



# The Isshinryu Way

## Everything Karate & Kobudo

**Isshinryu  
Worldwide**

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### Fundamentals Matter

In Karate, we start with the basics.

In Kobudo, we start with the basics.

Continuing to develop your basics makes your kata stronger.

Continuing to develop your basics makes your fighting more efficient.

Continuing to develop your basics makes your Bunkai more effective.

Are you dedicating enough time to your basics? Are you drilling them in a variety of ways? Are you applying the practice to your other training?

If you didn't answer YES emphatically to all those questions, spending more time on your basics can only benefit you. In fact, it's not just your traditional basics, but it's working on all your root training elements.

Practice your stances, are they strong, can you easily move from one stance to another, can you change directions efficiently?

Practice your strikes, are you hitting the Makiwara or heavy bag? Do you have proper alignment, is your posture correct?

Practice your blocks, are you connecting your movement with your block? Do you actively think about when a block should be hard and when it should be soft? Do you practice with a partner to make sure it works?

Focusing on all these fundamental aspects of Karate isn't for beginners, it's the key to being superb at Karate, Kobudo and Fighting. If you ensure that every practice dedicates some time to your basics, the benefits will pay off very quickly.

### Upcoming Events

#### Events

May 2024—Isshinryu Expo—Thunder Bay, ON, Canada

July 2024—Isshinryu Hall of Fame—Gatlinburg, TN, USA

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#### **Essential Isshinryu is available!**

For more information on the first Canadian Isshinryu book, visit [www.essentialisshinryu.com](http://www.essentialisshinryu.com)!

## Ask yourself the hard questions



## Isshinryu Expo A Huge Success

Once again, the Isshinryu Expo held in Thunder Bay, On in May 2023 was a huge success. Plans are already underway for the 2024 event!

Participants travelled in from across North America and Europe for a great weekend of training. The highlight of the event is always the opportunity to train with a vast number of different instructors, learning their points of view and techniques.

During the event, the following promotions occurred.

### Nikyu

Julia Fenton (Chitora Dojo Thunder Bay)  
Kaelyn Fenton (Chitora Dojo Thunder Bay)  
Wilder Ostap (Chitora Dojo Thunder Bay)

### Ikkyu

Lisa Opas (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
Lucas Fabiano (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
Averi Peckford (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
Colton Tycholas (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
Carson Mulligan (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
John Meilleur (Toshikai Ottawa)

### Shodan Ho

Logan Fonso (Toshikai Thunder Bay)

### Shodan

Noriko Shibata (Toshikai Ottawa)

### Nidan

Pauline Hampe (Kokoro Germany)  
Mark Ivanowich (Toshikai Ottawa/Dryden)

### Sandan

Jen Edwards (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
Nolan Maenpaa (Toshikai Thunder Bay)  
Julie Laurendeau (Toshikai Ottawa)  
Candice MacArthur (Dryden)

### Yondan

Rob Purdon (Chowa)

### Rokudan

Ryan Boesche (Kokoro Germany)

### Hachidan

Brent Horton (Winnipeg)





## Isshinryu Hall of Fame Inductee—Susan Baldassi

Most if not everyone reading this already knows Susan Baldassi, she constantly serves as an inspiration to all, not only as a Karateka but as an exceptional human being. I'm proud to have known and been able to train with her nearly 40 years myself, but even after all this time, seeing her passion with every new student that starts demonstrates how deeply she cares, again, not just about the Karate, but about the people.

Everyone in Canada should be proud of her induction into the hall of fame, joining only a handful of others.

Here is Susan's official bio for the Isshinryu Hall of Fame.

Susan (Fuchek) Baldassi, 7th Dan, is the highest-ranked female Isshinryu Karate instructor in Canada. Affiliated with Master Albert Mady, Susan earned her Blackbelt in 1983 and opened her first dojo at the age of 17.

