



“You can only fight the way you practice”
— [Miyamoto Musashi](#)

NL SHOTOKAN KARATE

YOU MUST CONTINUE TO TRAIN

Bruce A.B. Lee, 7th Dan

I heard this statement from a number of Sensei during my Karate life and each time it seemed to have a deeper meaning. The first thing that comes to mind for me is; I must get up off the couch and go to the dojo to train. I remember what Sensei Masami Tsurouoka once said, “We are all beginners and will always continue to learn.” Sometimes it's hard to see the progress when we study karate for years. We are so close and involved with the day to day stuff sometimes we can't see the big picture. Confucius once said, “It does not matter how slowly you go so long as you do not stop.” The easy thing to do is make excuses and rationalize. *I worked so hard today, my knee hurts, I'll go next week and work twice as hard.* There is no end to the reasons not to go to class.

When it's said, “You must continue to train” what does this really mean? Miyamoto Musashi in the Book of Five Rings would always emphasize at the end of all his essays on strategy that the reader would have to; “consider this deeply, research this well, examine this closely, train diligently and you must learn this through repetitive practice.” One cannot develop to any sufficient degree in Karate by just reading about it or having someone tell you or watch videos, etc. The only way to develop is by doing. Look, listen and copy the true way and then make it yours. That is the way of martial arts. Gichin Funakoshi said, “Karate is like boiling water: without heat, it returns to a tepid state.”

Does this statement, *continue to train*, mean that we have to over train? No, sometimes just being in the dojo and concentrating on the basic principles, breathing deeply and paying attention to your posture is equally beneficial as hard physical training. It's all about balance. Yin and Yang combined with steadfast persistence. Karate students here in NL have many examples of persistence in training. All they need to do is look around the dojo and see all the grey hair; men and women that have been training for decades but still continue to train. Why are they still coming to class? I believe it's the search of knowledge. An old Chinese expression states that “knowledge, like the sea, is boundless; only through hard study can one reach the destination.”

The reasons for joining Karate and the reasons for continuing to train change from time to time. The main reason for most would be simply to become a better fighter so to be able to defend oneself. Analyzing the principles hidden in the Kata can keep one engaged for years. There are times when physical conditioning is your main focus or maybe it's the comradeship of your fellow dojo mates. What's the alternative?



Sensei Bruce Lee receiving his Yondan certificate from Nishiyama Sensei

“Yin and Yang combined with steadfast persistence”

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There is a line in the movie Apocalypse Now where Martin Sheen leaves the jungle battle field and is spending time in his hotel room when he starts to panic. The line goes like this, *I'm in this hotel room enjoying myself, becoming soft, while my enemy is in the jungle squatting, becoming harder.* The warrior spirit needs to be fed and that feed is practice. Do you think that all these senior karate-ka that continue to train haven't considered staying home on so many cold, dark, wet St. John's evenings? Is it because they're always in good spirits and have no aches or pains? I think not.

With regards to myself, and I'm not an exception, I struggled to class on many occasions when it was so easy to justify staying home. From worn-out hips to kidney stones ready to pop out at any moment, I still managed to go to class. In my 40 years of continuous training I cannot remember one time when I didn't feel much better leaving the dojo than when I arrived. There is something about training in the Martial Arts that taps into our primitive nature. There are very few activities that cater to this need. Gichin Funakoshi, father of modern day Karate, once said, "Studying the principles of Karate continually polish the mind." We teach the basics to beginners and children and as they continue to train, they mature and get a deeper understanding of application of principles. They become tempered like the steel in a sword and become unwavering in the face of adversity. Regarding training, Aristotle once said, "Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue of excellence, but rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." Practice makes permanent so it's very important to practice the correct way. Having instructors and senior students in the dojo that others can draw from help guide the way for new and less-experience students.

