

# The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #25

## Concentration Coalesces

Perfect Masters throughout time,  
in all of their addresses,  
state that in pursuit of truth  
*Concentration Coalesces.*

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*If you don't concentrate, you'll end up on your rear.*

Tai Babilonia

*To be able to concentrate for a considerable time  
is essential to difficult achievement.*

Bertrand Russell

*The stages of the Noble Path are: Right View, Right Thought,  
Right Speech, Right Behavior, Right Livelihood,  
Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and  
Right Concentration.*

Buddha

**T**o *coalesce* means to merge or fuse into a single point. The importance of concentration to success in life's endeavors has already been addressed in the vignette *Concentration is the First Key*. In martial arts this fusing into one point involves the body, mind and spirit.

Okay, the importance of concentration has been stated but, one may ask, "How is concentration achieved?" Excellent question. Following is one way to help develop concentration. It involves a game called, *Integration*.

The game of *Integration* involves bringing together our body, mind and spirit to a place of one-pointedness. It is a simple game but difficult to conquer. Once conquered, one's ability to concentrate and receive the untold benefits of awesome concentration will begin to reveal themselves in the day-to-day

activities of life. When we play the game, however, we soon learn how difficult concentration is, as well as how the three integral parts of the game—the body, mind and spirit—interact.

The game of *Integration* has three phases, each phase being more difficult and challenging than the first. And this is only the first version of the game. More difficult and challenging renditions can be easily created, but this first version will suffice for now. The three phases of *Integration* are:

Phase 1. Simple Number Counting

Phase 2. See and Say

Phase 3. Overlay

### Phase 1: Simple Number Counting

1. Schedule some quiet time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes.
2. Sit or lay down. It's best to sit. Laying down may put you to sleep.
3. Once in position, you cannot move. You must remain still for the entire exercise. If you move, you lose and must start the game over. Remaining perfectly still is the first major rule of the game in all its phases. This includes moving your head, fingers, hands, arms, or any body part. Scratching, itching or wiping drops of perspiration from your forehead are disallowed. You must remain perfectly still.
4. With your eyes closed, mentally begin counting from one to ten. Concentrate only on the numbers. If your mind wanders and you begin thinking about anything else, you lose and must restart the game at number one. Do this until you can count to ten with total focus and concentration. Once mastered, extend the end point to twenty, then thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, two hundred and up to one thousand. Obviously, the longer the game, the more time you will need during your "sitting." However, you must abide by the two major rules of the game:
  1. You cannot move and must remain perfectly still.
  2. If your mind wanders and you begin thinking about anything else, you lose, and must restart the game. Keep playing until your concentration becomes strong enough to

reach an end point of one thousand.

This exercise teaches us several things immediately:

1. How difficult it is for the body to remain still.
2. How difficult it is for the mind to remain still.
3. How easily the mind slips into other thoughts.
4. How our ability to concentrate needs strengthening.
5. How we are more than just our mind and body.
6. How powerful and deceptive the mind is as an opponent.
7. How developed our skills are as a true warrior.

### Phase 2: See and Say

1. Same method and rules as before:
  - Quiet space
  - Quiet time [15 to 30 minutes]
  - You move, you lose. Start over.
  - Your mind wanders, you lose. Start over.
2. This time you will *see* each number in your mind's eye and then *say* the number silently to yourself. Hence, "See and Say." So . . . in your mind see the number 1. As you focus on it, say "one." Then see the number 2 and say "two." Then the number 3, say it and so forth. This phase will be more challenging because two variables are used: sight and silent sound. The first attempt can be from one to ten. When this is mastered, move to twenty, thirty, etc. as before. If your focus slips and your mind wanders, as it most likely will, start over until you achieve the appropriate goal. Keep pushing the number barrier backwards.

### Phase 3: Overlay

1. Same method and rules as before:
  - Quiet space
  - Quiet time [15 to 30 minutes or longer]
  - You move, you lose. Start over.

- Your mind wanders, you lose. Start over.
2. This phase is even more challenging.

You will begin the game by seeing the number 1 as before. However, rather than saying its number, you will silently say a phrase or catalogue of words laid over the number, hence, *overlay*. It can be anything you want. As an example, we'll use the belt ranking order of the Karate Institute of America which is: white, yellow, orange, purple, blue, green brown, black and back to white, thus taking us full circle. Therefore, see the number 1 and silently say the words: "white - yellow - orange - purple - blue - green - brown - black - white" and then move to number 2. Repeat the same phrase or catalogue you've chosen to use. Continue in sequential order to ten, twenty, thirty, a hundred, two hundred, a thousand. If you can get to a thousand without your mind slipping out, you have excellent concentration.

What do these exercises teach us? One of the first things we realize is how restless the mind and body are, particularly as the game is extended in time and difficulty. The mind doesn't want to be still at all and will use any opportunity to move away from the discipline we seek to impose upon it. With the mind behaving in this manner, we learn that we are not our mind but something else. If we were our mind, we would be able to control ourselves, right? But in this exercise, even though we dictate the rules—that the body cannot move and the mind cannot wander—the latter wanders with ease and the body wants to and most likely will in time.

As we soon learn in this series of drills, concentration is a difficult skill to master. Enter our spirit, our will. As the game progresses in difficulty and time, our will must engage the battle and move to the forefront. If it's weak, we must strengthen it because it will help us strengthen our mind, which is a wild child, to say the least. All it wants to do is play around and not be held to task. In fact, when being disciplined, it revolts and it is quite good at its job. The body is easier to control in the beginning but after a while it, too, can't stand the stillness and cries out to move and be active. It is at this point we learn the definition of what it is to be a true warrior. Enter the forces of discipline, determination, courage.

Through this game of *Integration* we are given another tool for integrating our body, mind and spirit represented by the triangle, the symbol of perfection. Please don't feel you have to be successful

immediately. Frankly, the game is a life-long process from cradle to grave. Such is the journey of life, success and spiritual ascent.

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