Susan's parents recognized the value of martial arts for their four young daughters, thus setting them on the path with Kung Fu, Judo and eventually Isshinryu. Since the age of 6, she has travelled extensively to compete and train, including the IHOF tournaments.

Susan has inspired thousands of students for the last four decades as a Sensei, School Teacher and University Instructor (Faculty of Education). She is the co-founder (along with her brother-in-law Tim Leonard) of the Martial Arts and Health Expo, an international event hosted in Thunder Bay, Canada. As the author of "Explore Your Energy with Sensei Susan's Karate Kids" and "The Resilience Project" a resource incorporating martial arts and wellness practices, she promotes the benefits of the martial arts in the global community.

Susan has been featured on CBC Radio for her Women's Self-defense program as well as in Readers Digest "Best Health" magazine. She is

a charter member of the Thunder Bay Martial Arts Council, a multidisciplinary group promoting the benefits of the martial arts, AOKA Female Instructor of the Year 1999 and 2007 and selected IHOF Sensei of Sensei in 2017.

Susan loves the way that the martial arts make her feel: alive, able to challenge her limits, powerful and disciplined mentally and physically. She believes that Isshinryu is a wonderful path to forge the qualities that we need for life and continues to inspire others to explore this ancient practice. She appreciates the support of her family and especially her sons, Brandon and Jacob, who encourage her to continue to be a trailblazer.







## Embers—Keeping the Fire Burning

By Rob Purdon

Often as a karate student one finds one's drive and enthusiasm for the art waning. Life, work, injury, etc. can all make karate take a back seat at times, or even allow the thoughts of dropping out or quitting to enter consideration. These are difficult times for a martial artist and it happens at different times in their evolution. Sometimes it is when they are a kyu rank and other interests/priorities take over their time (we used to call it the "blue wall" and the "brown wall" in our dojo). Sometimes it is when they suffer an injury (in or out of the dojo). Sometimes it is when they feel they have achieved a specific objective (e.g. shodan). These drivers and the circumstances that create them can be hard to overcome.

In my journey, there have been many times where karate has had to take a back seat. There have also been times where I seriously considered dropping out. I have also suffered and recovered from a number of injuries. However, here I remain - a dedicated karateka, still trying to improve my understanding of the art, and as I age and old injuries come back to haunt me, adapt karate while still making it an effective art for self-defense. At times, though, the fire that kept me going in karate has been reduced to embers. This essay is a brief narrative on some techniques I found successful in fanning these embers back into flames.

The first step is one of self-reflection. When you feel the fire burn low, look at what is going on in your life both in and out of the dojo that are causing it. Identify the causes and isolate the drivers. Find the things that are within your power to change, then develop a plan to affect these changes. These are simple words but this process is difficult – it is hard to accept that, even if you did not create the situation or circumstances you are dealing with, it is how you react that matters. However, despite the drivers, no fire can exist without 3 basic elements: air, heat and fuel. This essay will explore self-reflection by extrapolating this concept to our human selves.

### Air

Air can be equated to breathing. If you are finding it hard to catch a figurative breath, it may be that you have over-committed in some component of your life (which actually could be karate) and you have no breathing room. Explore this with yourself – where are you spending your time and energy? What aspects are eclipsing others? Is this a wise and/or valuable expenditure of your resources? Can these be re-allocated to better balance your activities? When you make changes, monitor the results, see if you are improving oxygen flow to the embers and adjust your activities accordingly.

### Fuel

Fuel can be equated to energy. If your physical and mental energy are low, you will not be able to spread it through all your activities or address all the stressors in your life. Energy comes from diet, rest and exercise. If you are finding that you are tired and lack energy, look at these three things that provide energy and determine if you need to change or reportion them. Rest is essential, both sleeping and getting down time from stressors.

Exercise is an important way to fuel your body. It raises your energy level, increases endurance and is an excellent release for stress. Find ways to make exercise a regular part of your daily routine. Use the stairs, walk to work, take walks at coffee and lunch time if you work in an office or at a desk for long periods. If you are not sleeping well, explore that with a critical eye to identify what drivers are affecting your sleep patterns and what changes you can make.

