

Teaching: Principles, Techniques, Approach and more

NOTES: Need to add in Training Vs Practice, JMC, add expand and rewrite power generation. Look at other drills for adding and expanding. Ground and Empty space are still to be separate works.

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Introduction:

The following approach to teaching self defense comes from my years studying martial arts and years in a profession leading the learning for a major organization.

A debate raging today is whether to teach from a pure principle base or from a technique base. You will note I did not say from a pure technique base and the reason for this is that all techniques should (and at one point did) contain the underlying principle to make them work.

The criticism of technique based training is that it can lose the underlying principles and require overly cooperative partners to make them work, that they become in-bred if I could steal a term from Rory Miller and use it for my own purposes.

By in-bred I mean do we really need to learn 96 wrist locks or do we need to understand the principle that locks a wrist and make it work from many positions?

This makes it easy to think that a pure principle based approach is the right way. I admit my personal preferences are for principle based, but not purely.

Currently the people who come to me to train have a solid background in martial training or solid martial training as well as practical experience in application. This makes it very easy for me to take an almost pure principle based approach to teaching them. I may use a technique to demonstrate a principle but very quickly it then becomes whatever their personal preference is for technique.

However, if someone walks into a school without any training, then their tool box is empty and they have nothing to attach the principles to. Therefore, when teaching a person from scratch you need to teach a base of techniques AND you must attach the principles to them. Techniques without principles is worse than junk food for a person on a diet.

However, once the person has tools in their tool box then there should be a shift from focusing on teaching specific tools/techniques to teaching adapting and creating with principles, creating tools as needed.

I am not going to digress and create another argument but this is where forms can play an important role in training. I am not saying you must do or teach forms but here is where they are important. Another place and time I will expand on that.

Part One - Where to start:

1. A solid natural reflexive entry/response posture:

I believe every incoming student has to be given a solid natural reflexive entry/response as their “go to” starting point when under assault. This entry or response posture has to be built and designed from a natural instinctive response. Back in the 1940’s Moshe Feldenkrais said: “It is very simple, if I hide a knife and I go up to a group of young men and then I do this (overhand attack with a knife) they will all do this (his arms raised to protect himself - the flinch response as coined by Tony Blauer), so ... that is where I start.”

The response/entry position needs to be:

- I. Natural
- II. Aligned
- III. Grounded
- IV. Practiced through Operant conditioning

2. Begin focusing on one principle: “Move you not them”.

Everything has multiple principles in them because learning principles is like a never ending onion – peel one layer only to find another.

Trying to pass on every principle you know to a new student will overwhelm them, therefore we start with just a couple of specific ones and one overriding one to be pointed out as often as possible (read on to find out what that principle is.)

Move you not them allows you to show proper movement options: Linear, rotation, revolution and combinations.

Move you not them allows you to slip in the principle of moving to a strategic position as well as the upcoming overriding principle.

3. Teach power early by teaching one of the six harmonies: The elbow harmonizes with the knee.”

The six harmonies are a collection of principles (three physical and three mental) that increase efficiency and effectiveness drastically. Giving all six to the student too early will mean little so we focus on one easily taught principle.

The knee moves – this drives the force from the ground up.

The elbow harmonizes with the knee means that the elbow follows whatever the knee is doing. If the rear knee steps to the front – the same side elbow drives forward with it.

If the elbows move with the knees, then everything in-between moves as well (including the all important kua/hip) therefore the student quickly learns to do everything with their entire body.

4. Control the Elbow

This is a simple principle that will combine exceptionally well with “move you not them.”

The elbow is a control point and simply laying your hand on it can give you the sensitivity to react but also a point to move and direct them.

By teaching them to gain a control of the elbow you also begin to integrate the fact that self defence is not striking or grappling but having the ability to do the right one at the right time.

By teaching them to gain control of the elbow you hand them a vital piece of controlling another person.

5. Throughout everything you teach show and use empty space. This is the overriding principle you want them to grasp.

A new student may not get this but they need to start hearing it immediately and if they are always working on “move you not them” then it will be built into what they are learning.

Conclusion Part One:

No matter what “techniques” your system or style is based on if you teach it with this five-point approach it will give a solid foundation to build upon.

With the exception perhaps of the first point of having a reflexive response/entry posture these will easily adapt and apply to any martial art or system.

I believe regardless of your style or system people need that reflexive response entry posture to begin with. It can change over time and with learning but to begin their self defence journey people need a place to build from, a place they are going anyway so start there.

Tony Blauer is one of the modern day leaders in working off of a reflexive response and I’m not trained in his system so I am not here to either promote or try to explain it but one of his videos I have explains his goal was to allow people to survive the first few movements of an assault so that they could get to whatever training they had. That resonated with me so I believe regardless of what you teach, if a reflexive entry response posture is not part of it, then I recommend you expand to include one and then show how you go from there to wherever your system would go to.

All the other principles will directly transfer to almost anything else and either support or improve them.

Once again these are only my thoughts and opinions.

Part Two - Beyond the physical:

Cool heading but I will not be taking about chi or anything mystical here.

Beyond the physical means that there are a few very important topics that MUST be included and kept in mind if you are going to teach self defence:

- 1. Violence Dynamics**
- 2. The Plea of Self Defence**

Regardless of whether who you teach is experienced or has no experience these two topics should be included if not kept in the forefront of your thinking when you teach.

Violence Dynamics:

Violence dynamics is a study of violence as it may happen in the real world and not the dojo.

The problem many dojos have is a lack of experience in actual violence and therefore over time the drills drift farther and farther away from what may happen in an actual assault.

In addition, understanding violence is a necessary piece of knowledge to avoid violence and don't most schools teach to avoid the "fight."

And that common term "fight" is also a telling phrase because if someone really wanted to do you physical harm then the last thing they want to do is fight you. They want to assault you and those are two very different things. But do people teaching self defence understand that?

Go to the experts and read and learn. My favourite source is Rory Miller but you pick yours.

Understand that there are many shades of violence. How do you teach a woman to avoid an assault when the assailant lives with her? We have to accept our limits of understanding to either what we have experienced or what we have studied – but study and do your best to present something that will deal with reality.

This is a commentary on teaching self defence, if you are teaching a sport then what you teach will be tailored to that.

The Plea of Self Defence:

I am going to step out on a limb and say that this is the most under taught topic in most schools. Some reality based schools cover this topic (KPC) but most do not and worse yet many teaching self defence have never taken the time to learn this subject.

Self Defence begins with learn how to not get assaulted, then how to escape the assault, then to dealing with the assault and then it must extend to surviving the aftermath. (Note: you do not get to always pick avoiding or escaping.)

Understanding the plea of self defence should affect everything you teach if you are teaching self defence.

Even if you are passing on a historical art you need to ensure your students understand where what was done to the enemy years ago may not fit in today's world. Always finishing with a throat cut may not play well in court.

Even if you are teaching an art created in the military you must keep in mind taking down an enemy combatant is very different that dealing with the drunken party goer. Always finishing with a stomp to the head may not play well in court.

What you teach has to play well in court.

Make a solid study of self defence and what it actually means legally because a great many people may think they acted in self defence but may not have legally and it is off to jail we go or into bankruptcy. Get good references. I recommend Marc Mac Young's book "In the Name of Self Defense."

Conclusion Part Two:

I absolutely do not feel any self defence training is complete unless these two topics are covered and I will admit I did not always cover them in my years of teaching – thankfully I am still capable of learning.

Study, learn, even if you think you understand and know, the n at a minimum confirm you're right.

Part Three – What's a drill?

What's a drill? If that seems like an odd question – it isn't.

A drill is an instructional tool that teaches a specific skill set.

Learn anything from playing piano to playing soccer to martial arts and you will do drills. Drills are an important part of learning because they segregate out a specific skill set, or sets, and work them under controlled conditions designed to use those skills.

Drills work specific skill sets, in controlled conditions, designed to use them.

Drills are not real life. Drills were never intended to be real life.

This confusion over drills and reality oddly enough brings out errors from practitioners from opposite end of the spectrum.

Side One – That's not Real:

I watched a clip of Dan Inosanto doing a Systema knife drill. Now first of all this speaks volumes of why Mr. Inosanto is as good as he is. He is exceptionally well trained, recognized as having mastered a number of arts, and yet he is doing something new to him. THAT is a master.

But that aside there were comments on the clip about how it wasn't real and that would get you killed etc. denigrating the drill. To me, instead of the posters showing everyone how much of reality they knew, they showed how little of training they knew.

The drill is a knife sensitivity drill. It teaches moving slightly out of the way of the blade and redirecting or leading it as well. The attacks are continuous and controlled. The attacks are not real. The overall actions of the person avoiding and leading the blade are not real. This is a drill it is not real.

The drill teaches a person to see and read the line of force the blade is travelling on and how to move to avoid the thrust. It is a fake flowy sometimes showy drill that is a vital component to knife training in my opinion.

Let me explain. We do this drill. When we go to sudden assaults, the person up close and personal, the knife coming out from a hidden position, stabbing at you, repeatedly stabbing at you, that drill has given you the skill to read and move and gain often just enough time to survive.

Being able to pick up the line of force the blade is coming at you and moving to not get stabbed seems to me to be a good knife defence skill. No, we don't always get out of the way because knife assaults suck. But often it is that micro moment of time the slight shift of your body gives and the ability to catch that elbow and move that makes everything work.

So for those who say the knife sensitivity drill is not a real knife attack I can only say – yeah of course they aren't – running a passing pattern in football isn't a real game either. A drill is a drill not reality.

Drills are training or practice; we know they are not real, but can you see what THAT drill teaches? IF not ask because the people doing the drill should know or they shouldn't be doing it.

Side Two – The training becomes the way:

This is the flip side where the drills become so much of the training that the skill sets the drills were intended to teach drift out of knowledge and people begin to think the drills are a simulation of real life.

Drills are not real life; in fact, no training or practice is real life either just as good a fake as we can make it (if we are trying hard enough).

Almost all systems build a curriculum. It is exceptionally hard to spread a system and have consistency without a curriculum. I mentioned in the other side discussion that if you ask a person what skills are worked in a drill they should know or should not be doing them – that can happen when a curriculum is spread and taught without understanding. People begin to just do drills without understanding what the drill should be teaching them.

When people don't understand why they are doing a drill any validation can creep in. People try to justify a drill by linking it too closely to reality, after all they are training self defence. Over time those without understanding, study or experience of reality begin to build the drill in their minds as the picture of reality.

We all have a picture of the reality of violence and sadly too often if we encounter violence it doesn't look anything like what we thought or pictured from TV and movies etc.

So the first danger of thinking a drill represents reality is believing it and finding out the hard way it isn't.

The second danger in thinking a drill is reality is the purpose of the drill (teaching a specific skill set) gets lost.

The third danger of thinking a drill is real is the fact that most drills require some form of cooperation from the other partner and that cooperation gets over emphasized sometimes to the point of ridiculous. Some of the people in Systema, or any other art, can take the cooperation of their flow drills into "no touch" delusions are a great example of this. Please note I have a great deal of respect for good Systema.

I saw a clip recently where a student shouted and threw a "chi ball" and knocked the instructor out. It is one thing to set yourself up to be hurt in an assault through delusion, it is an entirely worse thing to do it to a student.

Conclusion Part Three:

The odd thing about both sides is that neither understands the simple fact that a drill is an instructional tool that teaches a specific skill set.

The reason for this section is that drills are needed. Understanding what a drill is and keeping the goal and purpose of a drill in mind and clear in teaching is important to avoid wavering from the path.

- You need drills to train.
- You should always know the skill sets being highlighted and trained in every drill that you do.
- Always remember a drill is only a teaching tool it is never real.
- Always keep in mind that any drill is a cooperation between partners no matter how energetic or intense you make it. (Just because you do it harder and faster doesn't make it real.)
- Do not let the cooperation lead you into delusion.

Design your drills addressing a specific skill set or sets.

When teaching clearly emphasize what skills are being developed.

Keep everyone honest – these are not real, so don't let any student think they are.

No one should cooperate more than the drill requires. If anyone starts to think things are happening without touching people – STOP – correct the drill. That kind of delusional thinking will get you or a student injured or killed in real life where the bad guys don't cooperate.

Part Four – What are you teaching:

Once again this may seem like an odd question and once again it isn't and it certainly isn't for those who not only want to teach but want to run a school.

There are many variables in approach to a martial art or self defence school and a commercial school may have to provide different options.

When teaching, particularly when teaching where there is either an expense involved to be covered or an intention to earn income and a living deciding what you teach and how and how far you want to compromise needs to be decided.

Randy King has a great rant on YouTube promoted I think by a question asked of Rory Miller on how to be commercially successful. I used the term compromise Randy used the term "sell out." He did so to make you ponder and think. His advice is some of the best I have ever heard for anyone considering running a school.

He said there are many programs that will tell you how to run a successful commercial school. But if that plan does not fit "what you teach" then your dream of running a martial arts school may become a nightmare.

Randy said to make a list of the things you would do and the things you would never do and a column in the middle of the things you might try.

He said then never do the things in the absolutely no column.

Would you teach kids?

Would you do birthday parties?

Would you offer a Cardio Kick Boxing class?

Would you stop using Japanese terms?

Would you stop wearing a gi?

Would you drop hardwork training?

Would you drop body and limb conditioning?

These, and many others, are all questions you need to ask when considering teaching.

There are no wrong answers to the questions either. What is a no for you and a yes for someone else is right for each of you.

When I ask what are your teaching, or wanting to teach, I am asking because that is the one thing that should never be compromised IF teaching what you love is what you want to do.

While I am sure there are people who enter into teaching martial arts for just dollars I don't think that applies to the majority. I think the majority begin a school with the dream of making a living doing something they love. I have to digress here to an article I once saw in a magazine for commercial martial arts schools on how to set your school up so you never had to personally teach a class again and I was completely baffled by that even being a thought, so I guess they are out there but most of the people I see love to teach.

So this post is to be clear on what you want to teach and be honest presenting it to others.

And to be utterly frank – You should close the school before you start doing things in the “I would never do that” column unless your feelings have truly changed. Lots of BJJ schools at first wouldn’t offer no gi classes but minds changed as the training and competition changed.

Think about all the different approaches to martial arts and what components would be necessary for them to remain intact.

Historical – Presenting a preserved art as a historical treasure.

Traditional – Presenting an art with a cultural background (or another culture’s perception of that culture.)

Sport – Presenting an art that is designed to be done under competitive rules and guidelines.

Reality – two varieties:

- i. Military background: Presenting a system that is used or has been converted from a system designed for the military.
- ii. Violence Dynamic approach

Health – two varieties:

- i. Movement and qigong based
- ii. Cardio based

Customized: Presenting an art or system based off of a person’s training or experience.

I am sure people reading this can think of a few types of approaches to training I haven’t thought of and I am not saying one type may not also include some of the others.

Being honest with yourself on what you want to do to teach is important but so is being honest with potential students about what you teach.

Randy King (who I mentioned above) runs KPC Self Defence here in Edmonton and I do some consulting for them. It is a Krav Maga school and would be of the Reality / Violence Dynamic approach I mentioned. When people call to inquire about classes he asks questions about what they are looking for and if his school is the wrong one he will NOT let them enroll. Yes, he turns them away. (I think he was a "Miracle of 34th Street" fan as a kid).

That is a very important thing for the success of a school. People who come expecting one thing and find another are often unhappy and dissatisfied and that can spread, plus it is just the honest thing to do.

If you are running a traditional school with a curriculum based testing and promotion, then the person who doesn't want belts or to be evaluated or doesn't want set techniques should be turned away.

Understand that no where here have I said any approach is wrong, just be true to your approach.

I ran a martial arts school for eighteen years renting commercial space and it supported the costs. I didn't make any money so I am not a model for a financially successful school but I was able to teach a lot of people what I loved. I made some choices about what I was not willing to do to be financially successful and I stayed with those choices.

Some might say well then you weren't successful but they would be oh so wrong because my purpose was never to earn my living from teaching martial arts it was to be commercially viable enough to allow me to do what I love. I never came to hate teaching or dread going to the dojo and teaching remained my passion, as it still does today.

Now I teach privately out of a personal dojo and I am hoping to do more seminars. What I teach has changed but I am clear on what that is and happy doing what I am doing.

This may seem like an odd post on teaching but most people who teach think of having their own school so I think it is an important one to truly understand what you want to teach before you teach it.

Part Five – Principle, Technique, Principle, Technique, Principle, Technique, HUH:

Lots of discussions all over the place about Principle and Technique based training.

Principle: “Fundamental source, primary element, fundamental truth as basis for reasoning, or general law.”

Technique: Here it is interesting because the definition of “technique” in the dictionary doesn’t fit how we use the term in martial arts and perhaps that comes from the early days of Jujitsu when the term “trick” was used where we would now today use “technique.” An internet search shows one definition as “a way of carrying out a particular task” which fits more than the common one found: “mode of artistic expression.”

In martial arts a technique is an action, in Jujitsu it could be a lock or in Karate a grab and strike and in Judo a throw etc. But it will be one specific thing often in response to one specific actions (but not always.)

In 2009 10th Dan Jujitsu master George Kirby wrote his first full “concept” (principle based) book “Jujitsu Figure-4 Locks”. He had previously written his books based on techniques and in fact his major book contained more than 850 techniques and variations. In his recent book he states you cannot remember over 850 techniques and he usually focused on 20 to 30.

So what is the difference between the two books?

The technique book is a catalogue of variations on the techniques in his system of Jujitsu. The concept book focuses on the underlying principles that make the figure 4 lock work with a few examples.

Actually the Figure 4 Lock book was his second book in approaching principle based teaching; he wrote “Advanced Jujitsu: The Science Behind the Gentle Art” where he broke the 850+ techniques down into a usable group of foundation techniques that all worked off similar principles.

We can look at it this way:

- The technique based approach shows how to use THIS in THAT situation. (Hopefully they also explain the underlying principles but not always.)
- The principle based approach shows how THIS works and expects you to discover how to use it in THAT situation.

I have previously likened the approach to: Show someone a technique and you protect them from one situation; show them a principle and you protect them from many.

How the heck does a system end up with over 850 techniques, particularly if no one can remember them all?

How does a “technique” get created?

Techniques are created when people who understand the principles get put in a situation they haven't been in before and create, with the principles, on the spot – thus a new variation of applying that principle is created = a new technique.

I have a couple of short clips on principle based topics: Locks and takedowns. If you watch the clips you can see the principle based approach. I explain the principle and then give a few examples.

The takedown clip shows the underlying principles that can be found in any takedown. It doesn't matter what situation IF the principles apply then you can perform a takedown.

I also have clips of a Kanshiwa Takedown Bunkai I created which was simply me taking the principles and looking at the movements in Kanshiwa Kata and creating situations where you could apply the principles. I basically created techniques.

A technique based approach would be to take that Takedown bunkai and teach it and have students practice the techniques until they have them memorized.

A principle based approach would be to teach the principles and then ask them to create the bunkai.

A principle based approach would be to teach them the principles and then have a drill where they were required to use them when they apply.

Principles cannot be demonstrated unless they are put into the form of a technique. The Kanshiwa Takedown Bunkai is a great tool to introduce the principles of a takedown to a Uechi based group because it demonstrates them in a form they know but in a format they haven't seen.

So there in lies the rub. To demonstrate principles you have to use applications. Then it is what the person you are teaching takes away that will govern if it is passed on as a principle base or technique. If they copy and practice the applications as set techniques the principles might also be passed on but they may not. If they take the principles and use their own creativity to demonstrate them then it will be carried on as a principle based approach.

Is one better than the other? Ah that is the question each will have to answer for themselves. The danger I see in technique based training is that the movements without understanding the principles can be passed on and the effectiveness of the techniques lost.

I have spoken earlier in this article that if someone comes to you without any training then some foundation of techniques needs to be given to them but I truly believe that the sooner this is left and principles are worked the more effective the student will be.

How well that works for a large system and a curriculum I cannot say but I believe it can be done.

However, everyone will have to evaluate for themselves and if a renowned master like George Kirby can come to recognize the value of principle based after 25 years of writing books I think eventually the diligent will – but clearly that is my personal bias showing.

For those who haven't seen them yet here are the links:

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/small-clip-on-takedowns/>

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/kanshiwa-takedown-bunkai-part-1/>

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/kanshiwa-takedown-bunkai-part-2/>

Part Six – Its ALIVE:

Simply put “Alive Practice” is adding some realism and resistance from your partner.

When I read article on alive training or practice there tends to be the presentation that you are simulating an actual real assault.

So let us be clear ALL TRAINING IS FAKE.

