

Basically every day begins the same for me and sometimes they are good, other days they are bad. I personally believe your entire day is designed around the way you wake up. If you wake up cranky and irritable then your day will be bad. If you wake up in a good mood and start off the day right all in all it should be a good day. Today was a different kind of day so I thought I had better journal it for my students in hopes it may help them someday.

I woke up as usual, struggling to roll out of bed (I am definitely not a morning person even though I have been getting up around 7 AM everyday for 10 years). As I traveled down the hallway to enter the bathroom I bumped the wall with my shoulder and suddenly I was upset since I was barely awake but I remembered my lessons in karate and immediately tapped the wall with affection and said, "That's alright I know you didn't mean it." After brushing my teeth and jumping in the shower I soon realized that I didn't have any hot water coming out of the pipes and was trying to figure out why. Oh well, just take a faster shower (BRRR!). After jumping out of the shower, literally, I went into the kitchen and put some water in a pan to boil so I could shave. I returned to bathroom, dressed and waited for the water to boil. Instead of clicking on the boob tube to watch the usual negative news reports I grabbed my latest book and read a few lines. After the water boiled I went into the bathroom, dumped it in the sink only to realize that the stopper was not down and I lost most of the hot water...again I said to myself "it is alright". After shaving I cleaned up my mess, glanced around the house to make sure it was clean and then out in the garage I went to enter the normal world.

Driving to the coffee shop as is my morning ritual I realized I forgotten my wallet at the house, so five blocks later I turned around went back and retrieved it from...yep you guessed it right where I had left it so I would not forget it. Ok, now I am beginning to get a little upset. I am thinking to myself "What else is going to go wrong today?" Finally reaching the coffee spot I grab my book and walk inside to get my morning pick me up. After getting my coffee and muffin, I turn around to realize that my favorite spot by the window is taken and my heart sinks even lower about today. I find a suitable place to sit down and begin to enjoy my book and coffee. About fifteen minutes into one of the best chapters in walks a group of loud businessmen who have chosen to sit right behind me. I look and yep my favorite spot is still occupied. I think they will realize it is a coffee shop and people are reading and be quite, but I was very wrong. After about five minutes of these loudmouths I am getting fumed. I try and block them out for another five minutes in a vain hope that they may get done and leave...but to no avail. I very politely turn around and ask them to please be quiet and they tone it down a little bit after my thank you. About a minute later they are back at it laughing and be noisy. Deep inside I want to turn around and give them a piece of my mind but I know my skills are better than that so I once again ask them to be quiet but this time with a little more emphasis on "YOU NEED TO BE". One of the guys in the group gets all cocky and tells me if I don't like to shut and move. Ok, now I am ready to kick him in the head but I control my temper and ask them why I should move when it is not just me they are bothering. Then they look around and realize that everyone is watching what is going on and they all look pretty upset. After realizing this they finally keep it to a slow roar but for me it is too late as I need to get on with my day. So out the door I go.

After returning home I stretch for about 20 minutes and then go outside to run. I do my typical 1 mile jog to the dojo and then a 1 mile full sprint back to the house. Today though my 1 mile sprint is much more spirited than it has been in awhile since I am aggravated and a little upset about the day's activities so far. When I get done I feel much better, more focused and ready to take on new challenges. After changing I jump into my vehicle and drive off to my meeting. During the meeting I begin to get a little frustrated since it is clear that no one is working together and each person wants it done their way. This is becoming more typical in the business world and I sit back, watch and soak it all in to learn from the experience. They all finally get done with their ranting and raving and start to actually talk. After that the meeting went great and everyone worked together and we accomplished our goal. After the meeting was over one of the members approached me and asked me why I never speak up and am always sitting back when the arguing is going on. As I thought about this for a few seconds I remembered my lessons on the "Art of War" by Sun Tzu. When you are in a heated debate you must truly listen for the opportune moment to make your move. If the moment never arises you simply learn about each person debating in order to more effectively defeat them at a later date. "Strategy. It is all about strategy" I told

him. With a great deal of confusion he stared right at me as if I was going to explain more of what I meant to him. So I simply sat back and waited for him to ask and he finally did. I told him that as a master of karate we are expected to be able to defeat an opponent at any time without using our physical skills. In order to do so you must truly see your opponent and understand both their weaknesses and yours. Once you have the knowledge the victory comes swifter more concise in battle. "What does that have to do with why you hardly ever speak up?" he asked all confused. I replied "Once I understand how your minds all work and what your triggers are it is easier for me to understand how to effectively deal with you all to accomplish a goal for the group." By the look on his face I could tell he actually understood it then. As I began to walk away he asked me another question "Do you apply your karate to everything in your life?" Man, I thought to myself, what a great question. Instead of giving him a simple yes or no I replied with "My life is karate and karate is my life." Then on out the door I go.

