

As we embark on instructing students in the martial art of Taekwondo, respect is the essential component upon which all student development is built. Without respect, we are nothing more than bullies. Respect is the attribute which tempers our experience and ability, yielding the beautiful gift of Taekwondo which we share with our students.

Respect is defined by The Random House Dictionary as both “esteem for or a sense of the worth or excellence of a person, a personal quality or ability, or something considered as a manifestation of a personal quality or ability” and “deference to a right, privilege, privileged position, or someone or something considered to have certain rights or privileges; proper acceptance or courtesy; acknowledgment.” Both definitions accurately explain our responsibility as caring, competent, and professional Taekwondo instructors.

To help us understand the importance of respect, we must first agree upon and follow a common belief regarding the worth of individuals, especially our students. We must believe that the worth of every person is inherent and therefore cannot be given or taken by anyone else, including ourselves as instructors. As a result, our role is to help our students identify and understand their own inherent self-worth, and to acknowledge it both implicitly and explicitly in all interactions with them. The dignity of a student must never be compromised.

In addition, the tenets of Taekwondo implore us to demonstrate respect in every student interaction. Courtesy ensures that we acknowledge the worth of our students. Integrity insists upon consistently honest interactions with our students. Perseverance causes us to continue to show respect during our own struggles or those of our students. Self-control prohibits us from crossing our students’ boundaries, especially in the name of teaching a Taekwondo technique. Indomitable spirit requires that we demonstrate the value of human life to our students.

Therefore, our students have the right to expect the following from us: (a) to be treated with acceptance and courtesy, (b) to receive quality instruction, and (c) to train in an environment of

growth, encouragement, and excellence. The remainder of this paper illustrates ways of upholding these expectations as instructors, through sensitivity, effectiveness, and a beneficial manner.

In order to respectfully instruct our students, we must first be sensitive. Sensitivity focuses our instruction entirely on and for the student's benefit. This means that our instruction is not about or for ourselves. As such, we must place our needs and desires as a lower priority than those of our students. To help accomplish this, we can ask ourselves, "What is in the best interest of this student now?" and "What can I do now to provide the best benefit to this student?"

In fact, respecting our students is an example of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Do you remember when you first started your Taekwondo training? Were you scared? Nervous? Anxious? Confused? Overwhelmed? We were all new students once. By calling this to mind every time we see a new student, we will be reminded that we are obligated to treat all students, regardless of their rank, in a manner that understands and meets *their* current state of development, both mentally and physically.

While following the Golden Rule with our students, we must keep in mind that we are not our students, and we will never know exactly *how* they are experiencing our instruction. The struggles they face will cause their experience to differ from that which we intended. This is another reason why sensitivity is essential in Taekwondo instruction. With experience, over time, we will better learn how to accurately perceive each student and respond appropriately.

Our sensitivity can be shown as compassion with our students when we choose to respond and not react to challenging situations which arise. We shouldn't feel the need to take personal offense to something a student does incorrectly, lazily, or rudely. Instead we can remember that no human behavior is without reason. While the student behaved in a manner which may have been unacceptable, it most likely wasn't done for the purpose of causing an issue, but was, instead, previously-learned behavior to a similar situation. In most cases, rather than publically correcting, confronting, or reprimanding them, it will be best for us to take the opportunity to meet students at their behavior and redirect it in a more constructive manner.

If we decide we should correct a student, it will help to think several times if this is the best time and manner to do so. We should never let students feel that we aren't acting in their best interest, especially when helping them improve. If we remember that change can be very difficult, and we approach the interaction as simply advising the student on a change which would help them, we will provide the student with great benefit.

Grandmaster Lee demonstrates this concept masterfully in the language he chooses with students. He says, "May I recommend that you..." to help a student change, "Good idea" when someone figures out what he was helping them learn, "What do you think?" when a student might be more resistant to change, "I'm speaking generally to all of you" when a specific student needs a detail, and, "Good job" occasionally to the truly outstanding student so others can learn what is expected.

We can practice leading students to their own conclusions, rather than forcing ours on them. This sensitive and respectful approach will ensure that our students' dignity is upheld. It will often help us learn something, too.

