

December 2016 Newsletter

Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Kyokai

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Angie Monday Renshi Award Presentation 12 May 2016

What I've Learned While Teaching Karate

When I first started teaching Karate, I thought I needed to be tough and stern. I wouldn't give an inch. The students I would teach seemed to get discouraged easily, and I struggled getting them to learn the way I thought would work best. This way made sense to me, but I wasn't getting the reaction that I wanted. I began to realize that I needed to find a way to teach karate that was more effective, and would make my students enjoy coming back to class. Once I began to lighten up, and found ways to make teaching karate more fun, for not only my students, but myself as well, I learned a big lesson: a little humor goes a long way.



Before I was a black belt, my teachers were strict and to the point. I learned this way because I didn't know any differently. Looking back I realize how the way I was taught influenced my teaching. There were many great things about having a teacher who keeps you focused, and on task. However, when I began working with younger students I realized this is not always the most effective way. Children in school have exhausting days, and have used up all of their concentration. I was expecting them to learn the same way I did, but I learned that way as an adult.

When I first started teaching children, I would critique them, and was always sure to point out what they were doing wrong. I noticed how fast, both the students and I, would become frustrated. They would be frustrated because they didn't like my corrections, and I would become frustrated because they wouldn't focus and constantly complained. It felt defeating for both of us.

After much thought, and many unsuccessful attempts at teaching, I thought about what I enjoy. I have always been told I am a funny person, and that I have a good sense of humor. I took my strengths as a person, and used them to make myself a better teacher. I began using humor while I was teaching, and it created a huge attitude change in my students. Once I didn't take myself so serious all the time, I got a better reaction from my students. I started to notice that they were more cooperative. Since they were enjoying themselves more they were more willing to take criticism, but I also found a lot of positive things they were doing too. I started including positive encouragement, and using it as often as I could, while still be sincere and constructive.

Once I learned I didn't have to teach the same way I was taught; I was able to make the class enjoyable. When I first started teaching I thought not being serious all the time meant that the students weren't learning as much, and from that I learned how wrong I was. Students can have fun while they are learning, and it is just as effective. I learned that as a teacher you are also always the student, and you are always learning how to better yourself so you can make them better. You can't take yourself too serious, or you forget to enjoy the process, and the reasons that made you want to become a teacher in the first place.

Frank Matt Renshi Award Presentation

I started my martial arts training in Damariscotta, Maine under Sensei Nancy Ault. I moved back home to New York in 2006 and in 2007, I opened the Corinth dojo in Corinth, N.Y. at the YMCA.

We started with three students for the first seven week session, and in the second, we added two more. So for the first almost year, I had five to eight students with no background except one student, Josh Welch. Josh studied Shotokan for a few years and made it to brown belt. Josh and another student, Cory Graska, started a few weeks apart. They were both with me to make Shodan.

Josh started his own dojo in Cohoes, N.Y. and most of his time was getting his school going, but work got in the way and membership was tough. Cory was a young man under twenty years old, so he was a senior in high school when he made Shodan.



I had a young lady come in to our Corinth dojo who was blind in the right side and had implanted hearing aides due to birth defects, as well as a severe cleft palate and facial deformity. Having her in class was a learning experience and rewarding to watch her grow and improve...not only in karate but in school and everything she did. Teaching her and working with her strengths was really a way to lay out how to teach people with disabilities.

When this young student started with me at around eight years old, she was quiet and I think really nervous. But as time went by, I learned her mannerisms and attitude, which was awesome. She was quite a kid. To teach her, I didn't change much in how I taught, but I had her teach ME how to teach HER. When you teach someone with disabilities, you have to get them to show you how they can learn. If your own ego gets in the way, you will never reach them, only in a negative way. And they will not stay.

I started watching my student and the way she held her head. It showed that she either couldn't see me very well or couldn't hear me. So I would get her to look directly into my eyes so that I could get her confidence and see if she was comprehending. She learned very quickly physically and she did everything. The adjustments I did make were very slight but very important to her learning process. I always stood on her left side and addressed the whole class, without anyone noticing that I was right beside her so that she could hear me at all times. I never singled her out.

