

# SMAA JOURNAL



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2020 SMAA DUES

Membership fees were due on January 1, 2020. Please be sure to pay your SMAA dues on time. You can either send a check to our headquarters or pay online at <http://www.smaa-hq.com/payments.php>. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and PayPal. This is a quick and safe way to make your annual SMAA membership payment.

We appreciate our members paying dues promptly. It makes life easier for the SMAA staff of volunteers, and it is representative of the type of self-discipline we are cultivating through the study of traditional Japanese martial arts.

### DONATIONS & TAX DEDUCTIONS

The SMAA is a federally tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation. As such, your donations to our association are tax deductible. Send your donations, in the form of a check or money order (made out to SMAA), to our headquarters in Michigan. We'll send you a letter back acknowledging your contribution, which you can then use for tax purposes. We hope you'll support the SMAA in our goal to preserve and promote traditional budo and koryu bujutsu.

### E-MAIL

Please make sure we have your correct e-mail address. Without this address, we can't e-mail you the *SMAA Journal*.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE SMAA

1. To promote and aid in the growth of Japan's traditional arts and ways.
2. To assist the public in achieving spiritual growth and physical development through budo/bujutsu.
3. To further friendship and understanding between Asian and Western martial artists.
4. To establish goodwill and harmony among martial artists of various systems.
5. To offer Western martial artists access to legitimate budo/bujutsu organizations and teachers in Japan.
6. To give practitioners of authentic budo/bujutsu recognition for their years of devotion to these arts.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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修道館武道会

Do you have a new e-mail address? Have you sent it to [hedavey@aol.com](mailto:hedavey@aol.com)? If not, we also won't be able to send you SMAA publications, so please be sure to let us know if your e-mail address changes.

## SMAA PATCHES

The SMAA HQ is selling official SMAA patches for your gi. They're great looking patches that embody the spirit and honor instilled in members of our group. They won't fade or bleed when you bleach them, and yet we've been able to keep the cost down. Each patch is basically a 3 ½ inch circle featuring our logo below:



Our patches were produced using state of the art digitizing and ultra-modern technology to create an accurate and attractive embroidered emblem. They feature tight stitches, sharp detail, clean lettering, and top quality craftsmanship. There's no jagged stitching, but we've still got plenty of stitches so that the background doesn't show through.

*The patch should be worn on the left side of your gi jacket near your heart. SMAA policy mandates only one patch per uniform to maintain the sense of dignity associated with traditional budo.*

These new patches are a great way to show your respect and enthusiasm for our group; we hope all of our members will order at least one. *And the best part is the patches are only \$5.00 (US) each!* (E-mail [shudokan@smaa-hq.com](mailto:shudokan@smaa-hq.com) about special shipping for international orders.)

To order, go to the "Payments" section of [www.smaa-hq.com](http://www.smaa-hq.com) or send a check or money order made out to "SMAA" to:

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## FACEBOOK PAGE



Have you been to the SMAA Facebook page? If not, you're missing out on the latest SMAA news, features, videos, photos, and information. It's easy and safe to join Facebook, and all you need to do is click the "Like" button to become a follower of our Facebook page. This is the fastest way to get SMAA news and updates, and we hope you'll drop by <https://www.facebook.com/ShudokanMartialArtsAssociation> and check it out. Once you're on Facebook, we hope you'll share our page with your friends and help us promote the SMAA.

## SMAA ONLINE PAYMENTS

Did you know you can pay for your annual dues at our website using PayPal or a major credit card? You can, and you can also pay for gi patches and promotions in the same way. This is a much faster, and in some ways more secure, means of sending money to our headquarters. We hope more of our members will make use of this feature. Just drop by <http://smaa-hq.com/payments.php> for more information.

## SMAA YOUTUBE CHANNEL

修道館武道会

Shudokan Martial Arts Association

Want to see some great videos of SMAA teachers, officials, and members? Now you can by visiting our YouTube channel. We're Shudokan1994, because 1994 is the year the SMAA was founded.