It doesn't matter if you are going full contact something about what you do is fake.

That is an easy statement to prove by asking one question: Every training session how many people go to the hospital with injuries (actual damage not a bleeding lip) and how many go to the morgue?”

Because if you are really training “real” to protect yourself from a violent assault the someone is going to the hospital or morgue every session.

So when ensuring you have “alive” practice always keep in mind no matter how “real” you make it – it is always fake.

Having said that I firmly believe in alive practice.

Alive practice is adding some realism and resistance from your partners.

Particularly in today's often litigious society safety is always a concern. As I say to my students we all have to be able to go to work tomorrow.

Alive training can be added to any practice and in fact proper practice, as I defined it elsewhere, demands it. You must at some point work in resisting partners. Without some form of resistance flaws and over compliance can creep in give the perception of effectiveness rather than real effectiveness.

Grappling has randori which is adds in resistance from the partner. People lock but don't break and there isn't striking. Any striking sport adds contact but there are rules on the strikes and equipment.

So those examples show adding resistance with safety factors. There are many others.

So we accept Rory Miller's statement that any training and any practice will have a flaw so what flaw do you want?

I happen to go with Rory and do many drills slowly but with full execution. I can elbow all the way through a head in slow motion where when I add speed I have to pull the strike.

Pulling a strike is a flaw – slow is a flaw.

Rory says going slow is one flaw he hasn't seen taken into real life.

Going slow allows you to see and incorporate (operant conditioning) but going slow might also give two misconceptions – a misunderstanding on how fast people can move and also that everyone moves at the same speed.

The other night we were practicing for something like the knock out game where you are walking and another person walking all of a sudden attacks you. (This was at about $\frac{3}{4}$ speed not slow).

One of my students asked if we could train for another trend today people coming up behind you and reaching around to slash your face and then take off.

I said I wasn't sure anything real could be done – we had just trained to respond to things coming all of a sudden at our heads so there wasn't anything to do there all we could do is train to be aware of an assault and you cannot do that in a dojo.

We have added counting backwards and other mental tricks to distract us while we train counter ambush but someone sneaking up behind you requires a 360-degree awareness that can only be trained out in the “wild.”

Us walking along in the dojo all the while expecting an assault is just too fake. Counting backwards and the other distracting mental tricks allow us to train to shift from that distracted “verbal thinking” to the deeper mind we need but it is not training awareness.

So the point here is yes try and train for everything. Yes, try and make it the best fake real you can (to steal a phrase from Tony Blauer). Yes, add as much realism and resistance as you can safely. Yes, absolutely add alive practice to what you do. BUT always remember it is still fake it is not real.

Still my favourite drill to add some alive practice is Night of the Living Dead (NLD) which I have covered in other posts but if people want I will repeat here. I got the seed for what I have done with this drill from Tony Blauer. We begin to pick up speed in our slow drills as we train when we are working with people we know have the ability to pull back if there is hard contact (well harder than we go on a regular basis and the head). This does add a flaw as adding speed always does of pulling.

We have also trained in Tony Blauer’s HIGHGEAR suites which I like because you can add more impact and that impact can travel through the suite but doesn’t do damage where no suite would. You still cannot go with any heavy contact to the head safely even with any helmet out there (my opinion.)

So train alive and train hard but always know the flaws, always know it still isn’t real.

ADD resistance from your partners.

Compliance is needed to TRAIN; resistance is needed to PRACTICE.

Part Seven – Street Smarts – what is it and can you teach it:

Disclaimer One: If anyone is expecting secret Ninja tricks to make them invulnerable Special Forces personnel – you are going to be disappointed. In everything we teach as martial artists or reality based stylists there is an unknown grey area. All the knowledge in the world doesn't mean it can be used by someone at the right time.

Disclaimer Two: I am not making any claim to having Street Smarts.

Street Smarts is a topic I think teachers can open a door to but I don't think we can drag anyone through it. But read on and perhaps what I mean will become clear.

Before we can look at IF Street Smarts can be taught we have to know what they are, so here are two definitions I found that I think sum up the term well and opens a possible door for teaching:

Definition of "Street Smarts":

1. the experience and knowledge necessary to deal with the potential difficulties or dangers of life in an urban environment.
2. shrewd awareness of how to survive or succeed in any situation, especially as a result of living or working in a difficult environment, as a big city neighborhood.

The first thing mentioned is experience and you cannot teach experience, the best you can do is pass on knowledge of your experiences or someone else's. There is no Vulcan mind-meld here to magically give someone your street smarts that you earned the hard way.

Knowledge can be passed on: Here is an example of a piece of knowledge from experience that can be passed on (more on that in a moment.)

In Rory Miller's DVD Facing Violence he has an articulation exercise and in it three guys come up to one person in a threatening manner and the guy has to act to get away. Now he has to articulate why he did what he did and the fellow on the DVD struggled. Rory gave an example of how he would have articulated what happened saying that one or two (I can't recall) of the guys approaching him had only

the top two buttons of their shirts done up over T-shirts and that is a way gang members wear shirts so they can more easily access their weapons.

So let's stop there – how many people reading this knew that about the shirts? I didn't. I've only ever seen people wearing shirts like that in movies. That is a piece of knowledge gained either through experience and exposure or some method that Rory's has that helped him in a potentially difficult situation. That piece of knowledge can be passed on.

Knowledge can be passed on but the next grey area will be using that knowledge.

So let us be up front and clear right now we CANNOT teach experience. I cannot give you in a dojo the "on the streets" experience some of the people I know that have it. In fact, I cannot even pass on experiences like that because I never lived in the streets or had to deal with gangs. I simply do not have that experience. I've researched and studied so I can pass on knowledge but I haven't the experience of Rory Miller or Marc MacYoung.

So first things:

1. You cannot teach experience.
2. You can pass on knowledge.

The second definition also refers at the end clearly to experience but it brings in a new description of "shrewd awareness."

Can you teach someone to be shrewd? Is shrewd an intelligence thing? Can we improve shrewd? Can you actually help stupid?

Shrewd is a type of intelligence so your success trying to teach it may be limited with some. I cannot give you the mind and experience of Laird, or Rory, or Jim Maloney, or Van, that cannot be done but we can open someone's mind to a different view of the world.

To have a shrewd awareness of what might go wrong you are going to need to understand how the other side thinks.

In Rory's Logic of Violence course he has an exercise where you look over what you've learned and then place yourself in the mind of a predator and plan a robbery on a person. That can be a disturbing experience for some who have never thought of deliberately planning to injure someone simply to take something from them. For those who have paused to ask "injure a person? How did we get from robbing a person to injuring them?" I ask you what is the absolute safest way to get what you want: Off of a conscious person or an unconscious person? So if I want to make sure I am not hurt or identified then an ambush with brutal overwhelming force is a safe approach. Disturbing way to think isn't it? In fact, one participant was extremely thrown by the thought of injuring someone just for "stuff" and, this is important, he was a guy who'd had no problems when in the military hunting insurgents and taking them out in Afghanistan.

Shrewd awareness might be something hard earned through experience or something you have taken the time to explore no matter how dark that exploration might be.

By pushing the envelope of how we think into those areas we need to be aware of we can pass on something that give us some ammunition for shrewd awareness.

Shrewd awareness like experience can have knowledge component that can be passed on but there may be another piece of the puzzle missing that cannot be taught. Like all knowledge having the ability to use it is still that grey zone.

Awareness, is the big buzz word for self defence. And it is a big part of street smarts, but sadly once again only part of the puzzle. If I tell you be aware; what does that mean? Be aware of what? So awareness is also a something often learned through experience or gained as knowledge. Simply saying be aware is like saying punch harder – okay – how?

Can we teach awareness? Again we can pass on knowledge. We can create drills to expose you to being aware. Rory has a great drill he does in the mall. But awareness requires knowledge of what we should be looking for and practice at keeping our heads "in the game" when we need to.

The second definition also has the implied information of being in an unfamiliar territory.

Can we teach being safe in unfamiliar territory? Certainly if we know we're going into it there are things we can learn.

Ever notice that kids often behave better at school or at another person's home than they do in their own home?

That's because kids are often naturally shrewd enough to stay under the radar and get the lay of the land before risking.

No one can cover all the areas you may find yourself in from a bad part of town, a biker bar, the back streets of New Orleans, a dark alley in Afghanistan but we can tell you not to act like you're in your own house and stay under the radar until you get the lay of the land. If you know what you're walking into you can study ahead of time.

We can pass on the knowledge that when outside of your "zone" be polite, stay under the radar, watch the locals, don't do anything first. If you mess up – apologize. But again implementing knowledge is far different than having it.

What can we do?

I do not believe you can teach people to have Street Smarts.

You cannot transfer something that was gained through experience.

You can give them the knowledge components.

You can open their minds to what is out there.

You cannot make someone use the knowledge properly.

If you have a real Street Smart background, then you may have some specific experiential knowledge you can pass on.

If you don't, then you turn to those who do.

I mentioned Rory Miller's "Logic of Violence" which has the tag: "Think like a criminal" and that is what people need to do if they are to gain any chance of awareness or Street Smarts through something other than direct experience.

I think teaching Violence Dynamics is the only way to pass on the knowledge components of being Street Smart (other than sharing personal experiences and direct knowledge).

I am going to guess that if you looked at the average martial arts class most people have never experience violence or have experienced one slice of violence. I am also going to guess that most are decent people who are not there because they want to go out and stomp people but rather they are there for their own self defence or as a social activity.

They are, for the most part, the citizens. Citizens are law abiding and the "good guys." Even if they have had violent experiences, like the former military guy I mentioned earlier, they have never thought of what would go in to being violent just to get what you want or simply because that is how you get your kicks.

Understanding how the criminal element thinks and reacts can help you deal with the potential difficulties or dangers. If you look at the description of the Logic of Violence DVD on Amazon, it makes it clear it isn't going to turn you into a Ninja or Navy Seal (yes I stole that to start this post) but you will learn "some important concepts and strategies to keep you safe." You could say you might learn some Street Smarts.

Simply knowing the difference between social violence and asocial violence and if the predator is a resource predator or a process predator can help keep you safe.

Once again the grey area is whether people can take in this information and make practical use of it. But then isn't that all martial arts or reality based self defence training? We can only provide the knowledge and work them through drills and exercises and then hope that they can translate that into the real world.

Street Smarts has an element of experience that cannot be taught.

Street Smarts has an element of intelligent use of knowledge that can't be taught although strategies can be shared.

Violence Dynamics can be taught.

Learning how criminals think can be taught.

What you take in, how you process it, what you can do with it, is based on each individual as just that – individuals.

To summaries I do not think you can teach Street Smarts but you can teach Violence Dynamics and that is as close as I think you can come.

Part Eight – “Good Enough” isn't:

There are a few paths I see where a practitioner will cease to improve and evolve. In Parts Eight, Nine and Ten I will look at three I have observed.

The first is a common human trait of achieving a level of ability they deem as “Good Enough.”

Moshe Feldenkrais who created the Feldenkrais Method of “Awareness Through Movement” and one of the first European Judo black belts wrote about the tendency to stop studying something once we achieved a level that we determined was good enough for our purposes.

He used the example of speech. Barring a medical condition all of us use speech every day but how many of us have studied speech as deeply as a stage performer, an opera singer or a great orator?

He talks of how once we reach a level that serves our purposes we cease seeking mastery. I am talking true mastery here not a piece of paper. He took this into his theories of how people ceased seeking to master movement, but that isn't for this post.

What I see in some practitioners is that they reach a level of skill and are content with that level. Now I am not saying that level may not be a high one but rather I am asking is good enough all there is?

I may not get this story correct as I heard it years ago but the sentiment I think carries weight. A dojo mate of mine was over in Okinawa at Nakahodo Sensei's dojo for a few weeks visit. At some point Nakahodo Sensei stepped in as my mate was performing Kata and demonstrated how he wanted a certain move done. My mate was blown away by the power and grace of Nakahodo Sensei's movement, but as he walked away Sensei muttered something.

My mate asked the translator what Nakahodo Sensei had said and it roughly translated to "Some day I'll get that move right."

As I said whether I recall that story correctly or not it resonated with me that in our seeking depth in our martial art or simply to be able to defend ourselves and others there should never be good enough.

Elsewhere I posted a clip of Dan Inosanto working on a Systema drill and from my perception the drill appeared new to him. I think most people would say that Mr. Inosanto has achieved mastery over a number of arts and yet he was working on something new to him.

I also posted a long while ago Rickson Gracie visiting and asking questions of Eddie Bravo and what he was doing in BJJ. He was respectful and contemplative and clearly saw things he would want to take away. Many BJJ practitioner dismiss Eddie Bravao (despite his competition success) yet here was one of the most recognizable masters of BJJ there to see what he could learn.

I see both those examples of why those gentlemen have achieved the levels of mastery they have.

When what you do works then what you do will always be a part of what you do. An odd statement but it will build into Part Nine later. What I mean by that statement is everything we have ever learned in our martial arts or reality based training forms part of who we are and what we do. What you did today that worked for you will still be a part of who you evolve into even if in a very different form.

My fascination with martial arts is the continued depth I see. The layers of principles are like an never ending onion, the moment you peel one layer off you find the corner of the next one.

In the hard core self defence side, I have posted many times that something Tony Blauer said resonated with me. He said that in the world some study showed there were 3.3% of the population (shortened to "The 3%") that were truly dangerous people. Again whether I have this correct or not (and any errors are mine) that also resonated with me. I have always sought to continue to improve to get closer and closer to the ability to deal with that 3%. I determined if I could deal with that 3% then the other 97% would become much easier.

I am not here to tell anyone that their comfort at being "Good Enough" is wrong, but I am suggesting that there always might be more out there and isn't that part of the joy of what we train?

If someone says that every time they've hit someone the guy has gone down, so they are content with how hard they hit then it is hard to "tell" them they could learn to hit harder when all their experience supports their opinion that already hit hard enough, so here is where every practitioner will determine their own approach to our study of violence.

Some will be content with "Good Enough" and some will always hope that someday they will "get that move right" and continue the seeking mastery of our study of violence.

Part Nine – Sunk Cost Effect:

Definition:

- The “Sunk Cost Effect” is the tendency for humans to continue investing in something that clearly isn’t working.

I am going to tamper with this definition and say that the Sunk Cost Effect is the tendency for humans to continue investing in something even when something else is clearly more efficient and effective.

The Sunk Cost Effect is the inability to give up and move on from what you have been doing to do something better.

Many years ago I had the good fortune to have an extremely valuable lesson. I had been working on knife defence after my good training buddy, Reg and figured out having a black belt meant nothing when someone was trying to gut you with a knife. I had developed a simple direct approach to deal with the larger attacks but was struggling with small movements and the reality of assassination type attacks – they could work but they took a lot of practice.

My Sensei at the time introduced me to a man who also worked on knife defence and he had learned a system many years ago that was far different from what I was doing. I only had the opportunity to spend an afternoon with him but it was enough to show me that what he did was more efficient and effective than what I was doing and, with adjustments could work on small movements and assassinations (disclaimer: work as well as something can against such attacks).

I dropped my approach and my buddy and I worked on this new one refining and tinkering and learning.

I gave up all the hard work, time, sweat, and effort I had invested in my approach to knife defence – all to move onto something new.

This also gave me another excellent lesson. Even though I had given up my original approach everything I had worked on and learned there has been useful somewhere in my training. As I commented in Part Eight what I did before was still with me, just in a different form and use.

Contrast this to a friend of mine who had attended a daylong seminar I did on knife defence and when visiting his parents he attended a class at the Karate school he had gone to as a child. They were doing knife defence and all was well while they did large prearranged attacks but when they lined up and everyone had to take a turn defending themselves as each person in line stepped up to attack them with impromptu attacks they failed, time after time.

When my friend stepped up he tried to do what they had shown in the class for the first couple of attacks but then, after getting “killed”, he abandoned their way and did what I had taught him. He succeeded time after time. It was effective and brutal enough the instructor stopped the line because what he was doing hurt. (note: “hurt” he didn’t injure anyone.)

After the class the instructor came up to my friend after class and asked him where he had learned what he had done. My friend replied he learned it at a day seminar in Edmonton.

The instructor shook his head and said, “A day seminar? You learned it in a day? I’ve been doing this for fourteen years.”

He then walked away from my friend. He never asked my friend who he had learned it from. He never asked my friend to show him what he had been doing. He asked nothing further.

I guarantee that the next time he taught knife defence (and he would) he taught what he had put fourteen years into training even though he knew it would fail, even though he knew something better was out there. He was not willing to give up that time and effort and training that clearly did not work for something that had been shown to him to be successful.

Note: all the attacks had been large movements.

So stop a moment and think about that. What he was teaching students failed the moment the moves were no longer prearranged. He had just personally witnessed a new way that was successful. And all it would have taken to learn was a day. (And practice – my friend left that part out.)

The new time and effort was minimal but the old time and effort was such a large investment he could not let it go. He could not give it up.

There are other examples but this one resonated with me because he had been placed in the same position I had but made the opposite decision.

This is the sunk cost effect.

Now a third element may have played into it and that will be dealt with in Part Ten.

From what my friend told me I know the defences the instructor was using and I know that training has many applications, so it was not actually wasted time. But you have to be willing to give up, to let go, to learn that.

I seek to be the best I can be (I am not saying I am the best). That means I look and learn and if I see something that looks more efficient and effective than what I am doing I work on it and test it and if it is, then I change. I let go and change. Nothing I have ever trained has been worthless even if the sole knowledge I got was it was crap.

So my advice here is never take anything on faith but if you see something that looks better than what you are doing then explore it. If it is then let go of what you are doing and change.

The sunk cost effect is one of those large decision making errors we can fall into – don't fall for it.

To tamper with the definition for the last time:

The Sunk Cost Effect is the tendency of martial artists and self-defence practitioners to continue investing in training even when another method is clearly more efficient and effective.

Part Ten – Ego – The good, the bad, the ugly:

Okay so I'm going to get this last barrier to evolving I had mentioned out of the way so I can move on to some "better" posts.

As always I will start with the common definition for what we're talking about.

Definition of Ego: Conscious thinking subject, part of the mind that reacts to reality and has a sense of individuality, devoted to one's own self interests or feelings, a person's sense of self-esteem or self-importance.

Ego is something we all have or else we would not interact with reality or have the motivation to get up in the morning or even know who were if we did get up.

Ego unto itself is not a "bad" thing and yet when we common folk speak of ego it always tends not to cover the good but rather the bad and the ugly.

This won't be any difference. Another thread on Van's Uechi Ryu forum deals with ego getting martial artists into situations they never should have gotten into and that is either the bad or the ugly depending on you point of view, but that is not the side of ego I will be talking about. Rory Miller talks about the side of ego where the teacher punishes the student for doing better than them thus creating a "lose" mentality in the student. But I'm not going there either although both are not the sunny side of ego.

I am going to talk how ego inhibits learning and growth. It does this in one of three ways:

1. I am perfect therefore nothing is better than what I do therefore I need not look at anything else.
2. I am the grand mucky muck and everything I do is the best therefore I/WE do not ever change what I am teaching.
3. I cannot be seen as less than perfect therefore I cannot do anything new in front of my students on the chance they may see me fail.

1. I spoke first of some people feeling their skills were good enough and they stopped seeking and learning at that point and this is the inflated ego side of that. The high and mighty is so good no one and no system and no style could have anything more to offer him. I always recall the story of Chuck Norris seeing BJJ for the first time and coming back to train with a white belt on. If you can't see the lesson there I can't help you.
2. Another downside to the inflated ego and not being willing to change is believing nothing is better than what you do even with clear evidence in your face. When I talked about sunk cost effect I hinted that there might have also been another reasons the teacher didn't ask my friend to show him my knife defence and that could be his ego would not allow him to accept something was better than what he was doing so he walked away. I mentioned in an earlier post Rickson Gracie going to see what Eddie Bravo was doing that was innovative in BJJ, to see what he could learn. Again, if you can't see the lesson there I can't help you.
3. Ever notice if the teacher of the school is on the floor doing what the person they brought in to teach the seminar is doing? Ever notice why they aren't. Now this is not the case with everyone because sometimes if the SENSEI is on the floor no one is looking at the presenter they are all watching their teacher. But when that is not the case the reason the teacher is not on the floor doing a FMA double stick drill for the first time ever is because they are going to look like it is the first time they have done it and their egos cannot let their students see that. I also mention Dan Inosanto doing a Systema drill that was new to him – need I repeat the last line of the two last paragraphs?