I leave you with this sentiment from one of my most influential karate instructors, Hidetaka Nishiyama, "It is not the pace with which we strive...some may surge forward while others may crawl. Many will never reach most of their summits within their lifetime. But, the fact remains that they are moving forward. A man who ascended to his pinnacle, that is to the limit of his capability, but still remains unproficient is a better man than a person who has the potential, but has stopped short of the summit..."

Continue to train, my friends...

Bruce A.B. Lee



Sensei Lee presenting his student Mary Williams with her Shodan Certificate

An advertisement for Shotokan Dojos. The background is a photograph of a torii gate silhouetted against a sunset over water. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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SHOTOKAN DOJOS

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If you would like to contribute to the NLS Newsletter, or have ideas for articles, etc, please send your submission to jeff.hutchings@gmail.com

SHOTOKAN FROGS

Jeff Hutchings, Shodan

“You should be like a frog – always. That is true *zazen*.” Shunryu Suzuki

On the surface, comparing our karate practice to a sitting frog might be a bit of a stretch, but in reading one of Suzuki’s books recently the parallel made sense. He was referring to the frog in terms of sitting in *zazen* (seated meditation), but he related the analogy on a wider level which can apply directly to martial arts.



The frog sits, seemingly motionless, neither slouched nor tense, but in a state of *zanshin* (continued awareness). The picture here is an excellent representation of how our Sensei urge us to be: calm on the surface, but with controlled spirit underneath. Without any visible indication, other than perhaps his subtle breathing, the frog is constantly poised to attack prey, or to escape a predator. In Shotokan we consistently work on eliminating the states of *unprepared* or *unaware*.

The image also depicts the serenity of the pond around the frog; leading to another analogy that we hear often. ‘A mind like a millpond’ - uncluttered and clear - opens the way for awareness, and awareness is the key to learning, understanding and using our karate. Finding yourself in a confrontation with a steaming head thinking ‘I’m mad as hell and now I’m gonna burst out with a snap kick and a reverse punch!’ will probably get you knocked on your back – or worse. The frog idly sits but is completely aware of what is going on around him. The intentions of his adversaries (or his lunch) are reflected in the calm water.

In the dojo we are reminded not to *look*, but to *see* – you see everything by not focusing on anything. Nishiyama Sensei’s teaching was to see from behind yourself.

There we have it, we need to be frogs: controlled breathing, correct body department, a clear head (“no mind”),

When is a Punch not a Punch..?

Michael Clarke, 8th Dan, Gojo Ryu

At the Kyudokan dojo in Tsuboya, Okinawa, Higa Minoru sensei spends at least the first hour of each class teaching little else but punching; and when you come to think about it, the punch is modern karate's most basic weapon, but I'm not so sure it was always that way.

Karate = empty hand...so where did the closed fist come from....and why is this particular technique used so much in modern karate? Nine years ago, when this photo was taken, being asked to hit the bag by the photographer presented me with a bit of a problem. I knew the kind of shot he was looking for when he was setting up the high-speed camera, and it wasn't any of my usual strikes...he wanted to see me kick and punch (the easy bits about karate).



Although many years ago, Okinawan karateka like Higaonna Kanryo sensei, changed the open hands into closed fists in kata like *sanchin*, I think sport karate has elevated the punch to its present status, and for many it is, if not the only tool in the toolbox, then certainly the biggest and most often used. So, when is a punch not a punch?

When it's rendered ineffective because the rest of your karate is too poor to support it!

SENSEI WAYNE LEE: PASSING IT ON TO HIS JUNIORS

"We don't have as many colored belts now and we need them, just like we need the youth classes; children are the future of Shotokan, and karate teaches them respect, confidence and concentration."



"Teaching makes you better and I'd like to see my students teaching."

Sensei Wayne Lee is pictured here with two of his adult black belts, mother and daughter, Deborah and Nicole Maddox. The duo are dedicated to their Karate and to assisting Sensei Lee, oftentimes teaching the junior club.



I don't think I'm in any position to call myself a martial artist. I'm a student of the martial arts.