In addition to being sensitive, a respectful approach to Taekwondo training must be effective. If our training is not effective and does not accomplish something, it is a waste to all involved. By ensuring our instruction is rigorous, challenging, and achievable, we are respecting our students, their time, and their money spent attending our classes.

In no way should compassionate, sensitive training be light or weak. Instead, for a student's training to be effective we must push them mentally and physically *at their level*. By being sensitive to each student's unique history, ability, life situation, struggles, and level of progression, we can accurately assess their current state and therefore deliver effective training. We must realize that we are morally unable to make another person do anything they aren't willing to do. As such, we encourage our students with the highest level of respect in an environment of excellence which facilitates their own desire to improve.

Providing challenging training takes hard work on our part. During classes we must be vigilant of each student's connection to the class and modify accordingly. We must prepare ourselves thorough an experiential understanding of the basic/core Taekwondo techniques and methods of

incorporating them in a manner which is appropriately challenging. By doing this, we will help our students learn to enjoy difficult training because they are accomplishing something meaningful.

As students accomplish rigorous techniques they once thought were impossible, their internal confidence increases which fuels their desire to grow and improve in an ongoing manner. As such, it is wrong to push a student to do something they cannot achieve. We must be careful of this and err on the side of caution. Breaking down larger goals/techniques into smaller pieces, which can be accomplished with appropriate effort, cements a foundation upon which amazing levels of success can be built. As instructors, we are obligated to deliver training that allows students to leave each class with a true sense of accomplishment.

By breaking our expectations into smaller goals also, we create a gradually expectant approach to helping students learn, which ensures that they will successfully rise to our expectations. We must never compromise our expectations, but always deliver them as appropriate to the student's progression, with an especially gentle approach to new students. Let students see their own success in rising to your expectations, which are rooted firmly in our school's standards. This helps our students know that they, themselves, are effective.

In addition, for our training to be effective, we must build trust with our students by ensuring that *we always* uphold their expectations of us as instructors. We must never let our own issues interfere with this critical trust which must be cultivated and maintained. As instructors, the development of this trust is and remains our primary responsibility throughout the entire instructor-student relationship.

Finally, a respectful training approach must provide meaningful benefit to our students. How can we deliver a meaningful training without knowing what each of our students are expecting from their training. A one-size-fits-all approach won't work. Some examples of reasons student train are: general exercise, physical fitness, self-defense, weight-loss, time with family, positive environment, discipline, certain belt/rank, and personal growth/excellence.

With these reasons being so diverse, it is essential that we must get to know our students' individual desires and objectives for their training. It is disrespectful to expect a student to train for a

reason other than their own. However, as students progress in their development, their objectives may change. If so, we must facilitate this change as they mature in their Taekwondo training.

Making every class enjoyable is essential in ensuring training is beneficial, especially for children. Nobody, even adults, wants to continue doing something that is not enjoyable, meaningful, or productive. The type of enjoyment matures as the student's training matures. Initially it may start as just fun. But then it may become more of a challenge or group experience. Eventually it may become an individual life mission. As the type of enjoyment matures, our interaction with students should recognize this change.

Beneficial training never misses an opportunity to train in a fun way. While some components of Taekwondo training cannot be modified, there are always creative ways to ensure classes don't get boring, and remain intellectually stimulating. To ensure the maximum benefit, balance the fun with a consistent experience, so students always know what to expect from you, their interaction with you, and their Taekwondo training experience.

As our students accomplish their objectives in small, incremental steps, they will feel rewarded for their hard work. We must help them realize their goals in a manner that allows ample room for the failure and improvement cycle. We should never allow students to experience any mistakes or failures as negative. Instead we should reframe these experiences as a natural part of the Taekwondo training experience.

Respectful training includes a sensitive approach, effective instruction, and beneficial results. In delivering this type of training, we must ensure that *every interaction* our students have with us honors their self-worth and dignity, leaves them improved and better than they were prior, and is deeply rewarding to them. There can be no compromise, for any reason, even if we are having a bad day. By consistently delivering respectful training, our students will become outstanding Taekwondo martial artists, and we will find that over time we are left with a deep sense of accomplishment, lack of regrets, and resounding peace and meaning in our own lives!