

Mark Your Calendars – Upcoming Events



March 27 Shiatsu Seminar with Kyoshi Donahue

April 5 Adult karate testing. 5:30 p.m. All classes cancelled.

April 6 Kids' karate testing. 5:30-8:30 p.m. All classes cancelled.

July 10 – Budojo 15-Year Anniversary. Seminar by Kyoshi Donahue with celebration to follow. More details will be made available as the date approaches.

August 7 Seminars in Indiana. More Information to follow.

Viewpoint: Tracey Alysson

While our practice unites us, we each bring a unique set of experiences and understandings to it. Budo is big enough to offer different things to different people, and to the same person at different stages of training. This newsletter will feature the voices of dojo students as way of giving insight into the people we train next to and what they can teach us about our art. Tracey Alysson is a psychologist who lives in Chesterfield. She began training in March 2009.

I think karate is beautiful. Separate from the violent aspects of it, watching Sensei and the black belts and the brown belts do the kata is amazing. It's like a pure form of energy. I watch the feet and the rhythm and the form when it's completely, perfectly balanced. It's unitary, it's all one piece, there's not a beginning and end, there's not a move, it's like a unitary motion. So the beauty of karate draws me a lot. I'd like to be able to do a kata that flows, kind of seamlessly. I think it's a long way off, before I can do that. But watching it is really beautiful to me. I hope I never get in a fight. I'd like to be able to take care of myself, but I hope I never have to fight with it. But the beauty of it, and the precision of it and the balance of it, what it does to the body, is amazing to me.

I'd been wanting to study martial arts for ten years, if not more. I work a lot with a group and my own teacher, and we work with being in the body and staying in the body, and we use punching bags and physical exercise to kind of ground. But I realized I could punch all day and nothing was happening. I just wasn't in my body. And it was just time to come and use my body differently.

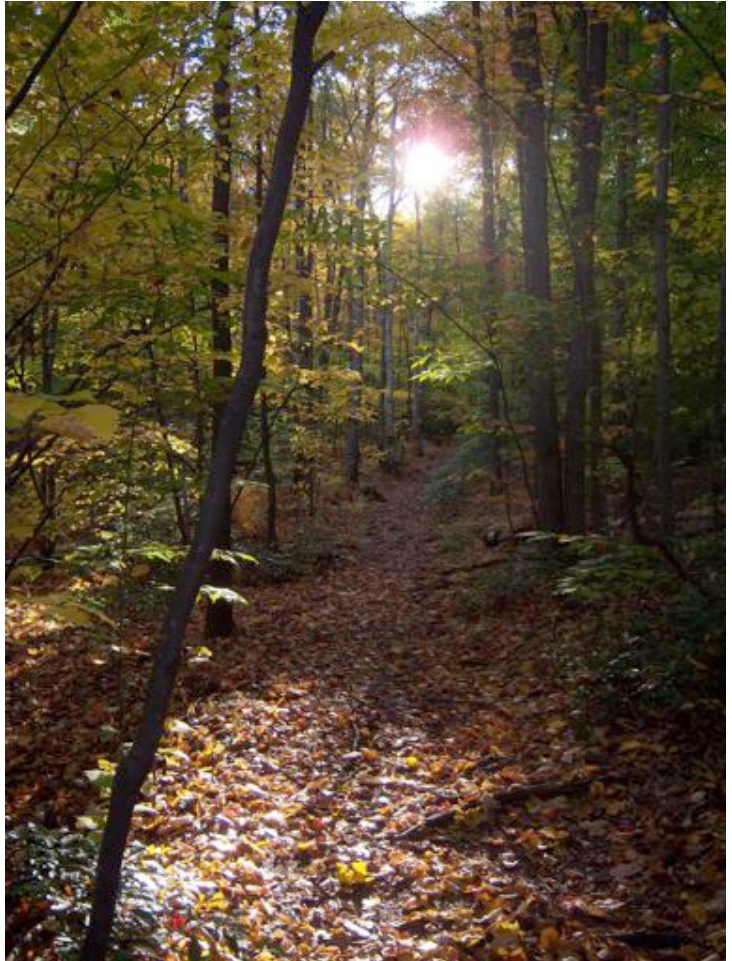
I'm out of my body most of the time. I get nervous, I'm standing over here watching, I'm above, I'm half in my body—if I get anxious, I leave. My body will survive somehow, but I won't be in it. It's hard to describe 'in my body.' It's connected with my physical experience as well as my mental experience. The body is a *texture* that will know things, like the body is a system that will know things. And I want to know things without thinking, so I want to know them through the presence in my body, which is really difficult for me. So I came to karate to work on a lot of fear,

a lot of terror, of my violence, of other people's violence. I came to work on being in my body, because I'm just not, a lot.

