



January 2016

Dear Anshin Dojo Members,

We hope everybody had a wonderful Christmas and New Year's!! It's time to start a new year and that means new beginnings for everyone. We open the dojo on January 03rd and normal classes will commence.

A new year clearly demands new beginnings. We hope that this year brings great prosperity and growth for all of our friends and family. Keep your head up and move onward to bigger and better things. Just remember, the pain you feel today is the strength you feel tomorrow. A man who conquers himself is greater than one who conquers a thousand miles in battle.

Grading - Stripe Testing

Attention all students!

There will be a grading coming up on January January 13th, for those who are getting their next stripe! We wish you all the best luck in your advancement and hope to see you all there!

Friendship Dojo Day

This month, Friendship day will be held at Anshin Dojo on January 31st. We hope to see you all there.



Illustration 1: Honbu Dojo in Okinawa

Dojo Closures

- 01st – New Years Day
- 02nd – Closed

Notable Dates

- 16th – Iaido at Stratford Martial Arts
- 30th – Iaido at Stratford Martial Arts

Special Events

- 31st – Friendship Day at Anshin Dojo

Birthdays

- 7th – Tony R.
- 13th – Preston
- 20th – Patricia

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The Key to Success: Mushin (No-Mind)

Mushin, or no-mind: reacting without thinking about it. Reacting without *having* to think about it. This is what martial artists and other aspiring skill-seekers alike spend a lifetime trying to achieve.

Mushin is a state of mind where the mind is not fixed on any given thing or occupied by thought or emotion. It simply means no-mind - a pure sense of clarity produced by absence of ego. This does not mean that the mind is empty but rather it becomes calm and fully aware of experience, free of preconceptions, fear judgement, or active thought.

When the mind experiences mushin, it is free to react to any opponent or obstacle without hesitation or the disturbance of interjecting thoughts. A person reacts intuitively, what is their trained natural reaction, rather than relying on what they *think* should happen. The mind is like water; when calm, you can see clearly through to the bottom, but when you feel emotional turmoil or heated anger, it distorts your vision much the way waves distort water and you are unable to see your opponent clearly. You've already lost. A mind devoid of distracting thoughts, vacant of greed, anger and ignorance sees everything as it is and with more freedom and ease, this mind allows for free play to spontaneity and taking no action rather than impulsive and rash action.

Mushin is not about repressing thoughts but rather what happens when thinking stops. How do we create no-mind? Just watch. Neither try and stop your mind or think, but let it move freely

without becoming attached to any given thought. Do not judge, just watch and witness what comes and goes without getting involved. The deeper your watchfulness becomes, the deeper your awareness becomes. A thought comes, and then there's a gap. Another thought, another gap. Like the clouds in the sky, let the thoughts pass through in your inner sky. Call it satori, zen, call it what you want - these gaps are where you will begin to catch a glimpse of no-mind—small intervals where the sky is clear and

the sun is shining. Do not allow yourself to be consumed with creating these intervals. Thoughts must move around in total freedom. The longer you practice this, the longer the gaps will become and a new clarity will arise which will allow you to see in your inner world. When you enjoy these blissful moments, eventually you will become the master of your own mind. If you will yourself to think, you will think. If thought is not needed, you allow the mind to rest. It is still there, but you gain the control to use it or not use it depending on the situation.

Mushin is a very Zen concept prevalent in many Japanese arts, Many martial artists aspire to attain mushin during kata practice so that they are able to flawlessly execute their movements at any point, whether in the dojo or in combat. In Zen, mushin exists through meditation. The goal is to enhance awareness and sensitivity, while reducing thought and emotion in order to allow intuition and spontaneous action to take place. The goal is to attain this state of complete awareness in other parts of the practitioner's life as well.

"When you feel emotional turmoil or heated anger, it distorts your vision much the way waves distort water and you are unable to see your opponent clearly. You've already lost."

Sensei's Corner

Story: A Karate Man Would Not

A young karate student faithfully attended his Sensei's class every week, driving across back roads and wooden bridges until he eventually saw the familiar bamboo shoots that lined his teacher's property. The grounds were beautiful and serene - one of the qualities that drew him to training in the first place.

After every class the student had an opportunity to drink tea with his instructor, relaxing from the day's workout and pondering the lessons learned. Lately, the student found himself opening up more to his Sensei about troubles he faced in everyday life.