When Kenpo 10th Dan Nick Cero passed away in 1998 I recall a letter sent in to Black Belt magazine that retold a story from one of his students. Mr. Cero had been a 5th or 6th Dan at the time and was teaching a white belt class. The student relating the story was working with another white belt who was clearly skilled in another martial art. They were supposed to do a specific response to an attack but when the student really came in hard and fast his partner didn't do the specified technique instead he responded with something different but very effective. Mr. Cero had seen it and stopped the class for a moment to pull the student's partner aside and send the student off to work with someone else. Of course the student thought some form of berating would take place; however, as he watched Mr. Cero explained to the student's former partner that he had never seen the technique he had used before and he asked if he would show it to him. The two of them worked on the technique with the white belt teaching the high Dan. The student said it was one of the greatest lessons about learning he had from anyone.

I think it was Patrick McCarthy Sensei who said he never wanted to be put up on a pedestal by his students for fear they would be hurt when he fell off and landed on them. Bad enough to be put their by your students, worse yet when your ego has you crawl up there.

Don't let ego either inflated or in fear of embarrassment stop your learning.

Part Eleven – Wanting to learn, not waiting to be taught:

Old Chinese Teacher saying: If I show a student one corner of a square and he cannot see the other three corners, then I speak to him no more.

There is a phenomenon in martial training of wanting to be spoon feed. Students wanting to be taught every step of the way without exploration or discovery or thought on their part.

If you teach a martial principle (by definition martial principles have universal applications) by demonstrating it in one technique, then a student who wants to learn will begin looking for where else it applies. A student wanting to be taught will wait to be shown that principle in each and every technique one by one. They cannot see the other three corners of the square after being shown one.

Certainly in the Shu, Ha, Ri progression in learning martial arts there is a period where the student doesn't know which foot goes where and is expected to be shown how to do everything BUT there must come a time where the spoon feeding stops if the student is to truly develop.

The student must take what they have been taught and contemplate it. Without contemplation the student will forever be caught in the basic Shu level of needing to be shown.

When you leave the mat - think about what you have learned or been taught, ponder it, turn it over in your mind, contemplate it, expand it.

To truly evolve in your training, it must be "your" training. You must take what your teachers have given you and look beyond what they have shown you to find what they have shown you.

I teach fighting in empty space. If I show someone how to do this in an application and they do not think of it any further, then they might be able to use it if attacked that way. But if they ponder it and think about it and look for where it can be used elsewhere then they will learn how to use it. And in my mind have a far greater chance of using it under stress.

The reason I say they will have a far greater chance of using it under stress is if you look at where a principle can be used and begin to see it and do it everywhere then “that is what you do” and if that is what you do there is a higher chance of you doing it in chaos than trying to remember that one thing that made an application work in a specific technique.

Each to their own of course and always but to truly evolve in your art it takes contemplative thought and on the mat exploration and verification.

The old saying is very telling. If I show you one corner of a square and you can't (or don't bother) to figure out where the other three must be, if you wait to be walked over and shown where each of the other three corners are, then perhaps you aren't worth the teacher's time. I know that sounds harsh but if that teacher is trying to develop into you a mastery of the art there is no hope for those who can't see the other three corners.

Those who master this study of violence know why they do what they do because they have contemplated it and worked on it and tested it.

I know Art Sensei tends to down play his excellent posts as simply “he does what he does” but if you watch his clips he has a reason for how and why he does everything. He has studied, contemplated, written books and worked things out and now he tells you – he is showing you one corner. He has shown you what he found on his exploration and now you can either wait for him to show you everything on every technique or listen to what he says on his clips and look at where else it applies AND THEN CHANGE.

If you wait to be taught everything, you will not learn.

Learning is the active seeking of knowledge and the exploration for discovery.

We see that one corner, either by self discovery or being shown by a teacher, but once you see it look for the other three corners, don't sit around waiting to be shown.

Part Twelve – Operant Conditioning to Habit Response, Part 1:

“We don’t rise to the level of our expectations – we fall to the level of our training.” - Archilochus a Greek soldier.

Simply put operant conditioning is a behaviour modification method where certain responses to stimuli are either rewarded if the response is the desired one or punished if it is not. A Habit is a deeply imprinted response to a cue. We want to use operant conditioning to create a habit response to specific cue.

I’ve actually started writing a manual or book on this and here is a portion from the introduction for Part 1 on this subject:

What do we want?

Reacting is usually described as working on the OODA system:

1. Observe – what is happening
2. Orient – to the observation (interpret the sensory input)
3. Decide – what to do about it
4. Act

The delays in reacting come:

1. Freeze at observe or orient or decide.
2. When there are too many options to decide what to do.

But what if we could act directly off the observation basically short circuiting OODA and leaping from Observe to Act?

This is where HABITS come in.

Habit is a three step process:

1. The Cue = the stimulus that kicks off the accessing of this habit.
2. The routine = the programmed response.
3. The Reward = why the brain kept this response.

Habits work in the Basal Ganglia of the brain and once a habit is formed the rest of the brain basically bows out when the cue is seen and lets the Basal Ganglia take over. In fact, once a habit kicks in the rest of the brain cannot interfere.

Remember we want to jump from Observe (the **Cue**) to Act (the **Routine**).

The formation of a habit means once the cue is noted (OBSERVED) you enter immediately into the routine (ACT.)

Therefore, if we can form the right habits we can respond faster than normal by jumping from Observe to Act.

Habits CAN be created.

Habits CAN be changed.

IF we can break the habit down we can create, change or even eliminate it.

Part 2 on this topic will briefly note what is needed to form or change a habit.

Part Thirteen – Operant Conditioning to Habit Response, Part 2:

More from the manual/book I'm working on:

THE SYSTEM

Our system works on forming effective combative HABITS through Detailed Analysis of the Cue and Reward, Operant Conditioning and Soft Adrenaline Training.

1) Detailed Analysis of Cue and Reward:

To Create a habit, you must:

1. Identify the cue
2. Identify the "True" reward.
3. Determine the Routine.
4. Believe it works.

To CHANGE a habit, you must:

5. Keep the cue the same
6. Identify and Keep the "True" reward the same.
7. Change the Routine.

8. Believe it works.

➤ **The identification of “Cues”**

- The cue is the time you need to move and act – or as Rory Miller says that moment people need to have “permission.” Laird calls it setting the Trigger.
- One step is to review who you are, what you do and what dangers you may face.
- The next step is to run through those danger situations in detail to identifying what the first indication of danger and how to act, and also the last indication and how to act (you know for when Mr. Murphy jumps in.)
- NOTE: This will take actually studying violence as opposed to assuming how it will happen, or how you think it will happen. Unless you have experienced it or done it; you will have to study it.
- This includes analysis of assault movement and precursors. –WHAT DO YOU SEE?
- This includes scenario visualization, dissection and analysis, and making decisions on what or can or are willing to do. (Do your thinking now – not later.)
- What do you see - leads to the earliest “Cue”.

➤ **Identification of Rewards:**

- Must identify and acknowledge what the reward is to establish or change the habit.
- This means seeking and understanding what people are getting out of their current training.
- Define winning an assault for example. Is it looking the guy in the eyes so he knows he is beaten? Is it that feeling of physical clashing and Manly conflict that makes it feels like winning? Or is an effortless win the true reward and if so then this is the “feeling” we must seek and acknowledge as the true reward.

- The above is important to work through because people engage direct lines of force all the time because of the “manly reward” of that conflict. We must redefine the reward from manly conflict to survival and teach the habit of not engaging strength but engaging weakness.
- Using Rory Miller’s Goal = Strategy = Tactics = Techniques we can work at defining the Goal to survival and the have that reward to be properly acknowledged. We can go beyond the Monkey dance.

Note: To be effective the reward has to be:

- 1) immediate,
- 2) consistent and
- 3) large enough to be valued.

➤ **Instilling Belief:**

- How do we instil belief?
- By acknowledging that the failures feel bad and that successes feel good.
- This is an ACTIVE acknowledgement. (See The Program for details.)

In the next part we will look at Operant Conditioning and Soft Adrenaline Practice.

Part Fourteen – Operant Conditioning to Habit Response, Part 3:

I’m going to wrap up these parts on operant conditioning and habit formation in this post, so, my apology, it is going to be long. I have tried to break it out into sections
What I am writing will go into more detail and offer some specific drills but this post will give the over all gist of what I think needs to be done.

Operant Conditioning:

Operant conditioning (or instrumental conditioning) is a type of learning in which an individual's behaviour is modified by an immediate consequence. When the action is successful there is a positive reinforcement. When the action is unsuccessful there is a negative consequence. The goal is that the reinforcing of the successful behaviours embeds them as desirable ways to behave, where the negative consequences eliminates that behaviour.

Therefore:

- Operant Conditioning is achieved through rewarding the desired behaviour and punishing the negative behaviour.
- Habits are formed when the reward is achieved therefore habits can be formed through operant conditioning.

In our system you are going to find something hard to accept for the first few repetitions in a drill where the participant is going to actively acknowledge that it either felt GREAT or it felt CRAPPY! Even if just to themselves.

This is an important piece for successful operant conditioning and absolutely necessary for the formation of a habit.

Soft Adrenaline Practice

- Soft Adrenaline Practice allows time for the success or failure of the routine to be experience and acknowledge allowing the practitioner to retain the successes and eliminate the failures.
- Therefore, **Soft Adrenaline Practice allows Operant Conditioning to happen.**

Purpose:

- The first purpose of Soft Adrenaline Practice is to introduce a little of that KICK JUICE into your system while you are placed in a threatened environment. Anything that works for you here is recorded

by your brain and body differently than something you learn “intellectually” and the brain and body recognize these as things to remember that are good for survival.

- Things you remember to do in response to something that your brain feels is important to remember are HABITS. Therefore, soft adrenaline practice is excellent for habit creation and habit change.
- The other reason is that it allows us to find the best Routine or action as well.
- No point responding if the routine is ineffective.
- I am only going to have one point on the routine itself which will follow the soft adrenaline description but the actual expression of the routine will be based in your own training and experience.
- The purpose of slow training was to find what I am going to call the Pure Move.
- The Pure move is Rory Miller’s Golden Move or my interpretation of it. The Pure move is accomplished without attributes and simultaneously achieves the following objectives: You avoid the assault, you achieve a strategic position, and you disrupt their structure (by control or strike)

Why eliminate Attributes in Practice:

- Slow training is to eliminate any attributes you may have such as speed and strength.
- If your success depends on an attribute then your success is only good until you meet someone with more of those attributes.
- Attributes are still used in application but they should only determine damage – not success.
- In addition, we often cover our errors or flaws with an attribute. By this I mean if I can get from point A to Point B so fast the person does not see and take advantage of the flaws in my movement then my training is flawed because the moment I encounter someone who can see the flaw who can take advantage of the flaw – I fail. Therefore, going slow allows me to see everything in between Point A and Point B and correct any flaws.
- The Pure Move succeeds because the principles used are appropriate and appropriately applied to the situation.
- Therefore, we want to eliminate the need of an attribute for success.

Other Benefits of Slow Practice:

- Here the other benefits of going slow enter into the picture – the ability to have a tactile experience what you are doing.

- Think of a small glass of something to drink (you pick the beverage). I take the glass and fire the liquid to the back of my throat and swallow.
- Could I even begin to tell you what the liquid was, the consistency, what it tasted like, or even if I liked it?
- If instead I took it and rolled it around in my mouth savouring the flavour and the consistency would I know more about that drink? If I enjoy the drink I will want to remember it to have again but if I don't then I will also want to remember what it was. Most people will express their like or dislike with either a facial expression or verbal comment or both = This is acknowledging the reward (or negative).
- Slow training is intended to give you immediate feedback both positive and negative (This is the Operant Conditioning portion) because if I am making the wrong move and I do not cover it up with speed or strength then I should FEEL that I have lost my position, or my control, or my structure, or that smack upside my head. By going slow, I can savour the feeling of the move and embed within me what feels good and should be sought again and what feels bad and should be avoided.

Don't exceed the "fight" Threshold but add resistance:

- The other thing that can be done in slow training is a progressive increase in resistance and fight of your partner.
- But there is a "speed" that when reached will/should kick in your partner's fight response. Slow training should NEVER be done at that speed. Not only because it is not slow but because we are trying to embed new tactical habits and kicking into fight mode will kick in all old habits.
- We want our partner to provide a progressively level of resistance and IF we expect them to stay within the drill and go slowly and NOT kick into fight mode even when that speed is reached then we are embedding a failure and a bad one. Therefore, the speed that triggers the fight response has to be avoided at all costs or – accept your partner is no longer in the drill and should be fighting – which negates the purpose of a drill, so pause and start again.
- Going slowly your partner can begin to resist and fight back in a progressive manner teaching you where the holes in your fight are and teaching them to see the holes.

Reading Lines of Incoming Force – the Ability to See:

- Going slowly allows you to see what I call the "flow." Now I am not talking about flowery frilly movements I am talking about lines of force and where they travel, where they might make you travel and how they can be influenced.
- I'm talking about reading where and what will come based on the flow of the lines of force. Going slowly allows us to see things as they unfold, to read the attack.

- If you can read the attack you can predict or influence where the holes will appear and be there. It is too late in the chaos to take advantage of an opening you must go where the opening will be.
- I remember years ago seeing a show on Wayne Gretzky where he talked about as a kid he would watch a hockey game with a drawing of the rink in front of him and a pencil. He would trace the path of the puck throughout the game and later study where the puck traveled so when he played he never chased the puck he always just went to where the puck was going to be.
- This is what slow motion can help you learn. Watch and see where not only things are but where they go and how the body reacts so that you can tell where the holes will appear and be there as they do.

Body Awareness of Tactile Thinking:

- What I want here is a body awareness, a tactile “thinking” where what you feel is the cue to the next response.
- There is no thought of no hey heart beat now, or no he’s slipping to the side move/slam/hit here exchange of thoughts the feeling is directly attached to your response. And your response will also be what HAS felt right (and worked) in practice.
- This is one of the most important lessons and can only be learned by doing and experiencing.
- Without feeling what is happening you will be far too late to respond successfully.

Drills:

In reality based training the drill used are based off of the study of assaults not “fights.” We have a number of drills but if you can conceive of how a bad guy would try to take you out then you can create a drill to simulate it, then simply do it slowly.

Hard Adrenaline Practice:

- Speed or Hard Adrenaline Practice can follow once the routines are embedded.
- Speed should never be introduced until the routines are embedded.
- It is not that you never practice with speed but this slow practice specifically addresses using operant conditioning to create tactical habits. Adding speed will test how well they have been embedded.

FINAL NOTE: I know it is a long post but the final note is that in habit formation using operant conditioning there is no “training”, no talking, no teaching, just the experience. What is felt, is the teacher.

Part Fifteen – The Maturing Progression of a Marital Artist and how it may affect what you teach:

But before I begin I am not trying to say this is a “must” approach but it is an interesting line of thought to consider when approaching groups of different makeups.

There was an old show called “Way of the Warrior” back in the early 80’s and one episode was on Taiji (link below) and in it the Taiji master explains how he requires his students to progress through a series of arts and why.

I’m going to add my own thoughts to what he had to say so understand this is also my take on it. I’m going to quickly run through them then revisit the progression at the end and why it may affect what you teach to who.

The Taiji master said he progresses his students as follows:

1. Kung Fu
2. Xing I
3. Bagua
4. Taiji

1. Kung Fu:

He starts students with a Kung Fu that is a hard and external art. He said in the clip it is so the students have precise and clear movements using maximum force with little evasion to fight their way through blows.

I am going to take that further and say it is a very athletic and in your face approach that ends often in clashes of force on force. This feeds the needs of the younger people, particularly the male of our species, for that mano a mano conflict.

2. Xing I:

The second style and first style of the Internal Arts he introduces the student to is Xing I Chuan. Here there is a shift to relaxed muscles to generate power and more thought on what is being felt on the inside rather than what is happening on the outside (Thanks to, Dillon Beyer for that explanation of external and internal arts). A calm mind and intelligent attack is desired rather than just fighting through blows.

Xing I Chuan was very popular in the military and it is an exceptionally aggressive style and while the closings are often slightly angled they are still very direct.

So the athleticism and overt aggression of Kung Fu is being given over to looseness and a more thoughtful attack rather than fighting through blows but the aggression and directness is still there just more refined.

3. Bagua:

Bagua is the third style and the second internal art he introduces the student to. It was an art famous for being used by some of the emperors' bodyguards.

This art is all about looseness, evasion, circular and flowing. The loosening required for Xing I is taken to different method to get the flowing, revolving actions required by Bagua. The aggressive direct approach is gone replaced by a subtler deceptive one.

4. Taiji (Tai Chi)

The last art (4th) and the third internal art is Taiji and Taiji contains elements of Xing I and Bagua in it but it also has spiral motions (Chen does). Looseness is never enough and there is an alignment with gravity and an acceptance of gravity that must be achieved. As he said in the video you need to experience it.

Where am I going with this?

There is a maturing happening in the progression above from hard, direct and aggressive to soft, direct and aggressive, to soft and evasive to totally soft and tactile.

When I spoke about the reward in habit forming we need to understand where on this maturity line the student is. If they are young athletic hotshots, then the reward they will expect is a “Clash and Bash.” It may be the only reward they can accept. So if you want to teach them to protect themselves quickly then clash and bash may have to be part of it. When I posted the “true reward” previously if the reward is not what the person expects or wants then the operant conditioning is not going to be effective – and that is how this post links with the most recent ones.

If they are farther along the maturity line (and this has nothing to do with age folks) then you can introduce loosening and more tactile responses. You can shift the expected reward from Clash and Bash towards effortless.

It will depend on the program you are offering and where the student is to determine what they need.

I am not saying they must learn four different styles but perhaps one style evolving throughout four different methods.

Not a must but something to think about.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Y-CQ3NIBpE>

Part Sixteen – Entangled – Bad very bad:

What is being entangled:

- The definition of entangle is to “catch in snare” and that fits perfectly for becoming entangled in self defence.

- We can become entangled, caught in a snare, a trap, and become so focused on getting out of that snare that we lose sight of our primary goal in counter assault.
- There are many ways we can become entangled and none of them are good for self defence.

How do we become entangled:

- When something snares our focus I call it becoming entangled. It is a term I got from my long time training partner and Taiji instructor, Rick Bottomley.
- If someone grabs us by the throat and we focus on getting their hands off our throat above all else – we are entangled.
- If we attempt to get a lock and it isn't working right away and we continue to work on it – we are entangled.
- If we can't figure out what or why something is happening and it loops in our minds to the point we can't respond – we are entangled (a freeze).
- If we get taken to the ground and completely focus on grappling forgetting striking is still an option – we are entangled.

I recall a video clip of Michael DePasquale Sr. saying something like I hit him here and his mind goes here, that is when I really hit him over there.

Our minds become entangled on “something” and our focus becomes so narrowed on that “something” we miss the obvious.

Rory Miller points out most systems have many defences for the two hands around the throat choke from the front but if you ignore the hands and step back, push off, and turn they really don't have a good enough grip to hang on.

So why then all the defences for this move which happens about as often in real life as a wrist grab to initiate a fight?

We have them because we become entangled in the fact someone has laid their hands on us and our minds go to the spot we are grabbed.

I was working with a very well trained and talented Jujitsu guy with many years of experience and I asked why when someone grabbed him he worked so hard to break the person's hold before he did his move. I asked him to ignore the hands and just go for it. Everything he did worked and usually as a result the person grabbing him let go to save their... own behinds as they flew through the air.

Anything that snares our attention away from what needs to be done is an entanglement.

Everyone has them, how many train to break free of them?

How do we break free of our entanglements:

- First you find yours. What really let's panic creep in when you train.
- Once you find them, train having it happen.
- Allow yourself to be placed in that entanglement and train to ignore it. Let them grab your throat, wrist or pin you on the floor etc.
- Take the training into impromptu practice where you do not know when the "entanglement" move is going to happen.
- Train your mind to not become entangled.

I doubt we can actually train out all the possible entanglements but we can eliminate many and learn to recognize and break the entanglement sooner.

Part Seventeen – Forms, yes forms – don't make that face at me:

I work with more than a few reality based guys and if forms are ever mentioned there is always a rolling of the eyes. Most, see forms as boring and either unnecessary or completely useless training.

But the truth is forms, when done properly, can be a vital part of training and may in fact be necessary to grasp the full depth of many martial principles.

Definitely many principles can be learned without forms but some require a close observation and self correction that may only available in forms.