Karate is bringing me into my body. It's giving me an entirely new experience of my body. I used to evaluate my body from the outside—how strong is it, blah blah blah. I've stopped worrying about it. My massage therapist says, "Wow, your whole body is changing." And it is. The shape is changing, the muscle tone is changing, the strength is changing. I look in the mirror and my arms have muscles. I hate it, actually. It's like, "Ew!"

There are certain difficulties or impairments I have, like I have a real right-sided weakness, I have really no coordination, I have various things, and I welcome karate to just keep teaching all of me. I think I either cracked or broke a toe. When I first did that, I thought someone should put an announcement in the paper, "Tracey broke her toe." And then Sensei made some comment in one of the classes, "I think I broke my toe on the mat," and life goes on. I thought, wow, it's—my whole relationship to my body, which had always been pretty positive, has deepened so I don't worry about what hurts. I'm gentle with it, I'm respectful of it, but I don't make myself a little sick bed around it and cut myself special privileges around it. I don't tough it out, either, I just keep going, and what I can't do, I can't do. I can't do a lot of push-ups, but I what I can do, I do as well as I can.

My body's working out the kinks in it all by itself, because I'm sure not doing it. It's changing my body, it's transforming it without my directing it, because I don't actually know what I need. But it's changing it. It's very interesting.



I was telling a friend that I thought I was starting to study karate to learn how to punch, but actually I'm studying karate to learn how to stay an adult, rather than regressing, going to fear states, which are child states, child memories, trauma memories, avoidance, all that stuff. You can't really do that in the dojo. Sensei's not asking for emotional demonstrations, he's asking you to show up, do the best you can, learn a piece at a time, and have a good time, which is a very adult state. It's helping a lot. I think the Brattleboro School of Budo is an amazing community, with a very safe atmosphere. It's not pallid, but it's very safe. There's no machismo crap, and there's no silliness either.

I've been amazed—it took me months to *believe* the lack of judgment, being a beginner, but people are happy to teach, they're happy to go over it 42 times, or 52 times, they really are. And everyone is just doing the level that they can do. And I think there's a real happiness at the dojo, which I appreciate tremendously. The way sensei teaches and the people there are a remarkable group of people. And I just love knowing that I'm being part of it.

I came in to watch a class, and I was just watching the class that was ending, and I remember there were small groups and they were doing some kind of application and I thought, "They're going to hit each other! They're going to hit each other!" And I'm like, oh, what am I doing in this place? But I stayed.

I had a lot of anxiety and I didn't know what to expect. I'm kind of an introvert anyway and I'm not used to walking into large groups and saying hello. The first 5 months, most of the time was pretty awful. The first three weeks was high. Then it got really hard. I'd say every third class would be really great, then the other two would be really hard again. Everything was new, nothing was familiar, I wasn't good at anything, then there was more new stuff. The amount of new stuff sensei teaches is great. It's great, but there's all this new stuff.

I really went there to stay joyfully present, I didn't go there to learn how to punch. I went there to stay present with myself. It's not about karate, it's about me. It's about the form I'm in, and what I'm doing with that moment, rather than leaving it to judge myself, to worry about what the next exercise will be, to think if someone's not wanting to work with me because I'm new—blah, blah, blah, all the intellectual crap. Learning to leave all that aside and just be there because I wanted to learn something. So the first five months was just plowing through a lot of my own getting my own way, with my own judgments and hesitations. But everybody was very supportive and very kind and very nice.

Somewhere in the first five months it was so hard, I thought “I should work harder.” I should do push-ups at home, I should practice at home—which of course I should—but it became a mission, it became “I have to do that to keep up in class.” So probably the fourth month or so I realized I was no longer having fun. And then I thought, this is an elective activity, so if I'm not having fun, what am I doing it for? So I let it go. So I do practice at home when I have the time, which is not often, and I practice because I like it. But I'm not lifting weights and jogging miles, because I don't like to make it an achievement thing. So I took a short detour into making an ordeal out of it.

