

Development Potential

Things to think about on your journey

When you consider why you train and why you come to the dojo multiple times per week and endure hard training, occasional bruises, sore muscles, or even a sense of frustration from time-to-time. Is it really just to achieve the next belt or promotion? Why do we do it? It would be so much easier to just watch TV, read a book, or surf the Facebook pages.



I would propose to you that we all continue the journey because we are looking at some form of personal development. Ok, what does that mean, personal development? Is this a self-help program of some kind?

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Well-being

Well, yes and no, each person comes to the dojo initially for reasons such as social connection, enhanced strength, a broader range of motion or flexibility, or self-defense skills, to name a few. Now don't get me wrong those are all great reasons to come out and train but there is more ... much more.

Many studies show that regular training supports more balanced brain chemistry, and body chemistry. The resulting balance helps to bring an overall feeling of well-being and increased quality of life. Ok so how does that help me? Well, martial arts practitioners who train regularly are less likely to have symptoms of anxiety, depression and a variety of other mental health concerns. A stronger sense of self helps us all deal with the daily challenges that life inevitable brings.

So, on one level our training can help us to be more balanced each day and deal with the waves, sometimes tsunamis, that life can bring our way. On another level, there is a natural thing that tends to happen when we are calm, balanced, and clear headed. People tend to look to martial arts practitioners as community leaders because they train to high individual standards and they help training partners attain higher levels of personal success.

Leadership Skills

Many successful instructors and Black Belts spend as much time leading and guiding as they do encouraging others to develop their own leadership skills. You may have noticed that your instructor has different students helping the class from time-to-time and wonder why that is happening.

A junior or intermediate student may lead the warmup exercises, or the rolling and falling drills, or they may even teach a specific technique during the class. Why would that happen if the main instructor is present? Well, many seasoned

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Instructors know that leadership and teaching skills are just that, “skills” that have to be developed over time.

Just like practicing a throw, strike, or evasion technique we are often clumsy and slow in the initial stages of the practice. Over time through regular quality practice we increase our level of competence. We practice in a controlled and safe environment so that when a particular response is needed the practitioner can complete the task in a calm, relaxed, and competent way.

And, so it is with development of teaching and leadership skills. We offer the opportunity for students to lead and teach at different times so that they will learn the leadership skills that can enhance their daily lives. If you watch carefully you may also notice that some of your fellow students learn skills (leadership or physical) more quickly than others. Some of your training partners may struggle and continue to need more work on basics before moving on. There are many reasons for this, but make no mistake the determined student who persists is often the one who has developed the most by the end of their training journey.

Relationships

If you struggle in your training, and it feels so difficult, and you notice others are “getting it” much more easily than you, please don’t be discouraged! Working with our fears, feelings of inadequacy and personal judgements are all part of the personal development journey.

As you work through the demons that hold you back you will likely cultivate a sense of compassion and understanding for others who struggle in their daily lives. When we can move from concern for just our personal experience to embrace the experience of others we have the potential to experience more balanced relationships at home, work, and in general.

What about you?

I encourage you to consider what brings you out to the dojo time and time again. What is your personal leading edge of development? I have suggested a few options in the previous paragraphs but those are just a few of the many reasons we train. What about you, what is your motivation for the journey you find yourself in today? Are you working with your instructors to acquire the skills that will enhance your quality of life, your leadership skills, your confidence level, your ability to comfortable in your own skin?



Questions or Comments
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