

## **Check Your Ego**

by:

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A true Martial Artist knows there is no one perfect style of the arts, be it Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Brazilian or what have you. One can increase their own knowledge by studying the different styles and learning from them. Open your mind and increase your skills. Know that there is always one better. Expand your potential.

Bruce Lee once said, “Ever since I was a child I have had this instinctive urge for expansion and growth. To me, the function and duty of a quality human being is the sincere and honest development of one's potential.”

An instructor, in order to allow their students’ growth in their own potential, should encourage them and not limit them. Only those selfish in their own pursuits would hold a student back from learning what is out there. The world is vast and wide, as is the wisdom of the arts. Face it; your school will never be the alpha and omega...only one can hold that title. And He encouraged us to be humble and serve. We could learn from such greatness.

I often bring in a master from another school for a seminar or class and give him/her the floor. I allow them to teach my students a small portion of their knowledge and show them the respect that is their due. I feel that I am not holding my students back to the extent of my own limited knowledge, but allow them to see what other styles are out there. I can only take a student to the extent of my own knowledge, which is narrow should I not continue in my own journey of the arts. Therefore, out of great respect of the knowledge from others, I continue to ask questions and I learn. I have no ego where my belt is concerned. I know there is far more to learn. And to become better skilled, I must expand beyond the doors on my school and encourage my students to do the same.

To quote the great Bruce Lee again, “If you always put limit on everything you do, physical or anything else. It will spread into your work and into your life. There are no limits. There are only plateaus, and you must not stay there, you must go beyond them.”

An ego has no place in your school. Check it at the door. If you want to be respected, you first must learn to respect. This doesn't end once you achieve a black belt, no matter how many stripes you don. Your students come to you to learn, and as an instructor, you must take great care with their trust in you. That doesn't mean you prove your greatness, your toughness, or how much better your skills. Even someone without a black belt can learn to bully. That means they learn from you and you

teach them to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Master Anko Itosu says, “Karate begins and ends with respect.”

To discount other styles, is to disrespect the masters. *Wu Shu*, also known as Kung Fu or martial arts, is one of the earliest long-lasting sports, utilizing both the brain and brawn. The theory of *wushu* is based on ancient Chinese philosophy. Several styles and schools came from this ancient teaching. Karate originates from Okinawa, one of the many islands outside of Japan. Weapons were confiscated when Japan invaded the island to prevent an uprising. The roots of the island were in martial arts. Gichin Funakoshi, born in 1868, is credited with having invented karate. He grew up learning *Te* (meaning hand), and was later permitted to teach martial arts in school. His style became known as *karate-do*, off which many karate styles were born through the years. I could go on about the many and various teaching over the years. Many masters have come before us. Who are we to say that our style is better than those?

Master Gichin Funakoshi said, "No matter how you may excel in the art of Karate, and in your scholastic endeavors, nothing is more important than your behavior and your humanity as observed in daily life."

I think a lot is said in that one statement. People not only observe us by our words, but our actions. We can call ourselves true martial artists; we can even teach students the style our masters gave us. But true humanity and behavior will be what others judge you by. Speaking poorly of another's style or highly of only oneself does nothing to add to your character. If you want to be looked up upon, you first must learn to serve. If not for our students who come in daily, weekly to learn the knowledge handed down to us, the arts would die. Without students...we are nothing. Be humble and encourage them to grow and be respectful of others.

I'll leave you with another quote from Master Gichin Funakoshi, "The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat but in the perfection of the character of its participants."

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