

Words Offense or Defense are not used in karate

The way we use our words is the way we think and therefore the way we act and move.

I am very careful with the choice of words when I teach, the effect can be subtle, but subtleties make the difference between win or lose, or between higher to mediocre quality of movement.

In karate what commonly is known as defense, is called Oji Waza, and it translates "response technique", and we also do not use the word offense, but rather Shikake Waza, which means "set up techniques" or strategy.

The word defense implies, defensive, protective, and therefore behind, waiting. When one is defensive he is always trying to be safe and therefore judging, confirming, with the mind in the past and that will make someone late every time.

Response means taking advantage of the opponent's attack and action, using the space in his action as our opportunity, we say that catching the chance itself is too late, one has to catch the chance when the no chance becomes chance.

Offensive is also negative, it implies rushing, forcing your way, being too hungry for the result, acting without consideration of the situation, or "self dancing", the objective is to use the opponent's mental and physical inclination, and to make the opponent move, commit himself, and use the space that he gives us, so we must create an opportunity for our attack, one has to be patient and act in time.

There is a saying in karate "no first attack", some see it as morale, since karate is an honorable martial art, and that is true, but also strategically, if the opponent is in good mental and physical condition, attack is not a smart thing.

There is also a saying: "uke seme" block is attack, within the block must be attack, block is only half technique, in the block we must take leadership to allow the timing and condition for counterattack.

Another way to look at it is, in Budo movement, mental or physical, is space, qio, or chance to the opponent, if the mind is set on attack or defense it is already moved, it has directions, and it is limited to all other directions, an immovable mind, is a mind that is not taken by any thought or mental direction, it is quiet yet attentive, and therefore is free to be where it needs to at any instant.

Within the offense must be defense, so when the opponent respond to my set up and move, I do not have to make decision, my body, or the wisdom of the body will make the action happen in a flash, when the opponent move you must already be in motion to take advantage of it.

So one cannot be one minded, offensive or defensive, the mind has to be flexible and flowing to do whatever is necessary in an instant, without space, as there is no space of time between the hands clapping to the sound that results.

That is why we say that we have to use our mind to make strategy, but we cannot over use the mind and the brain, because that will cause rigidity and interference with what needs to be done. At the highest level, intellect and intuition should synergize to bring our full creativeness and flow.

How to get there? In karate class the directions we give to a student for technique and for the way one interacts with opponents, not only influence the way the body move, but help the mind become free from interference of the brain and allow us to thrust more of the intuitive side, to bring balance between the two

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