To see video of SMAA teachers and members, go to:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5Nika6Ge0&list=PLS11\\_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gg5Nika6Ge0&list=PLS11_XCH8RkI868tRKZ0fdJFSeFGyNZ0o)

To see video of the amazing experts that trained leading SMAA officials and teachers, go to:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11\\_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79Ble1NZ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcE7zBhv9Hs&list=PLS11_XCH8RkIV8liNZoXI93WI79Ble1NZ)

## MARTIN SENSEI NEWS

Paul Martin Sensei has an amazing YouTube channel ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNw8a00xA\\_cejgbQuO\\_awUQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNw8a00xA_cejgbQuO_awUQ)) called *The Japanese Sword*. He's a member of the SMAA Board of Advisors, and his channel recently reached 10,000 subscribers. Big news!

He also had an interesting article published in June by JAPAN-Forward: <https://japan-forward.com/historical-japanese-sword-kotetsu-katana-of-kondo-isami-discovered/>. It's titled *Historical Japanese Sword "Kotetsu Katana of Kondo Isami" Discovered*. Since many SMAA members include Japanese swordsmanship as part of their training, we think you'll enjoy this article by Martin Sensei.

Martin Sensei is a Japanese sword specialist living in Tokyo, where he has studied various forms of Japanese swordsmanship for years under celebrated sensei. He used to work in the Department of Japanese Antiquities at the British Museum, London. He has a Masters in Asian Studies (Japan) from the University of California, Berkeley, and he's currently a Trustee for the the Nihonto Bunka Shinko Kyokai Public Foundation (NBSK): <https://nbsk-jp.org/english/>.



*Martin Sensei, SMAA Senior Advisor*

He also works closely with many sword institutions in Japan, including the Nihon Bijitsu Token Hozon Kyokai (NBTHK), providing specialist translations for books and exhibitions: <https://www.touken.or.jp/english/>. Martin Sensei is a recognized specialist by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT:観光庁), and he has his own regular column at JAPAN-Forward (Sankei Shinbun): <https://japan-forward.com/category/culture/japanese-sword-column/>...

He's also a Samurai Spirit Tourism Ambassador for the Tohoku Region: <https://samurai-spirit.com/index.html>, and he lectures at several facilities in Tokyo (Honganki Japonisme Academy, Samurai Museum, Nezu Museum) and around the world. You can book your lecture here: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction/>...

Martin Sensei says, "The sword in Japan is not merely a weapon, it is a sublime piece of functional art, with deep spiritual and historical significance to the Japanese people. Just like Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms, the Japanese sword is an enduring symbol of Japan."

## SUINO SENSEI NEWS

In June, Nicklaus Suino Sensei's Japanese Martial Arts Center in Michigan celebrated 14 years in



JMAC

business! The dojo offers classes for children and adults in a variety of traditional forms of budo. Students have access to high-level instruction in classical Kodokan judo, Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido, Goju Ryu karate-do, and more.

Suino Sensei is a founding member of the SMAA. He started studying judo as a child, and he has decades of budo experience, but in 1988, armed with a

master's degree in English and a few dollars, he set out for Tokyo. After a 14-hour flight, a two-hour train ride, and a 20-minute ride in a friend's Nissan, he arrived in time for dinner, a beer, and a long night's sleep!

One of the first things he did was reach out to the late Sato Shizuya Sensei, a high-ranking teacher of classical Kodokan judo, judo as a martial art and not merely a sport. He trained at Sato Sensei's dojo located within the American Embassy Housing Compound three times per week, spending as long as 8-10 hours training on Saturdays before venturing into the nightlife district of Roppongi.

He also studied Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu iaido extensively with the legendary Yamaguchi Katsuo Sensei, tenth dan. Suino Sensei stayed in Tokyo for four years, winning event after event in iaido and returning to the US as one of the most prominent and decorated Eishin Ryu swordsmen of the early 1990s. Before coming back the US, he received his iaido sixth dan directly from the headmaster of Eishin Ryu.

