

Hap Ki Do
Philosophy of the Science

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From the Top

We all know the 3 basic principles of Hapkido are circular motion, water principle and non-resistance. Likewise, we all know that Hapkido is literally defined as the “Way of Coordinated Power”. Instead of going into how these principles relate to me, I will instead explain two foundations I have developed through Hapkido: Living in the Present and Awareness.

When I was growing up, I used to get scolded for throwing things inside the house, yelling at the top of my lungs, and fighting with my brothers.

Mom would chase me around the house with a big wooden spoon I called “Spanky”. When she managed to corner me, she’d beat the snot out of me. After I’d had enough, she’d herd my reddened behind and me up to my bedroom, where I’d have the pleasure of spending the next hour or so stewing about what I had done wrong.

Eventually, my brothers and I caught on to the rules. I managed to keep my yelling to a minimum. We moved the fights to an area isolated away from mom and dad. We even managed to keep the throwing limited to when our parents were out of the house. Unfortunately, as I matured, I went on for several years not indulging in these desires to yell, fight and throw things.

Along comes Hapkido...

I didn’t realize it at the time I first started practicing Hapkido, but what I truly missed as a young adult, was being in the six-year-old mind set. My mind was creative. Everything was new. Anything was possible. It was the ultimate joy to learn or see something new. Excitement, was a way of life! As a child, I spent no time at all worrying about my past or future. I was concerned only with what was facing me at that specific moment. I didn’t worry about getting a job completed. I didn’t worry about making money. I didn’t worry about whether or not someone was attracted to me. I didn’t care what anyone else thought of me. If I didn’t like something, I’d be sure to let you know immediately, no holds barred.

One basic foundation I have learned from martial science is that it teaches one to live in the present. We learn through Hapkido that we must allow our minds to function freely, like the flow of water. If we allow our mind to attach to a single situation, our growth becomes stagnated. The more we think about something, the more our thoughts take over and the more energy we expend on it versus our growth and personal development.

I am reminded of the following passage from an unknown author:

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
...at late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own;
Live, love, work with a will,
Place no faith in tomorrow
For the clock may then be still.

Life is short. No one is capable of changing the past. No one is capable of completely forging the future. Focusing too much time and energy on these unattainables is a waste of energy and blinds one to the enjoyment of what is happening in plain sight.

I am not a master at Hapkido. Likewise, I am not a master at living in the present. Sometimes, I will unknowingly go for hours fretting about something and then have the sudden realization that it is out of my hands or that it is actually of no importance at all. Other times I catch myself planning too much on the future and then realize that I have thrown too many irons into the fire. When I catch myself, I take a step back.

I recently caught myself worrying as I worked to prepare myself for testing. I was nervous because I realized I would be testing at the same time as another member of my Hapkido club and that I wouldn't possess his speed or power. I was forgetting moves, my timing was faltering, I was starting to injure myself, I was misplacing things and I was completely lost when I tried putting my Hapkido Philosophy into words. I realized that my workouts and preparation were being hindered because of this thought stirring in the back of my mind. I was wasting my energy on a very a lame self-important concern. Hapkido is about personal development. It is about focusing on abilities, not disabilities. It is about always having faith in oneself. I took one solid step back and pulled myself out of the fire. By removing the worries, I was able to focus on my daily workouts and prepare my mind and body for testing.

I do not consider the detour I took to be a fault. After all, everyone worries from time to time. I was able to recognize that I was straying from the path and managed to refocus my energy for my own good. This is a demonstration of another base I have discovered rooted in Hapkido. This foundation is awareness. Awareness is the ability to see an area for improvement, through self-observation, and then take action toward personal enrichment. If you are unaware of where you are spending energy, you'll have a difficult time continuing with personal growth and will have no idea if your mind begins to clutter. Awareness supports the open mind by allowing one to take action toward freeing the mind, from the dam a single situational thought.

I am a student and I still have a strong desire to learn. I will continue studying Martial Sciences. I will continue building and learning how to focus my internal energy. I will continue assessing and improving myself. As a child unknowingly does, I will work towards living in the present. Unlike a child, I won't be throwing things inside the house, yelling at the top of my lungs, or fighting with my brothers. Like a student of Hapkido, however, I will continue throwing and being thrown, kiaping and working out with my Hapkido family.