As I got to know her better and she me, she really did great with no restrictions at all. In fact, I wished that at the same time, more of the other kids would have done as well, which is something I tried not doing....comparing students to each other or to myself. We are all different.

As time went on, I thought she may be having some troubles with hearing, but her grandmother told me that she would turn the volume down on her hearing aides so she wouldn't hear her grandfather. So she did this to me from time to time. But I would call her on it and she would smile and fix the volume.

The most I learned in teaching this young lady was that I needed to let the students teach me how to teach them. Be aware, be patient and don't try to throw too much at them until you get to know them and gain their trust. When teaching a student with disabilities, I learned three important things to use in my teaching techniques:

1. Recognize the student's disabilities. Work around the disability (standing to the left) while also recognizing the student may take advantage of their own disability (volume down on hearing aides).
2. Pay attention to how to communicate with the student (standing to the left) to help each reach their full potential without changing the flow of the entire class or making the student feel separate from the class as a whole.
3. A class of students is the sum of all of the individuals in it, recognizing that not each student will be at the same level, but that each is a significant part of the whole (that she excelled to her highest potential despite her personal challenges, while others did not reach that height with no personal challenges).

What I learned along the way, the biggest thing, is that you cannot compare students to each other or to yourself. I learned that people can physically move and comprehend what they are doing by being explained to along the way (don't overthink). Josh is a big man and a police officer and Cory was young and in great physical shape. I learned how to teach with a more open mind and to go with the individuals' strengths and weaknesses.

We moved to the Adirondack Sports Complex to start a new school with a bigger venue and to reach more people. An effort to grow not only our school, but to influence more people along the way.

I have three women coming up soon for Shodan also in the next year. They started as white belts with me and one of them was one of our first Karate Kids students.

The learning process as a teacher is never ending because of all of the challenges. You can't go out and say "This is it. Do it." All people are different in every way, but at the same time, if I teach constance in training, then everyone "gets it". And I make it a point to encourage and support the student.

Josh is still a member of the GKK and his school is on hold temporarily due to his job obligations. He has been with me from the start in New York and still is with me. I think the biggest thing I've learned with him is to teach the student to what he or she is physically capable of.

While on this journey so far, I was also part of the Livestrong Program at our YMCA in Saratoga, N.Y. I taught classes on balance and energy to cancer survivors and patients in treatment. That so far has been my most gratifying experience. I also recently set up a Women's Self Defense program once a month at the Adirondack Sports Complex.

Respectfully yours,
Frank Matt

Ken Maunz Fifty Year Celebration

By Ken Maunz

I am celebrating 50 years in the art June 3rd thru 11th. It will be at Cumberland Gap NP. First goal is to do 5000 techniques in one class. Did 4000 at my 40 year practice. Hope to use different instructors during the week depending on who's there. The other goals are have fun, learn from each other, and spend time together.

The area has hiking, backpacking, 4 wheeling, biking, historic sites, and horseback riding. Training is not planned for everyday, but will try for 2 to 3 hours most days.

Come a few days or the week. Please let me know if you are interested. On Facebook, kenmaunz@hotmail.com, or call me 734 347 9280 .

I hope to get a group camp site or individual sites as you like. Motels are close for those who don't camp. Plans will develop as I find who is coming and the interest of what you like to do. I like the 4 wheeling and hiking. 4 wheel park is free and open to anything with wheels but the family car would be a bad choice. I will answer any questions or give free bad advice on my hot line BR549.

Thanks.

New York Seminar

By Frank Matt

Friday October 14 we kicked off our seminar with a small promotional moving up to Shodan. Mr. Ed Myers led the testing and the testing board consisted of Mr. Ed Myers ,Mrs. Angie Monday, Mrs. Nancy Ault , Mr. Greg Sturdivant,and myself.



Moving up were Bryana Bennett, Lisa Bennett and Carla Denn. They have earned every accolade that was given.

On Saturday morning we kicked off the seminar with Mr. Myers giving a white and green belt class that lasted until around noon, I saw a lot of sweat on some faces and some smiles, Mr. Myers made everyone in that class very comfortable.