Suino Sensei has continued to visit Japan regularly for advanced training in judo, jujutsu, and iaido. He also brings his teachers to his dojo on a regular basis.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING & EXPERIENCING ONE'S CENTER OF BALANCE

*By Joseph Rippy*

Have you noticed the dignified grace with which all great budo practitioners carry themselves? Not only do they display flawless movement when applying technique but also dignified balance in such a mundane activity as sitting in a chair. Their balance and poise are something one should strive to emulate. What you are witnessing is an individual who has found and developed his center of being both physically and spiritually. He has found his source of balance and power.

Most karate-do practitioners can immediately tell someone where their center of power and balance lies within the human frame. After all, it is clearly stated in most modern works on the subject. Generally speaking, it lies about one and a half inches below the navel, right? Depending on which book you are referencing, each author might give a slight variation as to its location. Suffice to say it lies in area of the navel, inward a bit from the surface. If we, as discerning students of budo are not careful,



*The late Joe Rippy Sensei*

we will likely fall into the trap of ideation only and not actually pursue an experiential understanding of the very basis of human movement, this being relevant to any pursuit that deals with refining a physical act demanding control of one's balance. Martial artists too often become armchair cowboys satisfying ourselves with an intellectual understanding of a particular subject but completely failing to participate in the practice of that idea. Without a true understanding of our physical center of balance, how can we expect to accomplish such refined techniques as those of our most senior masters?

I was first made aware of the following principles by Joe Sheeron Sensei, senior student of Osaka Toshio Shihan of Salt Lake City, Utah. I am forever grateful.

He noted that as human beings we are bipedal. We normally move using two feet as instruments of locomotion. When we stand on both legs simultaneously or on just on one, we are situating ourselves either on a dual or singular base of support. As an example, when standing still we are generally on both feet, and when walking we alternate between swapping from one foot with the other. Let's therefore begin with the most basic posture of balance: standing.

Start by assuming shizenhontai, a "fundamental natural stance" sometimes called yoi position in karate-do. Your feet are side by side and shoulder width apart.

Touch the tip of the index finger of either hand to the bellybutton, so that when looking downward you see the finger at a 90-degree angle to the torso. Slowly begin moving the upper body and hips directly to either the right or the left without disturbing the feet. Move so that you are able to see the finger, which indicates the general location of your "central gyro's" placement in the body, approaching the inner portion of the foot.

At this point, notice that the opposite foot must be slightly loosened from the floor in order for you to continue moving the center point closer to the stationary foot. At some point, when the center area of the body nears the foot, you are almost entirely on that one foot with little weight on the other. Continue to very slowly move the center of the body over the single base of support. As your center of balance approaches the outer or lateral portion of the weight bearing foot, your balance has been severely jeopardized. When the center passes beyond the outside of this single base of support, notice that you will either fall or that you must quickly catch yourself by reestablishing the integrity of your balance with the other foot. This will hold true if you move in the other direction.

Now from shizenhontai, move very slowly toward the front of both feet. Again, you will notice that you will fall if your center of balance passes beyond the tips of your toes. From shizenhontai, move your center of balance ever so slowly to the rear and take note that you will fall as soon as the central gyro passes the outer portion of the heels.

What does all this mean? It means that regardless of posture, whether standing still, launching a kick, moving forward, backward, turning, any tai-sabaki ("body movement"), or any other possible way you might choose to move, you must maintain your

central point of balance within its base of support. It must remain within the borders of your foot or feet, dependent on the activity that is taking place.

Let's now carry the importance of balance a step further in our pursuit of perfecting our physical techniques in the martial arts and even the overall activities of daily life itself. After all, budo is not for the dojo alone. (Your practice is not only for yourself but for the positive effect it should have on all who connect with you. Thus, the body and the immediate practice hall become a microcosm of the world. This begins with the practice and pursuit of perfecting your balance. Achieving balance in one's body in turn helps to achieve balance within the mind and spirit. Anything that is less than balanced is disharmonious and lends itself toward chaos.)

