

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH WORK

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BASIC PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH WORK

by Clement G. Riedner, PhD, SeD, LHD

The Martial Arts sense who uses the Martial Arts as a ministry needs to understand some of the basic principles of youth work. There are three main points for the youth worker.

1. KNOW YOUR YOUTH

Get to know your youth. You don't have to keep a little black book on them. Get to know them mentally. What kind of family life do they have? What are their needs? What are their interests?

Get to know them and their family. I remember when I was an assistant principle of a very large Christian school a ninth grade girl was forced to drop out of school in the middle of the year. Her mother had just had an illegitimate child and she wanted her daughter to stay home and take care of the baby. It is heartbreaking to hear of things like that.

At another school, my wife taught kindergarten and she came home saying that her five year old kindergarten kids would say, "Hey, Mommy had a new boyfriend over last night."

Once you become a sensei, and you get to know your students, it is going to cause you grief to see some family situations. But these kids need your help. Get to know them. It doesn't mean you become so buddy buddy with them that you break etiquette. But get to know them, their needs and their interests.

2. BEING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DOING

You can do an awful lot of things for the Lord, but what is important is who you are. And what these kids are and what they care about is what is important. They don't care about you. They want to know what kind of person you are. Do you represent to them the "establishment" or do you represent real Christianity which comes from the heart? Kids are probably fed up with the establishment. They want a Christianity that is real. They want to see something that is genuine. Being is more important than doing. Be genuine if nothing else and you can have more of an influence before God and with these young people. You don't have to teach them a single verse of Scripture. You don't have to take them out and teach them how to win souls to the Lord. You don't have to do anything except be a genuine, solid, honest Christian, who really is what he says and says what he is. And you'll have a very positive long range influence on that individual.

You will find that you probably will end up with an inner circle. The Lord had an inner circle that followed him. You will end up with an inner circle that will follow you. You will end up relating with just a few. I call it the target Christianity. The goal is to get the ones who really want to live for the Lord. That will be your Peter, James and John.

You will find certain students that you can train more than others. Don't choose them. Let them choose you by means of their commitment. All you need to do is be what you are. Be a good solid individual Christian, and they will come to you. And as you teach the arts you will find than an inner circle will emerge. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8)

Christ met us where we were. He died for us while we were yet sinners. Meet your young people wherever they are. We get wrapped up and say, "I can't work with you, son, until you cut your hair." "I can't work with you until you stop bringing in your walkman with rock music." "I can't work with you until." Well, sorry, it doesn't work that way. Just meet them wherever they are, and go from there. If you have external standards that you expect them to abide by, they will eventually come to it. That doesn't mean that you debase yourself and become like them and commit their sins. But you should just be genuine. You should just be loving to them wherever they are. And that will draw them to you.

The second major point under this is how do I know I have accomplished anything? That is one of the frustrating parts of youth work. How do you know whenever you accomplish anything in their lives? I was a youth pastor once, and I kept close attendance records, statistics, to determine what was accomplished. The statistics were helpful, but they would not determine what was accomplished.

Here is a hint to the answer to this question as to how do you know if you have accomplished anything. First of all, there might be an observable response. Obviously, in the Martial Arts, in a performance requirement, when a person gets ready to give a test for results, and as they progress through the belt divisions, there will be an observable response, because you will know when they've reached a certain level. It is hard to describe how a person knows someone is ready for a black belt test. I can just tell one way or the other. It becomes a "gut instinct," or a feeling. And an observable response will be in that category.

There will also be an apparent change in attitude and behavior. This will be one of your primary ones. Hopefully, it will not be to come up to something that you have just set as a standard, but something that comes from the heart, and an actual heart desire to change. When their attitude starts to change, then their behavioral change will soon follow.

3. KNOW WHAT YOUR GOAL IS:

Know at what you are aiming. When you set out on a course and say, "How will I know when I've done anything in my Martial Arts ministry?" then set some very definitive goals. Are you looking for a set amount of decisions? Do you want a certain number of people to pray a sinner's prayer for salvation; a prayer of rededication? Are you looking for a certain "X" amount of decisions; a change of attitude; a change of behavior? Are they being conformed to the image of Christ? Is the young person becoming more Christ like? That is a very subjective thing.

The decision is important, but it must be followed through with a change; an observable, subjective change. The best way is to pursue an individual and list their negatives. You may want to take each individual student, and keep a list of their negative qualities, and as they grow in the Lord, you should see these negative attitudes change into positive attitudes. And as you see this, it will give you a clue that you are actually getting somewhere with them. And then you will know whether or not you are reaching your specific goal with each student.

