

WEEKEND TRAINING AND TESTING

September 2014

I have spent the last year moving in and out of my comfort zone, juggling my many different hats as karate student, competitor, mom, Sensei's wife and team doctor. My journey began with local tournaments in the Pacific NW, finally leading up to USA NKF Nationals and then continuing with training and brown belt testing in the hombu dojo with Soke last month.

I have always been so impressed with the adults who practice, train and compete; we must balance so many responsibilities and are constantly distracted with our children and their needs, our work responsibilities, and all of the many other little nagging responsibilities that are a constant. (Everyone in the McMinnville dojo is familiar with my annoying pager alarm when I am on call.) For me, part of being able to find my own personal balance includes karate training and being a part of the karate family. I feel lucky to be a part of a great group that extends beyond the borders of my local dojo.

During our training and testing, we were constantly working on movement, shifting and distancing from our partners. From the outside looking in, the movement in karate seems fluid and unforced. However, for me, the movement in karate feels impossible at times. I have been told in class about 100 different ways, maybe more, that movement begins with the feet, legs and hips, ending with the upper body and the arms. Want power? Use the hips. Want speed? Use the hips. Want to be more snappy? Use the hips. You need to rotate the hips more. You need to pull with the hip. You need to sink into the hips. Problems rotating? Too much upper body. Falling over? Your base is too narrow/wide/short/long. Who knew that the most basic movements require so much lower body involvement? The reassuring thing is that I am not the only one trying to figure this connection out. Even more advanced students than I have been given suggestions from Soke and the other Sensei present about the disconnection between the upper and lower halves of their bodies.

As a doctor, I know that the simplest things, the things that we think least about everyday, like breathing or our heartbeat or speaking, have the most complicated background in physiology. Nothing takes only a single step, everything has a basis that initiates the action. As I continue working on more advanced katas and their bunkai, stepping out of my comfort zone yet again, I am hopeful to be able to find that base that will serve as my foundation -- allow me to move where I need to go -- and help me keep my balance along the way. Thanks to Soke and everyone else present for a great training weekend!

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