



Important Dates Spring is here!

June 10th—Karate Ontario competition

Grading starting June 16th

August— Summer Sensei Shionitsu, 9th Dan Han-shi Seminar

This is our long awaited spring issue. We have an amazing group of new writers and articles for your enjoyment.

Our new **Questions for Sensei** series is starting as well as a great Karate Kamp report. Also we have the return of our **Health Kicks** series a new Black Belt interview with Courtney Carroll and much, much more. Enjoy and keep training hard.

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Questions for Sensei By: Sensei Alex Waith 7th Dan

How do I make training a habit without focusing just on grading or the end in mind?

For younger people, a competitive goal is good to have in order to train seriously and with overload or more training than their normal routine.

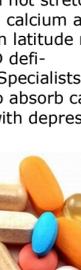
For many people at all levels and ages training, with extra effort and seriousness when focused on grading is an important motivation for training.

We should continue, however, to train with the understanding that the martial art is endless and the more you train, the more you understand and can improve.

When you get older it is important to continue to cross train for physical condition as this condition declines with age. However, your training in karate can become more technical than the physical type when you were younger.

I believe, either reading or hearing from someone, that O Sensei Ohtsuka said, *"ten minutes of focused and correct training daily was more important than a lot of time without correct focus or method"* This, however, does not mean we should limit ourselves to ten minutes only.

Finally, we should train because we are *karateka* and this is what we do. We should try to make training a **TSUNE** or daily habit such as other routine daily habits of life. Training then becomes automatic and a natural part of the "fabric" of our life.

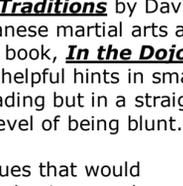


Health Kicks: Vitamins for Flexibility

By: Ian Watson

A common question I am asked by my patients and fellow *karateka* is which vitamins they should take to improve physical performance and flexibility. Short answer, *they do not exist*.

A Google search will return multiple hits for various products claiming to increase flexibility and strength, such as methylsulfonylmethane (MSM). However, a search of Pub-Med, the scientific paper database, does not contain any papers that have investigated this very controversial topic. Simply, there is no magic bullet. Let's face it; if there were medications that improved flexibility and they were safe, we would all be doing the splits by now.



Strenuous exercise and over stretching can cause muscles to tear or become inflamed. An injured muscle hurts, therefore, it will not stretch to its maximum potential. Furthermore, muscles depend on calcium and potassium to function properly. Due to Canada's northern latitude most of us, especially those with pigmented skin, are vitamin D deficient. Health Canada recommends 400-600 iu per day. Specialists recommend 1000-4000 iu. Vitamin D stimulates the body to absorb calcium, has some anti-inflammatory properties and helps with depression. We do not recommend calcium supplementation because two studies have shown an increase risk of a heart attack in healthy females. Natural sources of calcium such as dairy products, soya products, beans, nuts, salmon and broccoli are preferred. Our diets are usually rich in sodium and potassium so forget the Gatorade. Vitamin C also has anti-inflammatory properties and helps with suppressed immunity caused by stress resulting from over exercising. 400-2000 mg is the average recommendation per day, depending on age. Another beneficial product that has anti-inflammatory properties is fish oil, obtained from pills or from eating fish three times per week. MSM does have anti-inflammatory properties but the research supporting its use is weak as compared to the recommended use of vitamin D, C and fish oil. Patients who experience nighttime leg cramps may want to consider magnesium, 50-400 mg per day. Just be careful as it can cause diarrhea, so increase the dose slowly. However, no study has shown that any of these products will improve flexibility; they just help to keep the muscles working and healthy by reducing inflammation. The increased flexibility comes from exercise and stretching.

All of the recommended doses of vitamins can be obtained from a well balanced diet, however, most of us due to a busy lifestyle are not able to always eat the right foods. Consequently, especially vitamin D, supplements are required.

So if you want to kick higher and stronger; follow the Canada Food Guide, take your vitamins, don't over exercise, stretch daily, get 7-8 hours sleep everyday, be patient and have reasonable expectations. Hard work always pays off. See you at the Y.

Book Review: Traditions By David Lowry

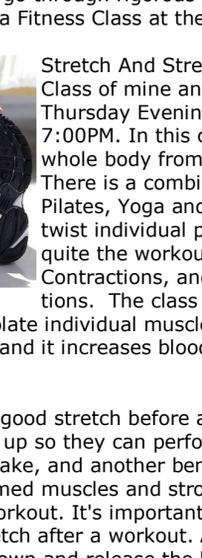
Reviewed by Henry Medeira

The most powerful and influential martial arts book I read, in my mind you I have to add, up until now, is **Traditions** by David Lowry. This is a set of essays on the Japanese martial arts and ways, and goes further than his previous book, **In the Dojo** by addressing many basic questions and helpful hints in small dedicated chapters that are very light reading but in a straight to the point manner, even reaching the level of being blunt.

It certainly gives you some insight on issues that would take several years, if not decades, for the beginner or lower grade student like myself to even become aware of.

