

Immobilizing an Opponent Control Holds & Pressure Points

By Kimberly D. Omens

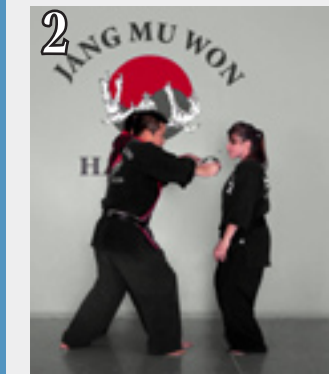
Introduction

As practitioners of martial arts we are constantly met with choices. From kicks and punches to throws and weapons, there are numerous categories of techniques that can be studied. Part of our task is determining the most useful category of techniques to use in a given situation. This article takes a closer look at two categories, control holds and pressure points, considering their benefits when used in appropriate encounters.

Control holds are techniques whereby one immobilizes their opponent by twisting their arm or wrist, for example, into a position where the opponent cannot move without great difficulty and, usually, pain. Pressure points are locations on the body which, when pushed, cause the opponent great pain. Control holds are often used in conjunction with pressure points. For example, one might, when performing an arm lock, push on the opponent's median or ulnar nerves, located mid-arm, near the crease of the elbow. In this way, not only is the opponent trapped as a result of the arm lock, but he or she is also disarmed by the pain that results from pushing on the pressure point. Movement will cause the opponent greater pain, and as a result, he or she is well-controlled by the grip.

Jang Mu Won Hapkido was founded by the late Grandmaster, Dr. Chong Sung Kim. Grandmaster Kim is regarded as one of the world's foremost instructors and practitioners of the Korean martial art of Hapkido. His art stresses the importance of control holds and pressure points, and they are an integral part of Jang Mu Won Hapkido's curriculum. In particular, Jang Mu Won Hapkido combines control holds and pressure points with other categories of techniques such as kicks, strikes, twists, and throws, emphasizing the importance of timing and precision in executing all Hapkido techniques.

Picture #1: The attacker, Allen C. Lieu, grabs the bystander, Kristina Castle, while Master Han W. Kim prepares to defend the bystander.
Picture #2: Master Kim breaks the attacker's grip on the bystander by sliding in and grabbing the attacker's arms.
Picture #3: By intercepting the attacker's arms, Master Kim redirects the attacker away from the bystander.
Picture #4: Utilizing a shoulder throw, Master Kim throws the attacker. The attacker is unable to break free from the grip.
Picture #5: Master Kim applies pressure to the wrist of the attacker. This prevents the attacker from getting up to attack the bystander again and Master Kim maintains control of the attacker.
Picture #6: The attacker is rolled over and pressure is applied to the shoulder. The attacker is immobilized as both hands are unable to break free of the defender's grip.



What are They Good For?

When it comes to choosing areas of technique to master and use in a given situation, the first question that should be addressed is this: What are these techniques good for? This question should be answered by addressing both the benefits of the techniques and the situations in which these techniques could be the preferred choice.

In terms of the benefits of control holds and joint locks, one benefit is that without doing terrible damage, an opponent can be subdued and controlled. For example, with kicks, punches, and throws, an opponent is almost certainly going to be badly injured. While in certain situations it may be the goal to badly disable one's opponent, this is not always the preferred route. If during an encounter one is more interested in controlling the opponent rather than injuring them, these techniques serve that purpose. This is not to suggest, however, that these techniques fail to provide the pain necessary to deter future attacks from the opponent. Rather, the opponent will be able to feel the pain of the pressure point used in combination with a control hold, and will, moreover, feel that with each movement they will suffer more pain. In this way, the opponent is deterred from engaging in further attack without the use of any serious or permanent injury-producing techniques.

A second benefit of control hold and pressure point techniques is that they work to subdue the attacker in a way that kicks and punches do not. While the latter can inflict major injury and in that way subdue the opponent, control holds and pressure points allow one to immobilize their opponent without taking the chance that the attacker will not be hurt enough by a kick or punch to refrain from further attacks. Also, control holds and pressure points spare the energy of one who is being attacked. Rather than expending energy engaging in kicks and punches, one can simply move straight to the finish and control the attacker before becoming fatigued through the course of a fight.

