

Zanshin

One of the most powerful things I see students learn from their training in classical martial arts is what the Japanese call zanshin or perfect awareness. While performing kata, this attribute is displayed by looking before we turn to do a technique and even holding a posture and looking at something a couple of seconds after a technique is done to insure the threat has been dealt with. But zanshin is much deeper than that.

Zanshin is also a displayed attitude. We know how important first impressions are and how different postures can and do effect the outcome of any situation. The ever penetrating mind and glow of self confidence is evident in everything a successful warrior does. This presence is a very important part of zanshin.

Being able to see the future before it happens is also a trait that young adults learn through their martial arts training. While many teenagers and young adults tend to go through life like a person floating in an inner-tube down a river and constantly running into things, there are a few that learn to look ahead and see the rapids and steer around them. As teenagers become students of conflict resolution, they start seeing how their actions are going to affect others and will start to understand that they are in charge of their lives and even those around them. This ability to predict the behavior of others in the future empowers the students and they begin to develop the ability to “see” the future. This element of zanshin is so important in today’s society.