



The Isshinryu Way Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu
Worldwide

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One Year In and Still Kicking (I Hope)

This past year has been disruptive, to say the least.. I personally don't think there's been more than a 2 week period in my past 30+ I haven't been in a Dojo, and now I'm looking at it being more than a year since I've been in what I used to consider a Dojo.

That doesn't mean training has stopped, it just changed. It means we've been training more independently, taking more ownership over our own training instead of trusting our Sensei will tell us what to do. And adapting, moving lessons outside, online and asynchronous.

While we all miss each other and our shared time together, let's also remember that this is what Karate is. Karate didn't start as a highly social activity. It was a secret activity, done primarily alone and drilled relentlessly.

If our early Karate masters were able to

practice in public with all their friends, instead of at night and in private courtyard or cemeteries, we might not even have the concept of Kata.

I know it's been tough, but Karate has been training you to be tough. Mentally and Physically, you can handle it. Focus on what you can control, and keep making time for your Kata, Basics, Drills and embrace this as an opportunity to analysis your own skills and improve them.

Your Sensei are also still there, think of them sometimes, don't be afraid to reach out and ask them questions. They are missing you as much as you miss them.

Keep on Kicking...

Upcoming Events

Events

All Events currently On Hold

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Essential Isshinryu is available!

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

Choose Alive Time



Training Together ... Apart: *Isshin-ryu* Virtual Training

By Pat Couperus

Shortly after Canadians were told to isolate at home to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, Shihan Tim Leonard hosted an online *Zoom* karate training session for students of Toshikai Dojo of Ottawa. Initially, the online karate was a way to keep connected and stem the onset of loneliness and anxiety of home isolation. That initial experiment has turned into the successful, well attended, twice-weekly, 90-minute, *Isshin-ryu Virtual Karate* training sessions.

Participation has expanded beyond the Ottawa dojo to include participants and instructors from Thunder Bay and Calgary and occasional participants from elsewhere in Canada. Sensei Richard Ruberto (Staten Island, NY) and Jerry Holt (Minneapolis, MN) feature regularly as guest instructors.

Each training session starts with 20 to 30 minutes of cardio and strength training hosted by a different sensei or sempai each class. The remaining class time is usually split into two 30-minute sessions with different topics covered, such as a particular kata or drill. Some of us, stay connected after the training to chat while we enjoy a beverage.

The online karate classes were awkward in the first few sessions, but it has turned out to be a great experience and has revealed some positive features that should carry over into the post-pandemic world.

The Experience

Virtual training is not as seamless as a dojo training experience. It requires pauses to reset camera for better angles before demonstrating an aspect of a technique. You also need check the chat stream for questions, set the view to profile the instructor or demonstrator, and mute participants during instruction. But, instructors and students have slowly adapted to the online environment. We figured out how to get the best out of our Wi-Fi signals and that streaming to multiple devices was a bad idea. And we learned where to place laptops and phones to provide better viewing angles.

Teaching something new to a large group is difficult

in-person and more so online. People learn at different paces and in different ways. Which usually means breaking apart the training into different groups. This can be an option in online training but focussing on aspects of a kata or an application, such as how and why you move in a certain way, is easier to approach for all participants. From a practical standpoint, we have found that the virtual training sessions have been an opportunity to really focus on details and technique.

You have to be organized and pick training that will work well in an online session. For example, we have focussed part of most online training to the IRID (*Isshin-ryu* Improvised Drill) which breaks down parts of each of the kata into *bunkai* applications. It is usually done by training with a partner who throws alternating *seikan tsuki* techques which are defended. But the drill is easily broken down into sections that students can learn and practice on their own. It is easy to move forward from week to week. We have also returned to *modern Arnis* and knife fighting drills which can also be easily broken down for online learning.

