

The Niju Kun

Master Funakoshi and His Philosophy of Karate

In the first chapter of Master Funakoshi's book, Karate-do Kyohan, he tells us the most important point of Karate-do is "spiritual rather than physical matters." He discusses both positive and negative aspects of karate, telling us Karate-do can be misused if it is misunderstood.

Those who want to learn karate must understand what karate really is. Then the student must learn to use the techniques and skills properly.

We should stop to reconsider his original philosophy of Karate-do as he explained it in the Niju Kun or twenty precepts.

1. Karate begins with a bow and finishes with a bow. *Karate-do wa rei ni hajimari rei ni owaru koto a wasaru na*
2. In karate, never attack first. *Karate ni sente nashi*
3. One who practices karate must follow the way of justice. *Karate wa, gi no taske*
4. Know yourself first, then you can know others. *Mazu onore o shire, shikashite ta o shire*
5. Spirit and mind is more important than technique. *Gijitsu yori shinjitsu*
6. Be ready to release your mind. *Kokoro wa hanatan koto o yosu*
7. Misfortune comes out of idleness. *Waza wai wa ketai ni seizu*
8. Don't think that what you learn from karate can't be used outside the dojo. *Dojo nomino karate to omou na*
9. It will take your entire life to learn karate. *Karate-do no shugyo wa isssho de aru*
10. Put karate into your everyday living; that is how you will see its true beauty. *Ara yuru mono o karateka seyo; sokoni myomi ari*
11. Karate is just like hot water; if you do not give it continuous heat, it will become cold. *Karate Wa Yu No Gotoku Tazuzu Netsu O Atae Zareba Motono Mizuni Kaeru*
12. Do not think that you have to win; think, rather, that you do not have to lose. *Katsu kangae wa motsuna; makenu kangae wa hitsuyo*
13. Move according to your opponent. *Tekki ni yotte tenka seyo*
14. In conflict you must discern the vulnerable from invulnerable points. *Tattakai wa kyojitsu no soju ikan ni ari*
15. Consider your opponent's legs and arms as you would lethal swords. *Hi to no te-ashi wa ken to omoe*
16. Be aware at all times that you have millions of potential opponents. *Danshi mon o izureba hyakuman no teki ari*
17. For full awareness in natural stance, you must practice ready position as a beginner. *Kamae wa shoshinsha ni atowa shizentai*
18. Practicing kata is one thing; engaging in a real fight is another. *Kata wa tadashiku, jisen wa betsumono*
19. Do not forget: (1) strength and weakness of power; (2) contraction and expansion of the body; and (3) slowness and speed of techniques. *Chikara no kyojaku tai no shinshuku waza no kankyu*
20. Always create and devise. *Tsune ni shinen ku fu seyo*