

Responsibility in Martial Arts

by Burrell "Skip" Koepke, Soke Dai

Seki-Ryu Jiu-Jitsu

One of the things beside training that a martial artist should know is "responsibility for ones actions." What does the word responsibility mean? From the Funk & Wagnall Dictionary it is defined as:

The state of being responsible or accountable; that for which one is answerable; a duty or trust. Ability to meet obligations or to act without superior authority or guidance.

What does this mean to a martial artist? Well, first it means one who is concerned with war. Martial arts comes to us from a time when every day was a survival of the most prepared person. Now days we don't live in a war zone, even those areas where we may live or visit that are sometimes called "shady areas" are not real war zones.

Yes, as Martial Artists, we are practicing the art of war, but the one thing that almost everyone forgets is that all techniques must be done with control. Control was taught in ancient times, and likewise it should be applied today. We have the responsibility, both legally and morally to control our actions even in a high stress situation.

Even when threaten by violence, we should be trained so as to control the situation from getting out of hand, or use only enough force to control that situation. An example would be a women that is confronted and grabbed by someone, but not violently. She should use only enough technique as to gain control of the situation. Unfortunately, most martial arts instructors don't teach responsibility, but rather they have a student, poke the eyes, shatter the knee, crush the larynx, smash the groin. What happens, if the attacker survives? They receive every thing you own and 1/2 of your wages for the next ten years.

If your teacher or system does not employ techniques of control, then you need to find a way to make this a part of your personal arsenal. Remember, all of the founders had control techniques in their systems. They understood the meaning of responsibility. Over reacting and using dangerous techniques when are they are not warranted or using competition techniques for self-defense, is not responsible and just does not work.

Remember we are not at war, so killing, maiming, or breaking techniques are not responsible things to be taught except in the gravest of circumstances. We have to be responsible in our training and teaching of our "arts of war", and meet the obligation of controlling our techniques, so as to not do more harm or injury to some one, than is needed.

As a general rule, as long as you use only that force that is necessary to repel an attack, you will be legally within the bounds of the law. However, if you are an instructor, please take the time to speak with an attorney, police officer or investigate the local laws to fully understand your legal as they apply to self-defense situations. You may find that many of the techniques you teach everyday in the dojo, when used under less than life-threatening circumstances may get you jailed. As an instructor, you should train your students to act responsibly and within the constraints of local laws. That is YOUR responsibility.

Be responsible and enjoy your art.