

Virtues of Leadership as Found in Judo

by Gary Goltz, USJA President for Growing Judo, February 2014

On every USJA card is Therefore Roosevelt's Man in the Arena Quote:



Brain Money, Sensei of the Riverside Police Youth Judo Club presenting me with portrait / quote

"It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled or how the doer of deeds might have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, if he wins, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat."

I hope our members have taken the time to read it thoroughly and think about its meaning. Roosevelt, who was among the first American's to study judo, is a fine example of the leadership qualities every judoka should strive for. This includes an understanding of the transcendence of victory and defeat which was at the core of the Code of Bushido, the way of the Samurai. According to Jigoro Kano the ultimate goal of judo is jiko no kansai; to seek perfection of one's own character. This centers on developing humility and a realistic acceptance of one's self. Based on this inner fortitude, trust among a sensei and his or her students is built, which is the essence of leadership in judo and all aspects of life.

The 7 Leadership Qualities Found in Judo:

1. Integrity – In my years of service to the USJA, there have been more than a few who disagreed with my views or policies. However rarely has my belief and dedication to the USJA ever been questioned. This is being true to the cause, which is a pillar of leadership.

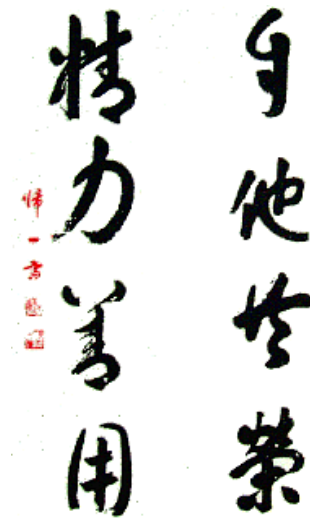
2. Perseverance – The ability to have self-discipline and stay on course in the face of adversity is another leadership key. My friend’s mom, when I was growing-up, called this stick-tu-itve-ness which she often would say I have an abundance of. It wasn’t until later in life I came to realize she was paying me a real compliment.
3. Courage to Risk – Going for a big throw like uchimata or seionage in a tournament requires one to make a 180 taisabki (pivot). BJJ folks say this is a weakness of judoka in that they will give their opponents their back. However, those same BJJ folks are the first to be awed at the site of an impressive judo throw. I wonder if they realize that these techniques require a great deal of calculated risk taking in order to achieve the goal of scoring an ippon.



Gary Wagstaff Photo

4. Knowledge Quest – The Japanese called this kaizen or the continuous improvement process. This is why Kano incorporated ranks in judo. He wanted to remind everyone that judo like life is ongoing. Achieving a new belt level is a renewal, as it marks both a beginning and an end.
5. Self Defense Skills – Taking personal responsibility for one’s own actions is important. A judo person knows calling 911 is not always the answer in a predicament. Therefore, just like a Boy Scout one has to be prepared by having the basic skills and ability to handle a situation in the event the cavalry is busy fighting a battle elsewhere.

6. Divergent Thinking – This involves keeping an open-mind or thinking out of the box. A leader surrounded by a group of yes-men may be taking a long walk off a short pier. Worse yet is when the support troops know it but have been conditioned to not speak up for fear of reprisals. Successful leaders readily admit their mistakes rather than continuing down the wrong path.
7. Giving Back to Society – Good leaders look out for society, not just their own company. They are concerned for human rights, the environment, and not simply their own bottom line. Kano said at the root of judo are two principles; seiryoku zenyo (to make the best use of your power) and jita kyoei (to go forward together with your opponent).



Kano's calligraphy of judo's principles

The 7 Rules for the Student by Professor Jack Daniels:

Back in the mid 1970's when I was in college at the University of Pittsburgh; a professor of mine handed this out during our first class along with his syllabus. Years later I remember re-reading it and finally realizing the wisdom in it. I share this list with you verbatim and can now say with certainty that it involves many of the leadership virtues found in judo.

1. Never be over-awed by authority. Not at any time whatever, nor for any reason whatsoever, can anyone with profit or safety permit his faculty of thought to take a sabbatical, least of all when the mind is exposed to the thoughts of other people.
2. Be open to conviction, but refuse to be convinced until conviction becomes a necessity.
3. Read little, think deeply and much. Avoid acquiring the grasshopper-mind. Books are highly suggestive, therefore, chose your authors with care, take time to think through the full implications and connotations of what you have read, and test its validity from as many angles as you can. A hungry man must chew, swallow, and digest food before it can nourish him. Swallowing it whole leads only to indigestion. Avoid mental indigestion at all costs.

4. Seek TRUTH and pursue it, to the extent of re-making your own mind no matter the cost, should it become necessary. The "truths" of today will be the "superstitions" of tomorrow. Allow them no "permanent residence" in your mind. Seek not mere "knowledge" but UNDERSTANDING; perchance WISDOM may follow.
5. Never lie to yourself, or you are a lost fool!
6. Learn to think beyond the thoughts of men who lean on things they see; always remembering: NOT IN EXTERNAL THINGS SHALL WE FIND TRUTH.
7. Make it your golden rule to never to consult an author on any subject until after you shall first have thought deeply about it and reached some conclusions, no matter how tentative.

Conclusion and Closing Thoughts:



Neil Ohlenkamp, myself, Neil Adams, and Tony Mojica at a recent clinic

The legendary British Judo coach, Neil Adams. M.B.E., during his seminar, which I just attended, told a room of 40 tough black belts, who were mostly competitors - to be adaptive. He said in the face of constant modifications to IJF rules top players must be able to embrace change in order to be victorious or for that matter to simply survive. I agree with Neil, that being adaptive is perhaps the most essential element of leadership both in judo and in life.

Lary