Stand again in shizenhontai. Place both hands on the abdominal region near and around the navel area. Do not press hard; just hold the hands in place. Totally relax the entire body, but don't collapse. This means bringing the body's structure into balance so that no excessive tension occurs. Remain in this position as long as it takes to confirm that you are completely relaxed and motionless. This is necessary in order to fully sense even the slightest motion the body may now experience. When you have achieved this condition, take a step forward in the slowest possible fashion.

What was the very first motion you sensed? Some people say they feel their toes flex, others the knees, and so on. If you felt anything other than the belly region shift forward prior to any physical or mechanical movement, go back and try again, repeating the entire sequence. In every form of Japanese budo, correct movement starts with the lower abdomen.

Repeat this drill as often as necessary, until you truly sense that in order to step, walk, and move in any direction, your belly (center of balance) must be propelled in the desired direction. In other words, you must literally throw your center of balance

forward in the direction you choose to go. In this case it was simply forward. What happens next is the recognition that the body is basically falling forward off balance and in order not to fall one of the two legs must move out in order to catch oneself.

Did you feel the initial movement of the lower abdomen, which prompts the movement of one of the legs? Congratulations! You have begun to be aware of how you truly move. Off balance, balance, off balance, balance, and so on until you decide to stop walking. This is the yin and yang of human bipedal walking. Heretofore, it was probably difficult to be aware of such simple and subtle movement because you have done this all your life. There has been no reason to stop and analyze the way you moved when walking, but when you aspire to advance in any martial art or sport activity, you must go back to the basics. This is the most basic aspect of bipedal motion.

Consider the implications of applying this knowledge and physical awareness to areas of training such as tai-sabaki, martial body movement. With this understanding of human motion, which always begins with one's center of balance as the true initiator of any movement, you can now apply this awareness toward the perfection of not only karate-do technique, but also the realization of balanced and integrated motion in all of your activities.

Here's a quick example. On more than one occasion, Ohtsuka Saiko Shihan (leader of Wado Ryu karate-do) has cautioned students not to move one's body out of sync; that is, to move only a portion of the body instead of the body as a unified whole. An example of this disconnected movement is when a student steps forward with junzuki incorrectly. (Junzuki in Wado Ryu is generally similar to the oizuki, or "lunging punch," used in Shotokan karate-do and other styles. In junzuki, if you punch with your right hand, you also step forward with your right foot.)

When junzuki is incorrectly executed, the student's legs move forward ahead of his abdominal center, instead of letting the limbs follow the center of balance, which is natural for human beings. This type of disjointed movement tremendously diminishes the desired effect of junzuki. It causes excessive movement and wasted effort, two of the three "no-nos" that should never occur in Wado Ryu.

Another example of not moving from the center as a unit is seen when students improperly demonstrate the third movement of Pinan (Heian) Nidan Kata. In this movement, you're moving rearward prior to turning 180 degrees. If you interpret this action as stepping rearward to escape an opponent's punch, what happens if you move the legs before the torso? In essence, you have allowed the torso to remain almost in the original position prior to any movement. The legs may well be on their way toward escape, but the real target, the torso remains almost fixed allowing the attacker the opportunity to successfully strike. On the other hand, if you had begun the movement with the body's center, the entire body would have had more

than a fair chance of escaping the frontal attack, providing you correctly stepped backwards.

So, what does this all mean concerning one's center of balance? With a simple and direct method of experiencing one's center of balance, a student can step out of the realm of mere theory and directly validate the idea of being centered. It means that when one consciously trains with this understanding, there can be a return to natural movement. With this new understanding, you begin the climb toward correct application of body movement, irrespective of it being karate-do technique or the polishing of your dining room table. All movement in life should show poise and elegance through applying the correct use of one's center in the lower abdomen.

**About the Author:** Joseph Rippy Sensei was a Senior Advisor for the SMAA, and a high-ranking black belt level teacher in Wado Ryu karate-do under Ohtsuka Hironori Sensei, the son of the founder of this martial art. He trained in Wado Ryu in Japan and the USA from 1964 until he passed away about three years ago.

