

Sogo-Goshin-Do

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What are you doing?

What are you doing for the kai? If you are a new student then just attending class is all anyone can really ask. However, if you have been around for a while and especially if you are a brown or black belt then much more is often needed. If you can think of something you can do to help the kai grow or help keep the dojos up and running then volunteer your services. What makes a group work is everyone pitching in and sharing the load. Ask your Sensei today what you can do to make an impact on the kai or your dojo.

Katas and Uses

We do kata for many different reasons. Making sure you know what those reasons are is the key to making it a useful and practical exercise. We don't just do kata for the sake of doing them or because it is part of your next belt test. If done properly they can be a great asset to your training. Here are some reasons to use them.

Indexing: you create a mental catalog of movements when you learn a kata. This is easier than just trying to remember a list of techniques. Plus, you usually demo the move on both the right and left, which is good training. When applying them on a partner (*uke*) you can then practice the movements (*bunkai*) or variations of them in a more real world scenario.

Muscle Memory: by performing kata over and over you make it easier for the information to travel along the nervous system. The moves become more of a reflex. Practice makes perfect and a kata is very standardized, so the body is able to perfect certain movements that are key to the system. By training your body to follow your commands exactly you make it easier to learn new movements later within martial arts or any sport.

Exercise: you actually get exercise when you do a kata. Granted it is not highly aerobic, but then that depends on how you do the form. You can vary your speed and / or the depth of your stances for different levels of difficulty. Kata are

a great way to warm up the muscles prior to a good workout or even as a warm down.

Clear Your Mind: you have to focus at some level to perform katas correctly. By clearing the mind of other distractions and performing the kata you may give the mind a needed stress break and you are exercising your mind's ability to stay focused. Try this: perform one of your favorite katas and focus on one thing the entire time, such as your breathing. Don't let your mind wander. It is easier said than done, but is great for your focus training. A second variation is to focus on one part of the body and its sensation during the kata, such as the bottom of your feet. It is not normal to focus on the bottom of your feet for that long and it is not that easy, but by doing the kata like this you are blocking out distractions, which is great for your sense of calm. Kata are basically meditative movements and entire systems like Tai Chi are based on this practice.

Sport: this is really one of the last reasons to learn a kata in my opinion. It is a good thing to compete a few times at least to get used to facing fears and overcome stage-fright type emotions. However, we don't simply learn kata to try and win trophies. A better way to look at it is to see how well you can learn the movements and challenge yourself to be the best you can be and if this gets you a trophy then that is a great outcome.

Summary: Basically kata should not be done without reason. You may have found a reason not listed here, but consider these when practicing kata. Also, remember you don't need to know as many as possible. Soke Kuniba once said it takes a lifetime to master just 5 kata. Kyoshi considered this when implementing the 5 *Shoden* forms into our system. It's not quantity, but rather quality of the kata you perform. Good luck!

Martial Arts on Film

Martial arts are more popular today than ever. One of the genres of martial art that has swept our culture is Martial Arts movies. Some of

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these are good and some are bad. Oh, and let's not forget some are awful. However, some do make the grade and enrich our understanding of the martial culture or at least provide some combat scenes worth seeing. Here is a list of some movies that deal with some facet of martial arts and my critique of them. Maybe you'll check some of them out. Most of these are really not for children and have a PG or R rating so discretion is advised.

Enter the Dragon: The best of the 5 Bruce Lee films. Yes, there are only 5 true Bruce Lee movies. Great fight scenes and no bad dubbing. ****

Rapid Fire: The best Brandon Lee martial arts film if you are looking for more Lee movies. Great stick work in the style of Danny Inosanto. ***

Dragon The Bruce Lee Story: This movie takes a lot of liberties with the truth on Lee's life, but it is a well done movie with great fight scenes. ****

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: This makes up for all the bad Kung-Fu movies by making the moves look believable. More of a fairy tale, but extraordinary.

Ran: By Akira Kurosawa who is considered the Spielberg of Japanese film. This is not for kids and has subtitles, but it is powerful and savage. More of a samurai film. ****

The Seven Samurai: This film is long, in black and white and has sub-titles, so it is *not for everyone*, but the true heart of the samurai comes through in this film. It is one of the most acclaimed foreign films of all time. ***** (*not for everyone*)

Shogun: 9 hour mini-series adaptation of Clavelle's book and very well done. Another great samurai saga. *****

Kung-Fu: Ok, the fight scenes aren't the best, especially in Season 1, but the message is clear. Both Seasons: 1 & 2 are out on DVD and at a great price. Very good TV for early 70s. Ok, for kids too.

For more info on these and other movies go to my web site at:

<http://www.geocities.com/ltsmann/film.html>

Health Tip by Sensei Daniel Schwerin

Is warming up really important to your health? The answer is "YES". There are many reasons for warming up: (1) getting the body ready to exercise (2) gets you mentally prepared (3) reducing the likelihood of an injury. Simple warming-up exercises stimulate the heart, lungs, muscles and other parts of the body. The heart increases the rate and force of contraction, thus increasing the amount of blood to the body, more oxygen is taken in by the lungs and is then able to be delivered to the body through the increase in blood flow. These exercises cause the brain to release hormones that help some muscles relax while causing other muscles to increase tone (increase in anticipation of having to work). The brain also releases other chemicals called endorphins and catecholamines that work on other parts of the brain in regulating how the body will function.

The last reason to warm up is that simple exercise done before a major exercise helps the body reduce the likelihood of injury. Having a greater amount of blood flow, more oxygen, less stress to the muscles and joints in turn will decrease the potential of injury.

If you want to maximize how you work out, then the best way to exercise is a short warm up exercise (run around the building a couple of times), followed by a brief stretching routine. Then go through your work out and follow everything with a very hard and long stretch. This will in the long run help you in your martial arts.

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