



### **INTEGRITY: Stand In It. Speak It. Respect It. Live It.**

by Steven E. Johnson (5.13.2023)

Let me start by saying, "WORDS MATTER." Placing martial arts aside, everything we do in life as adults is a personal, family, business and/or organizational display of one's integrity and character. What we say, how we act, and how we treat one another often depends on if we succeed or fail in any of the above mentioned areas.

Regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion or gender, as a sensei, we role model, as a teacher, a father/mother, a husband/wife, a grandpa/grandma, uncle/aunt or brother/sister. We are constantly being observed.

Why am I writing these words, you ask? Today, I was reminded why Budo organizations fail. After almost 50 years in the martial arts I have heard the mud-slinging and bad-mouthing of dojo instructors and leaders of organizations attacking the character and integrity of one another. Words can erect or break down walls or barriers.

Webster defines integrity and character as follows: (Where do you stand?)

**INTEGRITY** 1: firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: incorruptibility 2: an unimpaired condition: soundness 3: the quality or state of being complete or undivided: completeness

**CHARACTER** 1: the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves: someone's personality 2: a set of qualities that are shared by many people in a group, country, etc. 3: a set of qualities that make a place or thing different from other places or things.

As adults, most have heard the expression, "If you do not have anything positive to say, don't say anything at all." Positive or negative, our words and/or our actions, at some point will be remembered by someone. How do you want to be remembered?

**WEAKNESS.** Keeping one's mouth shut is not to be misconstrued as weakness. It is by far just the opposite. It is a positive sign of constraint, control and temperament. The enemy would like nothing more than to bring one down to their level. Now, this does not mean that one should not speak up or stand up when a wrong is being observed.

By all means, do so. Just be mindful of how and where you do it. Hopefully the outcome or end results will be beneficial to all involved.

**SENSEI.** You've heard the saying about we instructors being 1 in 10,000? Believe it! We are unique and special. We have collectively traveled the road of hard knocks; physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. *WE ARE BUDOKA!* Not everyone can do what we do or have walked in our shoes. We exist to build positive walls for the next generation of warriors. We do not have the time to hurt one another. Why should we? We should be on the same team.

What I tell the yudansha within the National Karate Jujitsu Federation, USA-International (NKJF) is to not respond to any negative words that may come our direction, personally, professionally or organizationally. I advise my leaders and representatives to simply invite them to train with us. Let our feet on the floor be the tool that changes minds.

We have stood the test of time for almost five decades. We come from good roots and an impeccable lineage. How many martial arts organizations can you count on one hand that has lasted this long? Sure, we have had ups and downs like most but we have stood and continue to stand arm-in-arm. We are an organization who opens its doors and embraces all traditional martial arts systems/styles. No further words need to be said. Come sweat, train and enjoy the camaraderie.

Many blessings! Osu!

Steven E. Johnson, NKJF President & Director (Kaicho)