



## *I quit!*

Recently I bumped into an old student of mine while buying a bagel at my favorite Bagel store. I stood on line waiting for my Bagel when I noticed this young man. I immediately realized that I knew this individual but didn't know from where – I know a great deal of people. After a few glances back I realized he had been a student when he was about 5 years old. His face looked the same but he sure did grow up. I said hello and he immediately said “Sensei” and bowed. I was happy to see him and asked what he had been up to all these years, he was now 19 years old. After a few seconds he told me he thinks of our school and my teachings quite often. I told him he should come back to train again. He said he wished he never quit.

This is where the story gets interesting. Not very often do I hear that students quit, normally they always tell me they will be back someday. This very rarely comes to fruition – but many promises have been made. We spoke a bit more and I said if he wished he didn't quit, then why did he? He then went on to explain, he was a kid at the time and he blames his mom for letting him quit.

This is kind of ironic – I see sometimes how children make it difficult on their parents and also how the parents do their best to continually motivate the children, but in the long run give up. It seems like the words I hear most in my business is I can't force them to do something they don't want to do. Plus I am sure paying to get aggravated is not something they want either. I can't disagree more with a parent when they make this statement. I am a father of a 14 year old daughter and if I don't force her to do what is good for her, then who will? I believe if I listened to her she would be eating chocolate for Breakfast, lunch and Dinner and staying home playing on her DS2 video game.

I made the conscious choice that she would not quit martial arts. You may ask how I do this, simply put; we never ever discussed it being an option, never had the discussion, nor will we. Secondly, I do what ever I can to keep her as engaged as possible. We do many special events and watch movies and read books continuously on the martial arts. The martial arts is her second home, like it is for many of my students. What if your child wanted to quit school, would you let them? Obviously not – I hope. I know you are going to say this is not school. I realize that, in school they don't learn how to defend themselves, ward off peer pressure, in school physical activity has been limited to only a few hours per week and most of the time it is not concentrated physical activity. So you are right when you say it is not school.

Oh – did I mention that at a martial arts school you learn how to learn. How you ask, simply put it is the methods in which martial arts are taught. Martial Arts are taught in many ways - mental lessons, physical and spiritual each method is tied into the visual, auditory and touch through physical activity. We are also experts at what we call Edu-tainment, education and entertainment combined. We also enable our

students to develop confidence, how? - Through a bunch of mini successes and failures, each day is a lesson. So rather than thinking of martial arts as an extra curricular activity think of it as a life-enhancement program. Something that ties into school and works hand in hand, in fact it is your ticket to peace of mind as they get older.

So would I ever suggest allowing your child to quit – of course not. Martial arts are absolutely the answer. Even if your child doesn't intend on becoming a martial arts expert, a teacher or continuing for ever, achieving a certain proficiency in it will change their lives everlastingly. I know this because many of my students are police officers, doctors, lawyers, accountants, nurses, and entrepreneurs, we have thousands of success stories. If I could only jump into the future to show you how the martial arts will enhance your child's life you would never consider ever letting you child stop. Martial arts are simply the best thing for your child ever.

If you are running into some struggles and need help, we are experts at motivating students. Please either call us or stop in. In closing I urge you to think about this – if one lesson, one move, one shift in perspective – kept your child from harms way, wouldn't the stress, struggle and investment be totally worth it. I think so!

## Communication- Opening up a can of worms

When things are good, they're good; when things are bad... well, lets not go there, there is enough negativity in this world. When I hear anything negative that's when my hand goes up and I say: "talk to the hand". This is an adage spoken over and over again, in general people tend to want to hear the good news first, and deal with the bad news as it comes up. They assume that the good news will overshadow the bad or by sticking their head deep enough in the sand, upon taking it out all bad things will have magically disappeared. Sometimes avoiding the inevitable will only result in problems that you can't overcome or deal with properly, making the situation much worse to deal with then it would have been. This is something I coined the "**Ostrich Syndrome.**" Quickly nipping any bad situation in the bud is the best approach.

Here is an example: Mrs. Smith comes in to sign up her child Johnny. After going through an exciting intro class, he loves it and wants to join. Seeing Johnny's enthusiasm, Mr. Karate instructor goes over all the programs with Mrs. Smith and she agrees to sign Johnny up for the yearly program. Mr. Karate Instructor is very happy, signs all necessary paperwork and gives Johnny his uniform and carefully goes over his welcome to the family packet (all systems mentioned are on [www.takingitotothenextlevel.com](http://www.takingitotothenextlevel.com)) he reviews the schedule and welcomes them to the family. He sends Mrs. Smith and his new student, Johnny on their way. Sound familiar.

