



Jigoro Kano said, “The purpose of judo is the making of better people.” Equipping oneself to better deal with adversity qualifies. When we find ourselves in a situation that is contrary to our normal, comfortable, day-to-day world, coping is a challenge. What might we learn from our judo that would both improve our judo and our outside-the-dojo life?

Consider Grip Fighting. Most judoka have found themselves in the favorite and usually uncomfortable grip of another player. Most have a favorite grip from which to throw favorite techniques. Grip fighting responds to this with a statement, “If I can’t have it my way, I will likely lose.” Consequently, a limited and limiting battle ensues. I won’t let you have your grip, and I will persist on having to secure mine. Even more debilitating, should you establish your grip on me, is the confidence you gain, as well as the fear and defensive response, I give. Worse for me still, you do not care if I become defensive, since as well as risking a penalty, I am providing you with a commonly dealt with reaction, something you have no problem defeating on a regular basis (that’s why it is your favorite grip).

What if, however, you slap your favorite grip on someone, they smile in the face of adversity and relax, then attack with a throw specially designed and practiced to take advantage of your favorite grip’s weakness?

DEFENSE: Since there is always somebody who might beat you at grip fighting, would it not be wise to learn to attack against the somewhat limited range of uncomfortable scenarios?

OFFENSE: If you can only do your best throw from one grip, might it be wise to both train to do it from other ones, and also have a couple of good attacks from grips you don’t like?

Then, there is anticipatory response. You want to come after me with an over the top, high back grip? I have trained to move away just the critical extra inch to motivate you to over-reach and attack just at the moment before your gnarly fingers ensnare me. I have practiced a thousand times. Come, take your grip. I am prepared for adversity.

Taking this approach to your judo might well transfer over to your life. Better to practice dealing with adversity on the *tatami* than on the street or within the arena of your personal world. Judo makes you tough; it doesn’t make you a tough guy; it makes you able to cope physically and mentally in the event of harsh encounters. It broadens your mental horizon.

Been there, conquered that. Learn that no one thing means defeat. I once heard a national level coach say, “If you lose the grip fight, you lose the match.” I thought, “Humbug!”

Kano: “It is nearly impossible to study everything about human beings in general over a short time. So, while it is necessary to make a study of various things ones lifetime work, it is also necessary to become a person who can, by directly improving oneself, make a judgment on any issue, even if you know nothing about it. That is judo.”

BECOME THE GRIP-FIGHTER’S SCOURGE

1. Do attack and response drills against grips you fear, left and right, alternating lefty-righty.
2. Randori – Allow a grip you despise and get comfortable by virtue of familiarity.
3. Randori – Have your partner take any grip, then find what is left to you and figure out attacks.
4. Waza – If you are non-dimensional, and only one or two throws work for you, you will discover this and can add to your repertoire. This is a good thing.
5. Look to your foot sweeps.
6. Uchi-komi / Nage-komi -- Try your favorite throw(s) from odd grips of your own. You might even discover some really cool variations.