## POWER OF THE POSITIVE

*By Nicklaus Suino*

In our martial arts training lives, whether we study aikido, karate, kendo, or some other martial art, we must learn to use the power of the positive. This means that whenever there is a choice about how to act, we should choose the positive action: when teaching, when preparing to demonstrate or compete, and when communicating with others in the dojo.

### TEACHING

Studies of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) have shown that the subconscious mind absorbs information however it is presented. Thus, if a teacher says "don't do it this way," the student may



*Suino Sensei teaching classical judo*

remember the error better than the correct method. However, if a teacher says “do it this way,” and demonstrates the correct method, chances are good that the student will remember the proper way to do the technique, whether the technique is found in jujutsu, judo, or iaido.

That is why, if you find a good teacher, one who is not only technically proficient but also a decent human being, you stay with him/her. They are not the norm, just as excellence is not the norm in any endeavor. But in such a short lifetime, why NOT seek excellence? Anything less wouldn't be worth it.

This doesn't mean that a teacher should never point out student errors. It does suggest, however, that advice should be presented in positive terms whenever possible. This approach will help to maximize the student's exposure to correct examples, and make the whole experience of learning martial arts more enjoyable.

## PREPARING FOR DEMONSTRATIONS OR TOURNAMENTS

Adrenaline is one of the biggest obstacles to success in demonstrations, tournaments, or tests. Overcome by nerves, many of us begin to focus more on what not to do than on what we should do. Once the mind starts repeating “don't screw up, don't screw up,” the most prominent mental image we end up with is one of screwing up.

## THE MIND IN BUDO

*Article and Japanese Calligraphy by H. E. Davey*

It's common knowledge that the mind moves and controls each part of the body. Of course, in the case of the lungs and various internal organs, this control is being exerted unconsciously through the autonomic nervous system. Nonetheless, the mind directs the body, with the body ultimately reflecting our mental state. Through the medium of the autonomic nervous system, the mind and body are

A better approach is to mentally rehearse the performance, visualizing ourselves executing each technique correctly, and imagining the satisfied feeling we will have once the routine is completed. Having mentally rehearsed our performance successfully many times before actually stepping onto the mat, we are much more likely to do well.

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Our dojo in Ann Arbor is a place of learning, not a place of perfection. Because we are learning the martial arts, we have to make ourselves vulnerable. Encouragement, therefore, is the order of the day. It is not necessary to speak falsely in order to encourage others, however. The truth is that every student who puts forth effort is worthy of praise, and an alert instructor or fellow student can always spot opportunities for praise.

Kengaku means “visual study” in Japanese. It has two aspects: (1) to spot mistakes made by others in order to avoid them; and (2) to spot the areas where others excel, and to try to emulate them. The second aspect has unlimited potential to make us better!

**About the Author:** Nicklaus Suino Sensei is the author of several excellent budo books, the Director of the SMAA Judo Division, and the Co-director of the SMAA Iaido Division. He studied for several years in Japan under top teachers, and he's one of the founding members of the SMAA.

connected. However, we can weaken or enhance the mind-body connection by the way in which we use the mind. It's essential to reflect on this if we're to learn any activity, including budo, effectively. Because when this connection is weak, one may observe a martial arts technique demonstrated by a teacher, fully comprehend it mentally or



intellectually, and still not physically respond in the proper manner.

### THE POWER OF A POSITIVE MIND

In many ways, the positive and dynamic use of the mind is the most important point in learning budo, for without it, we rarely have the follow-through to effectively master any other aspects of training. Beginners should also consider as well the ways in which a negative attitude can affect them physically. (Psychosomatic illnesses are just one example of the debilitating effect the mind can have on the body.) And while all of this is important, the bottom-line is that the mind will withdraw from an activity it doesn't "feel good about." That includes learning a martial arts technique, and if we believe that we can't do well at some aspect of budo, the mind often fails to fully focus on that action, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure.

On the other hand, to be positive in training and life is not the same as being inflexible or hard-headed.

