

You don't see –yet you see You don't hear – yet you hear

This is a Budo Martial arts saying describing the highest level of intuition and awareness, and the ability of a person to perceive without interfering with himself, without the interference of thoughts and judgment, It's an awareness which in it our receivers are clear, not clouded. At this level without trying to see, without trying to know, you know the opponent's intention; you see his action before he moves.

This is not magic, anyone can get to that level, but it is tricky, the harder you try the more difficult it will become. The beautiful thing is that if you have the proper guidance and directions, and you understand the factors that are necessary to get to that level, you will get there. I think that part of the difficulty lies in our belief. In our society we are trained to believe in logic and to believe only what we see and can confirm.

In karate confirming, trusting what we see only will make us always late, behind our opponent. If we open our "receivers" there is enough information in the opponent's movement, body language, breath and rhythm, and the energy that he projects to us to see the opponent's intention and movement ahead of time.

I believe that the ingredients that bring a person to such high level are:
Stable emotions under pressure; confidence; experience; proper use of the eyes; proper use of the breath; proper movement; and you also have to believe that it is possible.

Confidence and stable emotions

Hard training brings confidence and confidence brings stable emotions.

Of course there are other factors that affect emotions such as the breathing, even our posture and the way we move. When we get excited or afraid our breathing rises and becomes faster. When we try to focus our breathing slows down. That is also not good since it is a narrow focus. What we need is attentiveness, which is wide and includes focus. So our breath should be natural. Just the same way that emotions affect the breath, it works the other way, and we can affect and quiet our emotions using the breath.

Breathing

The breath "catches" the opponent's rhythm and movement rather than the eyes. If we use the eyes we are behind. We use the breath to "ride" the opponent, tune to him, rather than fight or compete with him.

We say that your breath and the opponent's breath should become one, and in the more advanced levels, your breath will conduct the opponent's breath and movement. You are the commander and he is your soldier. Through connecting to the opponent's breath we connect to his intentions, since the breath is the connections between mental and physical.

We also react to the opponent's action with our breath rather than with the eyes. Light reaction is too late for us since you have to look, analyze, decide and then act.

We bypass the conscious brain, by reacting with the breath. Which means reacting directly at the spinal level, and at the same time the breath also activates the body center.

The breath initiates reaction and action, so reaction and action become one, without space. (This needs deeper explanation that is beyond the scope of this article). If a person breath does not tune and match the opponent's we say that he is self-dancing. That means that he has to rely on speed and force rather than skill.

The Eyes

In karate we understand that the eyes affect the brain. If we look at the opponent too hard we will judge, confirm, be behind rhythm and out of tune with the opponent. We will easily become overly excited and emotionally unstable. When we rely on the eyes we become hesitant and have doubts. There are many ways of describing the use of the eyes depending on the level, with the highest level being "you don't see yet you see". In other words: You don't try to look yet you see inside your opponent without trying.

Enzen No Metzke – Eyes back as if looking at a mountain from a long distance.

This is one of the most basic and important methods of using the eyes. When looking from close you can see a house a tree, you get stuck in details. When looking from afar you can see the whole without getting stuck in one place. The feeling should be as if the eyes are monitoring the situation, observing, looking softly, and not trying too hard.

Looking at the shining star – looking to the opponent's eye as if looking to a star.

When the eye shine changes you know the opponent intention changes and he is about to move.

Tani no Metzke – looking through a canyon.

Looking through the opponent's eyes to his heart or feeling. You are looking to the opponent's eye level, not staring at the eyes, but rather through and down to his heart.

Aiko San is a woman who has worked with my teacher for the past 40 years. She understands karate more than anyone else, and once gave me great advice: "Look at your opponent as if he is a shadow, he has no details".

At the end you don't look in any special way, you just see inside your opponent.

Experience

Through the experience of facing many people we realize that most people have similar patterns in the way they react. They project their energy before certain action. This is a very important component of reading our opponent without judging and analyzing. Experience can also create bad habits. The way you respond mentally to a stimulus is similar to how we respond physically. Nerve impulses travel in certain pathways. Once they travel once in certain pathway, they are likely to travel in that same pathway in response to a stimulus. So if we are creating a habit of tensing up, getting nervous or angry when facing an opponent, we will block our ability to sense him and to respond to him in a flowing way.

How to use experience to our advantage needs to be taught orally in the class and in accord to how a person interacts with the opponent in a certain moment. Here I only describe the general concept.

Body movement

If my body moved in the way it was designed to, from the center out, then my reaction (from the spine) and my action (from the spine) are one without space of choosing or deciding. If on the other hand, my training is improper, and I move my arms and legs independently, in isolation, it's a different pathway of movement. The brain has to order the arm and leg to move. I could not bypass the brain so I am going to be busy with many details and cannot perceive my opponent.

In proper movement there is one center control (mentally and physically). The movement becomes easier and the brain is not so busy. Details can be let go of, and all that is left is intention and breath. The proper movement will take care of itself. I don't know what I am doing until it's done.

Posture

In good posture openness and sincerity are expressed. Your body and mind are light and sensitive. We say that even a fly landing on you will set you in motion.

When an opponent senses that you give yourself up, not holding anything, he will feel it very difficult to attack.