

Philosophy of Judo

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Putting your energy to work most effectively-Seiryoku Zenyo

This is the core of the philosophy of judo. Do not waste! Do not waste your mental, physical and spiritual energy on things that do not accomplish your goals. In Judo we try not to waste our energy when trying to throw someone. There is a correct timing and position to executing a throwing technique. If done correctly, the technique will work with almost no strength...like a hot knife through butter. If done incorrectly, then you will find the technique difficult to accomplish and requires a tremendous amount of energy.

Consider Fully, Act Decisively! -Many times, we practice our techniques by “toe-dipping” or “testing the waters” with our techniques. This will often result in your partner applying a counter-attack to our indecisive first attack. It is better to come in with your technique whole-heartedly. If it fails...it fails and we will learn from it. But if we never attempt it, we can never be successful.

Shin Gi Tai – Literally translates into Heart, Skill, Body. One of the goals of a judo player is to develop all three of these elements and to get them to work in harmony to create a higher level of Judo.

Dr. Kano wrote:

“The study of the application of judo ultimately led to the teaching of seiryoku zenyo, which is the principle behind competing in earnest. I have demonstrated in these pages that this principle can be applied to everyday life. With regard to our daily activities and social interaction, the teaching of seiryoku zenyo means bringing about maximum results through the use of every sort of energy. For this reason, human faults like anger, for example, violate this principle. Becoming angry consumes mental energy. How does anger benefit you or anyone else? The results of anger are invariably a depletion of mental energy and being looked down on or disliked by others. By following the principle of seiryoku zenyo, people will not be able to get angry.

Being disappointed or troubled by failures or setbacks, or harboring grievances are also ways in which mental energy is

consumed. Arguments, fights -all these things are violations of seiryoku zenyo. Those who practice judo must take great care to follow this teaching. No matter what the situation, there is only one path that people must follow- in every case, the only course is to consider what is the right thing to do and proceed in that direction.

I have coined a phrase that I regularly say to people: jinsei no koro wa tada itsu aru nomi (There is only one path in life). Conducting oneself in accord with this principle on a daily basis is vitally important.

Though human beings may reach the pinnacle of success, there is only one path down which to proceed. That is to say, because complacency gives rise to the causes of failure, you must always consider things carefully until you find the most appropriate course of action and proceed that way. Even when you fail, there is only one path down which to proceed. Even if once you fail and lose heart, if you regain your courage and find your way along the highest path, circumstances will gradually improve. Because they find their own paths, those who practice judo and follow the principle of seiryoku zenyo always have a calm spirit, enjoy life, and are enterprising. The most advanced human mental life can only be achieved when people thoroughly absorb this principle.” [1]

Shinichi Oimatsu of the Kodokan describes for us the application of this principle:

...Professor Kano synthesized the three purposes of Judo and what he regarded highly was “the realization of the Way of managing human and social life.” This was especially deeply related to moral law.” That is to say, 1) cultivation of morals, 2) refinement of mental development, and 3) application of the doctrine of the challenging spirit of Judo to everyday life. Regarding the third point in particular, what is taught at the dojo (training hall) and what is learned about Judo are not where Judo training stops but where it starts. All that is taught and learned should be made a part of one’s own life as well as a part of society.

What is the Application of Seiryoku Zenyo:

- To Be a Person of Value As a human being, one must set his/her goal in life and discipline his/her naturally endowed abilities. Moreover, since people “are not something that can exist apart from society” and since the fortune of today is a result of the past, everyone should develop his/her given abilities. If one contributes to society, the personality traits-even if there is a

difference in achievements-can develop.

- **Determination-Judgement-Effort** To become a person of value one should make it a purpose to believe in one's best, one should judge the steps to achieve this purpose, and once this has been done one should gather all his/her strength and work hard.
- **Seiryoku Zenyo**"Application The momentum of determination, judgment, and effort comes from one's own strength. All the phenomena of the universe function on strength. In comparison of similar living beings those with much seiryoku will have a more magnificent life. ...[2]

"This teaching, one of the most important concepts in judo fighting, says, "If you win, do not boast of your victory; if you lose, do not be discouraged. When it is safe, do not be careless; when it is dangerous, do not fear-simply continue down the path ahead'." [3]

Mutual Welfare and Benefit-Jita Kyoei The second part of Dr. Kano's philosophy was the emphasis on the betterment of our society. While in the first part he emphasizes bettering yourself, he then believes one should use that new found development of self to then help others and to benefit society.

In Judo classes we practice this principle as well. In the beginning, others help you get better with advice and by letting you throw them so that you can get a feel for the techniques. As you improve, perhaps they help you by giving you a tougher workout. Later as you develop your judo, you will do the same for others like give advice, take falls and give your teammates a tough workout.

Footnotes

[1]Excerpt from "Mind Over Muscle-Writings from the Founder of Judo" by Jigoro Kano and compiled by Naoki Murata, published by Kodansha International, page 84-86

[2]-Excerpt from the article "The Way of Seiryoku Zenyo-Jita Kyoei and Its Instruction" by Shinichi Oimatsu (Kodokan) published in The Bulletin for the Scientific Study of Kodokan Judo Volume VI, 1984

[3]Excerpt from "Mind Over Muscle-Writings from the Founder of Judo" by Jigoro Kano and compiled by Naoki Murata, published by Kodansha International, page 123
