

One of the first lessons in Hapkido is that of the three principles. These principles are the foundation of both the physical and philosophical aspects of the art. When I first started Hapkido, it was difficult for me to understand the connection between these two elements and so they remained separate. As I gradually learned more of the physical part, I was able to explore the philosophical tenants of the art. Gradually I was able to see some connection between the philosophy and practice of Hapkido.

. This has been a slow, and not always successful process, but I feel that I have improved individual techniques by utilizing the three principles. The principles can also be applied outside of the do jang. Not all principles are applicable in every situation. It is difficult to know when to apply certain principles, or sometimes even to know that I am applying them until later. Especially applicable to my recent life is the water principle. It has allowed me to improve in the art of Hapkido, and has given me new insight into different facets of my life out side of the do jang.

I find the water principle easy to identify with because of its many different aspects. It has commonalities with both non-resistance and circular motion, but for me is more descriptive because of its ability to combine these principles with other characteristics of water. One of these characteristics that I find particularly applicable to my life is the concept of flow. I have found that in most circumstances it is very helpful to recognize the flow of your surroundings. The perception of this flow doesn't mean that you must be carried away with it, but being aware of it will allow you to use it to your advantage. Knowing your destination and the flow of your surroundings allows you to use the flow to help you there, instead of blindly fighting headlong against the current.

The water principle, for me, has much in common with non resistance. Non resistance is something that I have found supremely useful during my dental school education. Many patients are anxious when they come to the dental clinic, and many times this anxiousness is expressed as a rudeness or shortness with their care provider. I have found that by not meeting this aggression head on, but being very welcoming and friendly, much of this misplaced energy can be dispelled. Hapkido also emphasizes respect in the do jang, and I have found that respect goes a long way to winning the trust and acceptance of others. Greeting someone with a smile and a smile will go a long way to making a positive impression and starting off on the right foot. A rapport can then be built with the patient in a much better state of mind, which will result in a more trusting and productive relationship.

Water is a powerful and versatile force. A gentle flow of water can carve out even the toughest rock over time, or a powerful wave can deliver crushing power in an instant. In many situations, the desired result can be achieved by gentle, steady pressure, when a confrontational approach would yield resistance and anger. The instructors that I have found the best teachers as well as the most pleasant to learn from have used this principle. I have watched Master Hayes and our other Hapkido instructors guide students, including myself, with small corrections when needed while letting us discover as much as we can about a technique by ourselves. The flip side of this is the incredible power that can be exerted when needed. Just like a tidal wave or flood, it is possible to use the water principle to bring overwhelming force to bear on a problem.

It is impossible for me to determine whether the water principle has changed the way I think and interact with others, or if I am drawn to it because it explains my

preexisting personal philosophy and temperament. It has most likely been some combination of the two, and in hindsight it is impossible to differentiate which came first. The water principle has given me the ability to more clearly understand some aspects of the art of Hapkido and my life in general. I hope to be able to take these lessons, build on them, and continue to grow in the do jang and out.