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Kime



Illustration 1: Honbu Dojo in Okinawa

September 2016

Dedicated Readers of Kime,

Thank you to all the submissions made for this newsletter over the past months. Keep it up!! The more content we receive, the better the newsletter will be (and the more interesting).

If you have any ideas, content, articles, pictures, or anything you'd like to see in the newsletter, send your insights and comments to maja@anshindojo.com.

Friendship Day this Month

Friendship Day this month will be held at Anshin Dojo. Unlike other months, we will be holding this class at 10am, much like our regular Sunday classes. Hope to see everyone there!

Saturday Classes Resume

Starting on Saturday, September 10th, Saturday classes will resume as normal for both Karate and Kobudo. Kobudo is from 10am-11am and karate is from 11am to noon. We suspended these classes for the summer to give everyone a chance to spend time with their loved ones, but now that fall is coming, we are excited to reopen the dojo for yet another class day!

Dojo Closures

1st to 5th – Labour Day Week

Special Events

25th – Friendship Day at Anshin Dojo (10am)

Birthdays

August

29th – Mike M.

September

15th – Michelle P.

20th – Hilarion

26th – Nikolas P.

ANSHIN
SCHOOL OF KARATE
KOBUDO and JODO

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Aphorisms

By: Alex Di Marco

The magic of empathy and consciousness.

There is a video readily available on the internet of a leopard who kills an adult baboon nursing a baby. As the baby baboon cries, the leopard instinctively responds by comforting and assisting the baby, ignoring it's fresh kill. In the animal world there are many examples of this dichotomy between friend and food, caring and killing. A fascinating dance of conflict and care seems to co-exist in a world of struggle, patterned co-operation, conflict and instinctive caring for survival. From this primordial sea of movement we are born, very physically similar to the baboon killed by the leopard; but emerging with a special, amazing, almost magical ability of awareness. We become aware that we are "something distinct". We define this distinct something as "me", a person, though what that truly means is a bit difficult to define. In this awareness we can move beyond the conflict of existence and meet others and discover similarity and connection, and through this a wonderful magic occurs called empathy. This powerful force of influence, when in combination with consciousness, redefines and changes the fabric of our existence. Who and what we are become greater than the sum of our physical being as we see ourselves mirrored in others. Our very identity becomes an experiential fluctuation of feeling, value and connection, influenced by choice, as we begin to have the understanding that who and what we are is greater than our physical needs and instinct. This great sea of movement still exists within us and without, but with our ability to perceive, and connect we become active

swimmers, creators of waves that define and change the fabric of our environment.

Through this ability we have the potential to see, relate to, and connect with others, but this must be nurtured.

The importance of the concept of family

The family is the beginning of our journey to emotional intelligence, and the building block of growth. As we begin to perceive, and relate, we look to others around us, mirroring and assimilating behavior in our struggle to understand who and what we are. It is here that those around us can introduce us to the world, helping us to be powerful creative swimmers within this stormy sea of existence. Our Family, whether naturally born or within a chosen community, provides the means of encouragement and assistance to allow us to grow as healthy caring connected individuals. It is within our grasp to work together to create a balance against the constant waves of existence and a calm harbor against storms. This starts with every helping hand and kind word. This grows with every friendship, every teaching moment and caring attitude. Within a loving family, empathy changes everything.

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

— Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom

Bullying: Karate's Unspoken Problem By: Rick Evans

In this two-part series, this article talks about the dangers of bullying from the perspective of Karate-ka Rick Evans and his thoughts on how cooperation and awareness can be powerful tools to eliminate bullying from the dojo.

I love karate. I hate bullying. I have been bullied in the dojo, physically and emotionally. I have promised myself, when I lead a dojo it won't happen. Does it happen in your dojo? Have you created a culture where bullying doesn't happen? Because a dojo is a perfect place for a bully to hide.

BACKGROUND

It is human nature to feel inadequate. We learn this feeling from birth, dependent as we are on others to feed us, to keep us warm or cool, to keep us clean. As children, we have an enormous amount to learn – all the 'stuff' that people around us take for granted. We are ignorant and, at least unconsciously, we are aware that we are somehow less than others. At the same time we are being socialized. We learn rules that will keep us safe, rules that will help us fit in. Often we learn those rules by breaking them. While we are born innocent of those rules, still we are often called bad because we break them.

Over and over the lesson is learned that we just aren't what we are expected to be, we aren't good enough, we aren't OK. There is an entire branch of psychology that speaks to this phenomenon. Dr. Eric Berne wrote about how it affects human relationships in "Games People Play". A popular take on it was expressed by Dr. Thomas Harris in his book "I'm OK - You're OK". (If you are interested in reading in this

area, I also suggest "Born to Win", written by Muriel James and Dorothy Jongeward). Feeling Not OK is a bad feeling. No one wants to feel Not OK. We'll go to great lengths to feel better about ourselves. The problem is we don't know how to do that. Even worse, there are few people who know how to help us; and lots of people quite ready to point out our inadequacies.