WHY is it that some people think forms are a waste of time:

My thoughts/opinions are as follows:

- The reason for this is because most do not understand or teach the purpose of forms properly.
- Not understanding the purpose of forms they are then both taught and performed incorrectly.
- As they are being performed incorrectly they are indeed unnecessary and useless.
- Forms are not just a series of movements you have to get through
- Forms are not just a series of movements you need for your next ranking.
- If that is how you think of them then either stop reading or read what is to come thoughtfully.

The Purpose of forms:

I said many years ago I believe on Van's forum that forms were the library of the principles of a system and this remains my opinion. I would go further to say it is the repository of the proper performance of the principles.

If I'm correct then you can learn the martial principles of a system by studying the forms. Assuming they are passed on properly.

NOTE: Learning the martial principles of a system doesn't mean you can apply them in chaos, for that you absolutely need a body(s) to practice on.

As I said, if a form is just a series of movements to "get through" then your approach isn't going to get you anything from the forms.

What forms allow is the close scrutiny of your body mechanics and movement performed without the distraction of a threat.

Forms allow the integration of newly learned mechanics performed without the distraction of a threat.

The "without the distraction of a threat" is vital because trying to examine closely your own body mechanics and movement when someone is trying to take your head off can be somewhat difficult.

Therefore, by removing the threat we allow full and complete self examination, evaluation, and correction.

How to Practice Forms Properly:

Once again I feel the need to add the disclaimer that these are my opinions from my training experience that neither makes them right and you wrong or vice versa.

When I do a movement in any form I look at each move asking myself:

1. What is this move teaching me?
2. What principles are in this move?
3. Do I have all the other principles I have learned in this move?
4. If not, why not and then explain or fix.
5. Can I feel/experience all of them happening.

To do this you must “listen” to the performance of your form and try to feel each and every part of each and every move and has the answer to why you are doing something the way you are.

In the progression of learning previously mentioned spoon feeding ends and you should be able to respond to the question “why do you do that movement the way you do” and respond with more than “that is how I learned it.”

Forms should be a tactile experience savouring every moment of each movement and feeling the “correctness’ of each one.

You need to be able to do the form with that same deep brain thought rather than intellectually doing this move and getting ready to do the next move.

You should know the “check points” of what you expect so that you can self correct.

For example, if you follow the principle that power is generated either on a 90-degree line or a 180-degree line then you can examine your form to see if you are staying true.

This requires becoming aware of what your own body is actually doing which will then roll over into partner work and being aware of what they are doing. It is very hard to sense where your opponent’s legs are if you can feel where yours are.

Forms are not fast food, they are fine dining and the same care and time you would take to savour a truly fine meal must also be given to the study of forms. If rushed as if they are just an intake of needed calories, then they will be empty calories.

Through forms you can gain a much needed body awareness.

Conclusion:

I believe the practice of forms has been maligned due to improper teaching of how forms are to be done and therefore how they are practiced.

You can learn principles without forms and you can learn self protection without forms but I believe there may be a limit to the depth of knowledge that might be gained without forms and one way to exceed that limit is through the practice of forms.

However, each to their own, practice forms or not, do them as fast food or a savoured meal, you have my opinion.

Addendum 1 to Part Seventeen – Forms, yes forms – don't make that face at me:

Background on My Study of Forms:

My foundation system in Uechi Ryu Karate Jutsu. The system was founded on three forms and later five more were added (and more yet by some branches.) I practice only five of the forms for reasons I will cover in a separate post. In addition, over the last eighteen months, I have learned a version of the Practical Method Chen Taiji 84 move form. It has been a large endeavour for me.

While I started to formally learn the Chen Taiji form eighteen months ago I have actually been incorporating the body mechanics and principles of Chen Taiji for many years.

What that means is you can learn the principles separate from the form but, and this is the part to listen closely to, you don't really truly learn all of them or the subtlety of them until you learn and practice the form.

The form gives you the structure with which to self correct the principles.

My learning this form has not been without difficulty. The first obstacle was the fact it had been a long time since I learned a form of any kind. Yeah it's a memory thing and I admittedly didn't have the coinciding of time and energy to practice the form as much as I had anticipated.

The second was the length of the Taiji form compared to the Uechi forms. Uechi is a fast direct style and their forms reflect this in being short, brief and direct themselves. The Chen Taiji Yilu form is 84 movements (some count differently) and we jokingly say one of the movements is almost a full Uechi form.

This isn't an insult to Uechi, but rather a reason I had a struggle learning the form.

However, by far the largest struggle I had with the Yilu form is that is a teaching form of the principles rather than an application based form.

Uechi forms translate into applications exceptionally easily. The Yilu form does not, and yes you can make any BS up to show here if he does this odd thing I can use this move as a response, but the fact is in real application the movements of the Yilu form do not look like the movement in the form but the principles are there. This can also be true of Uechi forms or all forms.

Now some Taiji people might disagree that Yilu isn't application based but I train with far too many reality based practitioners for that one to fly. It is principle based teaching and not technique based teaching. If we look at it that way I can see how easily the principles can translate into application.

The struggle I had was that my brain takes everything into application so this was a major cultural shock for me and I hated the form for many months. I continued to learn it because I valued the Chen Taiji principles. But then I found the principles and something I could draw a line back to a movement in the form began showing up in my self defense training.

If you recall an earlier part I showed where one Taiji teacher had the students learn King Fu then Xing I then Bagua and THEN Taiji, so ponder that again for a moment from the perspective that Yilu is principle based and not technique based – when they began to learn Taiji they already had learned the fighting applications in three other systems so applications were not needed – a different principle based method was.

For those who might know the background of Chen Taiji Practical Method this may also be seen as an odd approach because Master Hong said you must do the form as if you were fighting and fight as if you were doing the form. At first glance this may seem contradictory to what I just said but it is not.

In the last post I commented that doing Taiji was about experiencing what you were doing, a tactile experience. When you perform a move in the form it is not that you envision a particular attack but rather that you always envision contact with the aggressor. Without this vision flaws will enter into your performance.

When you engage in application the “simply do the form” refers (my opinion again) to not becoming entangled (another previous post).

My background in forms opened with direct short Uechi forms that translated quickly in to a multitude of adaptable applications. (Well actually it opened with Tae Kwon Do forms a long time ago but I don't practice those anymore.)

This gave me a wonderful practical outer shell that was very useful. Unfortunately, my training didn't give me what I wanted in the underlying method or principles to make that shell as efficient and effective as I wanted. So I went looking and searching and I found that the Practical Method Chen Taiji principles fit for me and I began to fill my outer shell with this thick substantial filling.

Now I am seeking to explore that filling as closely as possible through the Chen form itself. I seek the principles that will make things the most effective and efficient as I can. For me that means finding as many universal martial principles as possible and integrating them into what I do for self protection. As I practice and learn from the Yilu form I take that filling back into my Uechi forms to continue adding a stronger and stronger core.

This is simply my practice.

Addendum 2 to Part Seventeen – Forms, yes forms – don't make that face at me:

Sanchin “Testing” (Checking):

[Dillon Beyer](#) made the following reply to my post and I thought the concepts presented were very worthy of consideration:

"I think it's really interesting to explore the way shi li or shime type testing practices work with solo work to help provide a context for the sort of feedback that you're looking for in the forms. Learning how to align against external pressure, and most importantly, what alignment **feels** like against external pressure, is very useful as a self check when you're practicing feeling the alignments without that pressure.

That is, it's interesting to see how the movement principles of the art expressed in solo training do or do not carry over to how the principles are expressed with a partner. How you align to gravity may not be how you align to gravity AND pressure from an opponent, which is fun to see."

SANCHIN-KITAE:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DS1y293IO4U>

Part Eighteen - Tensing stops everything therefore, seek looseness:

WPD Dragon Flow Drill

This drill was created because of these two facts:

- If you've done martial arts and self defence long enough, you begin to figure out that everything works better when you are loose and nothing works better when you are tense.
- I believe you need to understand the effects of a line of force to use them and to avoid or mitigate damage.

My Base system is Uechi Ryu Karate Jutsu and it is said to contain aspects of three animals. Those three animals are: Tiger, Dragon and Crane.

A person who knows far more than I ever will about Chinese systems said that there are no actual Dragon Kung Fu elements in Uechi so that sent me off on a search for the Dragon in Uechi Ryu and discussions and the seeking of looseness lead me, and my students, to develop and create what we call Dragon Flow Drills or Tactical Flow Drills.

The Dragon is a mythical creature existing in many cultures. The Chinese dragon is different from the Medieval English Dragons. Where the Medieval English Dragons are powerful they are also stout and only their necks and tails can undulate and whip. Chinese Dragons by contrast are long and slim and very serpent like in appearance and their body type lends itself to undulating whipping movements.

So while Dragons are mythical the Chinese Dragons are emulated by undulating whipping body actions.

We will also see that the extension of the loose body undulation to the limbs creates the coiling we also associate with these slender Chinese Dragons.

It is in this undulation and loose torso work where we find the Dragon and the looseness we seek.

The use of the body in a loose and undulating manner isn't something new, many systems, including Uechi contain it.

Xinyiquan Teory, Applications, Fighting Tactics and Spirit by Liang, Shou-YU and Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming page 246 (Yue, Fei's Ten Important Theses from 10. Thesis of Fighting)

"When the body moves (it is) like a wall collapsing. When the feet are falling (to the ground), (it is) like a tree growing roots. When the hands are rising, (it is) like a fired cannonball, thrusting straight forward. The body should be like a living snake, when the head is attacked, the tail will respond, when the tail is attacked, the head will respond, and when the middle sections is attacked the head and tail will both respond. When striking forward, must be aware of the rear. Knowing (how to move) forward, you should also know (how to move) backward. The heart moves like a horse; the shoulders move with the speed of wind. When training it seems there is someone in front of you and when you are exchanging the hands (i.e. fighting), even though there is an opponent, it is like fighting nobody. When the front hand rises, the rear hand urges closely. When the front leg rises, the rear leg follows closely. (Though) there are hands in front you, do not see the hands and (though) there are elbows in front of (your) chest, (you do not see the elbows."

One of the best demonstrations of this is in the video Searching For Shushiwa where Senaga Sensei is videoed demonstrating Kata. The undulation of his body coordinated with the rotation and compression of his lower body produces very powerful strikes and movements.

We would like to incorporate this undulating loose body action into our practice, the question, as always, is how to train it.

This is where and why we created the Dragon Flow Drills.

Before we get into describing the drill we need to recall some important points from Part Three: What is a Drill:

- A drill is an instructional tool that teaches a specific skill set.
- Drills work specific skill sets, in controlled conditions, designed to use them.
- Drills are not real life.
- Drills were never intended to be real life.

If you think you are going to defend yourself as you move in this drill you are going to get hurt, but the principles of this drill should become part of your selfdefence.

Start working these drills slowly and allow yourself to be placed in a losing position. (Different I know but there is method to the madness.)

Dragon (Tactical) Flow Drill:

NOTE: Throughout this drill observe the generation of incoming lines of force, their paths, and along which lines they would move you. This is important for later skill sets.

Step One:

Two partners (A and B) stand facing each other in a relaxed and casual stance.

A: Pushes on B's shoulder slow but steady and with power.

B: Does not fight the push but rather lets his shoulder roll over back with the push allow the undulation of his entire body to absorb the push.

IMPORTANT NOTE: A should not allow themselves to step back as they absorb the push but rather as the shoulder being pushed rolls backwards they extend the opposite side's foot and hip forward to move in.

This is repeated alternating which partner pushes and which shoulder is being pushed. It does not matter if the same side or opposite side shoulder is pushed the response is the same.

Step Two:

Two partners (A and B) stand facing each other in a relaxed and casual stance.

A: Pushes on B's hip slow but steady and with power.

B: Does not fight the push but rather lets his hip sink back with the push allow the undulation of his entire body to absorb the push.

IMPORTANT NOTE: A should not allow themselves to step back as they absorb the push but rather as the hip being pushed sinks backwards they extend the opposite side's foot, shoulder and hip forward to move in.

This is repeated alternating which partner pushes and which hip is being pushed. It does not matter if the same side or opposite side hip is pushed the response is the same.

Step Three:

Two partners (A and B) stand facing each other in a relaxed and casual stance.

A: Pushes on B's shoulder slow but steady and with power.

B: Does not fight the push but rather lets his shoulder roll over back with the push allow the undulation of his entire body to absorb the push.

IN ADDITION: B also allows their hand on the opposite side from the one being pushed to flow with the circular energy being created by the push to open hand strike A.

VERY IMPORTANT NOTE: MAKE SURE YOU ARE NOT SIMPLE ROTATING HORIZONTALLY WITH YOUR TORSO. MAKE SURE THERE IS ALSO VERTICAL MOVEMENT SO THAT YOU ARE UNDULATING THE TORSO NOT SIMPLY ROTATING IT.

Step Four:

Two partners (A and B) stand facing each other in a relaxed and casual Stance.

A: Pushes on B's hip slow but steady and with power.

B: Does not fight the push but rather lets his hip sink back with the push allow the undulation of his entire body to absorb the push.

IN ADDITION: B also allows their hand on the opposite side from the one being pushed to flow with the circular energy being created by the push to open hand strike A.

Step Five:

Two partners (A and B) stand facing each other in a relaxed and casual stance.

A: Pushes on B's shoulder or hip slow but steady and with power.

B: Does not fight the push but rather lets his entire body undulation to absorb the push and as he absorbs the strike he allows their hand on the opposite side from the one being pushed to flow with the circular energy being created by the push to open hand strike A.

A: Now uses the undulating movement of their entire body to absorb B's strike.

Step Six:

Two partners (A and B) stand facing each other in a relaxed and casual stance.

A: Pushes on B's shoulder or hip slow but steady and with power.

B: Does not fight the push but rather lets his entire body undulation to absorb the push and as he absorbs the strike he allows their hand on the opposite side from the one being pushed to flow with the circular energy being created by the push to open hand strike A.

A: Now uses the undulating movement of their entire body to absorb B's strike.

IN ADDITION: A flows with the circular energy being created by the push to open hand strike B.

B: Now uses the undulating movement of their entire body to absorb A's strike and flows with the circular energy being created by the push to open hand strike B.

DO NOT be afraid to be placed in a poor body position, learn to flow out of it striking.

DO NOT be afraid to be turned around, learn how to flow out of it striking.

Step Seven:

Now as you can see we have entered a constant exchange of energy flowing into the next strike.

Depending on skill level you bring in all kinds of strikes depending on what is open at the moment.

IN ADDITION: you can now start to flow using a palm or forearm guiding (the Uechi Wauke) movements to intercept and deflect the incoming strikes as you flow into your next one.

Work this with exaggerated movements until they begin to feel natural and then you can start to make them smaller, shrinking the movements.

Step Eight:

We want to learn to flow and cut off the flow of our partner with strikes. One good way to introduce the cutting off of the partner is with the introduction of the legs.

As you are flowing with your partner look for an appropriate moment to flow with a leg attack.

Step Nine:

Now that the use of the legs has been introduced to meet your partner's flow with a strike we begin the next step, which is to manipulate the flow and counter flow.

For instance, A has thrown a strike at B's head. B has deflected the strike with a palm or forearm guiding movement and is flowing in the direction of the strike, as B gains control of the movement they reverse the direction (short circular move) and strike thus meeting the movement of A's body head on.

Step Ten:

As you work this drill PLEASE make sure you are focusing on using your torso in a very exaggerated undulating manner to avoid, deflect and to strike.

Allow yourself to be turned around and flow with it.

Allow yourself to be bent over and flow with it.

Learn how to flow out of these bad body positions into effect strikes.

Learn how to flow out of these bad body positions to cut off the momentum of the aggressor with strikes.

Step ten consists of moving this drill into a close quarters sparing format which is limited in function to working these skills with emphasis on the palm forearm guiding movements and fast hands generated by the movement of the body. The arms are moved by the body's movement and not simply moved on their own.

- **As you work with this the movements become smaller and more contained and, if you perform forms, then they are ready to be introduced into your forms and applications.**
- **As you continue to work you must reintroduce posture and being to work more with the mid-chest for the undulations and avoidance to ensure maintaining proper base.**

Much of this reflects the skill set worked in this drill.

The goal is to remain loose and to learn the precursors to force generation and along what lines a force will move. It will also teach you were to move to avoid and mitigate those incoming lines of force. In addition, the drill teaches you looseness and that the body has built in strike while avoiding if you move in a certain manner.

- Try.
- Play
- Explore
- Enjoy

Part Nineteen - More looseness:

In search of looseness we discovered:

1. If your face is tense your body is tense.
2. If your legs are tense your body is tense.

If you shake and loosen your face your body will stay looser. I was once asked why I smile when we scrap in the dojo and one fore reasons was it kept my face looser.

There is a clip of Toyama Sensei in a performance and before he did Sanchin he did a drill shaking his legs with active vibration. Made me think.

So here is a drill we do to help learn to loosen the body through loosening the legs.

WPD Loose Leg Drill:

Done at a moderate speed and can be sped up as you gain skills.

Step One:

- One partner (A) stands in a neutral stance.
- The other partner (B) hooks A's legs with his and moves them.
- A does not resist and simple loosens the leg and allows it to be moved.
- A does not move until B moves them.
- No resistance, just move with them – no matter how bad it gets, no matter what a crappy position you get put into.

Step Two:

- One partner (A) stands in a neutral stance.

- The other partner (B) hooks A's legs with his and moves them.
- Only now A lets their legs move slightly ahead of B moving them.
- BUT A still allows B to contact their leg.
- A doesn't allow B to apply pressure – they move just ahead of the force.
- BUT A still has to let B contact.
- Stay LOOSE and try to pick up their intent from their movement and predict the line of force and where you will be moved to so that you can manoeuvre yourself with it and out of it so that you do not end up in as many crappy places.

Step Three:

- One partner (A) stands in a neutral stance.
- The other partner (B) hooks/kicks A's legs with his and moves them.
- Only now A lets their legs move slightly ahead of B moving them.
- Only this time A does NOT ALLOW CONTACT – A predicts the movement and path and staying loose moves just slightly ahead of the contact.
- This can only be done if your legs remain loose. Tense and you will not be able to move in time.
- There may be a little "catch up" contact as you run out of space to move.

Step Four:

- One partner (A) stands in a neutral stance.
- The other partner (B) hooks/kicks A's legs with his and moves them.
- Only now A moves away from the line of force the moment A sees B initiate the movement to kick or hook their leg.
- A moves out of the "zone" of the line of force.
- Just Distancing to observe the line of force in its competition.
- B has to complete the kick even though A should be gone and out of range before the kick is launch due to the moderate speed BUT A needs to see the entire kick.
- Remember A moves THE MOMENT B initiates their leg movement.

Step Five:

- One partner (A) stands in a neutral stance.
- The other partner (B) hooks/kicks A's legs with his and moves them.
- Only now A moves their leg out of the line of force and then as they plant it back on the ground they move into a place B doesn't want them.
- A will close the distance.

- A will pull their leg back then jam the end of B's kick.
- This is a DRILL so A doesn't have to worry if they end in a great fighting position just that their feet no longer move away and just distance they use it as a draw back and close.

Step Six:

- One partner (A) stands in a neutral stance.
- The other partner (B) hooks/kicks A's legs with his and moves them.
- A now uses their legs to intercept B's legs mess them up.
- A will jam or hook and extend the length of B's kick.
- You have to be loose and you have to move on B's initiation of his movement.

Step Seven:

- Add in closing off the intercept and using hands to engage and finish.
- To continue progressing the drill simply increase the speed gradually and up the resistance to A's finishing movements.

The drill is to both promote loosening but also to continue to build that ability to read and use the incoming lines of force.

Part Twenty – Staying Loose in Chaos

WPD Close Quarters Combat Drill (CQC) Number One:

This drill serves the following purposes:

- It takes the looseness acquired in Dragon Flow and Loose Legs into up close and personal bad breath range and makes it more relevant to self defence.
- It gets people used to being in real close and reacting because being that close can be difficult for some people.

- Allowing yourself to be placed into the bad places this drill puts you in allows you to discover how much you can still see and take advantage of.
- It allows you to increase your tactile awareness.
- It allows you to improve your ability to read an assault.

This drill is done in slow motion but can speed up depending on the skill of the participants.

Partners A and B

Partner A is learning how to deal with CQC.

STEP ONE

Partner A assumes a defensive or COVER arm and hand position conducive to CQC. For illustration and learning I advise palms of their hands touching the side of the forehead and elbows in to cover the ribs.

Partner B moves in from a good hand position and (in slow motion) delivers strike after strike of punches, palm, forearm and elbow strikes driving Partner A across the floor.