From 1 o'clock till around 3:30pm green and brown belts did kata and great feedback on performance and the what fors. From around 3:30 till 5 pm the black belts worked on kata and applications, also having everyone one the same page when it comes to our kata, one steps and anything else that we all need to stay together on.





The biggest thing I took from the seminar is all of us being on the same page as far as what we teach and again slowing our movements down a bit to make us more in control.

Thank you Mr. Myers for coming all this way and teaching us, and thanks to Mr. Greg, Miss Angie, Miss Nancy and Mr. Kie, and thank you to all of my friends in Maine and Ambler Pa. It's always awesome being with you all.



Springfield Illinois Promotions

By Kim Barrington

Congrats to Kris Barrington 3rd kyu, Patrick Conner 3rd kyu, Jeremy Watson 5th kyu, Wyatt Watson 6th kyu, Joey Bacon 5th kyu, Landon Barrington 6th kyu, Spencer Bacon 9th kyu and Ashley Watson 6th kyu.

Thank you Deb Crawford and Morley Peura for setting on the promotional board.

Retiring from Karate

By Zak Zaklad

I am retiring from karate at the end of 2016. It will be 32 or 33 years for me with the Ambler program, and with Bill as my Sensei. We have been with GKK for nearly 25 years and I feel great gratitude for the teaching, the support, and the community. It was a big blow to me when Brad Smith died, 4+ years ago, but I have gained an enormous benefit from being part of this excellent organization

It's been a good run for me, but my body tells me it's time to move on. I will be devoting my energies to tai chi, teaching and running my school - Mt Airy Tai Chi.

Being a contributing part of our karate community has been a big part of my life for all these years, both the practice and the relationships I've made. At the age of 74, I feel in pretty good shape mentally and physically, and karate has played a significant positive role in my health. I have made strong friendships, which I hope to keep.

I thank you for the honor of being part of GKK

Confirmation Bias

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While sorting through old photos and papers recently, I came across an award I received way back in the sixth grade for penmanship. It is now proudly displayed on the wall along with my Registered Alchemist certificate, my Dick Dastardly's Vulture Squadron Flight Diploma, my Mensa membership, my Doctor of Philosophy in Holistic Sciences, and other rare and wonderful documents. My handwriting skill deteriorated rapidly after that, but there was a time when I could produce letters with good form.

When I got to junior high I discovered that penmanship was of little importance and that the content of what was written rather than the form of the handwriting was what mattered. Sure, it had to be legible, but the skill I had worked so long and so hard to achieve counted for naught.

This was hard for me to accept. How could something that was so important for so many years no longer be significant? We practiced and practiced and paid attention to fine detail, strove to develop perfect form, and for what? It just didn't compute. There must be something wrong with the system or the teachers in junior high because what we had been taught had to be of great value or there would not have been so much emphasis placed on it.

So I sought out affirmation. I looked into whatever information I could find with my limited resources that would validate my position – that good handwriting was important and valuable. I wanted confirmation. Naturally, any book I found that discussed handwriting insisted good handwriting skill was very important, the perfect form of each letter was paramount. I blissfully ignored any mention of meaningful content because of trying to bolster my argument and long held belief that good form was what really mattered. This psychological phenomenon is called “confirmation bias”.

Confirmation bias is where we tend to disregard perspectives other than our own rather than changing our beliefs, attitudes or behaviors. Essentially people unintentionally search for, interpret, favor, and recall information that supports their current beliefs. We tend to cite only those sources that confirm what we already believe and, thus, want to believe. Confirmation bias was rampant during the recent election, but it exists in martial arts to a large extent as well. There is likely a lot of information about this on the internet if you are interested.

I was justifiably proud of my handwriting form. I had devoted a large portion of my life at the time to develop the skill and expertise, I had certification and recognition, I had accomplished what few of my peers were able to do, and the investment of time and effort and resulting success were all very important to me. If someone doesn't value reason and evidence, then what reason or evidence can you provide that will change their mind? Oh, well.....

Sometimes it is really, really hard to accept that our studies don't count when the chips are down and the moment of truth is at hand – that we had unreasonable expectations. Yet, logic, observation, and experience are hard to ignore. I reluctantly accepted that it wasn't the form but the function that mattered. However.....I looked good when I failed.

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