Benefits

Despite the limitations, Toshikai's *Isshin-ryu Virtual Karate* training has been overwhelmingly positive. Perhaps most obviously, the online training has allowed us to **continue training and learning** during the pandemic stay-at-home isolation. Regular dojo time usually ensures some practice. Without the online training sessions, I think that most of us would have stopped training, when we could no longer go to the dojo. The twice-weekly training allows students and instructors to stay engaged and continue to improve their karate.

Most importantly, the online training has created and reinforced links across *Isshin-ryu*. Toshikai's Virtual Online *Isshin-ryu* has the participation of students and instructors from across Canada and the U.S. Hanshi Alert Mady has hosted online training sessions that connect students from across Canada, as well. Other dojos are similarly hosting live training sessions that are open, upon invitation. Students and instructors have benefited from these sessions. We have learned

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different applications, interpretations and understandings of *Isshin-ryu*, and brought them back to the dojo for our students. Clearly, online training is much easier to do than traveling to train with another dojo or to attend a regional or national tournament. As such it is an excellent tool to expand martial arts knowledge.

We have also found that online video training has actually increased participation and engagement from students, particularly those who are newer to karate training. The online environment is less intimidating, and some students feel more comfortable posing a question via the chat function. Online training gets more people involved and accelerates the learning for all.

Bigger Challenges

Even after adapting to the online video environment, there are still challenges to online learning both for students and instructors. But, we have discovered that many of the challenges can be overcome. And more importantly, that the bigger challenges are really only due to the current stay-at-home isolation imposed by the pandemic.

For larger dojos with a number of students at different stages of their training, virtual training can be awkward unless you operate multiple online training sessions. At Toshikai, we are a small club and two training sessions a week is all that we have time for. So, we adapted by using “break-out” rooms during each virtual training to facilitate parallel instruction sessions for smaller groups or to focus on particular topics. The approach has successfully allowed kyu to progress in their learning.

Students usually learn kata, *bunkai* and applications initially by mimicking the demonstrator, and perfect these later. And it is easy during an in-person training for a learner to adjust their position to view a particular part of a demonstration from a better angle. This is awkward for virtual training because of the single-camera view. So, instructors must adapt to the “mirror effect” of the camera and learn the best way to position themselves so that students can mimic movements or best see foot and hand positions. And also repeat movements from different viewing angles. In the end, this is not as different as the dojo in-person learning that usually requires demonstrations at different speeds and observation from different angles.

By far, the biggest downside of virtual training is the lack of an *uke* or training partner, so that students can practice the application with another karateka. Some things cannot be learned properly without demonstration in-person. Perfection of technique comes from understanding the applications. As a karateka you always should have an explanation for what you are doing and why you are doing it in a particular way. Thus, it is key to learning and understanding karate, to be able to apply the technique on another person, or have it applied to you, so that you can feel the effect. This is a challenge that cannot be overcome in virtual training, unless you share your space with a fellow *Isshin-ryu* karateka.

An additional complicating factor is the size of the space in which you can practice. Students and instructors are usually in fairly small spaces in their homes when they are doing the virtual training. Small-space practice limits kata effect is a problem. Students learning kata by adjusting for the space in which they practice can carry over easily into the application when they return to a larger space. It is important to advise students who practice in small spaces to be aware of this and encourage them to practice in larger areas when they can.

And it is all but impossible to swing a *bo*, *sai* and *tuifa* in a home, unless you don't like your furnishings. Consequently, *kobudo* training is very difficult unless online training is moved outside or to a larger space. Outside virtual training also has its downsides, as well. Glare on the device makes it hard to view the screen. Connectivity to data networks is problematic and costly.

In the end, most of the limitations to the *Isshin-ryu Virtual Training* session are a result of the current pandemic isolation protocols. When we return to normal training with others, it will be possible to host an online training session with a partner, so that you can demonstrate techniques; and students will be able to similarly pair up to better learn *bunkai* and other applications.

