

A Personal Note:

Every martial arts test has a memorable story. My career has not been unique in that aspect. On my 1st dan test, I was taller than Sensei Spencer, who now towers over me! On my ni dan test, my mom took me to McDonald's for dinner before the first half of my two-day test. After Chung Mu, I puked french fries on the testing floor, which happened to be in a Catholic church. Whoops! During the second sparring match of my san dan exam, I threw a round kick; tore the ACL in my right knee, and dad carried me to the emergency room. My yon dan test was relatively uneventful, other than the fact that it took place outside in Florida during the month of June! I faired well in the heat, but the big story that came out of that weekend was when Andy and I had an appointment to meet with our wedding coordinator the next morning. The lady was not overly enthusiastic about my black eye, gi burned neck, and bruised arms, and she really put a microscope on Andy!

My go dan test was shaping up to be the biggest martial arts event of my career. I trained religiously 4 to 5 days a week for months, nagged dad about sending video footage of the required katas, and I monopolized Renshi Wolfrom's time every chance I got. Unfortunately, while competing in the Mokomoko Invitational Ju Jitsu, Karate, & Eskrima Tournament I severed the ACL in my left knee during a sport ju-jitsu match, which, by the way, I happened to be winning by three points at the time of the accident. Following that event, I continued to train for my go dan test, despite the hesitations that my husband, instructors, and peers presented. The more opposition that was presented to me, the harder I trained. What can I say? I'm stubborn!

After an MRI had recently reviled the extent of my injuries, my father has chosen to not allow me to test, despite my protest. I guess you can say that his stubborn streak is far superior to mine!

Although I will not be testing at the Sokeship Council this year, I look forward to trying again next year. Also, knowing the countless hours of preparation that I have invested, my father has chosen to award my rank at the gathering this year. Because I am not able to participate in the right of passage that all martial artists go through, I have requested that Soke hold my certificate until I have proven myself in front of a judging panel. In the mean time, I do intend to humbly accept the honor of rank and title that is being offered to me.

Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a forum that will initiate both personal reflection and idea exchange among teachers in the martial arts. My objective is to share some of the expensive kollj edjukation (Just kidding, Dad!) that defined my teaching style and philosophy.

In the undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education classes that I have completed, I have learned to evaluate myself and assess how my students perceive me. When I am feeling frustrated with a student, I have learned to question myself instead of doubting the intelligence of my pupil.

I look forward to sharing teaching strategies, self-evaluation techniques, and martial arts news in this quarterly newsletter. I invite comments, questions, and criticisms. I intend to use your feedback as a catalyst for group discussions and future newsletters.

Best Wishes,

Shihan G. Dunn

Japanese Words to Know:

Ju: Principle of gentleness fundamental to Jujitsu and Judo

JuJitsu: Ancient systems of self-defense (spelled also – Jujitsu, Jiu Jitsu, Jiu Jutsu), meaning “gentle art”

Ju No Kata: Forms of gentleness, a kata

Why don't they get it?

"I've spent the last 45 minutes teaching Jonny how to block, and he still doesn't do it right! I give up! He's so dense!"

I know that we have all chosen to give up on a student's ability to perform a technique to the satisfaction of our expectations because we think, "*they don't get it.*" However, when a teacher's frustration peaks, we need to refocus our energy and begin to scrutinize our teaching approach.

There are many reasons why students may not be able to perform routines, but one possible issue is that the teacher is not teaching at a developmentally appropriate level for that child. Neuroscientists generally agree that children develop at different rates depending on both genetics and life experience. Also, it is generally believed that children do not develop an ability to comprehend abstract ideas until their late teen years.

How does educational psychology relate to martial arts?

We often teach basic movements and kata as a conceptual experience. In essence, we explain these routines as though we are *battling an imaginary opponent*. Yet, if you apply the findings of educational psychology, you'll realize that due to their current stage of brain development, many children are incapable of creating an accurate perception of the imaginary opponent.

How can I help my student learn?

The answer to this question is simple; provide opportunities for your students to experience your techniques in an authentic manner:

- **Striking techniques:** First demonstrate how to perform the maneuver then allow them to actually strike a target. When teaching children's martial arts classes, I find that a target pad is strapped to my wrist for a majority of the class, so that students are continually provided with opportunities for accurate, authentic target zones.
- **Blocking techniques:** Allow the student to view how you apply a block, and then provide opportunities for them to apply the block against an on-coming target.
- **Rolling and Falling:** Since most children are light enough to lift and control, teach them proper technique by first demonstrating the motion, then guiding them through the fall by letting them feel what it is like to experience a take-down that requires them to fall in the appropriate fashion.

The bottom line...

When teaching children, provide concrete experiences. In other words, give them something that they can touch.

Get creative! Present a single idea in a variety of ways...one of your presentations is bound to work!

Props, like target pads, are a martial arts teacher's best friend.

Finally, never give up on a student. Work daily to inspire your students, because a true teacher will find self-fulfillment in the little victories.