Third, in relation to the last point, should it become necessary for one to use kicks, punch-

es, and throws in a given situation, control holds and pressure points can still be extremely useful as finishes to these other techniques. For example, one might throw an attacker coming forth with a punch by twisting their arm. Once the attacker is on the ground, a good way to ensure that he or she does not regain footing for a second attack is to perform a control hold and pressure point technique. Such a technique will keep the opponent on the ground and well within one's grasp should a second attack be attempted. The attacker, now manageable and under control, can be moved as desired.

Fourth, control holds and pressure points can be used in situations involving a knife. The obvious danger involved when facing an opponent wielding a knife calls for the most careful assessment of the best technique to use under the circumstances. In Jang Mu Won Hapkido, control holds and pressure points are pivotal in controlling the knife hand, both while taking the opponent to the ground and while holding the knife hand in place while the opponent is on the ground. Control holds and pressure points are useful under these circumstances because they quickly take the attacker's weapon out of play in a way that other techniques may not. For example, while a kick or strike may result in the weapon being dislodged from the opponent's hand, it is also very likely that these techniques will a) miss their target or b) injure the attacker in a way that he or she can continue to attack with the knife. In either case, the result is a further need to avoid an advancing blade. Rather than throwing a kick or hand strike and taking the chance that the opponent will not be disarmed, one might use a control hold and pressure point technique to immediately subdue and disarm the attacker. Most techniques to this effect begin by firmly gripping the arm bearing the knife, performing some technique taking the attacker to the ground while maintaining control over the knife hand, and finally ending with the knife hand either being controlled at the wrist, or being wrapped behind the opponent's back. One would then have the opportunity either to remove the weapon from the now controlled arm or wrist or simply maintain the control hold while pushing on an appropriate pressure point.

Who are They Good For?

A second important question asks who should use control holds and pressure points for immobilization purposes. Master Han Woong Kim, sixth-degree black belt in Hapkido and owner of the South Pasadena Jang Mu Won Hapkido studio offers some suggestions:

First, these techniques are ideal for law enforcement officers. Such individuals need to quickly and effectively subdue escaping or unruly suspects, for example, without inflicting major injuries. As already discussed, these techniques allow for the control desired without any accompanying serious or permanent injury.

Second, these techniques are ideal for security personnel. These individuals, whether working at sporting events, concerts, or casinos, for example, desire quick and effective means of controlling and removing particular patrons without causing great injury. As a result, such personnel would benefit from learning to use control hold and pressure point techniques, both for their functionality and relative discretion. Third, the usefulness of these techniques is not limited to individuals working in law enforcement and security-related positions, but also extends to individuals working in various medical fields and even in the airline industry. Certain medical professionals and airline attendants may encounter patients or patrons, respectively, prone to harm themselves or others.

These professionals often encounter situations where they are not necessarily under attack, but for the safety and well-being of all others must control a particular patient or patron before he or she causes any harm. Aiming to control these individuals in the least harmful and most effective way, such personnel would find these techniques valuable.

When met with the numerous categories of techniques available, a martial artist must choose, sometimes within an instant, the type of technique that is most appropriately employed in a given situation. This article aims to suggest that control holds, in combination with pressure

point techniques, can provide effective control over an opponent without the concurrent injury usually associated with, for example, kicks, punches and throws. Control holds and pressure point techniques provide a safer and in some cases even more effective alternative method of immobilizing an opponent. **TKD**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Kimberly D. Omens is a second-dan black belt in Hapkido and has been training in Hapkido for seven years. She currently trains at the South Pasadena studio under Master Han W. Kim, sixth-degree black belt in Hapkido. For more information about Jang Mu Won Hapkido, please visit our website at www.jangmuwonhapkido.com. Special thanks to Dr. Harry Cosmatos for contributing his expertise. Photos by Eric Ng

Picture 1: The bystander, Kristina Castle, has her hair grabbed by the attacker, Joshua Wheeler. Master Kim prepares to defend the bystander. Picture 2: Master Kim grabs the attacker's hand to begin a wrist lock. Picture 3: Using the other hand, Master Kim is able to trap the attacker's hand to lock the wrist. Picture 4: Master Kim applies pressure to the attacker's wrist. He does not allow the attacker to make his arm straight. Picture 5: Applying enough pressure can cause the wrist to become immobilized. This effectively prevents the attacker from trying to use the corresponding hand again.