Taking Online Karate to the Next Level: IKI Black Belt Grading

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Building on the success and experience of the online training and in particular the ability to easily bring together people from across the world, senior sensei have organized a live online video black belt grading. On June 6th, candidates from Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Romania will be graded for *Shodan, Nidan, Sandan, Godan and Rokudan*, live through Zoom. Hanshi Albert Mady will preside a testing board of the Isshin-ryu Karate International (IKI) with senior Dan and Sensei from across Canada and Germany.

The online testing has been organized by Shihan Susan Baldassi, Shihan Tim Leonard and Sensei Rod Berek. It will be hosted on Zoom using breakout rooms where each of the dan grades will be examined by a panel. The judges will be able to move between rooms to review other candidates at different points in the testing. The online testing is well organized and has a tight schedule. But, like most black belt tests, it will likely go long. That is to be expected, as candidates and examiners are engaged with the process and want to make the best of it.

Upon first consideration, an “online” testing may seem to have limits, even beyond the logistics of break out rooms and tight timelines. But the requirements of the candidates are essentially the same and every bit as rigorous as a usual testing - minus the kumite, perhaps. As always, candidates for dan ranking are recommended for promotion by their sensei. In advance of the testing, they will submit their martial arts CV and a short paper on the topic of their choice, and they will also submit proof of meeting the fitness requirements. (Easily verified through fitness and exercise tracker applications, now.)

In addition to the usual requirements, candidates will also submit videos of their kata for review by the judges. This aspect of the approach to grading adds additional rigour to the online testing. Candidates spend a lot of time reviewing and perfecting the performance of their kata as they prepare to record the video. As a candidate for Sandan, I can assure you that I agonized over every video and rerecorded each kata at least 3 times before deciding on the final version. Most candidates will also vet their videos with their sensei. Adding additional weight to the requirement.

On the day of the testing, candidates will perform some or all of their kata for the judges. I expect that performing kata live via video for judges will be just as difficult

and stressful as doing it in-person. The pre-recorded videos will serve as a reference for the judges, adding a layer of stress to the experience of the candidate. If the judges have noticed something in a candidate’s kata on the video they can watch for it in the live performance and question the candidate.

During the live testing, candidates will be asked to explain the application of techniques and the *bunkai* of kata. Of course, in most cases, candidates will not be demonstrating *bunkai* with an *uke*. *Bunkai* without and *uke* will certainly be more difficult, as it will require candidates to demonstrate their understanding of movements in a far more detailed way. Candidates will not be able to gloss through the movements or power their way through the application of a technique.

Despite the ease in which you can bring candidates and judges together from across the world, online grading is not likely to replace in-person grading. But, like the online virtual karate training, it is an acceptable substitute, and the additional requirement of video submissions might be something that carries over into the usual grading.

The Possibilities for Online Training

The online training that we are doing is a logical extension of the video training that students are already doing, independently. Today, millions of martial arts videos of every description are now shared on social media platforms and websites. And, dojos and instructors increasingly share video demonstrations and tutorials directly with their students. Students now expect a certain amount of training or reference material that can be consulted online in their own time to assist with practice. The online training can supplement the independent learning that students do. Students can learn in the live sessions and then consult posted videos and recordings of the live training session afterwards.

The positives of online training outweigh the negatives, particularly if students and instructors can train in the same space. Online training allows students to continue training even when they are away from their dojo, or instructor, and can easily bring together Isshin-ryu karateka from anywhere in the world. So, much like the post-

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ed videos were embraced as a training tool, I think that live video training will continue – perhaps not as regularly – for many dojos, after the doors reopen. Online training simply reinforces the fact that the *dojo is not a place but a community of karateka*.