Though we seem to find it difficult to honestly accept our strengths, it appears to be very easy to find people who are worse in some way. The art of making oneself feel better by putting someone else down is what Berne's book is all about. If I cannot feel good about myself, at least I'm better than you. And if I'm not so sure that I'm better than you, then for sure my little red wagon is better than yours. Or my house is better than yours. Or my car. Or my kata. Or something equally irrelevant to inner peace. No matter how irrelevant the comparison, the art of put-down is addictive. The good feeling it gives is only temporary. It needs to be repeated. Over and over. And so it becomes a model of behaviour that others can see, and possibly imitate.

A dojo can be full of opportunities to bully. A dojo is a classroom and that means it is a continuous source of mistakes and failures. The bully can turn a junior's mistake into an opportunity to emotionally embarrass the junior.

(Bullying cont. on p4)

Sensei's Corner

"You should always be training in the summertime, even when your on holiday. Training is a forever growing and progressive endeavor. You should never let up on your training because if you do, it will be harder to come back afterwards."

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Sensei's Rules of Living

#11.

Live a good honorable life. When you're old and think back, you will be able to enjoy it a second time.

You are going to have to live with your actions for the rest of your life, so save yourself the regret and anguish and live with honor now. Good things also come to good people. You will never be punished for acting with integrity, only rewarded.

In the physical training exercises, the bully finds endless opportunities to hurt and belittle a junior or smaller partner all in the name of 'good' training.

THE NATURE OF KARATE?

Karate means different things to different people. To some, it is a religion. To others, it is self-defense. To yet others, it is a good workout to keep off the pounds and stay fit for life. To some, it is an organized search for understanding of themselves and how their bodies work. For others, it is an intriguing set of puzzles to be explored and mastered. Karate is all that and more. And that is great!

However, karate as we each understand it is not just karate. It is karate wrapped in history and culture. I suspect that none of us could cleanly separate karate's core from its wrappings. Yet I think it worthwhile to try, as much for an insight into our own wrappings as any hope of finding whatever is at the core of karate.

For example, our practice of karate has a spiritual element. When we hang pictures of those who went before us and start the class by acknowledging their gift with gratitude, are we doing karate or dealing with a cultural wrapping? If the pictures just have to be on the east wall of the dojo because that's where they've always been, I worry that the wrappings have become more important than the gesture of respect and gratitude to those who went before. And if we don't have pictures, but we must bow to the east wall of the dojo, how is that different?

Another example of how karate comes wrapped in the culture of another time and place, our practice of karate has an egalitarian element, though perhaps a little less so to-day. On the dojo floor, everyone wears the same gi. Whether you are rich or poor, you can learn karate. It used to be that everyone wore a white gi. Was that karate or a cultural wrapping that some have chosen to update? And what's with wearing a gi anyhow; if you ever have to use your karate to protect yourself or your family are you going to ask the bad guys to wait until you change into your gi? If you tell me this is a ridiculous comment, I accept your view; I just hope you accept that the wearing of a gi is cultural wrapping - not karate.

These specific questions might not seem that important, but consider the position of those who attempt to practice traditional karate. Does traditional karate include the practice of never questioning your seniors, as was the culture of militaristic Japan? Does traditional karate demand competition as became part of the karate scene as it was taught in the schools of Japan as part of their fitness programs? Does traditional karate demand all out effort when training with a partner? With a partner of different size and/or skill? Does someone have to win, and someone have to lose?

I propose that if we cannot separate karate from its cultural wrapping to some degree, then there is a requirement for dogma, which gives great cover to bullies. If bullying or even the opportunity to bully is in the wrapping adopted by the dojo, then it becomes a model for anyone to copy and for new bullies to be made.

CHANGING CULTURAL WRAPPING IS INEVITABLE

Whatever karate is, wherever it came from, we know that it is old. So let's look at our own culture. What has happened in the last 100 years? One big change is that women have the vote. And women's rights are an issue that must be addressed. Today, homosexuals have rights. And their rights are also an issue that must be addressed. More so than ever in history, our population is a melange of various religions, races and countries of origin. And we all have rights that must be addressed no matter who we are. Our society has moved steadily from being one of local tribes to one of conforming communities, striving towards a global approach to individuality and human rights and responsibilities.

There has always been change and there have always been proponents of the 'good old days'. I suggest that it is among those proponents of sameness that bullies find a place to hide. As soon as I hear the excuse, "But that's the way we've always done it.", I wonder what is being defended. Is it karate or is it the cultural wrapping that has been passed down? Or is it a cunning excuse for bullying.

NEXT MONTH: Best Training Methods, The Dojo as a Classroom, 'Respect' As a Cultural Hiding Place for Bullies, Competition as the Fertilizer for Bullies, and Further Thoughts.