

COACHING SERIES

"Stop making shapes. Start understanding the fight and the intensity will follow."

Ady Gray

Developing intensity in **KATA**

A coaching perspective

Intensity is not something you add.
it is something you earn.



Ady Gray
Former England Head Kata Coach

“Intensity is not something you simply add. It is created by the intent behind your training”

Ady Gray

In recent years, more and more athletes have turned to platforms such as YouTube and online classes to support their kata training.



Online training platforms in Kata. Benefits Vs Limitations

These platforms have value. They can help athletes learn sequences, understand structure, observe timing, and recognise technical detail.



They do NOT:

- **Create the internal feeling of a fight**
- **Develop true intent through understanding**
- **Produce real intensity without application**

They cannot create the feeling, intent, or intensity required to perform at the highest level.

The Missing Element

It is not enough to watch what techniques or combinations look like. You must be able to apply them fluently, confidently and with intent



Too often, kata is performed as a sequence of shapes rather than an expression of combat

This is where much of modern kata begins to fall short.

we are seeing technically excellent athletes. Disciplined, dedicated and capable under pressure. Standards of movement, precision and athleticism have never been higher.

“We are producing better movers, but not always with the intent”



More Than Just Shapes

It is not enough to simply perform a kata and make it look correct. You must understand what every movement is doing. Without that understanding, where moments occur and why they exist there will always be a lack of belief in your performance.



Within each kata, there are clear points where exchanges begin, develop, and end. There are finishing technique and decisive moments where the encounter is resolved.

THESE MOMENTS MUST

BE IDENTIFIED.

Recognise the key moments within the kata



BE UNDERSTOOD.

Understand the purpose, the reason and the intent behind them



BE PERFORMED WITH COMPLETE INTENT.

Execute with focus, commitment and confidence



“If you do not understand where these moments are and more importantly why they exist within the fight. There will always be a lack of belief in your performance and without belief there can be no intensity”

NO UNDERSTANDING = NO BELIEF
NO BELIEF = NO INTENSITY

From Sequence to Fight

Kata should not be studied purely as sequence. It must be understood as a fight. At every stage of your training, ask yourself one simple question

WOULD IT WORK?

If you cannot answer that question honestly, then you are not truly understanding the kata, you are simply copying it.



What Understanding Changes in your performance

When you begin to understand your kata on this level, everything changes.



1

Your timing improves

(because you recognise exactly when actions should occur).

2

Your focus sharpens

(because you know what demands attention)

3

Your techniques gain purpose

(driven by intent, not imitation)

4

You stop making shapes, and start performing with meaning.

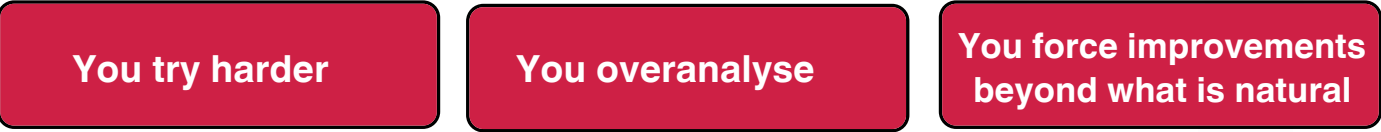
Understanding turns movement into intent > intent creates intensity

From Sequence to Fight

There is a common mistake many athletes fall into, Focusing purely on technique. They analyse, refine, and repeat, but fail to recognise when it's time to move beyond it.