Here are some basic commandments for youth workers:

A. Be real. Avoid the danger of an external life style without any internal conformity to Christ. Be genuine. We can't stress that enough. If that is in place, and you are genuine, everything else will pretty well fall into line. But that is the key. Young people can see through the facade of a fake anytime. Be yourself.

B. Your students must develop their own relationship to Christ, not just to your image. They must develop their own individual relationship with Christ. They can't just copy yours. Their relationship may be a little bit different from yours. This part may be frustrating to you. This is where you have to go back to the Biblical principle of trusting the Holy Spirit in other people. You may not get exactly that response that you would consider, but they have to develop their own relationship with the Lord. And then you will know you are progressing somewhere with them.

C. Accept the young person where he is. We've already mentioned this one previously. Individuals are on different plains of life, different levels of maturity, whether physical, social or spiritual. These must be considered. Each young person is different, so you have to meet them where they are on their level of maturity.

D. Listen to the young person. Most young people need an adult outside their family that they can trust. They want adult opinion, advice, counsel and an adult to listen to them outside the parent. If you can be that to a young person, whether you are in the Martial Arts or not, you will have been a guiding influence on that life.

E. Seek to build up the young person. Build up their ego needs. Seek to help them to succeed, by strengthening them in any way possible. Don't cut them down. Don't try to force them all into the same mold, because in what one excels another may fail. You need to find where that individual excels, and encourage them along that line.

F. Young people want to be involved with a limited responsibility. They want responsibility, but they don't want it all. They want a say in what's going on. They want to speak their opinion, but they don't want to be the only one with sole responsibility. They will want to be involved in projects, as long as they know you are there to back them up. They want that security of knowing that you are there, should they stumble.

G. Remember also, young people operate on emotions. That is why young people in Martial Arts training are somewhat on a roller coaster; up one day and down the next. You have to keep that in mind, when you are dealing with young people. They operate on emotions. They will sometimes be volatile and sometimes stable. And it will be frustrating for the Martial Arts sensei. Remember, they are part child and part adult. And the question will be at any given time, which part are you talking to. Just when you don't think they will succeed, they come through like a champ and real adults. And about the time you expect them to really produce they will fall flat on their nose, just like a child.

Let's look again at the basic principles of youth work.

Know your young people. Get to know the problems they are facing. It will help you to minister to him more effectively.

Being is more important than doing. Be real, above all else. The kind of person you are is so important to the young people. Relate to your young people, and you will find an inner circle of youths, sooner or later. How do you know when you have accomplished anything? That's not too hard, because I know when a certain student has a certain amount of time in grades and a certain amount of time in the arts, and learns certain levels of kata, and has a certain proficiency, then I promote him. But it is not that easy in the Christian world. You may have an observable response, and maybe not.

It's helpful to know at what you are aiming, whether it is just decisions, or attitudes, or long term conformity to Christ

And to be real in your own life. To have an internal conformity to Christ that is also external yourself.

Encourage your students to develop their own relationship to Jesus Christ, and not to just copy yours.

Accept the young person where he is. Remember Romans 5:8. Christ accepted us where we were, yet in our sins. So accept him where he is.

Listen to him. Young people desperately need someone who will listen. You might be a counselor, or you can be a sensei in an ethical relationship. You can be that outside adult counselor, that adult friend outside the family who will be the big brother to whom they can come and relate, to show their needs and their burdens. You may become closer to them than their own parents, simply because you listen.

Seek to build them up and meet their ego needs. Encourage them and help them to achieve. And let them be involved with a limited responsibility. Don't overload them or be afraid to give them responsibility. Give them as much responsibility as they can handle. And don't be surprised when they "blow it." But encourage them when they do well. And don't particularly come down on them too hard when they fail, but encourage them to do better the next time.

Remember, young people operate on emotions. They are like yoyos. Up and down.

And finally, remember that young people are part adult, and part child. Keep that in mind when you are dealing with them, and it will save your own sanity.

We trust these will be helpful in dealing with young people; teenagers, young adults, as you work in your Martial Arts ministry.

BOYS CLUB MINISTRIES:

We have found over the years that Boys Clubs are a very effective and fruitful source in the Martial Arts ministry. There are basically three types of clubs that you will find being operated:

1) Salvation Army Clubs: This is where we basically began our Martial Arts ministry in South Carolina. It was at the Salvation Army Boys Club. Much of the beginning techniques and concepts began there.

