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Tsune

There are many ways to measure one's progress and maturation in the martial arts, belt level and tournament performance being only two of them. Some ways are highly "internal," having to do with how you feel about yourself and others, for example, or how you cope with aggression, hostility and life problems. One measure having to do with attitude and lifestyle is encapsulated in the Japanese word *tsune*, meaning the adoption of training as a "daily habit."

Tsune is usually used in a more mundane context, such as brushing one's teeth regularly. But in the martial arts it refers to a state of such complete assimilation and involvement that training becomes a natural and automatic part of one's daily life. Before *tsune* is achieved, the student often must struggle to make the practice schedule fit into his everyday lifestyle; an endless number of factors will seem to hinder and obstruct one's practice routine. Some people are never able to accommodate regular training, and thus never pass this stage.

For those who persevere, however, *tsune* gradually takes over. A state is reached in which it is no longer necessary to think about disciplining one's self to practice. The training becomes as automatic and as accepted as getting up in the morning, getting dressed and having breakfast. Now the feeling of awkwardness, the feeling that something is not right, comes only when a practice session is *missed*. At this point the martial artist has achieved a comfortable level of oneness with his art, and has fully integrated it into his life and his personality. This is also the happy situation which yields the greatest personal rewards.

The Japanese are great believers in a disciplined, balanced life from which all excesses have been carefully pruned. Obsession with the martial arts would be as bad as any other kind of excess. So the goal is not to be totally absorbed in martial arts training, but to totally absorb training as one component of a healthy, happy, well-balanced approach to living. Give this concept some thought; visualize yourself having achieved it; go with the flow of it. The result will please you.

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