Lou Reed

MY SHOTOKAN KARATE

James Callaghan. *Mundy Pond Dojo*

My name is James Callahan and when I was in 7th grade, I joined Shotokan Karate. I am currently an orange belt working toward my green belt and I intend to stick with it, even past black belt. The reason I joined Shotokan was probably because of my mother and stepfather wanting me to be a part of something athletic. It was honestly a tough decision considering that I'm not an individual who loves sports, I have always preferred unorganized activities such as biking or skateboarding instead of team sports like soccer or basketball. Since my stepfather was previously in Shotokan karate, he said that it's always good to be prepared for anything unexpected, so he suggested I give it a try.

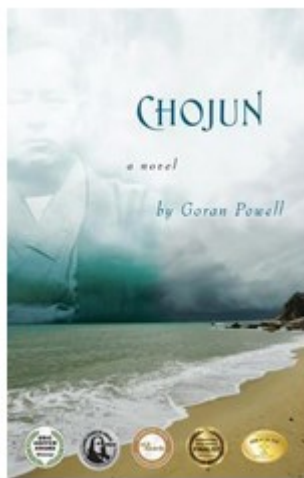


My favorite thing about Karate is stretching, warm ups and kata. My favorite kata would have to be Heian Godan, which I can't wait to learn next year. Of the katas that I have previously practiced, Heian Nidan would definitely be my favorite. I like Heian Nidan because it's not too hard and has some complications, like perfecting back stance and shuto uke. They are pretty tricky to do and are going to take a long time for me to learn the right technique, but I'm looking forward to it.

Shotokan Karate is a great activity. It doesn't only teach you self-defense, it also has side benefits such as self-discipline and patience and also it makes you physically and mentally stronger. Sensei Bruce Lee is a fantastic karate instructor, he makes karate enjoyable and has made me excited to come to class every Thursday. Since I have joined, I feel better about myself knowing that I am able to protect myself when I have to, plus I feel safer when I'm out with my friends or even by myself, which is why I am proud to be a part of the Mundy pond Shotokan Karate dojo.

BOOK REVIEW

Chojun: A Novel, by [Goran Powell](#)



A typhoon brings the renowned karate master Chojun Miyagi into the life of young Kenichi Ota, who must prove himself before he can enter the master's inner circle. As once-peaceful Okinawa prepares for war, master and student venture to China in search of the deepest meaning of karate.

Editors Note: I have this book and thoroughly enjoyed it. It seems historically correct and the Karate discussions in it are superb.



NEWFOUNDLAND KARATE ASSOCIATION

The organizing body of Karate in NL for nearly 40 years

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Many different self-defence systems distinguish themselves with the suffix “dō” or “jutsu.” The general consensus seems to be that “jutsu” indicates a functional system of techniques, while “dō” indicates a more philosophical pursuit. This distinction comes from the interpretation of the kanji for “dō” and “jutsu.”

道

道 “Dō” can be translated as follows:

course; district; journey; moral; road-way; street; teachings

<http://jisho.org/kanji/details/%E9%81%93>

The translation of dō being a journey or a teaching conjures the idea that one practices the self-defence system for reasons other than learning the techniques themselves. Dō is also used to denote a district, and in context, a group that practices together. Whether the reasons to practice are to build character or discipline, to improve fitness, to belong in a group, or to compete in a sport, the word “dō” does not indicate a focus on the perfection of technique to obtain maximum power.

**術**

術 “Jutsu” has several meanings as well:

art; magic; means; resources; skill; technique; trick

<http://jisho.org/kanji/details/%E8%A1%93>

Interpreting jutsu as a skill or technique translates into distinguishing that the training is focused on perfecting the technique. The jutsu student strives for picture-perfect form with proper timing, focus, and force for maximum power; seeks perfection of the art.

Dō training is often identified as being on the sport side of self-defence. Students train to improve their performance of kata and kumite under tournament rules. The nature of how the sport operates can sometimes diverge from the military/warrior spirit of the original system, to those who self-identify as jutsu. To those people, jutsu training means preserving the original techniques: not to become “showy” or compromise on form and power.