2) Boys Club Of America: We found a Boys Club Of America that was operated by a director who was a born again Christian, so we had a wide open door.

3) City Or County Recreation Center: Some city or county recreation centers may be available for a Martial Arts ministry, but the Salvation Army or Boys Club centers may be more open to the ministry because as soon as you use the word "Christian," you might get some opposition. So we recommend the Salvation Army Boys club first, the Boys Club of America second, and then you can always try the city or county recreation centers to see if they would be open to your ministry.

A. Beginning A Ministry:

The first step in beginning a ministry is to contact the club director to present your ministry. Be sure to clarify with him exactly what it is you want to do. Be sure he understands the purpose of the Martial Arts ministry. Have printed material available to show him. Explain that you would like to teach a course, to offer Martial Arts training to the youths, and that you are going to use it as a ministry, and that the Gospel is going to be presented. Be sure this is clarified. Don't sneak in and start preaching the Gospel when you get it. Be honest and up front from the very beginning. This may close a few doors to you, but at least be honest about it.

You want to present Christ to them. You are not there to promote any particular church or denomination. The contacts can be turned over to your own local church for visitation. Contacting the youths in their homes becomes that type of ministry. But if you are a non-church, nondenominational, and coming from the standpoint that you are not going to promote any particular denomination, you might find they will be a little more open to you. But be straight forward about it. Verify to them what it is you want to do. Have printed materials ready to show the director, and seek if all possible to present your program within his needs.

We have found that when the doors have been opened, then they have been wide open, and very receptive to us. When the doors had been closed, there was not doubt to us about it. So don't feel discouraged if the door is shut and the Lord doesn't want you there.

If the door is open to you, then you may begin. Their club will then generally advertise the classes, once you get started. If you have a Martial Arts club, then that will help. I like to get my team trained outside the Boys Club and then use them as my helpers, and use the boys club as a training ground for Christians that I have in my regular belt class. The boys club provides an ideal place for them to get experience teaching the techniques, and it is also an ideal place for them to experience witnessing as a means of a ministry.

Conduct a demonstration of the Martial Arts as an initial means of advertisement. If the boys club will allow you to put on a demonstration, then do so. Then you may announce that you are going to conduct a class at a certain time and have the youths sign up right then and there. We have found this the best means of getting started; to give a demonstration. And if you have the freedom to preach the Gospel, give the salvation message during that demonstration, with the invitation afterwards. If you are in a boys club that gives you that freedom, take advantage of it. Then it will make it very clear and understandable to everyone the full intentions of your ministry, so there will be no question concerning what you are doing and why you are there.

Give a good demonstration and explain to the young people that you are going to offer a short course, and they will generally respond.

If we meet one day a week at the boys club, the short course will run eight weeks. The demonstration advertisements should be on the bulletin board or have some posters put up at the boys club. And with the demonstration, there will be two main means of getting the youths in.

Set a limit to the number of young people that you want or can handle, depending upon the number of instructors you will have helping you, and depending upon the size of the room where you will be meeting. We have usually been fortunate to not have to go out into the main gymnasium, but to have a private room.

In the eight week short course, I normally require attendance of five out of the eight lessons. You don't normally require them to get a diploma at the end of the course. The Christian Black Belt Association has some material that can be used in this type of a situation. But attendance of five out of eight lessons is reasonable and does allow them a little freedom for missing one or two classes.

If you require perfect attendance, at every class, the only problem is that if they miss one, they might get discouraged and drop out completely. Our goal is not to have a perfect attendance, but to preach the Gospel. If they are there all the time, then that is good. But we want to do anything we can to get them to attend.

Give a self-defense promotion at the end of the course. I would not, on this initial eight week beginning course, charge anything. Make this one free. If you want to charge, then do so in any follow up courses. Use these eight sessions to ascertain the spiritual status of each student. Present Christ. Give invitations. Try to lead them to Christ. But use this time to find out where they stand spiritually. You might want to turn some of that information over to your local church for visitation.

B. Continuing The Ministry:

The eight week short course is the initial step into beginning a boy's club ministry. If possible, then lead them into a belt class afterwards. When I first started this, there were two instructors; I and one of my students taught the initial class, and then I had another black belt student, and a couple of his students, come in and then they taught defense class.

The students who complete the short course will be allowed to go on to class for a belt. It is there that you can begin charging a fee. This could be done additionally on a night or could be done the same night with you and your staff. It is ideal if you have an entirely different staff. When I had a black belt student and a couple of his students, then I and the black belt student took the beginning class and then we had another black belt with a couple of his students follow up with the advanced class on a different night. But the young people have to go through the initial eight week course in order to get into the belt class.

