



The Isshinryu Way Everything Karate & Kobudo

Isshinryu
Worldwide

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The Power of Community

Since the past newsletter, a pair of major events happened, the Isshinryu Expo in Thunder Bay, ON and the Isshinryu Hall of Fame in Gatlinburg, TN. These types of events highlight the community that exists within the martial arts.

Opportunities to come together and train, compete and generally enjoy good friendship and share knowledge are a defining characteristic of modern karate. We've moved beyond the secrecy in which Karate was born into an era of openness and welcoming to everyone. I'm very happy about this.

Being able to learn from everyone and share knowledge with everyone is the way that Isshinryu can continue to develop and misunderstandings as to the origin of techniques can be eliminated.

If you have the opportunity to attend a major (or minor) event, please take it. No

matter your rank, you will learn. Don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone, that's how you learn and get better. Before you know it, your comfort zone will be much, much larger!

I'd also like to highlight that community and social interactions are beneficial for your health, studies continuously show that having strong social connections leads people to living longer and healthier. We are fortunate to share such a great community.

Lastly, to those who nominated me and selected me as this years Isshinryu Hall of Fame, Harold Long Spirit of Isshinryu recipient, Thank you!

Upcoming Events

Events

May 2025—Isshinryu Expo—Thunder Bay, ON, Canada

July 2025—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!

Gratitude builds Strength



Competition as part of Karate Practice

By Julie Laurendeau

My karate practice has brought me through various experiences. I realize that my path is somewhat particular (and short), as I started Isshinryu karate at 38 years old, to accompany and train with my daughter who really wanted to learn karate. As it turns out, my daughter, a skilled karateka, has stopped training, but here I am, a Nidan practitioner and continuing my journey in Isshinryu karate.

In preparation for this essay, I dug out some articles and clips that I had kept along the way in my red Isshinryu karate binder. I find it always interesting to read again articles and materials, as their meaning will have evolved along one's personal journey. One of the articles I found is dated December 1978 from the Black Belt Magazine. It talks about Harold Mitchum teaching karate in his Dojo in Albany, Georgia. And it's actually the title of the article that caught my eye: "The Four Purposes of Karate", specifically Isshinryu purposes, being:

"...strengthening of the mind and body, instilling self-confidence, instilling self-discipline and as a means of self-defence that should never be abused".

Then I came across this quote that I had kept, from Hanshi Fumio Demura, 9th Dan in Shitoryu karate and kobudo. It reads:

"Competition is good, but it should only be about 10 percent of Karate training. People who train mostly for competition are going to lose the mystery of the art, and they could miss out on technical knowledge too."

Although Shihan Demura is not an Isshinryu practitioner, martial arts are martial arts and teachings or thoughts from other styles may be meaningful too. Reading his quote actually gave me food for thought. Along my karate journey, I had been encouraged to participate in tournaments. I have competed in kata, weapons and sparring, in Canada and in the USA. All these experiences were exciting and stressful in

some ways, but very fulfilling and great learning opportunities. Some of these tournaments brought together dojos of different styles of martial arts. The question in my head was, how can one Isshinryu practitioner distinguish him/herself from other karateka practicing other styles? It was a good question, but as I found out competing against karateka from many other styles, no matter the style, one has to practice and display their best performance showing strength, focus and speed in all techniques. Whether practicing Isshinryu or any other style, it's always inspiring to look at performances of other martial artists outside your little dojo and see how they apply and show their techniques. Hence, I believe that competition is a great opportunity to somewhat extend and enlarge one's mind through their karate practice, as I have found so many benefits myself.

Training for a competition or a tournament means increasing the time for practice and refining techniques to present your own best possible practice, whether it's in kata, weapons or kumite. It would be fair to say that training for a competition makes anyone practice way more. Practice, practice, practice, in order to fine tune every movement, every stance and every technique. Then, on the day of the competition, the karateka has to manage the stress and nervousness of presenting the kata in front of judges and also seeing other karateka present their best performance too. Hence, participating in competitions or tournaments does respect the 4 purposes of Isshinryu karate:

Strengthening of the mind and body: The extra practice from participating in a tournament surely provides strengthening of the mind and body. It reinforces motivation and focus.

Instilling self-confidence: The kata is presented in the best way possible in front of many judges. One can only develop more confidence in their techniques along the way.

Instilling self-discipline: The extra practice, again, to be able to offer the best performance, is an indication of self-discipline.



Competition as part of Karate Practice

By Julie Laurendeau

A means of self-defence that should never be abused: Mostly if participating in kumite, the techniques are used in a controlled environment and one can test various types of attacks and defenses with other competitors outside of the dojo.

No matter what position is attributed by the judges to the karateka (from first to last place, or participation), the experience is rich and meaningful. Every participant will leave the event thinking they would have liked to perform better, but they do have the lingering feeling of having improved and feel more confident. I personally feel that, in general, karateka that participate regularly in tournaments are generally more confident in their abilities.

There are definitely benefits in participating in competition or tournaments, and the real question that remains is: Considering the benefits of competition, aligned with the 4 purposes of Isshinryu karate, how much should it be part of karate training?

This is where the quote from Shihan Demura gave me food for thought. I have been encouraged to and have participated in many tournaments and always found it a great experience. With reflection, I believe the caveat is the risk of distancing oneself from the original teachings. One could want to “show” more and, for example, by kicking higher than the intended height in the kata, or by adding or changing something in the original kata. The extra practice is beneficial, but the repetition could mean repeating a modified movement or a movement that has not yet been totally mastered and ending up with a habit very hard to break in order to come back to the original teachings. With repetition, one could lose the perspective of the essence of the movement, as it becomes automatic and less mindful. Practicing in order to offer a best performance in a competition or training in order to offer your best performance of a kata are, in my mind, two very different things.

We also need to remember that having a black belt actually means the start of a learning journey. And it is so true. Having a black belt means being able to display and use the right techniques, but the real learning comes after. There are so many subtleties in every technique, that one can take a lifetime to master those techniques, in order to make them efficient and strong. A lifetime.

I believe that competition is a great experience. The extra practice does help increase self-discipline, self-confidence and strengthens the mind and body. Although there are many benefits, it makes the karateka practice the same movements over and over. And when the karateka wants to improve a certain technique, refine a movement, the answers, the real learning and expansion of knowledge will always be found at the dojo, with fellow practitioners and higher ranked Sensei. Now in terms of how much competition should be part of karate training, would or should it be 10%, more, less? Unfortunately, I don't have a number or an answer to that question. All I know comes from my own short, humble experience in which I have found many benefits in participating in tournaments, going outside the dojo, exploring the martial arts world and expanding somewhat my knowledge. However, it certainly represents well below 10% of my total practice. And in my own, short, humble experience, I believe the improvement, the refinement of the martial art, the real expansion of knowledge and the essence of the art can only be found in one place: the dojo. I started karate later in life, and I know there is so much more to learn! I am not even sure I made to “basecamp #1” to the “Everest” of Isshinryu knowledge and essence. But, like anything else in life, the most important thing is to keep going forward.

Importance of the Basics

By Kelly Cere

I have seen throughout my years of training so many schools no longer emphasize the basics. They focus more on kata and memorizing the moves instead of having good technique. Their students can go through the moves but lack the understanding of the technique and how it should be done. For example, they head block with their arm in the wrong position and their wrist bent or curled. If they actually had to block a wild punch coming at them, they would most likely hurt themselves instead of stopping the action. The reason, they continue to learn one kata after another making the same basic mistakes, that get carried on and on.

Why?

I believe that today dojos are more concerned with keeping students so they can pay their bills. So, they just keep students "moving through" their program and handing out promotion after promotion. Once the student learns the basics, they usually start the first kata, but I have seen dojos start teaching kata on the student's first day, which to me is insane! This behavior just promotes the cycle of students having bad technique from one kata after another. I like to come up with creative ways to mask the rep-

etition of doing basics. This way students hopefully don't get bored doing the same thing repeatedly which we know is the key to developing muscle memory.

At my dojo we start every class with basics.

Here are a few examples of how to make basics more fun and challenging:

1. Upper body basics 1 - 4, do 4 reps stepping forward, then do 4 reps stepping backwards.
2. Upper body basics 5 - 10, do 4 reps stepping backwards, then do 4 reps going forward but add 2 more punches (block - punch - punch - punch - punch)
3. Lower body basics 4 - 7, set the kicking leg in front instead of back.
4. Combine upper and lower body basics together. For example: front kick with right left, set down in front, set hands on left side of belt, down block right, left reverse punch.
5. Work basics with a partner or on focus mitts. Be creative yourself and make the basics fun. Put more emphasis on them to get your students excited about doing them too!

The Power of Example

By Richard Ruberto

We will all face some form of adversity in life. When it happens it will test us in many different ways. Some will beat us down chipping away at our hope and faith that we can prevail and overcome. How is this related to our training in martial arts?

No matter what, I show up to train.

No matter what, I will not make excuses why I can't show up.

The core of why I keep at it, and never give up, is why I continue to earn my rank. It is the difference between losers and winners.

No one ever said it would be easy to do.

No one should ever tell you to just show up and in such and such years you will have a black belt. The rank is earned and not freely given.

By showing up during the worse times in this life shows others they can endure and overcome. A sensei cannot teach you how if you aren't there to learn. Please don't give up on yourself.

New Additions in Thunder Bay

The Isshinryu Family in Thunder Bay is lucky and happy to announce two new additions.

Kieran was born on January 27th to Maegen Lavalle from the Chibushi Dojo



Charlie Findlay was born on July 4th to Amanda Findlay from Chitora Dojo (and made her first trip to the Dojo at around 2 months old)



From everyone in Isshinryu, we wish both families all the best and look forward to seeing them start train!



Isshinryu Expo Another Huge Success

This past May, Thunder Bay once again hosted the Isshinryu Expo, it was a fantastic weekend of Martial Arts training with presenters and participants travelling from across Canada and the US to attend.

No matter your interest, there was much to learn and experience. The best part of all was the comradery of the attendees and the ability to share time with so many like minded individuals.

At the event, the IKI also held belt gradings and promotions. The following people were promoted at the event.

Evelyn McMahan (Toshikai Thunder Bay) - Sankyu
Virginia Mill (Toshikai Thunder Bay) - Nikyu

Julia Fenton (Chitora Dojo) - Ikkyu
Kaelyn Fenton (Chitora Dojo) - Ikkyu

Hannah Fonso (Toshikai Thunder Bay) - Shodan
John Meilleur (Toshikai Ottawa) - Shodan
Carson Mulligan (Toshikai Thunder Bay) - Shodan
Lisa Opas (Toshikai Thunder Bay) - Shodan
Colton Tycholas (Toshikai Thunder Bay) - Shodan

Noriko Shibata (Toshikai Ottawa) - Nidan
Greg Saxe (Toshikai Ottawa) - Sandan
Gord Adams (Kenora) - Sandan

Melissa Kakuk—Yondan
Congratulations to All!





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; ANYTHING!

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!

A Karate Poem

By Tim Leonard & Chat GPT

In the dojo, calm and still,
Discipline bends to iron will.
Barefoot steps on tatami ground,
A silent space where focus is found.

White gi flows with each swift strike,
A dance of power, sharp and tight.
Kata moves in practiced grace,
The warrior finds their inner place.

Fists of stone, but heart of peace,
In every breath, the tensions cease.
With every bow, respect is shown,
Through strength, the spirit has grown.

Karate's path is long and true,
A lifelong art for old and new.
Not just for fight, but for the soul—
Balance, honor, in full control.

Karate Terms

Kenpo Gokui (Codes of Karate)

A person's heart is the same as Heaven and Earth.

The blood circulating is similar to the Moon and Sun.

The manner of drinking and spitting is either hard or soft.

A person's unbalance is the same as a weight.

The body should be able to change direction at any time.

The time to strike is when the opportunity presents itself.

The eye must see all sides.

The ear must listen in all directions.