To me, the interpretations of dō and jutsu are not so cut-and-dry. Perhaps the goal of the journey in your dō training is to become effective at taking care of yourself should you be assailed in your life. For this, you would need to have training that leaves you with a reliable set of techniques that better prepares you for reacting to attack. This philosophy surely follows a warrior spirit. Similarly, all the time spent perfecting skills in jutsu training could all be for nothing if you panic in a real situation or on a tournament mat. You must train the mind to be prepared for attack as well as your body. If you focus too closely on the technique itself, you may lose sight of the big picture: the “why.”

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see the following link by Bob Davis: www.stjohnsdojos.net**

Is dō training merely a philosophical pursuit that may diminish the quality of self-defence skill and jutsu training the choice for strong techniques? Could dō training be a journey towards truly effective and practical self-defence skills and jutsu training being an endless pursuit of perfection, which leaves students unable to see the forest through the trees? No matter how you interpret these terms individually, perhaps it is better to consider how better the concepts of dō and jutsu may be applied together as we train: endeavouring to improve oneself and one's skill through the pursuit of strong and effective techniques, and understanding how to shift gears between training to preserve an art and training a practical form of self-defence.



"Keep your karate-beaten nose out of it!" Sensei David Bell

In Shotokan, our Sensei say and do things that stick in our minds, like the phrase above, or the hand gesture (pictured here) often used by Sensei Bell. Hold your thumb to your chin as seen here and the two inch space between the thumb and forefinger is the difference between being inside or outside the danger zone in Kumite (or a real battle). Keeping your head back (not leading with your head) those two inches is paramount.

Pictured here is the significant mistake that I commonly make: leading with my head in Kumite. Sensei Lee, however, is seen delivering a reverse punch which illustrates correct upper body posture. Subtleties like these, I believe, are monumental in refining our karate.



FOLLOWING KARATE BLOGS

Avi Rokah

We learn through kata that the breath controls the body center, and the body center controls our footwork and technique. We practice many types of footwork, timing and techniques to respond to different attacks till those become our "body system" or acquired nervous system patterns, like a software install in the computer (hopefully quality software).

We face many opponents, and with time we learn that most people have similar patterns, even though different rhythms, ranges and ways of executing techniques. As we face many opponents we learn to read the cues that they give us, we learn to see the "information" that is there before one initiates this action or another. We learn to use the eyes less and judge less in order to see more, to become sensitive to the subtle changes and the inclination of the opponent.

Finally, when we face an opponent, from our body center, we already have direction, ki energy projected to the opponent, but our feet are flexible to move in any direction on the way to hitting the opponent, depending on how early or late our reaction is and other factors.

As we get more skilful, the choice of reaction is decided by:

- The breath.
- Our established "body system".
- Our accumulated experience of facing many type of opponents.

We do not consciously choose, when we react, we don't know what we are doing until it is done, yet we are aware, there is "monitoring" of self, opponent and the interaction.

A TALK WITH MASON NORRIS, AGE 11, MUNDY POND DOJO

“Learn skills that will carry into everything you do in life “

Why you started Karate:

The reason I started karate is because I wanted to be able to defend myself by learning martial arts.

Your favorite thing about Karate:

