

PERSPECTIVES ON LIFELONG KARATE

KARATE

IQ

Are You Training Hard
Or Training Intelligently?

Will the way you're training
today allow you to still
be training twenty
years from now?

Ady Gray

Are You Training Hard Or Training Intelligently?

Karate is supposed to be something we can practise for a lifetime. But if that's true, surely the way we train must evolve as we do.

I still see experienced instructors and senior karate-ka trying to train exactly as they did twenty or thirty years ago. Attempting to match younger students physically, using the same stance depths, the same training volumes and judging themselves against the same athletic standards.

But is that intelligent training?

There is nothing wrong with training hard. We should push ourselves. Karate can provide an excellent all-round workout incorporating cardiovascular fitness, strength and conditioning, mobility, speed, power and coordination.

But training hard and training intelligently are not the same thing.

As we mature, our bodies change. What a young body can withstand and recover from is different to what a mature body can withstand and recover from. That isn't weakness. It isn't an excuse to become lazy. **It's a physical reality that an intelligent karateka should understand.**

The answer isn't to stop training hard.



The answer is to become better at deciding how to train hard.



Experience Should Change Your Karate

If you've trained for 20, 30 or 40 years, your greatest asset shouldn't simply be the number of years you've accumulated. It should be what you've learned from them.

There is a huge difference between **30 years of experience and the same five or ten years repeated.**

If we're still training the same way, performing everything the same way and never questioning why, have we genuinely spent 30 years developing? Or have we simply become very experienced at repetition?

Experience should change our karate.

PERHAPS

We stop relying quite so heavily on raw physical speed and develop better timing.

PERHAPS

Our movement becomes more economical & smoother

PERHAPS

Instead of trying to move faster, we learn to move sooner.

PERHAPS

We begin questioning whether every technique needs to look exactly as it did when we were twenty

That isn't deterioration.

That's evolution.



Protect the Body - Not the Ego

Part of developing Karate IQ is learning how to train the body hard, while also protecting it for a lifetime of karate

Martial arts culture has traditionally celebrated pushing through.

TRAIN HARDER : GET LOWER : DO MORE : IGNORE THE ACHES AND PAINS

Resilience matters and training shouldn't always be comfortable.

But there is a difference between
**CHALLENGING YOUR BODY
AND CONTINUALLY DAMAGING IT.**

If the way you train at 30 means you cannot train at 60, was that successful training?

Take stance length and depth. Slightly reducing a stance as we mature doesn't necessarily remove the muscular demand. The legs can still work. The muscles can still be loaded. We can still develop strength, stability and control. But a relatively small adjustment may allow us to maintain the physical intensity while reducing unnecessary stress on the knees, hips and ankles.



“ It's not saying: **I'm getting older, so I'll make my karate easier.**

It's asking: How can I **Maintain** the training effect while **removing** unnecessary stress

If those extra few centimetres of stance depth add considerably more stress without adding meaningful technical or physical benefit, perhaps they're not making your karate better. **They're simply making your stance deeper.**

**THAT'S NOT EASIER KARATE
THAT'S INTELLIGENT KARATE**

Stop Judging Karate Like a Photograph

This leads to another important part of Karate IQ: **Function over cosmetic appearance.**

A stance isn't there simply to create an aesthetically pleasing shape. It has a purpose. Weight transfer. Stability. Movement. Force production. Control of the centre of gravity. The ability to move into whatever comes next.

So if slightly changing stance length, foot position or weight distribution allows an individual to achieve the same, or even a better functional result, why should that automatically be considered inferior karate?

Sometimes we become so obsessed with what karate looks like that we forget to ask what it does.

Of course, technical principles matter. This **isn't** permission to do whatever we want and call it karate. But maintaining the principles of a technique isn't necessarily the same as forcing every karateka into an **identical physical shape.**



No two bodies are identical.

Height, limb length, mobility, strength, age and physical structure all differ. So why would good coaching mean making everybody look exactly the same?

Teach the individual, not the photograph.

**Karate doesn't happen in a still image.
Karate happens in movement.**

What Does “Impressive” Karate Look Like?

Athletic karate can be incredibly impressive. **Speed**, flexibility, **explosive power** and dynamic movement should be developed and celebrated.

But we make a mistake when young athletic karate becomes the permanent benchmark against which everyone is judged. If that's our measure, every karateka eventually becomes worse.

A 55-year-old probably won't possess the same raw speed, flexibility and recovery as a highly athletic 20-year-old. **Why should they?**

The impressive qualities should evolve. The younger karateka may impress through speed and explosive athleticism.

The experienced karateka might impress through timing, control, distance, efficiency, balance, accuracy and the ability to generate an effect with less unnecessary movement.

At one stage of
your journey,
what impresses
might be how fast
you can move.
Later, it might be
how little you
need to move.



That's not **lowering the standard**.
It's changing the measure of the standard.

That's Karate IQ

None of this is an excuse for lazy karate.

- Train hard.
- Sweat.
- Challenge your cardiovascular fitness.
- Maintain strength, mobility, speed and power.
- Push yourself.

But also think

- Ask why you're doing something.
- Ask what the technique is trying to achieve.
- Ask whether that extra stance depth is producing something useful.
- Ask whether you could achieve the same result with more efficient movement.
- Ask whether you're developing your karate or simply repeating it.

And occasionally ask yourself a much bigger question.

Will the way I'm training today allow me to still be training twenty years from now?

The physical athlete will inevitably change. The intelligent karateka should continue developing. Your technical intelligence should increase. Your training intelligence should increase. Your understanding of your own body should increase and after decades of training, your ability to question, adapt and understand why should be considerably greater than when you started.

Don't spend 30 years getting better at repeating karate.
Spend 30 years getting better at understanding it.

Your karate shouldn't simply age with you. It should mature with you.
That is training intelligence. That is Karate **IQ**



KARATE IS A LIFELONG JOURNEY

**KEEP TRAINING
KEEP QUESTIONING
KEEP DEVELOPING**

KARATE IQ

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