So I jump in my vehicle and off I go back to the dojo to do my workout. Arriving at the dojo I realize it wasn't cleaned last night. I get so frustrated when my students can't even take a few minutes to pick up after themselves. Sometimes I feel like I am failing because they treat the dojo so badly. A dojo is to be treated as a sacred place. One of development, refinement and perfection so why do they do this. "Oh well" I speak in my mind as I clean up their mess...once again. After wasting 15 minutes of my personal workout time to clean up their messes I finally get to smack the bag around. I stretch out for about 10 minutes, run through a few Kata and now I am warmed up ready to go. I begin my 10 rounds, each three minutes long and really go at the bag. All the while I am doing this I keep thinking of the jerk who shot his mouth off at the coffee shop. By the time I hit round 8 I no longer thinking about him but rather about getting better at my skills. When I get done with my bag workout I hit the weights for about 20 minutes. Now it is time to tend to business since we open in five. I pick up the dojo and clean the equipment and open the door. About fifteen minutes after I switch the sign the phone rings and it is an upset parent...so here we go.

No one likes to deal with upset people, especially a karate instructor. So I sit and listen to each yell, choice words and so on. When they are finally done complaining and yelling I answer them with this..."Now is that how you treat people with respect?" Silence ensues on the other line. Typically I would be a little more compassionate at their plea but not when they are complaining about things that are the responsibility of every parent. As karate instructors we want the best for our students. Sometimes we want it so badly that we get too serious and strict in our courses, but we are not responsible for the student's actions outside the dojo...they are. This parent was yelling at me because the student still was not an A/B student in school and has been having problems with their teacher...again. So I replied with the only thing I could do, "When did you talk to the teacher about the problems and what are his grades now?" Once again silence ensued on the other end. The parent then told me that they have never talked to the teacher and just yell at the student for the phone call they received about their behavior. After they told me their current grades I kind of had to chuckle and this of course made the parent mad all over again. "Grades are not a laughing matter!" they exclaimed at me over the phone "and the main reason we enrolled was to help his discipline and improve his grades!" To this I replied in a very factual manner "Your has improved their grades. When you first enrolled was getting straight D's and F's. On this grade report they have all C's except the one B! So if they have not improved their grades then what do you want from them." Silence was on the other end of the phone and this time it lasted about five minutes while awaited another complaint or comeback. It never came. Karate instructors recognize success in small steps because we realize that anything worth perfecting takes a long time to learn. I don't understand why parents don't look at the overall picture and instead believe their child is failing because they are not an A/B student. You need to face it that not all kids will get good grades, but as long as they graduate they are at least ahead of the game. After a few more minutes of talking the parent and I hung up. It just amazes me that some parents expect me to raise their child. I will teach them karate, the values, the development but the application of those values is up to the individual, not the sensei.

About 5:00 the Kid Tigers begin to show up. They have a great class and did a wonderful job tonight. Basic Karate was about the same but Black Belt Club upset me all over again. During BBC it was apparent that none of the students have been practicing their skills expect during their normal two days

a week. They are not improving and that irritates me to no end. So I gave them a hard class. When class was over I explained about taking care of their dojo and told them they have to work together to clean before anyone can leave. So I bow them out and sit back to watch. About half of the students (the ones I knew would) started picking up the dojo. The rest just hung around chatting and talking. It is so funny to me that students do not realize a Sensei watches everything they do. We pay attention to those who have initiative and those that are lazy. We look for people who are sincere about their training and those that care only about "their" needs and wants. In all the years I have been teaching I still find it funny when a student wants to quit karate because they are too selfish or proud to do what they are expected of. 90% of the students we teach drop out, not because the training is hard but rather because we expect a higher moral code and discipline to show through in every action they have in order to earn a black belt. It also amazes me that parent's as well as older students want us to teach them/their kids but when it comes to supporting your dojo they complain, never volunteer or simply do not show up to the events. In a good dojo, under a good instructor you will never get a black belt if you do not give 100% to helping your dojo become successful. When a sensei makes something mandatory there is definitely a good reason for it. It is part of your training. If you/your child doesn't want to compete then they are afraid of failure and that is a BAD TRAIT. Our job is to teach good traits. Life is full of disappointments. It is important that we learn that as children so we can deal with it successfully as an adult. I know many people who never did and the first time they fail at something they break down and become a wreck...sometimes costing them dearly. After classes are over and the cleaning was done the dojo goes to silence.

I did my closing duties, balanced the drawer and made the deposit out. I cleaned my office and picked up my uniforms. I organize my next day of activities and get ready to retreat to my home to enjoy the evening. All in all this was a good day. I see the same thing each day, at least most of the time, but as I said before how you wake up in the morning effects your entire day. I hope this helps some of my instructors or even students at sometime in their lives.