

DOJO KUN

by Master Teruyuki Okazaki

Everyone who trains in karate must know the *dojo kun*. At the end of each training session—whether it be at the dojo, after class, or after a tournament, which I always call “special training”—the *dojo kun* is repeated all together by the students as a reminder of why we train. The *dojo kun* states the basic philosophy of karate, according to its founder and my teacher, Master Gichin Funakoshi. Master Funakoshi believed that, for the true *karate-ka*, the *dojo kun* should not only be considered a set of rules of conduct in the dojo, but a guide to everyday life. Everything we learn in the dojo, we should apply to everyday life.

Seek perfection of character

Jinkaku kansei ni tsutomuru koto

This is the ultimate goal of karate. The other four principles of the *dojo kun*, as well as the entire *nijyu kun*, all tell us what it means to seek perfection of character—how we can go about pursuing this highest objectives. But this is the most important thing. We seek perfection of character from the inside out. It is something we should do every moment of every day of our lives.

This means we should never stop learning. Karate training, like life itself, is an ongoing process of growth and personal education, a process that lasts for a lifetime. It is good to set goals, but as soon as we accomplish them, it is important to set our sights on the next goal, to improve. To seek perfection of character is to always seek to improve oneself, to always endeavor to learn and grow.

Be faithful

Makoto no michi o mamoru koto

To be faithful means to be sincere in everything you do. Here we are talking about making a total effort, all the time, in whatever you do.

To be faithful of course means that you have to be true to other people, to your obligations—but it also means you have to be true to yourself. And to do so means you have to do your best in everything you do.

When you are faithful to yourself, others will have faith in you. This creates mutual trust between people. Being faithful to yourself is essential to realizing the first goal of being the best person you can be.

Endeavor

Doryoku no seishin o yashinau koto

Try hard at everything you do. No matter what you are doing, whether it's training, working, having a relationship—give it one hundred percent. To do anything else is to cheat yourself and others. If you don't endeavor to do your best, you are not being faithful to yourself and others, and you are not trying to seek perfection of character.

Respect others

Reigi o omonzuru koto

A true martial artist always shows respect to other people. And it is something you ought to feel in your heart. Showing respect is a sign of humility, and humility is necessary for an open mind, which it turn is necessary to learn, to grow. You can always learn something from every person you meet. Likewise, every person you encounter is a possible opponent of some kind, and that opponent can pose a threat to you, physical or otherwise. In either case, if you respect everyone, you will more clearly see things for what they are, and you will be able to get the most of every experience.

Refrain from violent behavior

Keki no yu o imashimuru koto

This is a reminder to keep calm inside. Control yourself at all times, from within. Conflict within is a form of violence. It leads to violent actions, which is something you should try to avoid at all costs. A martial artist should always be in control, and that begins with an inner calmness, with peace of mind. If you are forced to defend yourself as a last resort, then it is all right to do so. But you will only be successful defending yourself when you maintain a calm, clear mind, in which case using karate technique to protect yourself will truly be your reaction of last resort.