Actually, a truly optimistic mind has confidence in a positive outcome to most events and is therefore capable of being tranquil, adaptable, and harmonious in response to many circumstances. As it can confidently handle various situations, a positive mind has no reason to be disturbed or to resist. It's this commanding state of mind that some koryu bujutsu and modern budo experts have described as fudoshin, an "immovable mind," which again doesn't indicate rigidity, but rather an assured condition of mental stability.

An optimistic attitude is most easily arrived at through a deliberate and rational analysis of what's required to manifest positive thought patterns. First, we must reflect on the present condition of our minds. In other words, is the mind positive or not? We've all met individuals that perceived themselves as being upbeat people, yet weren't seen by others in that way. The mind, being invisible, is intangible. It's therefore easier to see the characteristics of the mind through a person's words, deeds, and posture.

For example, we might say, "It's so hot today I think I'm gonna die!" This is a clear indicator that our attitude and words are negative. But if we say the temperature is very high, a simple statement of fact, then our attitude and words aren't negative. This kind of differentiation is self-examination or introspection. By developing our capacity for introspection, we have an opportunity to realize a more optimistic way of living. It's the first step in learning to keep the mind upbeat, so that our words and actions are also positive, making others feel at ease, happy, and encouraged for the future. And over the 50 plus years I've been involved in budo, I've found that this makes studying the martial arts easier and more effective.

Not only is it important to reflect on if we're positive or negative, but we should consider the nature of our environment. Our environment is influenced by the words and actions of other people, by the appearance of one's surroundings (order/disorder, neat/cluttered, dirty/clean, etc.), and by an almost



*Fudoshin: 不動心*

endless variety of other factors. These factors amount to “suggestions” that we receive from our surroundings and circumstances. Which of these everyday suggestions are positive and which are negative?

By answering this question, we can restructure our surroundings so that our subconscious minds are influenced in a positive way. Gradually, positive elements are then accumulated in the subconscious, which in turn influences our conscious thoughts and actions. It’s for this reason that a traditional dojo is clean, uncluttered, bright, orderly, and natural in appearance, as these elements affect the way in which one learns. At the same time, by being aware of the influences we receive from the environment, those that we cannot necessarily control in other words, we can consciously strive to be unaffected by the negative expressions, actions, and gestures of others. This keeps the mind free from pessimistic thoughts, and for this reason, students practicing in a traditional dojo are discouraged from making negative statements like: “I can’t do that technique.” Comments of this sort not only weakens them but has a dispiriting effect on others training in the dojo.

And that’s another essential point relating to the positive use of the mind in koryu bujutsu and modern budo. We must consider the effects of our verbal expressions and actions upon the other members of our dojo. If we speak to people in a discouraging manner, not only can it weaken them, but if we succeed in depressing others, this in turn poisons our own environment. This can then make us feel less than optimistic and vigorous. Soon we may create a vicious cycle through this negative behavior, and in fact, this is a frequent cause of conflict within a family or even within society as a whole.

In the Japanese martial arts, the cultivation of wa, or “harmony,” is considered to be essential. Without this quality, a dojo (or even a nation) cannot function effectively, but it can, at least partially, be cultivated by developing the habit of using positive, encouraging words when addressing others.

Koryu bujutsu, and to a lesser degree modern budo, are derived from the ancient traditions of the bushi, the classical warrior of feudal Japan. For a bushi—or samurai, as he could also be known—facing death was an everyday concern. In fact, the bushi's life was likened to the Japanese cherry blossom, which blooms only briefly, displays vibrant color and beauty, and is then scattered by the wind.

The bushi's main obligations and code of ethics centered on the concept of giving his life in the service of his country, clan, and feudal lord. Adhering to this aspect of giri (“obligation”) was the realization that he could be required to lay down his life, without hesitation, at a moment's notice. By resolving to live each day as if it were his last, he discovered how to experience life fully, without indecision or regret. The bushi's goal wasn't to simply exist, but to live a meaningful life.

For the bushi to maintain a positive attitude in the face of possible impending death, he had to learn not to worry about the past, or especially, the future. This point is also vital for the modern student of martial arts. Basically, if the mind stays in the present, it's impossible to worry. Human beings worry about an event that might take place in the future. The present moment contains no time or space for worry.