Partner A does nothing but allow himself to be driven backwards by Partner B's onslaught. Partner A simply maintains cover position and accepts the beating. HOWEVER, they should use the same loose body movements learned in Dragon Flow to accept and move with the slow motion pounding.

NOTES:

- Partner B is going slow so they can completely follow through with every strike completely.
- Partner A is to allow Partner B to swarm and blitz them with strikes.

STEP TWO

Step Two is identical only this time Partner A focuses their attention on what “holes” or opportunity to strike partner B open up naturally with Partner B’s onslaught. Partner A needs to watch and feel Partner B’s body to learn what strikes come from what movements felt. Partner A must also think back to the striking that was generated in Dragon flow and look to see the holes for that flow become open - but don’t hit them (yet.)

STEP THREE

Still looking for holes BUT still not hitting them, Partner A begins to flow with the incoming strikes and uses their elbows and forearms **STILL REMAINING IN COVER POSITION** (tips of fingers touching their forehead) to redirect, guide and interfere with partner B’s assault. Not totally resisting or stopping the assault but beginning to annoy Partner B.

STEP FOUR

Partner A continues to redirect, guide and interfere with the incoming strikes while remaining in cover position but now occasionally steps forward into Partner B with elbows and forearms. Make sure the step is generated by the Dragon Flow movements.

STEP FIVE

Partner B shifts now to making sure they come in on angles rather than a straight on attack to prevent Partner A from shutting them down by simply stepping forward.

Partner A does their best to still flow into shutting down partner B by stepping in with elbows and forearms of the Dragon Flow movements.

NOTE: By now you should be seeing that at close quarters the Dragon Flow movements are shrinking from what they were in the actual drill.

STEP SIX

At this point Partner A's hands are still on their heads and they have only used their elbows and forearms to interfere. The elbow and forearm part does not change.

However, Partner A will now change the hand position curling the wrists forward to point the fingers forward ala Uechi Kumite hand position.

Partner A will always flow with Partner B's attack and Partner A will interfere with Partner B, but MOST importantly Partner A makes sure their fingers are always pointed at Partner B's eyes.

If that position isn't familiar, simply point your index finger at B's eyes.

STEP SEVEN

While still keeping their fingers pointed at Partner B's eyes Partner A can now use Wauke hand movements (guiding with forearms, wrists and hands) to further guide and interfere with the incoming strikes.

At this point, depending on the skill level of Partner A they can shift from guiding and interfering to adding leading.

STEP EIGHT

Partner B may now start to use leg attacks: knees and in close kicks (but done from still CQC position – more on this later.)

STEP NINE

If you have not already start to move in a non-linear fashion Partner A begins to shift and move around more to get a better position.

I.E. Stop moving straight across the floor and move all around.

STEP TEN

Partner A no longer just looks for openings - now they “tap” them but not a full strike or take over yet, and Partner A is now tapping with hands and legs – all weapons.

STEP ELEVEN

Now when Partner A strikes the openings they can try to take over being the partner doing the blitzing attack.

Partner B is now Partner A and looks for their opportunity to fill a hole with a strike and take over.

The purpose of this Drill is to bring the type of flow and the reading of body movement learned in the Dragon Flow and Loose Legs drill into a playful CQC exchange. It helps people gain the tactile feel of the flow and gain a comfort in that much closer range.

This still isn't at the closest range.

NOTE: I'm going to post a few more drills and then move on to some deeper practices. Not complex or mystical (sorry if you were hoping) just principles I only see some using.

Part Twenty-One - Going Slow to See and adding a little kick juice:

I've shown the Night of Living Dead Drill (NLD) to a lot of people and frankly almost all of them missed the extreme value of it.

I hear “oh yeah we already do slow drills,” and/or “oh yeah we already do blindfold work” these are followed by “so we already have it covered.”

NO, NO, YOU DO NOT!

IF YOU DO NOT DO NLD - THEN NOTHING YOU DO IS EVEN CLOSE TO IT.

SORRY TO BURST YOUR “I’VE GOT THIS COVERED” BUBBLE.

I’ve worked this drill for a lot of years and over and over again it has proven its value to me, so I highly recommend you integrate it into your training and work it for a good period of time because when you do that you will see the value.

I’ve posted this more than once on Van’s forum so this will be an updated version for some.

WPD Night of the Living Dead (NLD) Drill

Introduction

- *I was introduced to Night of the Living Dead (NLD) by Tony Blauer, a self protection expert and trainer, as one small part of a seminar he was presenting on knife defence. Tony called it NLD because you move slowly like the attackers in the old zombie horror movie. It was a great gift to my martial arts training that was beyond any expectation I could have had. I will always be grateful to Tony.*
- *I am sure Tony does many things with this drill that I did not have an opportunity to learn because it simply was not the focus of the seminar he was presenting. In working with NLD I wanted to develop a methodology for*

teaching the self protection responses that I felt were the most effective. Therefore, I developed the progression of phases (levels) presented here.

➤ *Definitions:*

⇒ Aggressor: *The person(s) attempting to assault another party. (This is a role to play – you are not “you.”)*

⇒ Respondent: *The person the aggressor is attempting to assault.*

➤ *The respondent is always seeking to be successful.*

➤ *The role of the aggressor changes with the experience of the respondent.*

➤ *The progression is set up to help people progress learning self defence from scratch but with trained or experienced practitioners you can zip through the progression once and then start at whatever level of resistance that is appropriate.*

A brief Description:

This drill is required to be done in slow motion as much as possible. The reasons for this are many.

⇒ The first is safety because any defence is allowed.

- ⇒ The second is subtler in that to move slowly in this drill requires you to control the adrenaline created by the drill. This helps train you to control that chemical cocktail dump that takes place during a self defence situation. This vital to surviving a street assault.

- ⇒ Another reason this drill must be done in slow motion is that nothing is “pulled.” All strikes are taken through to their fullest extension. Because the strikes are being delivered slowly there is some requirement of the person being struck to evaluate the effectiveness of the blow and allow the proper anatomical response.

- ⇒ One of the main reasons for slow motion is that we want to build into the natural responses a person has to being attacked an effective reaction. When moving at full speed the proper movements are not felt, opportunities are not seen, and the ability to sense and fill holes is extremely difficult to learn.

- ⇒ This is an operant conditioning drill, therefore, there is no teaching to take place other than the experience of success or failure. If the student’s failure is so significant they cannot correct it through repeats of the attack, then stop NLD and make corrections through teaching and the restart the drill.

The Drill

- 1) The respondent closes their eyes and does not open them until the aggressor says “**BEGIN**”.

- 2) The aggressor begins an attack in slow motion and says begin part way into the attack. (The types of attacks can progress as well, however, it is highly recommended that you use the types of attacks found in the street and not in martial arts schools).

- 3) When the respondent hears “begin” they open their eyes and, in slow motion, begin to react.

- 4) If the respondent is unsuccessful it is beneficial to repeat the same attack until they find a way to succeed. This installs within them “success” in defending themselves. It does not leave them with the memory defending in an unsuccessful manner.

PROGRESSION

Phase 1 “Teaching Stopping the Aggressor”:

- The aggressor attacks and keeps coming until the respondent does something that would stop them (keep throwing attacks until the respondent does more than block – no pauses).
- After the respondent delivers a stopping reaction, they will continue to follow up their initial stopping move until they are safe.
- In this phase or level after the respondent uses an effective stopping move, the aggressor will not press another attack. The aggressor will simply respond anatomically to the balance of the respondent’s attacks.
- This allows the respondent to learn how to follow up with natural attacks that flow from one to the other.

Phase 2 “Filling your Holes”:

Many miss the purpose of this phrase because it partially “flips” part of the learning to the Aggressor to see and touch holes but the learning also continues to take place for the Respondent.

- The aggressor keeps coming until the respondent does something that would stop them (keep throwing attacks until the respondent does more than block – no pauses).
- After the respondent delivers a stopping reaction, they will continue to follow up their initial stopping move until they are safe.

- The change is that the aggressor will now fill any holes (point out faults or weaknesses) in the respondent's follow up **with a small touching strike**. However, the aggressor will **not** push into this opening and take back the initiative of the attack. The aggressor will not press a new assault.
- The goal here is to teach the respondent where their holes are so that they can improve their follow up by eliminating them.
- The other purpose is to teach the aggressor to look for and find the holes. This will improve their self protection capacity.

Phase 3 “Filling the Holes and Pressing the Issue”:

- The aggressor keeps coming until the respondent does something that would stop them (keep throwing attacks until the respondent does more than block – no pauses).
- After the respondent delivers a stopping reaction, they will continue to follow up their initial stopping move until they are safe.
- The aggressor now will not only look for the holes in the respondent's reactions but they will take back the initiative of the assault anytime the respondent leaves themselves open. The aggressor will press a new assault until the respondent once again reacts with a strong stopping action.
- However, once the respondent retakes control the aggressor will **only** take over again if the respondent leaves another obvious hole.

Phase 4 “Be a Pain in the A...”:

- The aggressor keeps coming until the respondent does something that would stop them (keep throwing attacks until the respondent does more than block – no pauses).

- After the respondent delivers a stopping reaction, they will continue to follow up their initial stopping move until they are safe.
- The aggressor now will not look to take over or win but will be very non-compliant – if what the Respondent is doing wouldn't work – do not let it work. (Note: This should be standard). But more importantly be resistant to all their attempts to win by interfering, intercepting, being a complete pain in the A... - make them really work for their win.

Phase 5 “Surviving”:

- The aggressor keeps coming until the respondent does something that would stop them (keep throwing attacks until the respondent does more than block – no pauses).
- After the respondent delivers a stopping reaction, they will continue to follow up their initial stopping move until they are safe.
- In this phase both sides try to win. If the respondent does not stop the aggressor, they will keep coming.
- If the respondent leaves a hole the aggressor will take back the initiative of the assault and press on to win.

Both sides try to win while staying within the bounds of the drills requirement to evaluate the effectiveness of a reaction to gauge the appropriate response.

This Phase allows you to gauge and set the resistance level you want for each round.

Phase 6 “Responding in the worst case”:

- This phase can be done with any level of the training. If a respondent has a hard time with it you would want to do the “worst case” starting again at phase one level of training and build them back up to phase/level four.

- The respondent does not start until they are actually being struck/grabbed. While any strike may take us out, this training tries to build in the mindset that you take it and fight on. It also teaches how to try and mitigate impacts.
- Here you begin to place the Respondent in as many bad starting positions as possible.

Phase 7 “Blinded”:

- This phase can also be done with any level of the training. If a respondent has a hard time with it you would want to do the “worst case” starting again at phase one level of training and build them back up to phase/level four.
- This is very interesting; the respondent never opens their eyes. The attack begins just as in phase five with the actual strike/grab and the respondent must react the entire time with their eyes closed. This helps prepare someone for when the attack takes away their sight.

Phase 8 “Don’t say begin”:

The change here is that the Aggressor never says begin the Respondent’s first indication of being assaulted is the Aggressor’s contact (grab or strike etc.).

Phase 9 “Add slight impact”:

One of the “flaws” that can creep into a slow motion drill is the loss of striking effectiveness even with driving through the targets. This results in the Respondent seeing a skewed view of their grappling actions having much more success than their striking.

To bring balance back you can do rounds where in the last inch or two before a strike you add enough impact to affect the person being struck.

You need to do this with people who have control and understand the difference between an elbow to the face and a heel palm to the face.

Phase 10 “Jazz It Up”:

- This phase can also be done with any level of the training. If a respondent has a hard time with it you would want to do the “worst case” starting again at phase one level of training and build them back up to phase/level four.

- Jazz it up anyway you would like:
 - i. Add in weapons.
 - ii. Lay out a weapon choice to be selected AFTER the Respondent has closed their eyes.
 - iii. Multiple Aggressors.
 - iv. Tie one of the Respondent’s hands to their body.
 - v. Do it in complete darkness.
 - vi. Have a number of respondents stand in a circle with their eyes closed. An aggressor moves among them and when they say begin everyone opens their eyes and the person being attacked defends themselves. The more the aggressor walks around the higher the level of anxiety and adrenaline.

Phase 11 “All out”:

- At this stage you will go as fast as you can as long as you can:
 1. “See” everything still.
 2. Have total control of what you are doing.
 3. Both move at the same speed.
 4. Stay safe.

Other Important Points

Notes about the Drill:

- One learning point you may want to keep in mind and use is that, if the respondent is unsuccessful in a defence, the aggressor repeats the same assault until they are. This teaches the successful reaction to the respondent by ending with a successful memory.
- There is an acting (role play) element to this drill as the participants must gage the damage a technique might do to them and respond in a correct anatomical manner.
- Every attack must be extended through the target to show the effects. Done in slow speed this should be a perfectly safe exercise even when otherwise dangerous techniques are being used.
- Maintaining the slow motion is excellent training to control adrenaline. I have referred to it as soft adrenaline training. (I'm thinking Tony Blauer's HIGHGEAR would be hard adrenaline training.) As you gain control and experience you can speed the drill up, however, done too soon not only decreases the safety factor but reduces the learning capacity.
- You will find that maintaining that slow speed will be one of the hardest things to do, but do it. The aggressor has a great deal of control here.
- The respondent must learn to accept mistakes and turn them around rather than speeding up to avoid them.

Okay that is Night of the Living Dead (NLD) a drill that gets messy real fast so some people don't like it but real assaults and self defence are messy things.

The next four posts have original versions posted before on Van's forum before.

Part Twenty-Two – Time to Turn Up the Heat Part 1:

These drills are intended to really give you a hard shot of that kick juice and require you to control it.

BLAST is a drill that does just that. I've haven't done it with anyone who doesn't have a "Why you...." Moment.

One of Rory Miller's books inspired the following drill called Blast.

In his book Rory talked about how some criminals perfected the slap not only because it protected the hand but because it caused an emotional reaction that often froze the person being attacked.

One candidate stands with eyes closed as the other slaps their face and attacks with the idea of hands in face, hands in face in a constant blitz. You can also do a version where the person being slapped does not get to open their eyes to simulate an injury to the eyes from the slap (don't really slap them in the eyes.)

The person slapping does not attack "as themselves" in other words they do not attack as themselves but play a part. This is not a contest it is a test of certain responses. You work with your partner to raise the level of slap to where it is good and hard but not able to do structural damage.

The person being slapped gets to open their eyes on the slap and respond BUT they MUST respond in full CONTROL. Their job is to respond but respond from calm.

This will be the hardest part, to stay controlled and not full contact.

The following clip happens to be public so I am including it here. It is from a black belt test I conducted in 2011 about 70 minutes into the test that alternated drills that jump adrenaline and dropped it forcing them to control their response. The two guys were too nice at the start so I did step in and help them UP the intensity level.

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/blast-drill/>

Slam is another drill where the original version was previously posted on Van's forum.

Part Twenty-Three – Time to Turn Up the Heat Part 2:

The Slam Elevator Assault Drill:

The Slam Elevator Assault Drill has two levels: Softwork and Hardwork.

The candidate starts with their eyes closed and is then is SLAMMED to the back of the elevator and has to defend themselves.

The Drill: Find a nice spot that has a wall behind it (preferably not concrete) and if possible a corner space that can simulate an elevator.

The Respondent stands with eyes closed.

The aggressor will shove / slam them back into the wall and attack.

The Respondent can open their eyes when shoved / slammed and protect themselves.

We have two levels of the drill because we have the luxury of having a couple of sets of Tony Blauer's HIGHGEAR suits.

The Softwork section requires the Respondent to handle the attack with control.

Because the Hardwork section is done in Tony Blauer's HIGHGEAR (except for the helmets) and the contact and resistance is increased and so is the contact.

This clip is also public and the 2011 IUPA Black Belt test (After this there is still another self defence testing and then they have to do presentations.):

For the Hardwork you will notice I change to using a whistle to indicate when to stop. When in adrenaline mode one more voice shouting doesn't often "get through" where a whistle can.

Again the drills I present can be added to any self defence, Uechi or any MA class if people find them useful.

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/slam-elevator-assault-drill/>

Part Twenty-Four – Toughen up Part 1:

I have a social reason for this section beyond just good martial training. Too many people today are simply not tough and I think, because of that, they feel self entitled and never accept personal responsibility.

I see people resisting arrest and then shocked the officers still arrest them and they cry at a level of force we would consider a light and easy night in the dojo. I see competitions on TV where the losers always blame the judges.

And then there is a competition called "Forged in Fire" where smiths make knives and weapons and, so far, regardless of man or woman, every person who was eliminated accepted responsibility and said they would have made the same choice. I wondered why? Then you look at what it takes to work in a forge and shape metal into a knife. They are simply tough.

From here we look back at how martial arts was supposed to shape better people and you wonder if tough but safe training wasn't what was needed to create self-reliant people and people who will accept responsibility for their actions. So the next two exercises are all about adding an underlying layer of simply being tough in some manner.

A few words on Limb and Body Conditioning

I call this toughening up for two reasons, I've come across people who have either never been hit or never hit anyone or both and there is a mental block or tentativeness for both situations. This drill isn't actually about being tough but about learning to accept the fact that if you are hit you cannot stop.

Before I begin it is essential to note that when performing these drills you never go any harder than each partner wants to.

Here is the best place to demonstrate the respect that Martial Arts are to create. You have no idea how much opportunity your partner has had to condition. You do not know how hard they may have conditioned already that week.

Listen to your partner; if they ask you to go lighter you have to.

In addition, there are strikes where your partner may not be able to hit YOU as hard as you might want because their weapon is either sore or not conditioned enough.

Conditioning might make you sore but it should never injure anyone.

Body Conditioning or Iron Shirt or Iron Body or Golden Bell (Qigong practices) has many variations and names. I personally feel Uechi breathing is best to handle the strikes to the body.

The essence of this training is to be able to take a strike to your body and continue protecting yourself; however, there is also so much more to it and what it can do for you.

Taking strikes does not mean that you become desensitized or destroy the nerves in your body. You can still feel something brush lightly against your skin.

It is not that you become totally invulnerable to the strikes and do not feel them. While your tolerance for taking strikes without pain certainly grows you do not reach a level where no one can make you "feel" it. I use the term feel rather than pain because you must learn to think of the pain in a different manner. You feel pain because something has happened to your body that could be damaging and this is the body's warning signal. You do not want to shut down that system. However, you do want to place it under your control. So you "feel" the strikes. Thinking of the pain as "pressure" can help. This allows you to place it aside when you need to and continue to protect yourself.

YOU DO NOT DO Body Condition so that you can choose to deliberately take a hit.

This is ill conceived in the street when the hand that hits might be holding a knife.

BUT the first indication you are being assaulted may be a hit and you have to get through that. Unless of course you're knocked out then nothing will help you.

It is true that "if" you get hit, your conditioning can be a weapon. You can bounce the person's strike disrupting their balance. You can actually have them injure their striking weapon, although they may not know it until the next day when the adrenaline wears off. You can also throw your weapons fearlessly.

Beyond this there is also an entirely different layer to Body Conditioning.

Body Conditioning is a tool that allows you to train properly.

First of all it allows you to strike an actual person. Regardless of any other tool, only hitting a person is like hitting a person. You must do it to understand this. Striking well-conditioned partners also requires you to strike properly before you have any effect.

Once you have the very basic conditioning you begin to use perform them in a different manner that raises the level. Here your partner is moving towards you or you are moving towards them and striking. This begins to teach you to attack the attacker. For me it also incorporates the weapons of Uechi Ryu.

In addition often the first indication you have of an assault is being struck. Being hit when you have not experienced contact can create deep freeze. You will either have to break the freeze or minimize it by experiencing contact. So if your training does not include full or heavy contact training similar to boxing, kickboxing or MMA then a systematic approach to train you to take a hit and deliver hit is required and these drills help address that issue.

There is a flaw in this drill, as there is in all drills, and the flaw is you know where and when you are going to get hit. Body conditioning prepares you for the surprise hit but it does not simulate it in this drill.

- WPD-RC BODY AND LIMB FOUNDATION CONDITIONING

Step One: Basic Body Conditioning

Here you simply accept kicks to different parts of your body and strike back with a punch. This trains you to take a hit and hit back immediately.

It is VERY important that you work on striking properly with mass and that you penetrate

through the target. Slapping each other with ineffectual strikes is a pointless waste of time. Constantly work on how to generate power. Strike with less speed if your partner cannot take your power but strike solid, aiming to penetrate through your partner. Land ON your weapon delivering mass. If you bounce off your partner when you strike, then you are not grounded and do not have connected mass. As your conditioning improves so must your striking.