The Benefits of Karate

By Jarusan Muraleetharan

Throughout history, humans have always found a way to stay active and healthy, whether it be through hunting, running, or basic labour to whichever era fits best. However, in the modern era, some don't get the opportunity to be active due to the commitments towards work, school, family, etc. This could create a stressful and chaotic atmosphere for oneself. Martial arts has become an essential component to many in the modern era. Some might just see it as just fighting, but many don't see the purposes and benefits that come with it. In this paper, I will talk about the physical benefits of doing Karate, the mental benefits as well as my personal take on Karate.

One of the most crucial steps in Karate is the breathing and the breathing techniques you learn with it. By focusing on your breathing while practicing Karate, it is shown to improve the cardiovascular system. The exercises will get your blood pumping and the different states of body movement will improve your stamina and endurance. By having a healthy cardiovascular system, it will decrease the risk of heart related illnesses and possibly stroke. Another benefit you gain from Karate is that it increases your physical capability. There are a lot of things you can do in karate, such as katas, exercises and kumite, each demanding a good physique. Practicing karate's rapid and repetitive movements at high intensity, requires a solid level of fitness. Studies also show that regular practice of Martial arts as well as Karate improves the quality of your sleep. By pushing your physical standards to the max, your body will look to repair itself when sleeping therefore giving you a good uninterrupted sleep, improving your overall immune system. By getting good sleep it helps the productivity of someone who may lack motivation. Karate is also known for utilizing all parts of your body. By getting all the muscle groups involved, it starts to give you a nice shape and keeps your body tone as well as being flexible. Keeping your body in good shape will automatically lead you to live a healthier lifestyle.

As many may think Karate is only beneficial physically, there is a whole different aspect on how Karate can help build and strengthen the mental side of it. Practicing Karate requires severe discipline and respect. You must first respect yourself and the art you wish to learn. Karate also requires observation and focus. You must be able to observe what the senior belts and Senseis teach. With each technique follows an explanation. To truly learn those skills, you need to sharpen your mentality and be mentally prepared to learn. Karate teaches a great deal of morals and values that come with the course content. Karate is not a Martial art that just focuses on fighting, Karate teaches and trains one to be self disciplined. It puts you in stressful situations that requires you to be calm and focused to solve. It gives you a level of self confidence and self love, by going through all stages of Karate it teaches you to take risks and that could translate onto the real world. In the real world, life can be very stressful. It gives you all sorts of tasks that can be challenging. Many people experience mental stress and even depression from not knowing how to control themselves and train themselves to take on those tasks and sometimes fall into depression. Around 322 million people around the world live with various stages of depression. This could result in them developing more psychological symptoms and more disorders. The effects of Karate helps prevent that, Karate often puts you in a challenging setting, whether it be through exercise, katas or kumite. By learning how to stay calm and disciplined in those scenarios, it could translate into the real world when you have stressors from work, school and even family. A study called "The Effect of Karate Practice on Self-Esteem in Young Adults with Visual Impairment" done by studied the confidence and self worth levels of young adults with Visual impairments before and after a 10 week karate training program. The results showed that the participants scored much higher on the scale after the training program. Below is the results of some of

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the participants after this study.

This studies shows that people regardless of their condi-

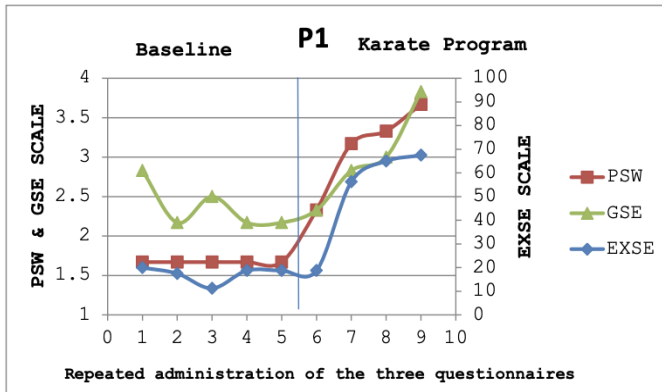


Figure 1a: The five repeat baseline questionnaire repeat measurements across a 3-month period, as well the four repeat questionnaire measurements during the 10-week karate program for each individual participant. Figure 1a is data from participant 1 (P1).