Diet is equally important. Our bodies require proper balanced nutrition. Alcohol and marijuana (in whatever form), while legal, are impediments to proper nutrition and can interfere with regular sleep patterns. Consequently, these should be used with caution and only occasionally, if at all. Other drugs (with the exception of prescription medication) are to be avoided at all costs – these have the capacity to destroy you and severely harm those you care about. Stress can often lead to poor decisions related

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to diet (fast food, junk food, alcohol/marijuana consumption, etc.). Diet, rest and exercise are also very important to injury recovery. We must recognize when these three components of fuel are lacking as, without fuel, one cannot address heat - the third element in the triangle.

### Heat

Heat can be equated to your passion and drive. When I have found my passion and drive for karate waning, it is often because I have been suffocating it with over commitments in other areas of my life and/or due to a lack of fuel. However, even when those two elements have been adjusted, overcoming the inertia to get back to training and development of the art has been hard. Always remember that you cannot start a fire without a spark. The point of ignition can be simply setting time to train a couple times a week. It can also come from working with a partner, an other student or a sensei to develop techniques or learn new ones – like rubbing two sticks together to ignite the fire. It can also be a conversation with your sensei, another student, your partner or a family member.

Never be afraid to reach out – the act of sharing is cathartic in its own right and will help reduce stress

(a driver affecting air and fuel in our triangle). If you find your interest and drive is waning in karate specifically and you find that this is not due to a lack of air or fuel, ask yourself what is missing. Is there an aspect of karate that you feel is important or interesting? Are there some techniques, weapons, or specific skills you would like to pursue? If you are a student, speak to your sensei and see if these elements can be brought in, or research and study them and offer to bring those elements to class yourself. If you are a sensei, be cognizant of the level of engagement of your students, be receptive to requests to explore their interests. Break up the relative monotony of basic drills with applications, kata, bunkai, striking etc. Bring something new into the dojo – sometimes a change is as good as a rest.

When you find your interest and drive for karate waning, remember that even if the fire appears to be out, there is always a bed of coals and with the application of air and fuel and heat, you're the fire can be rekindled.

## Karate and Breathing

By Noriko Shibata

I have been practicing karate since 2014. Unlike other karatekas who are practicing at the same style for 9 years, I have changed dojo twice and am always busy with focusing on adapting to new positions and movements. As a result, I feel that I missed learning and mastering one of the most important techniques in karate, the breathing. Breathing is one of the most important parts of karate and requires a lot of practice.

There are two breathing techniques called Ibuki and Nogaré, Japanese meaning for those words are

“breath exhaling” and “escape”. There are many interpretation for them but the best way for me to understand them is following. Ibuki is for Sanchin kata, where the breathing contracts inner and outer muscles in the body whereas Nogaré is used to recover energy between fights. When using Ibuki, the lower abdomen should be as hard as a rock. I would like to properly understand Ibuki and Nogaré breathings and implement it into my karate practice from now on.

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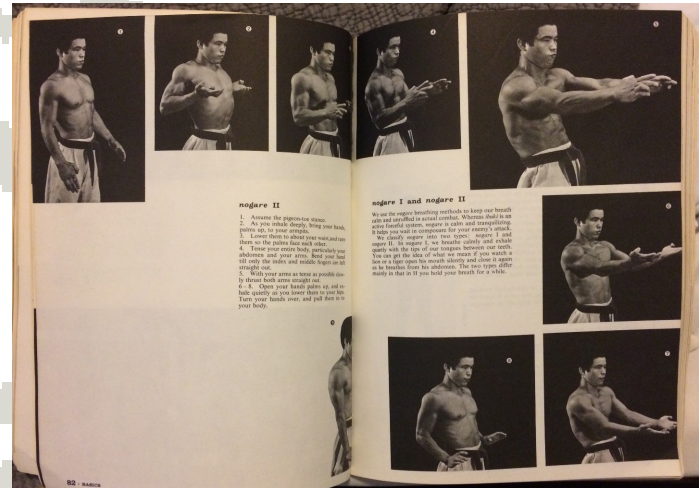
## Karate and Breathing