As your conditioning increases you can choose to introduce the weapons of Uechi Ryu: toe kicks, shokens (one knuckle strikes), hirakens (Tiger paws), boshikens (thumb knuckle heel palms etc. HOWEVER, take a step back and start lightly. This will protect you as you develop the proper structure of these weapons and it will protect your partner from the increased effectiveness of these strikes.

You MUST have a conditioning and striking foundation to progress to the advanced levels of this training.

NOTE: Once you become conditioned you can shift to work move advanced skill sets:

Round 1 (2, 3): Take the hit

Round 2 (4): Absorb the hit

Round 3 (5): Avoid the hit.

But to begin do all rounds taking the hit.

We do the drill with three to six people in a triangle or circle (although they can be done in pairs). Four people is the best. This way you can watch each other's technique and get feedback by having your technique observed. It also allows recovery time.

After each kick the receiver punches to the striker's body.

Really helps you keep the breathing in place at all times. If you want to add a little spice throw a second punch in.

The purpose of this is to train you to strike back the moment you are hit.

Do however many rounds you want. I like three over the five because it takes less time.

You go each drill set one way and then the other to complete that drill set.

The drills:

IMPORTANT:

- After EACH and EVERY kick to you - YOU punch back once to their body! I.E. In the first set: they front kick your shin – you punch their body, they front kick your thigh – you punch their body, they front kick your body – you punch their body.
- You kick with the right leg in one direction and when the reps are done you kick in the other direction with the left leg (this is for 3+ people conditioning in a group).

1) Rear Leg Front kick: The first kick is mid-level or slightly lower. The receiver raises their leg in a crane block. The kicker delivers the kick to the shin. The kicker then kicks the receiver's thigh, and then kicks the receiver in the stomach. (Toe kicks should be used. I highly recommend that you train them, but ball of foot is fine but hard to do in shoes.)

2) Rear Leg Roundhouse kick: This is delivered with the shin. The first roundhouse is blocked by the receiver with a crane block. (They can turn the shin out if both parties don't mind). The second is delivered to the receiver's thigh. The receiver then raises their arm so that they can be kicked up into the ribs. (Use body compression to protect the ribs and start light or you will break them.) The optional fourth kick (the only drill with four kicks) is thrown at the head. The receiver can challenge it with their forearm (but a true through kick will break a forearm), it is better to practice a dead arm block that absorbs the power. Don't forget to strike back after you have been kicked. (Note: We don't always do the head kick but it is good to be prepared for one.)

3) Rear Leg Side Kicks: The first round house is blocked by the receiver with a crane block (the kick is delivered directly on the shin). The second is delivered down onto the thigh of the receiver. The third is delivered into the receiver's stomach. You will quickly discover the heel is the best part of the foot to kick with. Those who advocate using the side of the foot have not kicked a shin yet with a bare foot yet but since you will be wearing shoes – can you tilt the foot? If you can, then a shoe will do fine on the knife edge.

4) Lead Leg Roundhouse Kick: (No crane block by the receiver.) The first kick goes to the inside shin, the second the inside thigh and the third to the midsection (again, as conditioning is the aim, you need to raise your arms to give the target). (We have found that, to start, it is best to turn the body towards the kick slightly in the beginning, so that the kick comes up into the stomach and not the floating rib.) Don't forget to strike back after every kick.

5) Combination: No movement by the receiver. The first kick is a rear leg roundhouse to the receiver's outer thigh, do not draw the leg back but place it down close to the receiver. The second kick is an oblique kick (instep kick) delivered with the toes turned outward. This goes to the inside thigh of the receiver's rear leg. The last kick is a front leg side kick to the receiver's stomach. Don't forget to strike back on the first two kicks. Note: When taking the oblique kick make sure you shift to point your toes towards the kicker or you will endanger your knee.

6) Figure 8 Kick: This kick moves like a Figure Eight going across the body then hooking up into the target and is a deceptive kick that can sneak into the groin. (Recently Anderson Silva hit Michael Bisping in the face with it.) No movement by the receiver. The rear leg kicks much like a front kick but off-centre across the body then curves heel in and toe out to toe kick the inner thigh. The next kick is the same except to the stomach. Don't forget to strike back.

7) Arm conditioning: Each partner holds their arm up so the back of the arm can be struck. Work on dead hand and sinking. Then reverse directions to hit the inside forearm is struck.

8. Forearm Drill: The receiver has their hands up by their head in a protective position. The deliverer swings both a left and a right inside forearm strikes at their head. The receiver blocks these with their outer forearm. After the last block strike (NO CONTACT) to the deliverer's head. (While technically it is the same drill you can choose to do these both ways like the kicks.)

* The above form our main Foundation limb and body conditioning the following just add to the fun.

7) Kotakitai (Arm Rubbing and Pounding):

Arm Rubbing:

Face your partner standing in fighting stance with your lead legs set about the centre of your partner's body. Raise your lead arms with palms up; place your inner forearm against your partner's. Thrusting out shear your forearm against your partner's as you press towards their head rotating your arm over to the palm position. Your partner will be doing the same. Concentrate on the shearing action.

Make sure you use proper body mechanics.

I do this with hands open my teacher prefers it be done with the hands in a fist. He feels there is a danger the arm may slip past your partner and endanger their eyes.

Arm Pounding:

Stand in opposite stances: Partner A in left stance and Partner B in right.

- i) Partner A steps in with a reverse punch (e.g. Right hand) to their Partner B's solar plexus.
- ii) Partner B steps back through guide blocking the punch with their right hand, and then uses their left hand or more specifically their left inner forearm to strike shearing the inner forearm of Partner A. Then Partner B uses their right hand to perform the major arm movement of the Wauke, then uses their left hand to strike down on the arm of Partner A (forearm or bicep.)
- iii) Partner B steps in and Partner A repeats step ii.

9) WPD Six Point Star:

Stand facing each other in a horse stance.

Using the same arms (e.g. right) each partner does the following with the sole purpose of smashing and shearing into their partner's arms:

- i) Swing your arm downward with palm rotated to the outside so that the top of your forearms clash.

- ii) Draw your arm towards yourself and swing it upward bending at the elbow so that you clash inner forearms.
- iii) Drop your arm straight down rotating the palm to face yourself so that you clash outer forearms.
- iv) Swing the arm up trying to strike your partner's head with a crossing knife hand (going from on shoulder across the body to the other shoulder) clashing outer forearms.
- v) Pull the arm back towards yourself and pull it across your body (do not lower it) then strike to your partner's head with a knife hand clashing outer forearms.
- vi) Draw the arm back slightly and turn the palm down and strike to your partner's head with a ridge hand clashing the inner forearms

Repeat with the other arm and then as many times as you wish.

10) Wrist Banging: Stand in fighting stance with one arm hanging down you bang your nasty outer wrist bones together. Then bang then inner bone together. Set a number to do.

11) Forearm banging: Stand in the same fighting stance and using your forward arm rotate from the palm up position to the palm down position striking your forearm out towards your partner's head. They will do the same shearing and clashing your outer forearms together. Alternate arms.

12) Shin Banging: Stand in the same stance and face your partner. Swing a low roundhouse kick across the space between you with the rear leg. Allow the shins to clash but be careful and do not over do it.

If you need more body conditioning, although I would doubt it, or if you only have a little time and want to work the body, try this one:

Extra Body conditioning: Described with a left kick starting, reverse for the other direction. The deliverer kicks the receiver's outer thigh as they place their foot close to the receiver in a right fighting stance they deliver a downward strike to the receiver's solar plexus. By pivoting from the right fighting stance into a left fighting they use mass to deliver right uppercut into the receiver's left side of their stomach. They pivot back into to a right fighting to deliver a left upper cut into the receiver's right side of their stomach. They pivot again to deliver a downward right hand strike to the upper chest. They pivot a final time to deliver a downward left hand strike to the other side of the upper chest. (Going lighter when striking over the heart.)

Important Notes for Body Conditioning

- A couple of really important points is to have everyone leave their egos at the door
- LAUGH a lot! Ya gotta have fun with it.

→ For these drills If you do Sanchin then that stance will make accepting the strikes far easier and will begin to exemplify why Sanchin is as it is.

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/wpd-foundation-conditioning-drills/>

Part Twenty-Five – Toughen up Part 2:

Lots of information in LEO literature about pressure point control and one of the reasons it sells so well is that there is no damage to the person the pressure points are being applied to and it looks so effective in the demonstrations for the oversight boards and their lawyers. However, as Rory Miller says, pressure points work best on sober cops in a training hall, but against drunks, or drugged up or full adrenalized assailants – hmm not so much.

Absolutely nothing wrong with stacking the use of a pressure point in what you are doing as long as it is not the make or break it part of your application.

This drill does two things, it teaches you how pressure points might just have NO effect at all and it teaches you to go through whatever you have to, to survive.

It works on simply being tough enough to do what you have to do.

The mind is a focus that has to be trained.

When you watch video clips of assaults you can see times where the aggressor is really not that talented as a fighter but the level of their malicious intent is so high and the impacts of the assault so ferocious that the other party folds into being the prey.

We have looked at training to take an impact so that the fact of being struck has less chance of putting you into that deep freeze.

We need to look at two other areas.

One I mentioned before the hijacking of your emotions or that startling intent. Again we have drill that delves into that area, but one of the other ways to put a person out of their usual comfort zone and drop them in a freeze is to hurt them.

Cause them pain.

Have them focus on the pain and crumple.

Have them turn away from what they need to do because of the pain.

The survivor mindset is one where the person is determined to "make it" no matter what.

You have to set aside conventional thoughts and simply expect that if you can get through this then you will survive.

In WW II the cargo ships sunk in the English channel had survivors pulled out of the water. The surprising fact was it was the older men and not the younger stronger men.

When questioned the younger men felt there was no way another ship would come by in time and simply gave up the struggle.

The older men felt if they just struggle through a little longer a ship would come.

The ability to go through that struggle to go through the pain of the struggle can translate into an assault where perhaps you gain the upper hand and are applying a choke but the bad guy grabs your thumb and cranks. Do you let the pain and the possibility of a broken thumb stop you from surviving by choking out the bad guy?

Can you accept that pain and go through it to do what you MUST to survive?

A good question.

Now I do want to distinguish feeling pain in training and not being stupid enough to ignore that sign of an injury from this concept. Although the example above of the choke and the thumb was from a training and my thumb was badly sprained for about a month and I did finish the choke it is not something I would recommend.

We need to train our minds to function despite pain.

The Drill: Walk through the pain

The drill is very simple. For the people in my base style, Uechi Ryu, then it is a lot like a drill called

Sanchin Stepping where a person places a fist against their abdomen and they have to step across the dojo as their partner presses on the fist providing pressure. When you get to the other side it is your partner's turn.

This is done exactly like that but instead of a fist you will do things that hurt and the person still has to Walk Through the Pain to the other side of the room.

The person inflicting the pain isn't trying to stop the person from walking but they are giving them pressure and pain to move through.

You can create your own because anything that hurts will do, but here is what we tend to use:

Shoken (one knuckle) Fists digging into the upper chest

Thumbs digging in under collar bone.

Thumbs digging into the side of your neck right on the pressure point.

Dig the butt end of FMA sticks into the cavity above the clavicle (collar bone.) Leave some stick so the STICK and not the hand is digging in

Shoken (one knuckle) fist digging into the centre of the sternum

Anything that they have to press through to walk that hurts is great – be creative and work on those pressure points.

BUT don't be stupid and place a weapon anywhere that will break, damage or injure a person or go beyond the person's ability.

We want pain but never injury.

When a person first begins their spirit is hot and they grunt and press through it with faces twisted but determined. This is fine and where most people start that F*&^K You I'm going through approach.

But, after time the intent cools but remains firm. The mind learns how to simply be indifferent to the pain and step calmly forward with no expression on the face. You learn to reclassify the pain as pressure and simply set it aside and do what you have to do.

It is simply something you have to do and the pain is immaterial to accomplishing that goal.

This drill is perhaps not for everyone but it certainly forges the mind for one piece of the self protection puzzle.

This clip is from the IUPA 2005 Black Belt test and Laird had never done this drill before so it was just one of the surprises for him on the test:

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/walk-through-the-pain/>

Part Twenty-Six – Looking at Digging deeper:

I often refer to what I'm calling deeper principles as "complex simple."

When we try to learn these "deeper principles" they seem so complex, hard to grasp and often even harder to transfer them to use in chaos.

But once we grasp them, once we "get it," they seem so very simple we can't understand why we had any problem learning them.

We often find it hard to understand why people don't get what we're talking about because we forget how hard it was for us.

So I call them complex simple because some are hard to learn but once learned aren't complex they are just simple mechanics.

I am going to introduce the topics of the upcoming posts with the writings of Moshe Feldenkrais, the founder of the Feldenkrais Method of somatic education, a jujitsu practitioner who became a Judo pioneer in Europe after meeting Dr. Kano, a self defence trainer for the Home Guard and British military in England during WWII, author of early books on Jujitsu and Judo, in fact, he was one of the first Judo black belts in Europe.

As part of the "General Observations" In Moshe Feldenkrais' 1972 Book "Awareness Through Movement" he wrote on Page 61:

“An efficient machine is one in which all parts fit together accurately; all are properly oiled, with no grit or dirt between adjacent surfaces; where all the fuel is turned into kinetic energy up to the thermodynamic limits; and where there is no noise or vibration, that is, no energy wasted on useless movement that cuts down the effective operating power of the machine ... to gradually eliminate from one’s mode of action all supercilious movements, everything that hampers, interferes with, or opposes movement.”

This is a brilliant observation about what we want to achieve:

1. Proper alignment
2. Loose and moveable
3. Efficient movement
4. No imbalances
5. No interference to movement
6. No useless movements

Or as he said: “to gradually eliminate from one’s mode of action all supercilious movements, everything that hampers, interferes with, or opposes movement.”

Over the next parts we are going to look very closely at how to operate like Moshe Feldenkrais’ efficient machine and how that relates directly to efficient self defence.

Part Twenty-Seven – The First Layer is everywhere:

To talk about alignment and balance we have to understand what Moshe Feldenkrais wrote on Page XIV of his 1952 book “Higher Judo: Groundwork” that:

“A more general case is our dependence on gravitation. Because our body is material it is attracted to the Earth. All our acts are therefore possible only if we have learned to be sufficiently independent of this universal and never ceasing attraction.”

This statement is one that needs to be analysed closely with his other writings to be understood.

We are and will always be subject to gravity. It is an ever present force working upon our body. We therefore need to acquire the following skills:

1. The ability to align our skeletons so that that it remains upright with the least muscle use and tension as is possible.
2. The ability to tap into the power of gravity by surrendering to it.
3. The ability to guide and manipulate that surrender to our purposes.

As long as we are standing we have to contend with the force of gravity to remain upright. We want to align our skeletal structure to be the main support of remaining upright. We need to be aware of how to maintain that skeletal structure with as little muscle tension as possible and to do that we need body awareness.

On Page 28 "Higher Judo" Mr. Feldenkrais wrote: "The ultimate stability of the adult body is secured by the facility of adjustment to the vertical and not by increasing the base or lowering the centre of gravity."

I am talking a level of skill that is beyond a quick fix but once learned can be profoundly useful.

By quick fix I mean something that can be quickly learned and also effective in self defence like the Predator Posture. Because the predator posture is easily taught and applied I believe for immediate self defence work that is the posture to teach. However, I do not believe that it the most efficient or effective posture for self defence.

I have heard both Rory Miller and my training buddy Rick Bottomley say basically the same thing that sometimes you have to learn something wrong to understand what is right.

I feel this applies when talking predator posture vs vertical posture. Not that the predator posture is wrong, I used the predator posture for many years and was good at it but it was simply one method. A method quickly learned and easily applied so very applicable to initial self defence training. As I trained I learned that the benefits from being in a perfectly balanced vertical posture far outweighed those of the predator posture. So this training is for those who have been trained to protect themselves and now want to go farther, deeper into those layers of being efficient and effective.

We need to learn to be perfectly balanced standing with as little muscle effort to hold us up as possible.

Any excess muscle tension “cuts down the effective operating power of the machine” because to move you must first overcome that excess muscle tension; therefore, muscle tension to simply hold us standing (as is needed in the predator posture) is a hindrance to the ability to immediately move in any direction at any time.

And that is one of the benefits of being perfectly vertical and balanced – the ability to immediately move in any direction at any time.

The drill to work on this is excellent but not “dynamic” which is one of the reasons it isn’t a big seller for the masses. It takes concentration, effort and commitment.

Perfect Balance Drill:

This is a sensitivity drill to acquire a “feel” for:

1. Being in perfect balance
2. When you become out of balance
3. When you have returned to balance.

Stand in a neutral stance.

In the beginning do this with your eyes closed

Loosen and find the perfect balance point where the absolute least amount of muscle is required. Allow your skeletal structure to do most of the work by finding the proper alignment. If you have ever done Yoga and that final Corpse pose on the ground going through the process of letting all tension out of your body, then this process of loosening to rely mostly on skeletal structure is very similar (Except you can’t go as far as in the corpse pose or you would fall down.)

You have to really understand that what you are looking to do is train your body to tell when it is in perfect balance and when it is not. You should be able to tell the slightest imbalance you have. This will later translate into perceiving the slightest imbalance in others.

Do this slowly so you can actually feel what is happening. If you cannot sense what is taking place the learning will be lost. Moshe Feldenkrais wrote in his 1972 Book "Awareness Through Movement" on Page 58:

"To learn we need time, attention, and discriminate we must sense. This means that that in order to learn we must sharpen our powers of sensing, and if we try to do most things by sheer force we shall achieve precisely the opposite of what we need."

And on Page 59:

"More delicate and improved control of movement is possible only through the increase of sensitivity, through a greater ability to sense the differences."

Step One:

1. Stand in neutral stance (at first do this with your eyes closed – later they can open)
2. Deliberately tilt fairly far forward and feel yourself coming out of balance.
3. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.
4. Deliberately tilt fairly far to the right and feel yourself coming out of balance.
5. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.
6. Deliberately tilt fairly far to the left and feel yourself coming out of balance.
7. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.
8. Deliberately tilt fairly far back and feel yourself coming out of balance.
9. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.
10. Mix up the directions of imbalance and feel yourself coming out of balance.
11. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.
12. Circle left tilting fairly far and feel yourself moving out of balance.

13. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.
14. Circle right tilting fairly far and feel yourself moving out of balance.
15. Bring yourself back and settle back into the balance point and recognize you are back to perfect balance.

It is important that you acknowledge returning to perfect balance and begin to train your body to seek that feeling of perfect balance.

Step Two:

Repeat the progression in Step One only each time you work through the progression decrease how far you tilt out of balance until finally you sense even the very slightest tilt off balance.

This is just a drill to teach your body to not only know when it is in balance and when it is not, but to train your body to unconsciously seek that feeling of perfect balance.

Part Twenty-Eight – The Next Layer is in You:

In his 1952 book “Higher Judo: Groundwork” on Page 46 Moshe Feldenkrais wrote:

“We have seen that proper manner of physical action is such, that the lower abdomen is the origin of movements of the body, or more precisely, the point that moves the least relatively to the ground, ... it is the first to move at the beginning of any movement of the body.”

In this quote we have one of the most valuable pieces of information about movement. While the actions that move us begin below our centre, the centre “is the first to move at the beginning of any movement of the body.”

Moving with your centre is one of the most vital layers to gain efficiency and effectiveness. Too often the upper body and what our arms are doing get the attention in moving and that both unbalances us and leaks power.

Your centre, often called Hara or Dan Tien, is not only a few inches below the navel but it is also inside at our core a few inches in front of your spine.

Drill #1 Find Your Centre:

The purpose of this drill is to find and feel your centre.

1. Face a partner
2. Stand so that you are centred over the mid point of your base (stance.)
3. Hold your lead arm out with your forearm horizontal, palm in, not bent under 90 degrees.
4. Your partner places their hands on you forearm and begins to apply a steady gradually growing pressure.
5. You accept the pressure and try to sense where your centre is to hold your position.
6. Now repeat 1 to 5 but from the back (partner's hands on your back) and then from the sides (Partner's hands on your shoulder).

The partner's job is to provide a steady growing pressure on their partner's forearm but they do not want to press so hard their partner cannot accept it and find their centre.

Drill #2 Move your Centre Forward:

The purpose of this drill is to feel your centre being the focus of your movement.

1. Face a partner
2. Hold your lead arm out with your forearm horizontal, palm in, not bent under 90 degrees.
3. Your partner places their hands on you forearm to provide resistance.
4. Lift your front foot to advance the body forward moving your partner.
5. Do not focus on your forearm – focus on moving your centre forward.
6. Stay vertical.
7. Now repeat 1 to 6 but from the back (partner's hands on your back) and then from the sides (Partner's hands on your shoulder).

