

Living Karate-Style: Life Principles with Punch

Karen Brunger, BHEc, AICI CIP

For nine years I have been taking Karate at the Richmond Hill Karate Club. And I have to tell you – Karate does just as much, if not more, for self-awareness and personal growth than it does for self-defence. How I do Karate is how I do life. Fear in doing a technique is also fear in how I do my business, or handle a relationship. If my technique lacks power, I am also holding back my power to succeed in my career. As my confidence grows in Karate, so does my income – it has increased with each change in belt colour. Here are some Karate principles that apply to life –relationships, career, and health.

1. Visualize your outcome. What you hold in your mind, you can create. While in a relaxed state, imagine your ideal scenario. Thoughts have energy. The more you have a particular thought, the more energy is directed into making it a reality.
2. Take responsibility for preparing yourself. Get the education, tools, skills and experience you need.
3. Find out the protocol and procedures. The information exists somewhere. A mentor can help. In the dojo we need to know how to line up in order of belt, and how to greet and thank each other.
4. Be appropriate and immaculate in your attire and grooming. A wrinkled *gi* (uniform) or poor hygiene is not respectful to ourselves or those around us.
5. Leave your baggage at the door. When we enter the dojo, we remove our shoes and leave them at the door. We're also leaving behind anything in our minds that does not involve Karate.

6. Be of service. In the dojo, each one of us is of service to each other, and to our dojo. Our Sensei, a 6th degree black belt, vacuums and washes floors.
7. Show respect to everyone. In Karate we bow as one way of showing respect.
8. Be considerate of others. In *Bunkai* (application) or *Kumite* (sparring) we practice as partners or in teams. We need to honour the people that are allowing us to work with them.
9. Appreciate your relationships. In the dojo we need others in order to grow. The wider the variety of people we work with, the richer and more valuable our experience.
10. Become 'one' with others. In Karate as we're working with our partners we need to feel them, and 'be' them. We are not separate.
11. Have spirit. Attitude is more important than technique.
12. Be relaxed and ready. We can move towards an opportunity (*skuri*), or avoid a negative (*sabaki*).
13. Project your energy. When we expand our energy, we have more personal power, and what we do has more impact.
14. Breathe! Diaphragmatic breathing gives us more energy and power.
15. Be aware! *Ichi gan* means first - eyes. What is happening around you? Is there something you need to respond to?
16. Be grounded. Get your balance – emotionally and in life. *Ni Soku* means second - stance. If we deliver a technique when we're not balanced, it doesn't work.

17. Be resolute. Feel your core power. *San tan* means third – powerful resolute spirit.
18. Take appropriate action. *Shi riki* means fourth – strong technique.
19. Strive for perfection. In practicing a *kata* (form), we break it down into individual techniques and practice each technique over and over, constantly working at making it the best we can.
20. Commit. There is no room for fear.
21. Make it count. Use the most powerful technique to get the job done. One knock-out punch is more effective than 5 half-hearted punches.
22. Focus. Each technique must have *kime* or focus. There is a direct correlation between focus and success.
23. Persevere. Take continuous action to improve. The road to success is one step at a time.
24. Be clear and concise with intent. In Karate we want to avoid excessive movement (*muda*), unnatural thoughts or actions (*mura*), and lack of meaning behind the action (*muri*).
25. Be confident. Be big. Allow yourself to go out into the world. When my Karate techniques are inhibited or limited, I know I'm limiting myself in other ways.
26. Be flexible. Flexibility means we're more able to respond appropriately.
27. Use timing to your advantage. When do you need to move, and when do you need to relax?

28. Choose when to use open, receptive communication versus directive. In a soft (*ju*) technique, we use our partner's momentum so that we can then lead in the direction we choose. A hard (*go*) technique uses force.
29. See it through to the end. *Zanshin* is an aware and present mind to completion.
30. Be open to all possibilities. *Mushin* is 'no mind'.
31. Develop intuition. It can help us make the right moves at the right time.
32. Live in internal peace and mastery. This is *Budo*, which is the name for Japanese martial arts.
33. Live with ethics, integrity, honesty, sincerity, justice, honour, self-control, composure, stoicism, manners and compassion. In Karate this is called *Bushido*.
34. Follow the steps to mastery. *ShuHaRi*: *Shu* – Learn the fundamentals and techniques. *Ha* – Reflect on what you know, and look for new ways. *Ri* – What you do is natural and transcends knowledge.
35. Perfect your character. *"The ultimate aim of Karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants."* - Gichin Funakoshi, father of modern Karate.
36. Attain enlightenment. This (*mu*) is the pinnacle of Karate.

I hope you find these principles useful! And if you're not already in Karate – maybe you'll check it out.

Karen Brunger is Director of the International Image Institute Inc., and is a Past President of the Association of Image Consultants International.