PSW= Physical self-worth, GSE= global self-esteem, EXSE= exercise self-efficacy

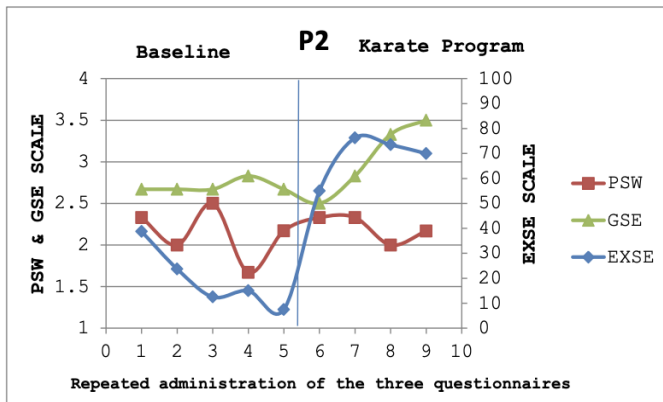


Figure 1b: Participant 2 (P2).

PSW= Physical self-worth, GSE= global self-esteem, EXSE= exercise self-efficacy

tion, find themselves more confident and ready to face the real world. This is truly motivating and important to see that the effectiveness in karate is not just physical but also mental.

A personal take I have on this topic is how Karate has

helped me both physically and mentally.

Growing up I have always been an active and hyper child, I did not have the patience and discipline to succeed. I started my Karate journey back in 2009, from then on I was put through hard training both mentally and physically. In 2014 I broke the Tibia bone in my knee from a track and field related injury and I was put on crutches for almost 2 years. I had lost all the momentum I had growing up and lost all physical and mental confidence I had. Once I came back to class, I was nervous and scared that I would re-injure my leg and possibly hurt something else. I had to focus harder and pay attention very carefully to all the techniques and all the lessons taught to me. With the help of my fellow classmates and the motivation from my sensei I managed to get back on track and be more motivated than before. After coming back from my injury I was more calm and collective when dealing with tasks, this help me with school and also help me when work was tough, I managed to gain a level of discipline and also gain a level of self respect it would it would definitely not be possible without Karate. Till this day I try to implement my lessons towards fellow classmates and try to learn more myself.

In conclusion this paper attempts to Show the physical and mental benefits of practicing karate. Karate is such a large subject to learn and there's an infinite number of possibilities of what you can learn. Karate definitely teaches you to be disciplined and to respect what you learn and who you learn with, karate has a great combo of improving your mental fitness as well as keeping your body in good shape. Each person has a different result when learning karate but the one common result everyone gets is that practice in karate helps improve you in some way.



About The Newsletter

Just as in our dojo training, the newsletter is about sharing and improving as a group. We regularly have contributions and updates from Quebec to British Columbia in Canada, as well as from Germany, New York and the Southern United States. Everyone is always welcome in my Dojo or to share via the newsletter.

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. (sensei@isshinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

Karate Terms

Baka-yaro Idiot or fool, use can range from playful to insulting

Bunkai take to pieces/analyze

Dachi Stance

Dojo Training Hall

Fōkasu Focus

Ganbaru persevere

Hai Yes

Hajime Begin

Ie Home or dwelling

Kakuri Isolation

Kenko Health

Keri Kick

Kihon Exercises

Kyu Level or Level

Mo Ichi Do One more Time

Mokuso Meditate
Rei Bow

Ryu Way

Sanchin Three Battles

Sempai Senior Student

Seretsu line up

Shin Mind/Spirit

Shinbō suru Perservere

Suwate kneel down

Tatte stand up

Tomaru stay

**“Never Forget that going
to the Dojo is not enough,
what you do alone is most important” -
Dr Kacem Zoughari**