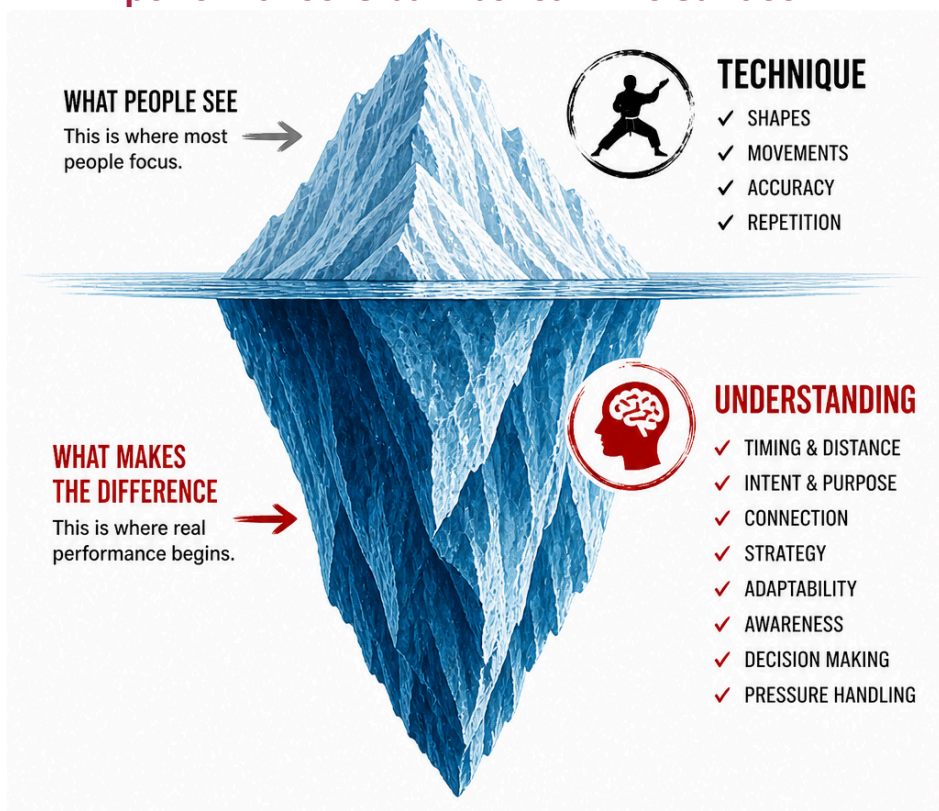


AND THEN YOU TRY TO PUSH IT EVEN FURTHER.



At this point, more effort does not create improvement, it creates interference.

Most athletes focus on what is visible, but performance is built beneath the surface.



This is where understanding must take priority.

At a certain point, you must move beyond mechanical perfection and return to the purpose of the movement.

You must trust the technique and focus on what it is meant to do.

Because kata is not about performing techniques in isolation. It is about expressing a complete, meaningful fight.

TECHNIQUE GETS YOU TO THE SURFACE.
UNDERSTANDING TAKES YOU DEEPER.

Final Thoughts

Just like online coaching, simply reading this will never fully get the message across.

Feeling, understanding and intent cannot be downloaded or observed. They must be experienced, they must be coached and developed in the dojo under the guidance of a coach. Serious Kata athletes should not go to the dojo simply to practice kata. They should train in all aspects of karate and bring that into their kata.

“An average actor recites lines. A great actor understands the story, feels the moment and commits to it. If you do not understand your kata in the same way, you are not performing, you are repeating”

Beyond the Dojo

Karate, when understood properly, is not just about movement. It teaches you to act not react blindly, but to act with clarity, purpose, and intent.

When you begin to understand kata as a fight, you are not just learning how to deal with physical situations, you are developing a mindset that carries into everyday life.

Because the hardest moments are not always physical, They are the moments where it is easier: **to stay quiet | to step back. | to do nothing.**

Understanding karate teaches you not to take that easy option. It teaches you to stand for what is right. To commit to action when it matters and to follow through with intent and belief.

This is no different to your training. It is easy to go through the motions. Easy to repeat what you see. Easy to settle for “good enough.

Real progress and real intensity comes when you choose not to take the easy option.

When you question what you are doing. When you seek to understand it. When you commit to performing it properly. That is when karate moves beyond technique and becomes far more valuable.

Champions are created through intent, understanding and the courage not to take the easy option.

INTENSITY IS NOT SOMETHING YOU ADD. IT IS SOMETHING YOU EARN.