The partner's job is to provide resistance but not to stop you from moving.

You have to be able to move in any direction with your centre.

Drill #3 Always move with your Centre:

This is a solo movement drill.

You can move in two basic ways and the you can combine those two ways:

- i. You can Slide Step – move the foot closest to where you want to go and then move the foot farthest away to catch up and maintain the same stance.
- ii. You can Step Through – take the foot farthest away from where you want to go and step it in that direction passed your other foot to change into the opposite stance.

The centre can move in three ways or combinations:

- i. Linear – move along a straight line in any direction.
- ii. Rotate: To turn about the centre as an axis.
- iii. Revolve: To move your centre around a set point in an orbit.

The solo movement drill is to simply step in both fashions and move in all three manners focusing on moving and directing movement with your centre.

If forms are part of your training, you can review each movement asking how the centre is moved and then focus on doing that.

Part Twenty-Nine – The next layer – the Whole Body:

The Three External Harmonies

Note: There are three external harmonies and three internal harmonies.

Body Harmony:

Body harmony means that certain parts of the body should be coordinated with other parts of the body to ensure the whole body is used to generate power. For proper self protection you must use your entire body in a coordinated manner. Follow these three principles for harmony of the body.

External:

- 1) Hands harmonies with the feet,
- 2) Elbows harmonies with the knees,
- 3) The shoulder joint harmonies with Qua (the femur/pelvis joint or line between the pelvis and the thigh)

Note: The wording is not incidental – the lower part of the body initiates and the upper part of the body joins.

The six harmonies appear in many Chinese martial art writings.

I noted above the external body harmonies.

The harmonies allow you to translate total body coordination into descriptive words.

The concept is simple enough. When you move the two components mentioned they should move in similar direction and manner

By doing this you will coordinate your body mass into the technique being applied.

1) Hands harmonies with the Feet.

When your right foot moves forward so does your right hand, this works to cause the right side of your body to move in coordination.

If you move your left foot as you drop back then your left hand pulls back, this works to cause the left side of your body to move in coordination.

When the feet do not move then the ankles create pressure on the bottom of the feet generating a coordination of the movement of the hands.

When one foot presses forward and the other foot pulls back the hands coordinate so that one hand strikes as the other pulls thus joining the entire body in the movement.

2) Elbows harmonies with the Knees,

This is a very important point. Just as with the hands and feet each side of the body's elbow and knees should coordinate.

As your right knee steps or presses forward the right elbow moves forward. Same on the left side.

As your right knee moves or pulls back the right elbow moves back. Same on the left side.

When you step in for an elbow strike the way to maximize the power is as the knee moves forward coordinate bringing the elbow forward into the strike. This times the strike with the landing of the foot (landing on your strike or applying maximum body mass.)

Moving the elbows in coordination with the knees eliminates the possibility that the shoulders will turn without the waist or the waist will turn without the knees thus creating a disconnection in the body.

It is pretty much impossible to move your elbows in harmony with your knees and not have your body move as a whole. This will also rotate the torso and hips into each movement.

- 3) Shoulder Joint harmonies with the Qua (the femur/pelvis joint or line between the pelvis and the thigh)

This is very interesting because often the third of the harmonies is expressed as the shoulder harmonising with the waist or hips. This is incomplete.

While turning the shoulders in coordination with the hips certainly helps with body coordination it misses a very important function that the shoulder, a ball and socket "joint," and Qua or pelvis/hip ball and socket "joint," can do.

The difference in referring to shoulders and hips or waist as opposed to the shoulder joint and Qua is that both these ball and socket joints open (expand) and close (compress) as well as rotate.

The shoulder and hips move in a very two dimension or horizontal plane. This is a limited movement. Useful but limited.

The Qua add a vertical movement as well as adding swallowing and spitting. The closing of the Qua causes a compression called swallowing in some styles. The opening of the Qua causes an expansion called spitting in some styles. (Note: There are other mechanics involved in swallowing and spitting but that is another post.)

When you have the three harmonies happening in your movements then you are maximizing the use of the entire body in the application.

This enhances the use of grounded mass and connectivity.

Add the Three External Harmonies to moving with your centre and you have a powerful driving force of the entire body.

Here is a little free clip I did up demonstrating the Elbow harmonizing with the knee (from back when I used the predator posture rather than my now, hopefully, vertical posture):

<http://wpd-rc.com/blog/wpd-free-instructional-video-clip-elbows-harmonizes-with-the-knees/>

Part Thirty – The Arms are Moved, they do not move:

At this point you are vertical and balanced, every move is done with your centre, every move meets the three external harmonies and now we introduce another principle for whole body power:

- **The arms are MOVED; they do not move.**

This principle once grasped increases your power and effectiveness greatly.

Arms only do three things:

- i. Rotate
- ii. Fold and unfold (Elbow bends and unbends)
- iii. Expand

Everything else that looks like the arms are doing should really be the body moving the arms.

The arms should not move on their own.

This should be a no brainer, but we miss this important body mechanic all the time. If we think about it though... How powerful are your arms? How powerful is your whole body? Therefore, the arm moved by the whole body is going to be far more powerful than an arm moving on its own.

This is a story for those in my base style Uechi Ryu that I heard and in all honesty I don't know if it was true or just a story. They attached small lights to points on the body and limbs of the last grandmaster of our style, Uechi, Kanei, then turned out the lights and filmed him doing Kata (forms). They were shocked that his elbows rarely moved away from the Sanchin position (set in close to and in front of the ribs) and when they did it was by only a slight distance.

Now, when we asked why we were told "He's a master." That is correct except the next question should have been then HOW did he do that and still move through the Kata because wouldn't that help us master the style too? But hey that is another question for perhaps another section on: Question everything.

I cannot say for certain how he did it because I was not there but if you understand that the arms are moved by the movement of the body and not moving on their own, then the elbows remaining in that position is easily understood. He was a master.

Here is a simple example: Stand in a bladed fighting stance with arms in a good guard position. Simply step through and forward into the opposite stance. You did not have to move your arms to change which hand was in front – the arms were moved into position by the step.

If you simply move around and either just rotate you arms, or fold and unfold, or a combination of both you will find you can do anything with the arms without moving them.

Expanding the arm is an advancement on releasing the arm as in letting the arm go in a strike. You perform a concentric expansion to extend the arm away from the body.

I will do another section on Concentric Expansions as they happen all over the body, until that is understood it is still effective to replace expand as that third thing arms can do with release.

One final story to end this section. This story is about the Taiji practitioner Cheng Manch'ing. The story goes that Master Cheng in his early days lost constantly at push hands and then one night he had a dream where he had no arms and still had to do his Taiji. The next day he went in to train and decided to do his Taiji as if he had no arms (arms moved – not moving) and from that day on he never lost at push hands. Again I don't know if the story is true or not but the message is a good one.

Part Thirty-One – Power Rises:

Power generation is a big topic, in fact, eleven years ago I wrote an article for the "Uechi-Ryu Journal" Volume 1 2005 edition that was 36 pages long listing out the different layers that contribute to power generation.

In this section I want to talk about the fact that power is generated from the ground up and how that takes place at a certain level (it will alter in later posts adding other principles to it), or rather the method I use to do it.

Power or force has to be delivered. Force can be delivered without any grounding through inertia such as in a projectile weapon or a jumping knee/kick or Superman punch from MMA but most often power is brought from the connection to the ground and up through the body to our chosen weapon.

It begins right in the soles of our feet and transfers through our ankle actions to the knees.

The knees are vital to power generation because their actions will open and close the Qua (The pelvis femur joint).

Your centre should be and should remain over the centre of your body's base - your two feet / stance.

Your knees never go off their base – each knee over each foot.

To rotate about your centre, you use your knees.

One knee sinks down towards and over the big toe.

The opposite knee curves out in a circle over the big toe to pull back (up) driving the heel into the ground.

This way the knees operate like a seesaw or teeter totter that not only goes up and down but forward and back.

[img]<http://wpd-rc.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/the-rocker-action-of-the-knees.jpg>[/img]

To use this knee action and have your centre stay right over the centre of your base / stance you must open the Qua or the ball and socket joint of the pelvis and the femur on the side of the knee sinking forward into the big toe and you must close the Qua on the opposite side.

If we think back to the three external harmonies your elbows will be harmonizing with the knees and your shoulder joint will be harmonizing with the qua.

This creates a whole body generation of power and as the elbows harmonize and the shoulder harmonizes it also adds the yin yang compliments to the body action.

So.... the movement begins in the soles of your feet; your ankles begin the trajectories the knees will take; the knees drive the power upwards directly into the qua; as the elbows harmonize the entire body rotates including the hips, the shoulder joint is harmonized helping to transfer the power out into the chosen weapon.

There are a lot of other things also happening but to bring the power up from the ground this is the base method I use and we call it "One Knee Down and One Knee Up." It is not the only method but it is the one I use.

Part Thirty-Two – Concentric Expansions:

Since I brought them up I thought I would make this section on Concentric Expansions. The easiest way to visualize a concentric expansion is to think of a pair pf scissors:

- Take one of the finger holds in each hand
- Stand the scissor upright on a flat surface on the finger holds
- Pull them a part (expand them)
- The connecting joint will move downward as the finger holds are moved apart

This is a concentric expansion. As you move the two points apart the joint moves down.

Illustration of a Concentric Expansion and the best method to perform it:

Figure 1 shows two lines (could be any part of the body but imagine your elbow to shoulder and elbow to hand).

To perform a concentric expansion, the hand and shoulder must expand away from each other.

One way often used is to pull or push the hand and shoulder away from each other to expand and move the elbow in-between – in alignment.

[img]<http://wpd-rc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Figure-1.jpg>[/img]

Figure 2 shows the end position with the elbow moving into alignment with the hand and shoulder.

[img]<http://wpd-rc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Figure-2.jpg>[/img]

That is the effect of a concentric expansion.

Two methods to cause the effect:

ONE:

Figure 3 shows the same two lines and imagine the same body parts. This time to perform the concentric expansion drive the elbow up/down between the hand and shoulder to press them away from each other. (you can also add pushing and pulling of the hand and shoulder later to enhance the expansion).

[img]<http://wpd-rc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Figure-3.jpg>[/img]

TWO:

Figure 4 shows the same alignment is achieved as in Figure 2 but through a different force method.

[img]http://wpd-rc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Figure-4.jpg[/img]

Option 2's method of performing the concentric expansion feels different and more connected and is much more powerful than Option 1.

Part Thirty-Three – Empty the Foot:

I am going to be introducing two thoughts on moving that certainly are not new but were not things I was taught in my martial arts training.

1. Empty the Foot:

We've talked about the fact that gravity is an ever present force; we've talked about using skeletal structure to align to remain upright and vertical with as little muscle tension as possible; we've talked about whole body movement; and now we will talk about the first step in a completely different approach to moving than we usually take: Empty the Foot.

Being bipedal we have two braces holding us up. If we stand in a neutral stance with our feet a little wider than our shoulders and our centre in the middle, we can align our skeletal structure to hold us up with little muscle use.

If you ask most people to lift one leg they will shift their centre over the leg that will not be lifted so they can balance on that leg as they lift the other.

And that is an important clue to what we want.

You shift your centre over one leg because we all know if you raise the other leg without that shift we will fall in the direction of the missing brace.

Stop and ponder that for a moment. If we remove one brace, we fall in the direction of the brace we removed.

So if I want to move in a certain direction and I remove that brace I start to fall in that direction.

I hope everyone is with me because I am going to take a small side road here. One of the things we read in predicting movement or attacks is muscle tension. If someone wants to spring at us we can see that muscle tension they intend to use to move. Muscle tension is something we can read.

Okay back on the main road.

If I physically lift one bracing leg it takes muscle tension and we often find ourselves shifting our centre to do it, but what if there was another way to remove that brace?

Recall that even though our skeletal structure is aligned as best we can there is still some muscle tension required to hold those braces in place.

What would happen if we released the tension in one bracing leg?

The brace would collapse.

We would begin to fall in that direction.

And there it is.

I use a mental visualization to teach this.

Most or at least many people have been in an elevator when it suddenly dropped a few inches (or been on an amusement ride that dropped). This dropping sensation of the floor falling out from under you is what I want people to feel under the foot of the brace they want to release.

Second side road here into a little physics. When you have two braces angled inward to hold a centre then there is a force exerted onto each brace, and when you remove one brace the force on the other brace "rebounds" (for want of a better description) and the force that was pressing down into the brace reverses direction.

Back on the main road again but remember that point.

You want to slide step forward:

1. Stand in a fighting stance.
2. Imagine the floor dropping out from under your forward foot (release the muscles holding that brace/leg in place).
3. As the brace “gives out” surrender to gravity letting yourself begin to fall forward (let the foot move forward).
4. As you begin to fall use the rebounding force in the rear leg (the remaining brace) to propel yourself forward.
5. Land back into stance with both braces in place.

If you want to step through:

1. Stand in a fighting stance.
2. Imagine the floor dropping out from under your forward foot (release the muscles holding that brace/leg in place).
3. As the brace “gives out” surrender to gravity letting yourself begin to fall forward - but only let the foot move slightly forward this time.
4. As you begin to fall use the rebounding force in the rear leg (the remaining brace) to propel yourself forward only this time propel the rear foot into the forward position.
5. Land back into stance with both braces in place.

This can be done in any direction simply empty the foot on the brace keeping you from going in the direction you want to go.

After a while you can learn to empty the foot without needing to have it move but just enough to engage gravity to initiate your movement.

This type of moving is fast but it is also harder to read making it appear even faster. Try it because you might be very surprised with the speed at which you can close distance.

Again what I am presenting here are the principles that make up the methods I use. I am not making any claims that they are the right and only way or even the best way but simply they are the best way I have found – so far.

For those who have used a drop step this is the same concept except the drop step uses muscle action to remove the brace and this lets muscles release to remove the brace.

Part Thirty-Four – Release:

I'm going to begin this section once again with a few quotes from Moshe Feldenkrais. All of these quotes should be kept in your mind as you read this section. They all deal with movement and the fact that tension is an inhibitor to movement particularly skilled movement.

The Quotes:

In his 1952 book "Higher Judo: Groundwork" Moshe Feldenkrais wrote on:

Page 25: "Dynamic stability is stability acquired through movement, such as the stability of a top or that of a bicycle."

Page 27: "Thus, the cat never resists, that is never stiffens itself when pushed; it finds a new standing configuration so easily, that abandoning the old one is no threat to it."

Page 35: "Perhaps the most important feature of co-ordinated movement, as we teach it, is that the correct act there is no muscle of the body which is contracted with greater intensity than the rest."

Page 49: "The body stiffens itself most of the time and is unfit to perform skilled action."

Moshe Feldenkrais in his 1972 Book "Awareness Through Movement" wrote on Page 59:

"When learning to act we should be free to pay attention to what is going on inside us, for in this conditions our minds will be clear and breathing easy to control; there is no tensions engendered by stress."

In the last section I introduced the idea of releasing the muscles holding a brace/leg in place to initiate movement.

Here I want to take that concept of releasing even farther.

Often to move we engage muscles by tightening or tensing those muscle; however, the quotes indicate that tension is an inhibitor to movement, so what does that mean for movement?

We look to the same process as emptying the foot.

In section Thirty-One the rocker action of the knees was introduced:

- To rotate about your centre, you use your knees.
- One knee sinks down towards and over the big toe.
- The opposite knee curves out in a circle over the big toe to pull back (up) driving the heel into the ground.

I also mentioned we would be changing how this is accomplished so let's first look at HOW we would move through applying muscle before I recommend a change in the approach.

We want one knee to sink down over the big toe so we can push it down with our muscles.

We want the other knee to curve out in a circle over the big toe before it pulls back driving the heel down – the pulling back is the up action and we can do this all by using only muscle power to push it out and then pull it back.

BUT we learned in the section on Empty the Foot that engaging gravity to initiate action helps, so what can be done to tap into the power source here?

This is where knowing what is going on inside us is vital. To let the knee sink over the big toe I don't actually need to push it down with muscles, in fact the opposite can be used to accomplish it. We all

recall that the knees are held in place by some muscle tension and if we release the right ones the knee will be forced to surrender to gravity and sink towards our big toe.

We don't want to end up on the ground so at some point we engage enough muscle to catch the "falling" knee where we want it. THAT action will lead into another section on tendon power.

For now, to understand the catch concept think of using one hand to throw a heavy ball up in the air. You throw the ball up and at some point the force is not enough to continue to beat gravity and gravity kicks in to pull the ball back to Earth – this is equivalent to you releasing the muscles holding the knee so it can fall over your big toe.

As the ball falls it reaches a point we want it to stop so we catch it with our hand and if it is heavy enough our hand is pressed down by the weight but then will bounce back upwards after the "catch" kicks in.

Let's review - Rather than using muscle power and tension to move the knee over the big toe we release the right muscles to let gravity pull it down over the big toe and we reengage some muscles to catch it once it has fallen far enough.

The same thing will apply to the other leg. Which muscles to release to allow the knee to circle out over the big toe before dropping the heel into the ground can seem harder until you figure it out then it isn't hard.

When you release the right muscles in both legs the knees will fall into the one knee down one knee up action naturally.

We often place inhibitors in the way of movement and learning what muscles to release to remove the inhibitors can be a real study and it takes body awareness to know which muscles to release and to be able to release them.

Let me give you an example of how this can be tricky when we have habitual muscle tension to overcome. Our eyes are held open by muscle action. To close our eyes, we use muscle power. When really tired the instinctive engagement of those muscles to hold the eye open starts to fail and our eyes can drift shut.

BUT can you do it all on your own? Can you release the right muscles to let your eyelids close through gravity or will you cave and engage a muscle to close them?

Let me say right up front I have not gotten enough control over my eye muscles to be able to release the ones holding my eyes open I always feel I am actively closing them with muscle action.

There will always be muscles engaged that hold us in place and if we are misaligned there will be even more muscles used and it can be very hard to learn to release them.

The issue with being off balance is that to hold that off balance structure more muscles are needed and to move they have to be overcome by even more muscles which only serves to achieve the opposite effect from efficient movement. More muscles engaged to hold a structure means more to be released if we use that method. So well balanced and structured is still very important and even more so to make this an effortless action.

So try a familiar action like a strike and try to determine what muscles are being used to do the strike with muscle tension (do the move) and what muscles you can release to ALLOW the move to HAPPEN.

Part Thirty-Five – Catch and Bounce:

The human body has an elastic quality to it due to our connective tissues. Three types of tissue that have varying degrees of elasticity:

1. Fascia is a sheet of connective tissue beneath the skin that separates muscles and other internal organs. The elasticity of fascia is under debate with some saying it has a high elastic rebound quality.
2. Ligaments connect bone to bone and are only slightly elastic.
3. A tendon is the connective tissue from muscle to bone and have great elastic qualities as they stretch then recoil and when compressed can act as springs.

As stated above all of these connective tissues to some extent (some more than others) create a network of elasticity in the body.

We are going to focus on tendons as the primary source for the elasticity we are going to be seeking to make use of.

In the last post I talked about releasing muscles to surrender to gravity to initiate movement and I mentioned that at some point we need to halt that surrender by engaging some muscles. I likened it to catching a ball thrown in the air. Hold that example in your mind as we cover a little more.

There are two ways tendons can be use: they can be stretched like an elastic band until they snap back or they can be compressed like a spring until the explosive expansion.

To demonstrate the spring here is a simple example – this is just to illustrate the spring factor.

1. Stand in a left foot forward fighting stance.
2. Raise the heel of your right foot off the ground about three or so inches.
3. Press your weight down on your right leg driving the heel towards the ground.
4. DO NOT let your heel touch the ground.
5. Quickly release the press.
6. Repeat in quick bursts of press and release never letting the heel touch the ground.

This is like catching that falling ball - you catch your heel with your leg muscles before it touches the ground.

You should feel the springing bounce in your legs. This is using the elasticity of your body to rebound and launch.

The reason we do not let the heel touch is because you can deaden out the spring by either not using it or dissipating into the ground. All wasted energy.

You can get the same bounce with your heel on the ground but the heel up makes it easier to do if you have never accessed this tendon power.

Just a fun drill:

1. Stand in neutral stance.
2. Release/Compress into your right leg to access that spring.
3. Bounce off your right leg rotating left 90 degrees and throw a right rear hand strike.
4. Catch the landing of the strike in your legs to again access that spring and launch turning right 180 degrees and throw a left rear hand strike.
5. Catch the landing of the strike in your legs to again access that spring and launch turning left 90 degrees to throw a rear hand right strike.