"Sensei, I love coming here because I don't have to deal with all the nonsense going on...out there." He waved a dismissive hand toward the front gate.

"I understand," the Sensei said. "The world can be a hectic place!"

"For sure," the student said, "like just today as I was driving here some jerk was tailgating me and honking his horn. I was going the speed limit, but I guess it wasn't fast enough for him!" The student snorted and shook his head. "I was tempted to waive him to the side of the road, hop out, and teach him a lesson in manners. After all, I bet he'd be a more courteous driver after that."

The Sensei considered the situation. After a few moments he simply said, "A karate man would not."

The student began to raise an objection, but he could see that his Sensei was finished with the topic, so

he simply took another sip of tea.

The next week the student returned for more training. After a thorough workout, they both sat down for a rest.

"How are you this week?" the Sensei asked. "Hopefully a bit more at ease?"

"Unfortunately, no." The student said. "I was on the internet and I found some people doing the same kata we do...except they were terrible! The stances were broken, the technique was weak, and they clearly had no understanding of the movement. The worst part is, when I tried to explain it they got mad. I ended up having to scold them for being so uninformed and unwilling to learn."



The Sensei nodded thoughtfully.

The student continued, "I mean, if I don't tell them like it is...who will? It's my responsibility to be honest - honesty is a good trait. Don't you think it was my right to put them in their place?"

The Sensei bit his lip for a moment and peered off into the distance. Eventually he said, "A karate man would not."

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Vocabulary

Bushido

(boo-she-doh)

way of the warrior

hombu

(home-boo)

headquarters

mizu no kokoro

(mee-zuu no koh-koh-roh)

mind like water

Did you Know?

Kyan Chotoku was only 4'10", but he was trained by some of the most prominent Okinawan karateka of his time. He devised techniques to make overcome his size, and enhance the art itself. He was famous for his kicking skills as being light and swift, but effective movements. He survived the battle of Okinawa in 1945 but died shortly after in the same year. He died of starvation after difficult years of war in Okinawa, reportedly giving food to his children instead of taking it for himself.

A Karate Man Would Not (continued)

Another week passed and the student returned for more training. As usual, they concluded their workout and retired for tea.

“How are you this week?” the Sensei asked.

“Much better, thank you.”

“Good, good. I’m glad to hear.” said the Sensei.

“In fact,” replied the student, “I had a little self esteem booster a few days ago. I think you’ll like this. I was shopping at the mall when I bumped into an old classmate of mine from college. Honestly, we didn’t get along very well and he always acted very snide and superior to me. Well, we started talking and he complained a lot about his jerk boss. I shared with him how good my job was and how great training has been. It felt nice to let him know I was succeeding after all the crap he gave me in school.”

The Sensei listened quietly, and then nodded while sipping his tea.

“What? Why so quiet?” The student asked. “Don’t tell me you think that was wrong of me! This guy needed to know I was doing well, and the fact that he was struggling should teach him a lesson about right and wrong. Don’t you think I deserved to give that lesson to him?”

The Sensei shrugged. “A karate man would not.”

The student sensed a pattern in these conversations and grew frustrated. “I don’t understand Sensei, what’s the point of sharing my stories with you if you just keep telling me I’m doing the wrong thing. The world isn’t as black and white as you make it out to be.”

The Sensei nodded. “You’re right, of course.”

The student asked, “So why correct me the way you do?”

The Sensei paused then said, “One time you told me

that you liked the serenity of this place. That it helped you escape from the real world. But have you considered taking the ‘way’ of this place out to the real world with you?”

The student crinkled his nose, not quite understanding.

Sensei continued, “Imagine for a moment that it was me tailgating you in the car, or me who was wrong on the internet. How would you react?”

“Respectfully, of course. But you’d still be wrong.” The student said.

“Yes, of course.” The Sensei said. “But could you not find a way to apply the etiquette and manners of this dojo in the outside world? Here we communicate extensively, but never to the detriment of one another. Is that impossible to replicate outside of these walls?”

The student sat thoughtfully. “It’s not impossible,” he eventually said, “but it would be so difficult to maintain that level of poise at all times. On the internet, in the grocery store, in my car...I mean, I can’t always act like you’re around!”

“But that is what I ask of you,” the Sensei said.

“I’m sorry Sensei, but that is asking too much. I am who I am, and if you want me to change so much...I’ll have to quit training.”

The Sensei nodded and then said, “A karate man would not.”

