

## Focus and Intent

By: Chris Zapata

02/17

Ichi Kyu Dayton Honbu Dojo



I had the opportunity after almost 5 years to finally go and train down at our affiliate dojo in Atlanta last weekend. I was very much excited about it and could not wait till the weekend to come around. To say the least, W.S. and his students did not disappoint.

First and foremost I want to thank W.S. and his family for the warm hospitality of opening their home to us. I felt like I never left home.

I am always amazed at what I see and hear when I am around Sensei. Though I train at the Honbu dojo and I get to be around him weekly, being in a different city and dojo, where there were no other distractions of life, I was once again amazed with his hard work and philosophies.

I actually got to be his uke on one of the techniques he demonstrated, when I grabbed him, I was caught completely off guard. His forearms and body are so strong and hard. All the years of budo training in his body were transferred to my mind as I grabbed him. My first thought was, yikes! It was like steel! I do not want to get hit by him. I asked him later in the evening at dinner how/why his arms and body were so strong, he just laughed and said "almost 30 years of martial arts".



Training was obviously awesome, however, I took something else away from this weekend as well. I went down telling myself to have an empty mind and to better focus. I felt pretty good on Friday and was able to focus

pretty good on the techniques Sensei was teaching. Then Saturday came around, it was a little rough for me. I was distracted in the morning when I received a call and found out that my son was going to the emergency room with a high temperature. I let outside distractions hamper my focus during training. It's amazing to me that as one is training, one tiny bit of lack of focus really hampers your training.



Sensei also discussed being able to mimic his movement and then perform the technique. I still have difficulty seeing a technique and then being able to perform it right away. It usually takes me seeing it and trying it a few times before I can nail it. In saying that, I do notice that when I am in the moment and focused, I am able to at least adequately mimic the technique on the first try.

We all have are "life" distractions, how we are able to turn those distractions off, focus on the moment and have the intent to perform the technique is the real key to learning.

Often, I have been trying to initially do perform the technique slow and in steps versus going fast. This seems to help me understand the technique better instead of blowing through it and missing the finer details of the technique.

As I get closer to challenging the Sho-Dan test, I am becoming more aware of when I am focused and when I am not. When Sensei or any of the black belts are getting on you, my advice is to not take it personal. They are saying something to you for a reason. Their job is to bring out the best in us. Our job is to keep an open mind and listen so we can become better to help them grow as well.

I am catching myself more than I have in the past when I am starting to wander off and lose focus. This is difficult thing for me, truly focus. But then again, this is why I train, to better myself. These "budo" skills WILL transcend into my daily life. Sensei has already proven that to me.

Sometimes getting away from your normal routine and training some where else, where all you have to do is train...gives you a different perspective on what you see and hear every day.