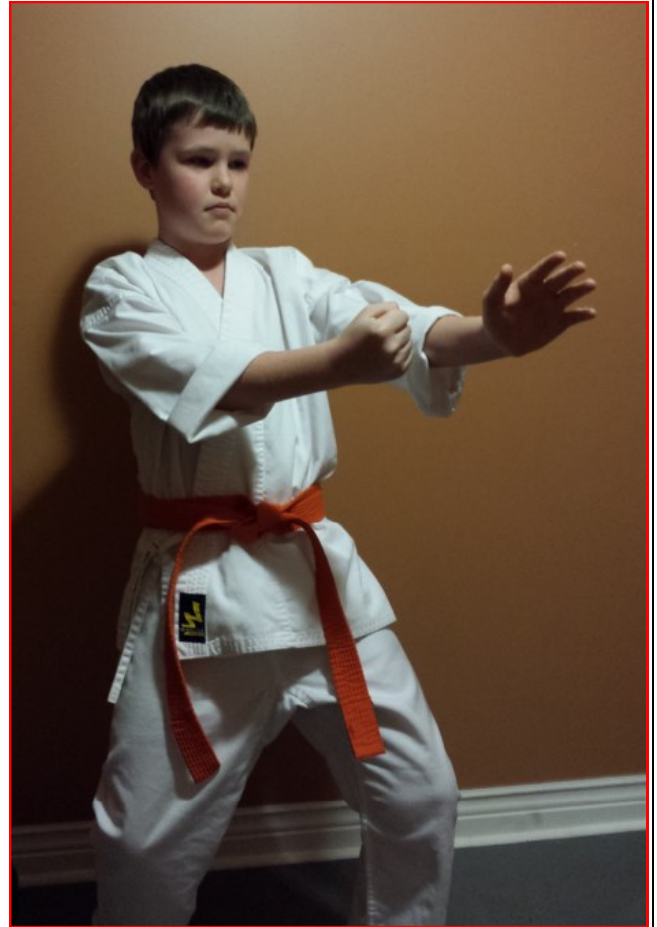
I really enjoy the physical activity but my favorite thing about karate is my sensei and being able to learn all the katas and different skills like, strikes, blocks, punches and kicks.

What do you like about your Sensei:

The thing I like about my karate teacher is that he is very patient and when you're starting off he gives you a good understanding of the notion of the skills you'll learn in karate. I also enjoy his stories that are great lessons about everyday life.



Any other comments you would like to make about Karate: It's a great place to learn how to defend yourself and learn skills that will carry into everything you do in life. I also practice judo and when I competed in my first tournament my karate skills really helped me a lot. You will definitely learn valuable lessons when you are in karate and I plan to stay in it until I reach black belt.



According to Sensei Lee, Mason is an excellent student: very interested in Shotokan and attentive to his teaching. Here Mason demonstrates a classic Sensei Lee Kumite stance.

SHOTOKAN IN THE NEWS

I usually speak at length about Machida's striking style, which is very much influenced by tournament karate and indeed Japanese karate. The differences are many, but among the most obvious are that Japanese styles (Wado-Ryu, Shotokan, Kyokushin and its variants) tend to focus more on repping out basic techniques and practicing kata (forms) into infinity. They use longer stances and tend to be more about pure striking than self-defence.



Machida himself has shown some slick little techniques that hark right back to the old days of rough and tumble karate.

I am a firm believer that many (though not all) old, traditional techniques that look ridiculous can be reconfigured and given an appropriate setup to make them effective.

Text taken from article, *Lyota Machida: Old-School Karate*, MMA Analyst, Jack Slack

“When a criminal attacks you on the street, he does not care about your style, rank or who your teacher is.” Adam Chen

A while ago I was listening to a conversation between my six year old daughter and my twelve year old daughter. They were discussing bullying. Anna, my oldest, has Down syndrome which means that there is an elevated concern about her being targeted by bullies. Granted, Anna is very well liked and respected amongst her peers, and I have been very fortunate that for the most part she gets treated very well.

My six year old isn't worried though- she has the solution.

“Don't worry, Anna. When I am seven I am going to learn Karate in Sensei Lee's class and if anyone picks on you, I will do karate on them! Hi-Ya!!”

‘Do karate on them’ struck me as thought provoking.

In the dojo we work very hard against fellow Karateka to block, parry and attack all manner of oncoming techniques, but they are just that, *techniques* from trained fighters. What happens when an adrenalin-pumped thug comes barreling at us on the street?

In doing some research on violence and martial arts in a street fight I came across a book by Dr. Jason Armstrong called ***Street Fighting Statistics & Medical Outcomes linked to Karate & Bunkai Selection***. Armstrong uses data from emergency departments and police assaults from street fights. How could that not grab your attention?