This is done for several reasons. One, it gives you a chance, spiritually, to work with the young people, and offers a better concept going into that long term class as to what you are working with spiritually, and offers you also the chance to weed out the disinterested, the clowns and those who merely are not going to be able to advance in the belt class. Not everyone should go into the belt class.

You give a demonstration to the boys club to however many young people are there, present the Gospel and give an invitation. Out of that you will have a certain percentage that will take the eight week course. Then you will have a certain percentage that had completed the eight week course that will go on for a belt. So it will go down. Just like Gideon and his band of followers, it will begin narrowing down. But that is all right. You will get them into a belt class with a little more serious teaching.

This may require a different night, or perhaps different instructors. The space to occupy the class will depend upon the schedule of the club, the equipment, mats, and rooms to determine what you can do. You want to run it on nights where you and your staff can go in and teach two separate classes; the beginning and the advanced. In reality, the ideal situation would be to have someone teaching the advanced class on a separate night.

Train the students for a belt; Karate, Judo, or Jujitsu. The Christian Black Belt Association has expanded to develop some certification materials and a system to be used, and it also provides a means to train your own instructors, so it gives them an outlet of their ministry.

Incorporate some type of Bible study or Christian leadership into your system. You may use your own Bible system, or you may look on the market for a Bible study approach. You can combine the two. The Christian Black Belt Association is willing to work with people to help them develop their own programs of this nature, should they get into a boys club ministry.

As the young people develop in spiritual matters and the arts, you can begin using them as instructors. We are now talking about an extended period of time, where you are looking at several months, or couple years even, of training. The boy's club ministries are effective and simple to set up.

Let's review again some of these basic principles. Remember again the types of clubs available. Salvation Army or Boys Club of America would be your best avenues to try. The city or county youth centers could sometimes be open to you, but will be opposed to the Gospel. The "separation of church and state" becomes the issue and a big problem. If the Lord wants you to have this type of ministry, it will open up. It will all depend upon what you have available in your area.

The beginning of the ministry will again be starting with a club director. Be very open to what you want to do. If you have a good program and good curriculum, this will be helpful. Remember, these guys are not dummies, so you can't just walk in and not explain what you want to do. If you have a decent program, then they will be more inclined then to accept it. Be sure it fits their needs.

Once again, the best way to advertise is to put notices up on the bulletin board at the boys club. If they don't have a bulletin board, then put up posters.

By means of demonstration, go into an eight week program short course, requiring attendance five of the eight weeks. We found this to be a very workable figure. Twelve weeks is sometimes too long, and four or six weeks are too short a period of time.

From there you can go into a more advanced course. The main purpose of the short course is to ascertain the spiritual status of each student and to lead each to Christ in that time if possible.

Depending upon the size of the room you have available, mats that you have available, and number of instructors you have, this will limit the amount of students you can serve. It is better to take fewer than to try and handle too many. If you can only handle ten or twelve, be honest about it and take only that amount in the first class. And do a good job with them and then take ten or twelve more for the next beginning class. Don't try to over do it by taking more students than you can handle.

As previously said, require attendance to at least 75 % of the sessions, and award a diploma at the end. And don't charge for this initial class. Those who pass the first course and receive their diploma, if they are interested can then go on to try and achieve a belt.

Depending upon what additional time you have available, whether you have more instructors to help you, you may want to run the classes on separate nights, depending upon the instructors and staff. If you have another black belt who can come in to help you, that would be the ideal approach. If not, then you could run the classes on the same night by running shorter class periods with the beginners and then advanced class.

You may have to run two beginner's classes in order to have enough students to have an advanced class. We have found that some of these students will stay with it. Some have continued on to obtain the brown belt and some all the way up to the black belt.

And it is an excellent opportunity to present the Gospel of Christ on a long-range basis. Be sure that the students that help you are trained in how to handle children. Be sure they are trained in safety matters, so that you won't have any problems. It would also be advised to send home to the parents a permission slip to have them sign, freeing you from any liability in case of injury. Liability for injury should also be one of the things to discuss with the director of the club, before you begin the ministry. And incorporate a technique in the eight week course which will be helpful, but nothing major, because of the injury problem, until you get into the advanced classes where you will have students who have been through and learned how to fall in the initial short course. Then when they show a little more desire and interest, then you can get into more instruction with them.

The main thing is to use a little common sense. