

Give up your Mind and your Mind will Stay Full

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No matter how technically skillful you are, if you are not able to give up winning – to let go of controlling the situation – your fighting ability, your ability to use the tools you have, will be limited.

There is a story about a famous Samurai in the 16th hundred, Miyamoto Musashi, who used to go around dojos and challenge the seniors. This was a way to test his skills. Once he came into a school and said that of all the students there was but one young white belt he would worry about. He could sense that even though this white belt did not have much technique, he would give up his life if necessary.

The term Ho-Shin means to give your mind completely; to not hold anything back. When you give everything away not only will your physical technique have all your being in it, all your mental and physical potential, but also paradoxically because you give everything away your mind will stay full – meaning free. You will be ready for any change in the situation.

We are afraid to commit ourselves because we might make mistakes. But here we say that when we commit one hundred percent we implement our decisions better and more completely. We are able to flow and better adjust to the changing situation.

My teacher, Sensei Nishiyama gives this analogy: if you pour out a cup of water slowly, when you turn it back up there is nothing left, but if you turn it down decisively and at once, when you turn it back up you will still have some water in the cup.

When you make a decision, give everything to it, don't hold back anything and you will be free. Your intuition and experience will work for you. If you hesitate, have doubt, you will have contradiction in your movement and in your mind. The opponent will have more chance to capitalize and you will be stuck, unfree

Aiko San, my teacher's secretary, who is very wise and intuitive and has been committed to karate for the past 45 years, told me that if you want to control the fight, give up control. In Budo (Japanese martial arts) the wish to win is the beginning of loss.

Ai Uchi in Budo means mutual killing. We say that when facing an opponent we must have the feeling of Ai-Uchi. If I am willing to give myself away, I have nothing to lose. The opponent feels no space or chance to attack since my mind is complete without doubt or hesitation. Most opponents will give up mentally when facing a person with that kind of spirit.

In karate we know that the mental and physical potential of most people is much greater than what they actually apply. We all know stories about women who demonstrate unusual feats to save their babies. In karate we can systematically learn to use more of our potential. Because of trauma, past experiences and as a protection mechanism of the body, we are not using our full potential. In karate, on the one hand, we develop proper technique and coordination so when we use our full potential we will do it with good mechanics. At the same time we learn to remove mental inhibitions, doubts, and give all of ourselves to a task.

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We learn how to use intention and breathing to guide our muscles and we develop a strong spirit yet we differentiate between spirit and emotions since being emotional is an obstacle and is different than being spirited.

I can only explain the concept in writing. The actual method of learning to give everything has to be developed in class, with your body and whole being. Then we can turn the concepts into actions. I believe that this concept can be applied to every area in life; karate can give you the tools.

Miyamoto Musashi said that an expert is a person who is great at his art, but a master is one who can apply the principles of his art to every area of his life.