By Noriko Shibata

When using Ibuki breathing I am at standing position like sanchin dachi, breathing air from the nose as much as I can, breathing out the air slowly from the mouth. When exhaling, imagine the diaphragm is pushing the lungs, and pushing the inner muscle called tanden(丹田) out. Tanden is the centre of ki(気 energy) which is located 7-8 cm lower from the belly bottom. The intention of the exhaling is to control the pressure of the tanden, gather up all ki in the tanden. While pushing out the tanden, keep outer abdominal muscle contracted. So the image is pushing inner muscle and outer muscle each other and build a strong wall around the lower abdomen which then radiates to all limbs and torso.

The most important aspect, during either the period of inhaling or exhaling, is that the abdominal muscles must be hardened. The moment of the inhaling is the most vulnerable state of the body. If I get hit during this period and my abdominal muscles are not hard, the damage can be critical therefore, I push diaphragm downward and do not raise shoulders, or push ribs outwards when breathing in. Inhaling air as quickly as possible. So Ibuki breathing makes sure that my abdominal muscle is hardened regardless of the stage of the breathing.

Unlike Ibuki, Nogaré is slow, deep, and soft breathing, also known as “combat breathing”. The purpose of this breathing is distributing oxygen to every cell of your body by slow deep breathing, and sustain your stamina during the fight. Exhaling the air can be sharp and quick, and the body can get hardened as when striking an opponent, or kicking a pad. Controlling Nogaré breathing is also able to lower the heart rate.



Hard and strong is not always the best for all situations, there are other times the soft approach is beneficial, like the hard-soft or yin-yang principals like the codes of karate, “The manner of drinking and spitting is either hard or soft”.

When I practice sparring, because I am small, I tend to harden my body as defence mechanism triggered. I don't notice it most of the time. Nogaré breathing is suggesting to me to soften my body and inhale air deep. This can allow me to prepare sharp and hard attack. Isshinryu Codes says “either hard or soft” which I understand that hard is powerful and breakable while soft is resistible and flexible. It is important to use both methods in appropriate timing.

There is no standardized instructions for the breathing techniques. Every research brings slightly different way of breathing under the same title of the breathing because individual perception towards the principals are not always the same. I choose what possibly best breathing for me from all information I went through. Ibuki and Nogaré breathing techniques work differently and have purpose. Practicing them and applying them to my karate will help improve my form, and help me stay stronger longer.



## About The Newsletter

Just as in our dojo training, the newsletter is about sharing and improving as a group. We regularly have contributions and updates from Quebec to British Columbia in Canada, as well as from Germany, New York and the Southern United States. Everyone is always welcome in my Dojo or to share via the newsletter.

Articles are welcome from anyone and everyone. They can be about anything related to the Martial Arts, a technique you think is just great; A better way to do a technique; History of a Karate Master; a tournament trick that works well; **ANY-THING!**

All articles are appreciated as e-mail. You can send it to your instructor to proof read and send in, or directly to me. (sensei@isshinryu.ca)

You can even include pictures if it helps your article!

## Karate Terms

### Kempo Gokui—Codes of Isshinryu Karate

1. A person's heart is the same as Heaven and Earth.
2. The blood circulating is similar to the Moon and Sun.
3. The manner of drinking and spitting is either hard or soft.
4. A person's unbalance is the same as a weight.
5. The body should be able to change direction at any time.
6. The time to strike is when the opportunity presents itself.
7. The eye must see all sides.
8. The ear must listen in all directions.

**Everything is Basics**  
*Soke Masaaki Hatsumi*