

“Apply karate to all things” (1)

Reflections by Bob Young, Nidan

Last month’s article looked at the Physical Elements of karate—how things are organized or interact. With that structure in mind, one can use the “karate lens” to help find solutions to life’s situations and challenges. The second article in this series will consider the Psychological Aspects of karate and how they can be applied outside of the dojo. Several key psychological karate principles are summarized below.

“mizuno kokoro” means “a mind like water” (2)

- * make the mind calm like the surface of water
- * smooth water reflects accurately all objects within range

Students must be able to immediately see and accurately understand the opponent’s movements (psychological and physiological). If the surface of the water is disturbed, the images it reflects will be distorted. By analogy, if the mind is preoccupied with thoughts of attack or defense, it will not see or understand the opponent’s intentions and might create an opportunity for the opponent to attack.

“tsuki no kokoro” means “a mind like the moon” (2)

* One must be constantly be aware of the totality of the opponent and his/her movements.

Analogy: the moonlight shines on everything within range.

* Nervousness or distractions are like clouds that block the moonlight and interfere with awareness
of the opponents actions. This interference prevents the mind from immediately seeing and accurately
understanding the opponent’s movements.

“unity of mind and will” (2)

Another analogy: the **mind** is like a cellphone’s speaker and the **will** is the electric current. No matter how sensitive the speaker is, if there is a dead battery no communication takes place. Similarly, even if you immediately see and accurately understand the movements of your opponents, but the will to act on this knowledge is lacking, no effective technique will be forthcoming. The mind may find an opening, but the will must be activated in order to execute the technique called for.

Key physical-psychological power principles⁽³⁾:

The objective is to create maximum **focus and efficiency** of power towards the intended **target**. The physical principles include maximum **floor pressure** connection, **transmission** of body energy to the target, and appropriate **control** of power and speed. The psychological principles require that the **mental** power or spirit is focused towards the target.

I consider the above principles when a task requires that I simultaneously do many things correctly, e.g., give a presentation, play a musical instrument, participate in an interview, and especially when I work on my golf swing. I figure out how to apply the above karate principles to my activity. With a calm mind, my mental focus must include a total awareness of my goal and not be distracted by the all of the things I need to remember. When I'm **mentally calm, aware, and not distracted**; I'm often surprised by how well I do.

References:

(1) Quote from *The Essence of Karate*, by Gichin Funakoshi 2013 by Kodansha USA, Inc.

(2) *Karate The Art of "Empty-Hand" Fighting*, by Hidetaka Nishiyama & Richard C. Brown 1960 by Tuttle Publishing pages 20-21

(3) Paraphrased from: *Traditional Karate Competition Rules*, ITKF 2009 Edition by International Traditional Karate Federation, Inc.