There are several aspects of this book that as a student I try to incorporate as part of my regular practice. The following are a few of them: *Nitten Soji* or the duty of students to make the dojo clean for practice (it is the very first item of our *Dojo Kun*), the connection of the feet to the ground and how vulnerable is the position we take, moving from the hips, how power is increased when the *"tsuki"* becomes trusting and when muscles are relaxed, making sure we are not just throwing our limbs when performing techniques or when we are doing kata (chance should not be a part of the equation in a real fight - we should always practice having, even if it is just in our minds, vital points as targets), how important distance can be (in sword fighting, life or death can be determined by a *sun* or the distance between 2 knuckles) and how important it is to perfect taking techniques.

This book amplifies a lot of what we are already being told in class, but sometimes overlook, or simply fail to keep it in sight.



Stretch and Strength for Karate

By Fran Hutchison

Let me start off by saying I would like to thank Felix To (Yoga/Pilates/Stretch And Strength Class YMCA Instructor) for his help with this article by helping me understand the differences between each class and what they are designed to do. And also his help and encouragement when I participate in his classes.

It was suggested to me that I take up a fitness class to help me improve my flexibility, and core strength. I have now tested three Fitness Classes and have continued with them. You can find me in a Yoga, Pilates, and Stretch And Strength Class. In the future you may see me in the Pool doing Aqua Fit too. These Classes are fun and are quite the workout. I've only just started and am seeing small improvements.

Stepping out of the Dojo and doing other fitness training is not only great for the body but for the mind as well. In Karate Class we work the same muscle groups, the same joints, and the rest of the muscle groups that don't get used get left behind. In a Fitness Class one uses various muscles, and gets a good Cardio Workout as well. I am finding the Fitness Classes are picking up where Karate Class leaves off.

I had my doubts with these Fitness Classes as I had done Yoga, Pilates and Dancercise/Jazzercise in the 80's and 90's and I remember the poor instruction that I got then and was expecting history to repeat itself. A lot has changed since then. For example, the Instructors go through rigorous Training and Education to be able to teach a Fitness Class at the Y.



Stretch And Strength is a favourite Class of mine and I do that one on Thursday Evenings from 6:00PM-7:00PM. In this class we stretch the whole body from our heads to our toes. There is a combination of moves from Pilates, Yoga and Dance. We stretch and twist individual parts giving our muscles quite the workout, by using Isometrics, Contractions, and Eccentric Contractions. The class also includes cardio.

We workout and isolate individual muscle groups. Stretching is great for flexibility and it increases blood flow through the body.

Giving your body a good stretch before any physical activity warms the muscles up so they can perform the task that they are about to undertake, and another benefit is that it keeps the injuries down. Warmed muscles and strong muscles get them prepared for any workout. It's important to stretch before you workout and to stretch after a workout. After the workout will calm the muscles down and release the lactic acid that has built up therefore preventing muscle soreness and stiffness.

I am finding I do Karate Class better when I have done a stretch and strength class. I am more limber, and my muscles are ready to do Karate.

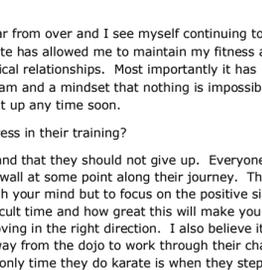
Stretch and Strength is a great and fun class. I am seeing small improvements with all the classes that I am taking. Swing on by Stretch and Strength on Thursday evening between 6-7PM, Felix the Instructor is really good and he makes the class fun.

Karate Kamp Report 2012

By: Patricia Ioana

Our first session started on Friday at 7:30pm. It was tiring after such a long day but compared to what Saturday and Sunday had in store for us, that night's training was not that tough.

The following morning we had to wake up for our morning run which occurred at 6:00am. The air was cool and the wind was brisk but the sunrise was breathtaking. Running was a good warm up and every one of us got a round of applause when they reached the finish line.



Afterwards we had our morning training which seemed that to last for hours but soon enough we were all sitting down enjoying breakfast. During the first part of the second session that Saturday, we did pad work and afterwards light sparring. Fortunately nobody walked out that day with any new injuries unless we counted the blisters and bruises. At the end of class we took our group photos like we do every year. Lunch was very rewarding after that training and some of us even took that time to nap. The third session consisted mainly of kata. Dinner came quickly and soon after we were all heading back to the dojo for our yearly social.

Our task this year was to come up with an activity involving the use of duct tape. It was really enjoyable to watch all the groups perform their ideas and this was a great way for us to strengthen our bonds between each other. While it was getting darker outside our energy was slowly draining and it was an early night for all us. We slowly made our way to our cabins and let the dreams take us away.

The following morning we had our morning run again followed by training and soon, breakfast. The second training came and went and after lunch everyone was getting ready to head home.

I believe that this year's camp was as enjoyable as any other and since karate makes up most of my life, I am looking forward to next year's camp.



An Interview with Courtney Carroll 3rd Dan

By: Dom Capilongo

When and why did you start karate?