Out of interest I turned my attention to the section on the patterns of street violence, particularly to the types of attacks that are encountered most often. Obviously this is an expansive field of study, but I thought for this little article I'd look at the top scenario for street attacks and have a look at Karate as the defense.

From the data compiled, the most typical street fight scenario is this:

Attacker pushes, defender pushes back, attacker throws a swinging punch to the head.

There are three things here I think are worth considering. First of all, when the attacker pushes, the threat is not only imminent but has actually materialized, and in my opinion, a Karateka who gets pushed may not *just* push back. The question is, what will a trained Shotokan martial artist respond with.

Secondly is the ‘swinging attack’ part. According to this, and other related data, the attack from the street fighter more often than not comes in an arc, or swinging motion. This is worth consideration given that in the Dojo we're not used to someone *swinging* at us. After all, we've learned that a swinging punch wastes time and energy: we tend to throw punches right from the hip as a straight-to-target projectile, and that is also what we are used to defending against.

Thirdly is the ‘punch to the head.’ The top attack documented by Dr. Armstrong is one where the assailant tries to knock your block off. Couple this with the fact that approximately ninety percent of people are right handed, it is likely that it is a right-hand punch that you need to be most aware of in this scenario (of course, *anything* can come from *anywhere* in a real combat situation).

With all of this in mind, I started looking at our manual for fighting: Kata, and I quickly came up with a variety of potential methods and means to deal with this offensive.

Having said that, I'm no expert, and what follows is my humble attempt to piece together some real life defenses. It's important, I think, to contemplate your Karate as an entity outside the Dojo.



Heian Shodan: Agi-Uki - Jam them up!

The right hand punch is anticipated and the ‘defender’ drives forward and jams the punch in its infancy. There is shock value here, as you take the assailant's balance while potentially causing shoulder damage to his extended arm. Without hesitation, this would be followed up with a natural-flowing second technique like a palm heel to the chin, or reverse punch to the solar plexus.

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Heian Shodan: Shuto – Arms up!

Again, anticipating the swinging right punch, the set for the shuto becomes the block and the shuto ‘block’ itself become a collar bone smash or a strike to the neck/jaw. This again is jamming the opponents attempt to strike you before you subsequently deliver a well-positioned blow.



Heian Shodan: Oi Tsuki- Launch a rocket!

The opponent indicates an imminent right-hand attack and the ‘defender’ launches forward with a well-timed Oi Tsuki. The punch doubles as a block/defense, keeping your opponent’s punching attempt to the outside as the Oi Tsuki connects with the opponent’s neck or jaw. The defender can then follow through with a second technique like a jodan elbow smash or reverse punch.



Bassai Dai: Yama Tsuki- Double it up!

This picture illustrates a Yama Tsuki delivered as the right hand attack is coming in. The slightly bent left arm of the defender deflects the incoming punch while striking the assailant in the head at the same time the right fist delivers a middle body or groin attack. A subsequent aggressive grab, and unbalancing of the opponent and throw could potentially follow.

As I was looking at this street violence scenario, one thing struck me in particular: it’s all in the kata. Three of the four defenses outlined above all come from the very first Kata we ever learn, and as I started looking at Bunkai for this little article, I have been reminded of the reason we repeatedly do Kata. Repetition makes our moves efficient and effective. In a street fight we don’t have much time to think, so we react. A teaching coming to us from Sensei Nishiyama that Sensei Lee often reiterates is that we can learn to give our reaction some direction.

As a Shodan I am at the entry level when it comes to understanding Kata, especially as it relates to combat, but in analyzing what is in our arsenal for when we are confronted with an attack, I can clearly see that we’re well equipped. If we train long enough and hard enough, when we are pushed to the place where we need to defend ourselves, we won’t *do* karate, karate will just happen.

“Complacency and overconfidence are dangerous. Self esteem is great, but believing that you just have to kick an assailant once to resolve the issue may well be wishful thinking.” Colin Turner



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