

# *Karate and Ibuki Breathing*

**KARATE** is the mental concentration and synchronization of the body.

The point of contact with the target must be focused and supported by the entire body, locked at its utmost. The body supporting the blow must also be standing firmly on the ground at the moment of impact. For example, in the punch:

1. The fist contact to the target is supported by the
2. wrist, supported by the
3. arm, supported by the
4. shoulder region, supported by the
5. abdominal muscles and gluteal region, supported by the
6. thigh, supported by the
7. leg, supported by the
8. heel.

So, on a punch the fist should be supported directly from the heel itself which is rooted firmly to the ground at the moment of impact. If one of the concerned muscles tenses even a bit earlier, the whole speed of the punch will slow down.

If the muscles tense late or weak, the punch becomes weak because connection is lost. The whole chain's strength is equal to that of its weakest link. Therefore, one has to learn to always use the whole body when punching, kicking, or blocking. If the punch, kick, or block is done with the extremity only (e.g., the hand or foot alone), that is NOT karate.

**IBUKI** is the exhalation *with vigor* from the lower abdomen. *Ibuki* is sometimes called the "mother-of-all-techniques" because eventually it will improve all of your karate techniques, whether they are *kihon*, *kata*, or *kumite*.

It is almost impossible to lock all concerned muscles at the exact same time and hold them at their firmest without *ibuki*. *Ibuki* will synchronize tension in all of your muscles to help them to tense more strongly and make it possible for you to contract your whole body at the same time. Also, because *ibuki* will concentrate your force into a single action, it will help to exclude all unnecessary muscles from movement in the action, thus making your execution of the technique faster, and stronger.

Remember that all techniques in karate are accomplished primarily by using the *lower abdominal and gluteal region*. If this region does not shift with the technique, you will not reach your target. Hands and feet are only parts of the technique. Because power and speed depend on the lower abdominal and gluteal region, it is the core of all karate techniques.

In *ibuki*, a stronger exhalation from the lower abdomen will result in a stronger technique, and a shorter exhalation will result in a faster one. If you concentrate on the sound of your *ibuki* (exhalation) as you would listen to a mantra, this concentration will reduce conflicting thought and will increase *sei* (tranquility). Doing so will reduce any telegraphing movement of the technique. As soon as the technique is over, inhale, sniffing quickly from the abdomen (not chest), so that you will be ready for the next *ibuki!*

Exercises for *Ibuki* include:

- 1) "Core of contraction"
- 2) Kiba-Dachi (contraction of thighs, legs, feet).
- 3) Kiba-Dachi (contraction of shoulder region)
- 4) Focused Ki (*zanshen*) through eye vector (*mesen*) in Kiba-Dachi
- 5) Relaxation and hip movement in Kiba-Dachi
- 6) Punch (*tsuki*) in Kiba-Dachi
- 7) Zenkutsu-Dachi
- 8) Synchronization in Zenkutsu-Dachi
- 9) Synchronized movement in Zenkutsu-Dachi