

In all the years I have been running my own dojos I have always said I am a "Karate man first and a business man second". Many people still today do not understand what I meant. On this page is an excerpt from my journal that I wrote in 1994 after struggling two years to build a good dojo and develop good students. I hope you enjoy the article.

Today was a troubling day. It all started out normal but went downhill. I had a student's parents come in tonight and complain about...well basically everything involving the way I run my business. After listening to them for about 20 minutes gripe and complain I finally asked them this question "Are you complaining about the way I run the business or about how I teach karate?". They both stared at me dumbfounded as I awaited their response. After about 30 seconds neither commented so I replied with this, "I am a Sensei, not a businessman. If you are looking for someone to hold your son's hand and baby him...you are in the wrong place. If you are looking for me to promote your child with the other kids, yet he can not even do the kata or basics required for the next rank, you are in the wrong place. If you are expecting me to choose a favorite, and you want your child to be it...you are definitely in the wrong place. I teach karate, pay the bills and teach karate". They just stared at me and I could tell that I had hit it on the nail with one of those things I brought up, which are the most common things people complain about involving the training of their child.

So I asked again...what can I help you with and once again...blank stare. So I continued on, but this time I spoke to all the parents and students there that night. It went something like this, "You are all here to learn karate. I am the Sensei which means I teach and you do. I never promised that I would teach your child how to do their chores nor would I raise their grades. I never promised that you may not get bumped, bruised or even a little bloody...that builds character and this is a contact training environment. Why do you think you bought gear. As for belts, well they are nothing, but what you put into earning that belt is something. That is what I am testing...not the cloth but you as a person." I then asked if anyone did not understand and no one raised their hand, so I continued on with "If you want to buy a black belt I will sell you one for \$6.95...if you want to earn a black belt you need to listen, train, be respectful and honor our dojo. If you can not perform the list perfectly listed in your curriculum books (yes I had them back then too) then you are not ready to test so do not ask. If you can perform the perfectly you do not need to ask to test as I will ask you to when I am ready to test you. If you want me to show you favoritism then you are definitely in the wrong place because in my world (the karate world) you must first earn your sensei's respect and trust. Once you have that you will be ready for the real teachings but only if I choose to teach you. What I do here is a privilege and not a right you are paying for. You pay to support the Dojo...the dojo is the building we rent and use a place to train. You are not paying to be taught karate. If you don't agree with this then you are in the wrong type of activity. Karate is not a negotiating platform...it is done Sensei's way and no other way." After the end of this statement I could see a few parents and student's grimacing because they are the ones that can not handle not being in charge, or getting their way so to this I added, "Are any of you a black belt? Have any of you ever worked so hard to earn something that you sweat, bumped and bruised, not only your body but your ego and even bled to attain this goal?" to which no one ever replied and even the ones who were making the faces went into that look of thought. No one answered yes to any of those statements. After giving them a few seconds to think it over (and getting off the phone) I returned and stated the following, "Look, karate is done a certain way. It is not done my way but the way my sensei taught me and his sensei before him and so on. I did not make the rules, but I respect the rules because I was patient enough to listen and learn. I was respectful enough to know that someday I want to be just like my sensei and I wanted to learn. I am not a businessman. I am a Sensei, a karate teacher. I teach discipline, honor, integrity and values you do not understand. I teach karate to anyone who wants to learn but I can choose who I take on as my personal students. If you don't like the way I teach then you do not have to come back. If you disagree with me or something I said then your mind is closed and you believe you have all the answers and I can not train you, but if you are willing to understand that I am the sensei...that I know best...and listen with an open mind I will make you the best you could be."

I remember leaving that night wondering if I would ever have a student show up for class ever again because of what I said. The next day no one missed class and over the next few months parents and

students began to support the dojo more. So I must have explained myself clearly to them...or at least I pray I did. - Franz Sensei April 18, 1994.

This holds true even today in how I feel about running a dojo. A sensei can not make exceptions to the traditions and etiquette of the masters. A sensei can not bend or ease off on their teachings to please students. A sensei has a huge responsibility on their shoulders and must act accordingly. This is how I run my dojo. Many people have come before you and many will come after you, but one thing holds true...I have never had a student say I did not help them with my teachings in their life...it is actually the exact opposite. Sure there are a few out there who probably don't like me, or talk bad about me but to those people all I have to say is...quitters and closed minded people never get anywhere in life and you should blame yourself before blaming others.