jeff Long—Thunder Bay, ON

Jeff is a Sandan and Sensei at the Chitora Dojo. He's also an English major who's been helping to reduce the spelling & grammar mistakes in the newsletter.

Author—Toshikai Dojo

Matt Morin—Ottawa, Ontario

Matt just travelled all the way to Thunder Bay in order to earn his Shodan.



Author—Wanted

Authors are always wanted, why not contribute your opinions or insights? Anyone can offer something of value, regardless of rank or experience.

Karate Terms in this Newsletter

Chinkuchi—Focus and body alignment
Heiko Dachi—Ready Stance
Ju Dachi—Free Stance
Ka—Person / Practitioner
Kama—Sickle(s)
Kami—Divine Spirit
Kanetsu—Joint
Keri—Kick
Kihon—Exercises
Kime—Focus
Kobudo—Ancient Martial Way, the term used to describe all the weapons in Isshinryu and Karate.

Kumite—Free Fight
Kurakashi—Repeat
Mae—Front
Makiwara—Striking Board
Mushin—No Mind
Naha—Port city on Okinawa
Rokushaku—Six Foot
Sama—Honorific suffix applied to a name, denotes respect
Seretsu—Line Up
Shiko Dachi—Horse Stance
Shozenkutsu / Seisan Dachi—Small forward stance

Shuri—Capital City on Okinawa
Tatsu—Dragon
Tatsuo—Dragon Man
Tetko—Brass Knuckles
Tonfa/Tuifa—Baton with Handle
Tsuru Dachi—Crane Stance
Uchi—Strike
Uchi Hachi Dachi—Inner Eight stance
Ude—Forearm
Uke—Hard block
Yubi—Finger
Yudansha—Black Belt

It is important to familiarize yourself with commonly used Japanese words. Try to memorize all the words each time and you will soon have a large "karate" vocabulary.



Submissions

Article Submission

Articles are welcome from anyone and everyone. They can be about anything related to the Martial Arts, a technique you think is just great; A better way to do a technique; History of a Karate Master; a tournament trick that works well; ANYTHING!

All articles are appreciated as e-mail. You can send it to your instructor to proof read and send in, or directly to me. (Mike (at) Isshinryu.ca) or (sensei@issheinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

Dojo Directory:

Any student is welcome at anytime to visit any dojo. Before class, always introduce yourself to the Sensei of the dojo and tell them who your current Sensei is.

For a full dojo list visit Isshinryu.ca We are getting too many to list here.

Affiliate Cities!

Abbotsford, BC

Contact: Mike O'Leary

Brandon, MB

Contact: Richard Wharf

Contact: Buzz Cox

Calgary, AB

Contact: Charles Boyd

Cookstown, ON

Contact: Harri T. Makivirta

Dryden, ON

Contact: Rick McGogy

Hope, BC

Contact: Norm Losier

Kenora, ON

Contact: Steve Davis

Contact: David White

Ottawa, ON

Contact: Tim Leonard

Quebec

Contact: Pierre Parenteau

Saskatchewan

Contact: Brian Smout

Sioux Lookout

Contact: Jim Sapay

Thunder Bay, ON

Contact: Mike Fenton

Contact: Trevor Warren

Vancouver, BC

Contact: Rachel McGovern

Windsor, ON

Contact: Albert Mady

Winnipeg, MB

Contact: Brent Horton

Canadian Isshinryu Abroad

Berlin, Germany

Contact: Ryan Boesche

Stow, Ohio

Contact: Albert Pecoraro



Congratulations to Carter and Colin after their promotion at the Chitora Dojo in Thunder Bay