



KAZOKU

Mind Your Business

By Jerry Figgiani

For years I have been preaching to my students that....” The Black Belt is the end for those who want to achieve it and the beginning for those who want to understand it”

In his book *The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do*, Master Shoshin Nagamine writes his thoughts about the mastery of karate-do. One of these precepts states...” Karate-do may be referred to as the conflict within yourself, or a lifelong marathon which can be won only through self-discipline, hard training and your own creative efforts.”

There are so many lessons that jump out from this principle that are invaluable to the practitioner. As martial artists we are always theorizing about outside conflicts, altercations and physical confrontations. While this is very important, in order to have a balanced approach to our training, we must understand the very significant conflict that occurs within each of us. More often than a physical confrontation, we all experience personal conflicts that play out within ourselves. As individuals, we struggle from time to time with self-doubt, but as martial artists we also struggle along our journey in karate-do. How many times do we ask ourselves if we have what it takes to stay on the path to become a Black Belt? How often do we question if we have the focus to continue to persevere to get to the next level? Do we focus on someone else’s journey; on what they achieve or on how many classes or seminars they attended? How concerned are we with the rank, status or position on the deck of our fellow students?

Over the years these are the types of questions and statements I have heard from students only to realize that it was just a matter of time before these very students would leave the dojo. As students on this path, it is our responsibility to Mind Our Own Business and concentrate on the one and only individual that can make a difference on this journey; and that is Our Self.

Focus on yourself and remember that it’s all about you. Know that when you stay the course, good things will happen. Inner conflict is mentally exhausting and is a hindrance to making positive decisions. This

feeling of conflict translates to self-doubt, anger, confusion, disgust and loneliness which robs you of the positive energy needed to accomplish your goals both in and out of the dojo.

In the 34 years since I opened my first dojo, I have been fortunate enough to not only have worked with some incredibly talented students who had a very easy path to success, but also,

and perhaps of greater value; I have had the opportunity to train students with great challenges and become part of their success as well. In that I have had these wide and varied experiences, I have been able to identify some very specific Tips for Success:

- Identify the inner conflict and acknowledge it. In this way you will be able to detach from it and thereby gain the clarity necessary to move forward. For many, meditation is a great way to access this process and find an overall sense of wellness.
- Ask questions of yourself; do I always put in my best efforts at self-discipline, am I training to the best of my abilities at all times?
- Become creative in your approach to your training. In a dojo filled with others develop an attitude of seclusion and focus exclusively on what you want to achieve in much the same way as if you were taking a private lesson. Pretend as if you are training one on one with your Sensei in spite of being in a full room.
- Evaluate your progress in each class and most importantly... Mind Your Own Business. 🐉

