

What Karate Students Should Know

武 is the Chinese character for “martial”. Three characters are combined into this one character which gives the meaning of “going into a pike (halberd) and shield combat between two people in order to stop them from fighting”. Since karate too is a part of “Bu”, one must understand and accept the true meaning of “Bu” and refrain from heedlessly initiating a fight.

The life of youth is in their vitality. “Bu” inspires vigor. When vigor overflows, its effect can be either good or bad. The same thing can happen with karate. If you use karate for a good purpose, it can protect you and even others who are weak or at a disadvantage. If you use karate for a bad purpose, it can corrupt public morals and work against humanity.

“Bu” is compelled only where justice and humanity can not reach. Therefore, if anyone initiates a fight to impress others, he will also be ill-spoken of as a reckless person. Being full of youthful energy, one tends to use force, using his hands first. But one must abstain from it.

You must maintain your dignity without becoming rough and violent. This is how far you want to come in pursuing “Bu”. It is worthless if one takes delight in frightening others ferociously for fun. A true saint does not put on a display, but rather humbles himself. As long as one remains as a bluffer (putting on a bold front), it does not matter if he is a scholar or warrior, he is only displaying his immaturity.

Remember, no progress can only mean regression. Some people puffed-up rather quickly over the fact that they have learned some kata, understood some meanings a little, and have become able to use their hands and legs rather smoothly. They quickly become proud and loudly brag of their self-evaluated prowess. They become so full of themselves that they actually believe that there is no match for them under the sun. Once someone becomes like that, there is no other path left for him than the one of regression.

The saying “Even an inch worm possesses a complete soul” describes how the world works. The more advanced you become, the more discreet you must become with your words. Otherwise you will create enemies in all directions. In the laws of nature, since the old times, it is always a tall tree that the wind lashes against, and it is always the low-positioned willow branches that the wind eludes. Be reminded that discretion and humble modesty are the highest virtues of any “karate” student.

Mencius said, “When heaven is about to confer a great task on any man, it first taxes the mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes the man’s body to hunger and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his undertakings. By all these methods it stimulates his mind, hardens his nature and enables him to do what has been impossible.”

Mencius also said, “If, on self-examination, I find that I am not upright, I fear even a poor man in his loose garments. If, on self-examination, I find that I am upright, I will go forward against thousands and tens of thousands.”

In the **Book of Rites** it said: With an upright scholar, friendly relations may be cultivated, but no attempt must be made to constrain him. Association may be sought, but cannot be forced. He may be