I remember Sensei said, “Monkey see, monkey do; do the best you can; don't hurt yourself; and have fun.” So I kept the “have fun” piece. And much to my amazement, even stuff I don't practice gets better. It's a funny learning thing. It's not just that I'm doing 85,000 high blocks, so they're improving, but they improve while I'm working on something else. Sort of a total organism thing, I guess.

To be continued in next month's edition . . .

Tracey Alysson
Student of Brattleboro School Of Budo

Get Involved in the Dojo



We have many great opportunities for students to get involved with activities and events at the dojo. Why get involved with the dojo? To develop a deeper practice, to interact with fellow dojo mates forming a sense of community, to learn the innerworkings of a dojo and most importantly because it's fun!

We have a few different initiatives up and running at the moment. All are welcomed to get involved!

- **Dojo Marketing** – This is a great opportunity to lend your creative abilities to help promote our dojo. Please email your ideas to Rachel at fractalr@gmail.com . We would love to hear from you!

- **Referrals** – Don't keep our training a secret! If you love your study of Budo, talk about it with your friends, family, co-workers, people at the laundromat, whoever, wherever. The more people we touch, the better our community will be.
- **Flyers** - We are always looking for a good place for our dojo flyers. If you come across a good place, please contact Jess Macinko at jmacinko@gmail.com. We are also often looking for people to distribute fliers.

Letter to the Dojo: Jennifer McClearen

Dear Dojo Community,

Three-and-a-half years ago I walked through the dojo door for the first time. Instantly I knew that the practice and the community of people that make up this dojo were extraordinary.

Since then I have sweat, bled, laughed, cried, ached, and celebrated on the mats—sometimes all in the same night. I have felt more confident in my technique to later find the grasshopper smirking from inside me—sometimes all in the same application.



I have grown immensely through this martial way. The girl that I once was, fearful and unaware of her own power, has given way to a woman who is more comfortable in her own skin. I am more connected to my mind, body, and spirit than I have ever been in my life.

All of you have been right along with me through this journey and I am endlessly thankful for your time and effort. Thank you for sweating, bleeding, laughing, crying, aching, and celebrating with me. To my comrades and my Sempais, thank you for teaching me. To Sensei, your gift to me is truly one that keeps giving. Thank you for so carefully and honorably preserving this art to share with us.

This is far from goodbye. There will be weeks and months between my visits, but the Brattleboro School of Budo is my martial home—my hombu dojo. No matter how far I roam, I'll never forget where I'm from.

In Budo,

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Get Involved Outside the Dojo

There's more to being a good budoka than just showing up to class. It is also (but not by any means limited to) being a well-rounded person and good citizen. Giving is a beautiful thing. People in need benefit from your time and you grow as a person. Anytime of year is a good time of year for giving, but especially around the holidays and during the colder weather. There are a couple great places in our own back yard looking for assistance.

The Brattleboro Area Drop in Center

- They are looking for donations such as non-perishable basic foods (tuna, peanut butter, soups, canned veggies, etc), as well as personal care and household items (toilet paper, deodorant, shampoo, diapers, etc).
- They are also accepting applications for volunteers which you can fill out on their website www.brattleborodropin.org or visit them in person at 60 South Main Street in Brattleboro.

The Vermont Food Bank

- They just opened a new facility here in Brattleboro and will be supplying food to shelters around the southern Vermont area to approximately 10,000 people in need (there are only 12,000 people in Brattleboro).
- They are in need of non-perishable donations
- Visit them at 22 Browne Court to offer volunteer services packing boxes and organizing food.

The Boys & Girls Club may be another place to get involved with or any other organizations in nearby towns. Also check out <http://www.volunteermatch.org/> . If you would like assistance in finding a volunteer program contact Sensei Smith at tamashii3@gmail.com or call 802-257-4797.

Student Interactive

We value your input. Please share your ideas, thoughts, philosophies, questions, and curiosities on anything in the newsletter or dojo related topics with us. Send emails to Michael Wilmeth at Michael.wilmeth@gmail.com. If you do not want your submission to be shared in a following newsletter, please state this in your email. I look forward to hearing from you and thanks for sharing!