As a teenager in high school I was very interested in the martial arts. My interest peaked after the popularization of the arts through the introduction of Bruce Lee to North America. Even though I was interested from an early age I did not get involved with the sport. I was very athletic and loved sports. I played football at the university level and competitive softball. I eventually traded in my cleats in 1995 after repeated hamstring pulls and started my journey in the martial arts.

Do you have any memorable karate stories about when you were a white or green belt?

I don't really have any memorable stories as a white or green belt. I do remember being very motivated to learn the art and become the best I could be. Coming from an athletic background I was very pleased to have been given the chance to double grade for my 9th and 8th Kyu. I guess that was the bug that got me hooked on karate.

Did you ever compete and what was it like?

When I started in martial arts I enjoyed competing. I loved to test my skills against others and was very much interested in fighting. However, the long days spent at tournaments was just too much for me. As a new teacher at the time my weekends were very precious to me and I really could not afford the time away from planning and marking. So my competition days were short but I have no regrets.

How important is physical fitness to your karate training?

For me physical fitness plays a primary role in my daily life and in my martial arts training. Personally I don't believe it is possible to excel in the art if your fitness level is in question. When you are physically fit you can focus on the development of proper techniques rather than on surviving the training sessions. Much of the martial arts is mental but when it comes to grading especially for your black belt your physical condition must be on point or you will not be able to achieve success.

Do you have any advice on any daily fitness routines to stay in the best karate shape?

I believe it is important to keep your cardio up by either running or using the elliptical machine. I am not a big fan of running but I make sure I am doing some form of cardio 3 - 4 times a week for at least 30 minutes. I would also recommend doing some resistance training such as chin ups, push-ups, core and abdominal work along with regular stretching to keep your fitness level in top shape. You don't need to spend hours in the gym everyday but you do need to be consistent to stay in good physical condition.

You have spent several years teaching beginners and the parents' class, what do you enjoy about this?

Working with the beginners and the parents has been a terrific opportunity for me. I believe teaching is my natural calling because I love seeing others grow and improve. Teaching this group provides me with tremendous joy because I see new karate students transform from awkward and incompetent to confident and proficient in the martial arts. The responsibility for teaching this group forces me to stay on top of my own growth and development in the arts and keeps me coming out on a regular basis because I know others are relying on me to be there for them. In addition I have also formed some wonderful friendships as a result of working with this group and that has been priceless.

Do you think grading is important for karate?

As a teacher we want to know how our students are doing. Grading serves as a bench mark for instructors to assess the progress of their students in the arts. Many of us perform better when we have definite goals to shoot for. Grading provides practitioners that target and serves as the catalyst for motivating them to train hard in order to improve their techniques and physical conditioning. Without regular grading I believe many of our lower belt students would lose interest after a while.

You are a very goal oriented and positive person. How important do you think goal setting and positivity should be for karate?

What you say to yourself is critically important in how your life turns out. Your subconscious mind does not know fact from fiction and will bring to us the things we feed it. If you continue to feed it positive thoughts it will bring situations and circumstances that are in line with those positive thoughts. Feed it negative thoughts and those negative events will also manifest. For me I make sure I only allow positive thoughts to set up shop in my mind because thoughts literally are things.

As a martial arts student I believe goal setting is critical to success. Yes you can achieve success without setting goals but when you have clearly defined goals for what you want it is much easier to reach your destination. As a martial artist we sometimes get frustrated when a technique eludes us or we fail a grading but the best thing to do in that situation is to stay positive and remember this is not a race. You are doing this for your own growth and development and not to compete with others. If you adopt this attitude you are much more likely to stay positive and reach your goals.

You are now a third Dan do you think there is anything left to learn for you?

I am a strong believer that learning never stops. As a teacher it is important to be humble and continue to look for ways to improve so you can pass on your knowledge to others. As a 3rd Dan I am just now beginning to understand the nuances of our particular style of karate. The annual clinics conducted by our grandmaster affirms that my learning is indeed far from being over. When you think you know it all you start to deteriorate and die. Life is about progress, growth and expansion and I choose life.

What role do you see karate playing in your future?

I love the martial arts and I love teaching. My journey is far from over and I see myself continuing to be a student of the discipline for many years to come. Karate has allowed me to maintain my fitness and flexibility, give back to the community and foster some critical relationships. Most importantly it has allowed me to develop a stronger sense of self as to who I am and a mindset that nothing is impossible. Karate has become a way of life and I don't see me giving it up any time soon.

What advice would you have for anyone struggling to progress in their training?

I would tell those struggling that this is par for the course and that they should not give up. Everyone who trains in the martial arts have felt frustrations or hit a wall at some point along their journey. The key is to not dwell on the negative thoughts floating through your mind but to focus on the positive side of the equation. Visualize yourself getting through the difficult time and how great this will make you feel when it happens. This will keep you motivated and moving in the right direction. I also believe it is important for those struggling to spend some quiet time away from the dojo to work through their challenges on their own. Many struggle in the art because the only time they do karate is when they step in the dojo. To progress beyond those sticky points you have to do more on your own time and try to figure things out. You can't always rely on being taught in class, sometimes the answers are right in front of you but you have to be looking in order to find them.

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