

# 気合

## KIAI—FEELING AND HARMONY

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**A**t some point during training you have to Kiai, you have to shout as loud as possible focusing all your energy and power. It is not only a shout and it is not only for karate students, people Kiai every day, at work and play.

If you have to do something that requires a little more effort, like lifting a heavy weight or pushing a car because it has a flat battery, you might grunt or shout as you do these things. Tennis players' Kiai when they serve. We all do it, it's a natural phenomenon. When we want to exercise our will strongly we use our voices as well as our bodies. In karate we try to develop the Kiai so we can use it when required. It is a feeling you have when you are in complete harmony with yourself and your technique.

Ask a beginner to Kiai and it usually comes from the throat not from deep inside the abdomen, the Hara. This is because they have no feeling for the Kiai. Like any skill you are learning, it takes time and practice. The Kiai must come from the abdomen, which is tensed at the moment of Kiai. To perform Kiai correctly you must have total concentration and your technique is as close to perfection as possible. For that short instance your mind, body and Ki are one. There are stories of great masters whose Kiai could stop a bird in flight or when attacked simply by using Kiai stop the attack. There is more to Kiai than just shouting aloud, it's an art in itself.

Ki is the final element you need in order to achieve complete harmony.

## T A N D E N – K I

**T**anden, the center of balance, the root of your Ki and energy is possibly the most difficult to understand. In Chinese Ki is pronounced Chi. In acupuncture the tanden is described as the sea of energy. We are dealing with something you cannot touch or see; your spirit.

To try and find your tanden and Ki stand in a relaxed fudo dachi, arms kept to the side. Draw an imaginary line, vertically through your body, from the top of your head down to the middle of the soles of your feet. Your tanden lies on this vertical line approximately three centimeters below your navel and midway between your navel and backbone. Having found your tanden you must now try to develop your Ki, your inner energy. This energy helps support the physical side of karate. You can not move unless you use your muscles, ligaments, etc. With the help of your Ki you can improve your overall performance of technique. The muscles, ligaments, etc. are the external force and the KI the internal. Your KI is transported throughout the body by means of the meridian lines. Those who practice acupuncture or acupressure use the meridians to help cure different illnesses we may suffer. When the meridians are damaged or blocked in some way we become ill. Needles or pressure is used to help unblock the meridians, enabling the Ki to circulate the body. Along these lines there are various vulnerable targets. The throat, sternum, solar plexus and groin for example are on the center meridian, the Conception Vessel. When these are attacked it disturbs the flow of energy, momentary disabling the opponent. These are not the only vulnerable points, but for the moment they will be sufficient as examples. Striking vulnerable points in itself is another topic, something I will write about in the future. There are many different books on the subject, but whatever you read, they all agree that the meridian's carry your Ki around the body. So by stopping the Ki you can effectively stop any attack How can you start to develop your Ki? Breathing correctly helps.