Our past cannot be changed, and to be preoccupied with it is inefficient in terms of time and effort. Likewise, by agonizing over the future we only exhaust ourselves, making us less able to effectively respond when the future is actually upon us. Moreover, by worrying about a mishap that may or may not take place, we undergo the event twice: once when imagining it, and once again, if and when we really experience it.

By mastering the habit of keeping the mind in the present, unless we deliberately want to contemplate the past or future, it's possible to face an opponent without fear. Then, no thoughts of past defeats, or future injury, will exist in the mind, and a truly



*Ki brushed in an ancient, abstract script: 気*

positive mental state will result—fudoshin—the “immovable mind.”

As noted earlier, when the mind is positive, integration of mind and body is maintained, and we can manifest our full potential. But remember, a negative mind unconsciously withdraws from the action currently taking place, which it doesn't feel capable of effectively participating in. This creates a separation of mind and body, making us unable to respond successfully to an opponent's attack. In budo it's vital to throw 100 percent of ourselves spiritually into the moment at hand, and this positive mental state amounts to a projection of ki, “life energy.”

We've all met positive and bright individuals, people who project a “large presence.” The intangible, but palpable, big presence a dynamic individual is projecting is ki. It's an indispensable aspect of traditional martial arts, although not every teacher will describe it using this word.

Nevertheless, the energy which effects the union of mind and body has been characterized by the Japanese as ki for centuries. The term is used every

day in conversation, and it's not something exclusively associated with martial arts. In Japanese brush calligraphy, teachers sometimes mention bokki, the “ki in the ink,” for example. I've also discussed ki with prominent Japanese teachers of everything from classical flower arrangement to Zen meditation. They all were familiar with it and periodically used the expression in their classes.

And of course, the character for ki is part of terms utilized in countless dojo around the world, words like aiki and kiai. When I was a child studying judo, a senior student would start off each class by shouting “Ki o tsuke! Rei!” Rei simply means to “bow” (to the teacher), and ki o tsuke is usually translated in this context as “attention,” as in to sit at attention before bowing. But when we actually examine the characters that make up ki o tsuke (気を付け), we discover its literal meaning suggests to “focus one's ki on something.”

Ki obeys the mind which can direct it, cause it to converge on one area and encourage its flow. It is the fundamental energy of the universe, which connects all things. It's also the true form of things in a subtle sense. It has been present since the creation of the universe.

An understanding of ki isn't something that can be fully detailed in a brief article, although you can find a much more complete explanation in my book *The Teachings of Tempu: Practical Meditation for Daily Life*, along with simple experiments and exercises to help you intelligently understand and develop your use of ki. For the moment, just remember that ki amounts to the vitalizing force that animates all creations, and that the positive use of the mind releases it, while the negative use of the mind produces a withdrawal and loss of ki.

### THE POWER OF CONCENTRATION

Once again, unless the mind and body work together as a powerful unit, it's difficult to perform with all of our strength in budo. In a sense, if the

mind and body aren't in harmony, we feel at odds with ourselves, and are utilizing only a partial—as opposed to a whole—power. And remember I mentioned that unless we regard each moment in martial arts training in a positive way, our minds will refuse to concentrate on activities that they don't want to participate in, or do not believe that they can effectively participate in. Along these lines, without the capacity to concentrate the mind on whatever activity the body's engaging in, no matter how much stress we're experiencing, it's impossible to fully maintain coordination. The difference between an unfocused mind and a concentrated mind is like the distinction between a flashlight and a laser beam.

Simply put, a positive attitude releases the power of the mind. But what directs and focuses this mental power, ideally in coordination with the body and our actions? It's concentration, and it's not just related to mental strength.

In ancient bujutsu and modern budo, innumerable examples exist of amazing feats and demonstrations of mental and physical prowess, often considered to be examples of the power of ki. Still, in most cases these seemingly superhuman abilities can be ascribed to the positive and concentrated power of the mind, used in conjunction with the body's strength. You could say that the vigor of one's ki is directly related to a person's capacity for positive thought and concentration. Moreover, if the positive thinking unleashes the vibrant power of ki, the concentrated use of the mind securely guides and focuses ki. However, like most habits, concentration is a habit that must be cultivated, and it's vital for the student of budo to consider what kind of practice will allow him or her to master concentration.