See how fast you can bounce off each strike to the next.

For those in my base system of Uechi Ryu if you do Kanshiwa Kata and if you perform your Wauke simultaneously as you strike in movement then you can play with this in the first three moves of the Kata. Performing the Wauke and strike at the same time and in movement is Level 3 in Kata performance as described by George Mattson Sensei in one of his video clips. This level also means you are performing the Wauke/strike as you turn. If you do not perform your Kata at Level 3 – no worries – you can still just throw the strikes as you turn as described above to get the same feeling of accessing this elastic spring power.

That is using tendon as a spring it allows for continuous movement.

The other way to use the elasticity is to use it as an elastic band.

There are two ways to demonstrate this but one is more obvious and easier than the other.

1. Stand in neutral stance with your right arm in front bent almost (but not) 90 degrees.
2. DO not tense your arm but make it firm (If you have ever done the Aikido unbendable arm structure demonstration think of that).
3. Have a friend grab your right forearm and hold strong but not as if they are trying to win a tug of war.
4. Without thinking of your right arm and without losing its structure step back with your left foot.
5. Allow your right arm to be “left behind” as you step but keep it structured (bent).
6. Unless your partner is really trying to win a tug of war at some point they will give way and the elasticity of your arm will pull them right out of their stance (watch they don’t crash into you with an involuntarily head butt).

You can do the same demonstration with your arm straight letting it be stretched until it snaps back but the ability to leave the arm behind to access this elasticity seems harder for people to grasp right away until they experience it.

This elasticity has many practical applications.

Think of your body as a ball of elastic you can access as coiled springs or bands.

We refer to this as tendon power.

Rick Bottomley demonstrating use of the body's elasticity:

<https://youtu.be/xrHpRBNzjdo>

Part Thirty-Six - Structural Intent (loose but firm):

In the last section I referenced an Aikido “Unbendable Arm” demonstration and I am sure most have seen it.

I am sure some dismiss it too because it is passed off as a demonstration of chi. I don't see it as a demonstration of chi but of structural alignment or structure with intent. If some want to believe it is chi that is their prerogative but I find it more useful to learn structure and alignment from the demonstration. A structure that should always be part of you and particularly your limbs.

I actually found a video clip by a Taiji guy with an almost identical explanation to the one I have written and that link will be at the bottom of the post.

I have already discussed the fact that muscle tension is not desired and that you need to be loose with only the muscle tension required to hold structure.

But we can't be rag dolls either so how do we find the right structure of loose but firm?

The right structure is demonstrated in the "Unbendable Arm."

The exercise is easy:

Two people face each other in neutral stance.

Person "A" places the wrist or end of the forearm on the other partner's shoulder (Partner "B").

The arm is placed with the palm and elbow pit facing up so that the arm can properly bend when the elbow is pulled downward.

Partner B takes both hands and places them on top of A's extended elbow pit.

Step One:

Partner A tenses their muscles as hard and they can.

Partner B begins to slowly pull down on the elbow and works up to whatever power they need to bend the arm.

Unless there is a great strength difference in Step One Partner B should be able to bend Partner A's elbow with little effort.

Step Two:

Partner A closes their eyes and visualises their arm as a fire hose and the water is rushing through it from their shoulder through their arm and out their fingers (later from the ground up). Everyone has seen how firm a fire hose is as the water rushes through it so seek to feel that same feeling of firm but loose.

Partner B begins to slowly pull down on the elbow and works up to whatever power they need to bend the arm.

As long as Partner A can keep the visual up Partner B should find it almost impossible to bend the arm and Partner A should find it effortless to stop their partner as long as the imagery remains in their mind.

And this is where my personal belief about the use of chi comes in because I see the use of Chi by Chinese martial arts as a way to visualize something flowing though the arm that can create the desired structure.

Not looking to debate it this is just my opinion.

Now in all movements this same loose but firmly structured alignment is sought.

That same effortless feeling to maintain structure is sought.

And again we come to the need to be able to sense what is happening inside out bodies to make things work – and that will be another section.

This structure is used on all things. You do not tense to strike but your weapon should be in this loose but firm structure as you strike.

Just another little something to add to what you do but, again, once you get it seems like it is so easy you should have been doing it all along.

If you have ever had a baby grab your hand and had their whole bodies come up as you lift your arm, then we know that at some point we already knew this.

That very nice clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hp2ku5BQxc>

Part Thirty-Seven – The Three Internal Harmonies

I have already written on the Three External Harmonies, but there are also Three Internal Harmonies written about in the classics and together they form the whole of the Six Harmonies.

For a long time, I gave up looking deeply into the Three Internal Harmonies because reading what people wrote it seemed to me they were attempting to make them seem very mystical and

esoteric and I read most as BS or that they understood them as little as I did at the time. Being charitable it may be they were just struggling to understand them as I was.

However, having seen the value in the Three External Harmonies and knowing they were just half of the whole I continued to look further and finally came to my own conclusion that the Three Internal Harmonies were really looking at the process of a reality based response. Which makes sense because these all were martial arts before they were anything else.

They were not mystical and they were not esoteric and they were not BS.

From reading many various writings and sifting through them I concluded that the three internal harmonies are what allow you to respond appropriately and effectively. The three external harmonies are the united physical manifestation of the actions generated and created by the internal harmonies.

There are a lot of variations given for expressing the three internal harmonies so I am going to pick the one that works for me.

This is a little bit of an intellectual process so I hope I have made this clear enough to follow because I think when we rewrite them at the end they will make sense to reality based martial practitioners.

What follows is the old terminology for the Three Internal Harmonies which won't make much sense until we look at the definitions for the terms and then rework them into how they connect to a reality based self defence approach.

The Three Internal Harmonies are stated as:

- Xin harmonizes with Yi
- Yi harmonizes with Qi
- Qi harmonizes with Li

The best definitions I found are:

Xin = Heart or emotional mind - often translated as spirit. We often hear of a fighter having a lot of heart, that desire to survive.

Yi = Mind – the mind generated by clear thinking and judgement and which is able to make you calm, peaceful and wise. Often translated as intent but I am not sure that is correct because I see Spirit as including Intent. I see the “Mind” here as that judgement of what action is desired or intended, I see this as the mind determining the required response by a judgement of the circumstances, but I will go into this deeper in a moment.

Qi = I dislike the new interpretation of Qi being the universal energy. I prefer the older martial version of Qi being simply the coordination of breath, movement, alignment and momentum. Therefore, for our purposes Qi = Body Coordination or the sensation of “body awareness” is the best description of what is needed. This is the thoughts of qi to mean that natural alignment we seek as in the previous section on the Unbendable Arm.

Li = Power. Often in the writings this is restricted in definitions as muscle power but I feel they are missing the boat completely – not to mention missing the tendons (also addressed in a previous section), so we will leave the term as simply meaning the resulting power or generated force.

Let's break the definitions down to the bare bones:

Xin = Spirit or closer = survival instinct

Yi = Mind or the mental process that determines a response or closer = conditioned response.

Qi = coordinated body mechanics

Li = generated force

So I am going to rewrite this as:

- Survival Instinct (Xin) harmonies with Conditioned Response (Yi)
- Conditioned Response (Yi) harmonies with Coordinated Body Mechanics (Qi)
- Coordinated Body Mechanics (Qi) harmonies with Generated Force (Li).

This makes sense.

You need the right spirit or survival instinct before anything else. It is often said you can teach fighting but you can't teach heart – so that is the foundation.

If you have the heart, then you need to have the mind that can see the cues and provide the proper response. This is created through operant conditioning. That deeper level mind has to be what kicks in next to tell the body what to do.

Once you have the spirit and your deeper mind generates the instructions on what to do then you have to have the best body mechanics (Centered, aligned, loose but firm etc.) to get the best result.

And the best result of those coordinated body mechanics is really good generated force.

The Three Internal Harmonies provide the right response and the Three External Harmonies will determine if you have proper Qi or coordinated body mechanics to generate force.

In other words, the Six Harmonies create the whole.

The harmonising of mind/body/spirit is often talked about in martial arts (in fact that is the purpose of Sanchin.)

Perhaps this can be seen as simply an intellectual exercise or even a manipulation to the conclusion I had come to but I see it rather as a confirmation that the Reality Based thinking has been the same for as long as people have been defending themselves.

Part Thirty-Eight – Three Stages of Performance:

Before we move on to two of what I think are exceptionally practical principles, I am going to inject here another concept in the maturing progression of a martial practitioner's learning.

In conversations with my training partner Rick Bottomley I've come to agree with him that people tend to go through three stages in applications:

1. Doing a technique.
2. Doing the move.
3. Allowing the move to happen.

1. Doing a Technique:

When we begin training, unless we come with some practical experience, we really don't know what to do. This is where technique based training happens. If they do this to you then here is your defence etc.

When I do Night of the Living Dead (NLD) types of drills it is easy to see when a person is in that stage of learning, they see an opportunity and try to jump on a technique often oblivious to what their opponent adjusts to doing.

I have seen people move as if moving was doing a technique (He punches like this I step like this etc.)

I see this is some UFC fighters. Someone has taught them (correctly) that head movement is a good thing so they bob their head back and forth and all around in meaningless wasted movement because there is no connection to what their opponent is doing. This is not the head movement of an Ali or Silva.

There is nothing wrong with this beginner stage unless you stay there. While it can be effective against a certain percentage of the population it has limitation and becoming entangled in “getting that technique” is just one of them. Someone with the ability to adjust and adapt will usually do be able to win over a person who does techniques.

2. Doing the Move:

Doing the move is the next step up from doing a technique. Here your response is a mixture of dealing with what the bad guy is throwing at you and having what the bad guy throw at you be completely irrelevant to what you are going to do.

How can you deal with something and have it be irrelevant?

The bad guy launches and assault and your operant conditioning kicks in to determine the response that will get you the closest to the Golden Move (recall from previous posts). At this point what the bad guy does is relevant because you can't just walk into a strike but you can walk in if you slip the punch.

The bad guy has initiated the assault and you have cued in and your operant conditioning is launching a response AND THIS IS THE POINT WHAT THE BAD GUY IS DOING BECOME IRRELEVANT. At this point the bad guy is nothing to you, you are going to blow through him performing your response and he is irrelevant beyond the fact it will be happening to him.

Doing the move completely changes the texture and feel and performance of a self defence response from doing a technique. This is a mental thing because your response might just look a lot like a technique but the execution will feel to you and to them completely different.

Doing a technique will handle as we said a percentage of the bad guys but if they have enough skills they will counter your technique and it will be a bad day for you.

Doing the Move increases the percentage of bad guy you can handle because a counter will not be enough because by the time they counter you are too far and too intent on completion to be stopped.

3. Allowing the Move to happen:

The next step is to allow the move to happen. To paraphrase Peter Ralston: Never deny your opponent the opportunity to defeat themselves.

As we move up from doing the move, we carry over the intent built there but everything you do now will be guided by the bad guy and what they give you. He drives in a wicked strike at the side of your head and you allow it to breeze by moving so he just feels like if he went a little farther he would have you and then he is off balance and you drop him.

In allowing the move to happen what is given to you is not responded with by a prescribed technique. It is not responded with by a move where you no longer care what they are doing. Instead the response always continues to care what they are doing so you can lead them to a bad ending to them. In addition because you what they are doing is still relevant if they adapt in a manner that would tip the scale back to them you can adjust using their own adaption against them.

Again this feels different.

Just as doing the move increased the percentage of bad guys you can handle, allowing the move takes it up a step farther because when doing the move, a good enough person can use your intent and energy against you. Allowing the move to happen means they are a part of their own defeat and that is really hard to beat because it also allows for adapting if the bad guy is good enough to attempt to negate the actions.

Reality Note: If a person sneaks up on you and wacks you in the back of the head with a baseball bat it is a bad day for you regardless of what level you are at this is not super hero magic stuff.

Part Thirty-Nine – Alternating Palms:

I love a principle that when done correctly gives you a whole bunch of principles without even knowing them.

The Principle of Alternating Palms is one of those.

Master Hong, the creator of the Practical Method of Chen Taiji, in his book wrote that in most (but not all) times when you move, or perform a move, the palms alternate changing directions.

Just to clarify: The palms alternate means that the palms begin facing opposite ways and as you move or perform a move they alternate the directions they are facing as you move.

Note: It doesn't matter if your hands are open or closed in a fist (although I prefer open) this principle still applies.

An easy way to demonstrate the difference alternating the palms creates is to not do it then do it and see what you can feel as being different.

NOTE: Simply rotate the arm to change the direction the palm is facing.

STEP ONE:

1. Stand in a left stance with both palms facing up.
2. Step through and as you do rotate BOTH palms down.
3. Step through and as you do rotate both palms up.
4. Repeat a number of times, then
5. Step back through and rotate both palms down (or up depending on what you finished going forward at)
6. Step back through and rotate both palms up.
7. Repeat a number of times.

STEP TWO:

1. Stand in a left stance with left palm facing up and right palm facing down.
2. Step through and as you do rotate left palm down and right palm up.
3. Step through and as you do rotate left palm up and right palm down.
4. Repeat a number of times, then
5. Step back through and you do rotate left palm down and right palm up. (or up depending on what you finished going forward at)
6. Step back through and rotate left palm up and right palm down.
7. Repeat a number of times.

Examine how you felt in each step and what felt different.

There are many things that come with this but the two main principles achieved by this simple action are:

1. Yin and Yang: Yin and Yang are two compliments that make a whole (not two opposites). By rotating the palms to alternate directions you create a yin and yang complimentary action which should have felt very different than the monotone feeling of both palms facing the same direction.
2. Not forgetting the other hand/side: When we perform a defence we often focus on the hand we think is doing the major action and the other hand goes lifeless. By alternating the palms in opposite direct the other arm/side is active and performing an action and is very hard to forget and let disappear.

Simple Demo:

Two partners face each other.

Partner A step in with right foot and looping right sucker punch.

Partner B steps in with right foot and project their arms – left intercepting Partner A's right striking arm and B's right arm intercepts Partner B's body/head/neck.

BUT

Try it a number of ways:

- i. B keeps both palms facing up
- ii. B keeps both palms facing down
- iii. B starts both palms up shift to palms down.
- iv. B start both palms down shift to palms up
- v. B starts left palm up right palm down to left palm down right palm up.
- vi. B starts left palm down right palm up to left palm up right palm down.

Again examine:

- What did you feel when both palms faced the same way?
- Was up or down different?
- What did you feel when you alternated palms?
- Was left palm starting up or down different?
- What happened to A's body and balance in each case?

BIG NOTE: Have a third party watch because often when I do this with people only one hand alternates direction as they deal with the sucker punch because they are not used to having both hands active.

You should see a difference and a distinct advantage for alternating palms.

You should feel that both hands are alive.

Try it and if you see the advantages then look at any application you have to see where and if it can be applied and try it out. You may find it already in some or much of what you do.

Part Forty – Empty Space:

This is another principle that if achieved gives you oh so many more. In fact, for application purposes, this is such a significant principle I will be doing an entire book on it. Therefore, the brief notes here will serve only as a wetting of the appetite.

Fighting in the empty spaces is the principle, and once you grasp it, then I believe you will see it in the clips that impress you most. I believe this can make the difference between a mediocre practitioner and a great one.

We have all heard at one time or another not to fight force on force and yet so many times that is the applications shown. Why? I think that while many understand the concept of not fighting force on force they don't know what the alternative really is.

The fact is that if you understand fighting in the empty spaces you will never fight force on force.

Empty space is a concept that applies to:

- i. Striking
- ii. Movement
- iii. Engagement
- iv. Grappling
- v. Everything

It applies to purposeful striking.

It applies to purposeful movement.

It applies to achieving control of the Joint Mass Centre (a concept I have not written about in these brief notes but will be in the completed book.)

It applies to moving you not them.

It applies to moving them properly.

It is one of the most encompassing principles for application that I can think of.

Empty space exists around the bad guy.

It forms a line from your striking tool through their guard to the target on their body.

It forms the space you should fill as you slip their attack.

It forms the space where they have no brace and thus can be moved often with ease.

I am going to say something that I know makes Reality Based practitioners cringe but if you want to see really excellent use of empty space watch good Aikido. Yeah I know not real attacks etc. etc. but who cares - look at how and where they move.

If the Aikidoka (or anyone) uses speed or force to make the technique work then you should also see they did not use empty space. But if you see them do it almost effortlessly then look at how and where they moved and where they moved their partner's limbs and body.

I teach fighting in empty space by using two visuals – solving a maze and for real close quarters: pouring syrup into a jar filled with marbles.

But there is too much to give details on here because as I said it will form an entire book. But watch good Aikido or Systema (not the no touch stuff) and you should be able to take what I have written and begin to see what I am taking about. Then just watch for the book.

Part Forty-One – Body Awareness:

No matter how “Lotus” this may start to sound it isn’t – Body Awareness is one of the most vital skills you must have to reach mastery of a martial practice. I am talking mastering the art not some piece of paper on a wall.

To deeply master this subject of violence you must have a complete connection to your body. You must know what is happening in every square inch of your body inside and out.

If you do not understand and have awareness of your body how can you begin to perform the way you would like?

How can you release the right muscles if you are not aware of what is tense?

How can you remain vertical and balanced if you do not have an awareness of your body to know if it is balanced?

You can’t and therefore you may be good even great but you will never master the art without body awareness.

And so we are clear I am still talking about mastering the subject of violence in application as well because to respond with the most efficiency and effectiveness you must be completely aware of the bad guy’s body and deal with any slight adaptation they throw at you and you cannot begin to be aware of someone else’s body without being aware of yours.

Body awareness is achieved through drills that expect you to feel and experience such as the balance drill described early on. Slow work helps because much of the time drills done at speed are too fast to grasp any sense of your body unless you already have it.

You have to actively seek to have awareness of your entire body. One method is standing meditation or Zhan Zhuang. Standing in one place with your arms in a “tree hugger” position may not sound very

martial but to do it for any length of time you must know how to loosen and align your body. Without that awareness you will soon feel the effects of your own body weight and gravity, shoulders will stiffen and ache, backs will tire and ache etc.

Yoga is another method. The Corpse Pose at the end of most Yoga workouts is a surprising treasure. Sadly, for a long time I just saw this as a cool down to the workout but now I see it as far more. In the Corpse Pose you lie flat on your back and the instructor usually walks you through relaxing each muscle as you surrender your entire body to gravity, which, of course, you can do because you don't even have to remain standing. But it is the walking through of relaxing each part of your body that is important because to do that you must have some awareness and control over those parts.

Body awareness is a big topic and I just wanted to introduce it here because I believe it is one of the vital keys to mastery.

Part Forty-Two - Conclusion – The Art of Self Correction:

As a conclusion to this set of postings I wanted to bring to the table a concept that my training partner and Taiji instructor Rick Bottomley uses for teaching – Self Correction.

Rick Bottomley applies this to the form but regardless of whether you do forms in addition to your application practice you can use self correction to learn.

You have been presented in these postings with a set of principles, whether you have embrace all, some, or reject them all for your own I hope the one thing that has been abundantly clear is that you must have a foundation of principles upon which you base your practice.

They need not be complex or the complex simple I lean towards; they can be whatever works for you as long as you are aware of what they are. You must have principles you believe in to apply in martial practice to be consistently efficient and effective.

Those principles give you self correcting markers.

Whether you are doing a form, a set of prearranged responses, impromptu defence response, or even scenario practice, perform a debrief and evaluate whether your principles were done - almost like running down a check list. Did I responded to the precursor, did I strike while avoiding, was I vertical, was I balanced, were my arms moved or moving, did I use empty space?

Walk down your personal check list.

If you are missing principles, then you have to evaluate why.

If something wasn't there – should it have been?

If you say no, then be sure you justify it without delusion?

If they should have been there then why weren't they?

If you know and understand your principles, then you can be your own teacher.

And this is the full circle to the question asked previously - are you waiting to be taught or seeking to learn?

If I show you one corner of a square will you go and look for the other three or wait to be shown?

Knowing your principles, you know where to look for the other three corners of the square all on your own.

Knowing your principles and using them as self correction points will be you doing your own learning and improvement.

Absolutely have a teacher but make them proud by what you have learned on your own and how you have applied the teachings to your own practice.

Seek to learn through self correction.

To do that then you must grasp the principles properly.

Seek, train, evaluate, correct, practice, learn, seek, train, evaluate, correct, practice, learn, seek, train, evaluate, correct, practice, learn, continue to repeat - never ever stop.

The end.