A few weeks go by and Mrs. Smith isn't bringing Johnny to class anymore. As the diligent Karate teacher Mr. Instructor calls a few times and attempts to do his 2,4,6 week calls and gets no response (another system on Next Level). After repeated attempts he finally reaches Mrs. Smith because she has forgotten to look at her caller I.D before picking up the phone. She tells Mr. Karate Instructor that Johnny has lost interest and they are discontinuing the program. At that point he tries to re-motivate her to bring him back by offering a free one on one with the instructor, but she declines. He goes through a laundry list of items that can help her, but nothing he says at this point could bring her back. She has mentally and emotionally checked out.

As martial artists we usually think on the defensive in regard to particular reactions to a movement. For instance, someone throws a punch at your face: You don't block with your chin, you bob and weave; or slip, slide and block to avoid the punch. You never stand by willingly and get punched in the face! Sometimes to overcome your opponent you even fake a move to draw an opening. This process is called "**opening a can of worms**".

Martial artists are trained to look for warning signs and to prepare for the worst after all the more we know the better off we are. As teachers, martial artists and business owners it is our job to take the guesswork out of our relationships with students and parents our clients. The saying "the truth will set you free," rings true in our business as well, so after the initial sign up I encourage you to take the time to speak to your clients and explain that the

relationship is not going to be all roses, be honest and truthful telling them that there will be pitfalls in training, and continual challenges that they may or may not experience. This doesn't have to be accomplished on the same day, it can be done a day or so after the initial sign up and I recommend waiting to explain negatives. You don't want to blow your sale. This meeting which I call "opening a can of worms" can be done in person or on the telephone and is probably one of the most important conversations to have with your client. Remember this conversation is done continuously throughout the students training because students need to be reminded to communicate.

Here is an example of the conversation:

Mrs. Smith:

We have found there are some things you may come up against while training in our school. The reason I am bringing this up is not to stress the negative, but to enhance the positive benefits of training at our school, and truly show what a learning experience this will be for the both of us. I just want to make sure that we are both on the same page.

Letting Johnny acquire the skills to achieve his black belt and be the best that he can be in every area of his life is not going to be an easy task. After all, nothing that is worth anything is achieved easily. At our school we consider every obstacle a small speed bump; to us speed bumps are made to slow us down and give us the opportunity to take notice of all that is going on around us. Achieving Johnny's and your goals is worth the hard work. That being said, if we don't address these pitfalls now, they will be overwhelming and you may not know how to deal with them when they arise.

Consider the following:

- 1) You or your child will want to stop at some point in your training; in fact they may want to stop many times during their training. If this occurs what will you do about it?
- 2) All students experience some form of burnout or de-motivation. This is commonly misperceived as boredom, you may hear them say in a whining voice "I am bored I don't like it anymore," when in fact it is not. If this occurs what will you do about it?
- 3) All students at some point feel frustrated. There are hundreds of reasons why this may happen, but we have been through them all and know exactly how to help you deal with them. If this occurs what will you do about it?

Will you allow us to help you through these situations?

This communication only lists a few of the most common examples of what may occur throughout any student's training. I am sure that if you and your staff were to brainstorm you could come up with a ton more on your own.

Questions like these may seem as though you are inviting trouble, but in fact you are putting a fail safe system into place. These types of questions will not only open the eyes of the parents and students but they will also help them to expect, understand and overcome any issues that may come up. You are taking down perceived barriers and creating a relationship that encourages open communication.

Many parents or students do not even know what to expect from their or their child's martial arts training. Sharing with them the challenges that will occur gives them time to prepare themselves with answers should any issues arise. If you empower your customers with other alternatives then they will react in a manor that will be more beneficial to both you, and them.

Isn't it every school's goal to prepare students to defend themselves? If so where is the focus on setting them up for success at any cost? The only enemy that will lead them to quit is ignorance. If we prepare them with an arsenal of defenses for those moments when they feel like they want to quit they will be able to overcome and succeed. So next time you sign a student up in your school, take the time to open up a can of worms.