Many activities, ranging from meditation to Japanese yoga (心身統一道), which the author encourages his students to participate in, can help cultivate the power of concentration. Still, it's not only possible to acquire remarkable concentration by engaging in everyday actions; it is vital to do so.



*The author teaching traditional jujutsu in his dojo*

When do people lose concentration, and therefore, lose their awareness of the moment? For most, it's when they're doing something that they're extremely familiar with, such as putting on or tying their shoes. For instance, how many of us remember which shoe we tied first this morning? As we try to be cognizant of these gaps in awareness, we start to cultivate clear consciousness and impeccable concentration in daily life. This constant awareness allows the student of budo to ultimately realize a state of mind that leaves no openings for an opponent's attack.

To continue, quite a few people become so preoccupied with the outcome of an action that they cannot focus the mind on the process taking place at that instant. This is an especially serious problem in budo, in that novices are often so concerned about someday using a particular technique they're learning "in a real self-defense situation," that they don't fully concentrate on the learning process taking place at that moment, and drift off into some sort of martial arts fantasy. Simply put, they're in such a hurry to become powerful, and thus bolster their egos, that they fail to deeply concentrate on

the action they are presently engaged in. In essence, then, when we're trying to complete matters in a hurry, we tend to lose concentration. This isn't to suggest that it's impossible to act quickly and still concentrate, but that we should be careful to make sure that we're really concentrating when hurrying.

People also switch off their concentration whenever they participate in activities they believe to be uninteresting. Beginning students of Japanese cultural arts, including budo, frequently struggle with the seemingly never-ending repetitions of basic techniques required by their sensei, failing to realize that the essence of these arts lies in learning their fundamentals, which must be continuously drilled if they're going to become automatic reactions. Their seniors usually have no problem practicing basic movements repeatedly, as they're constantly analyzing and refining minute aspects of these basics. What's boring for one person can be fascinating for another.

Therefore, in some cases, whether or not we concentrate is, at least partially, determined by whether or not we have a positive attitude. Even if nothing of interest can be found in an activity, it's still possible to use it as an interesting test or exercise to improve concentration.

Making sure that we concentrate on activities which we think are of no value is a related method of developing dynamic powers of concentration, and what we consider to be worthless is relative. In fact, by really paying attention to certain activities, it's possible to discover value where we imagined none was present. It is particularly important for novices in budo to realize that this art isn't based on short-term gratification, and that the value of many

aspects of practice becomes apparent only after innumerable repetitions. While it is, of course, not necessary to seek out things of little worth to concentrate on, keeping the mind focused on any physical action, even when it seems of little value (realizing that no absolute standard of worth is possible) is a way of cultivating potent concentration.

In all of these cases, if we fail to realize the importance of concentrating, we'll unknowingly cultivate the opposite habit of being unable to concentrate even when we want to. Every repeated mental or physical action, whether positive or negative in nature, builds up in the subconscious to form a habit.

What's more, data in experimental psychology indicates that the more vigorously and attentively we use our minds, the less fatigued we become, on both mental and physical levels. Bearing this in mind, it's logical to adopt the bushi's philosophy of performing each action in life as if it were the first time, and as if we might never have another chance to do so again. Using budo as a tangible proof of your ability to use the mind in a positive and concentrated manner, it's possible to vitally transform your life. In this way, it's natural to throw 100 percent of yourself into each moment, pouring ki into every second of life, becoming fully alive, and actually living as opposed to merely existing.

**About the Author:** H. E. Davey, SMAA Jujutsu Division Shihan and eighth dan, is a founding member of the SMAA. His award-winning books detailing Japanese yoga, meditation, martial arts, brush calligraphy, flower arrangement, and more can be found at [www.michipublishing.com](http://www.michipublishing.com).

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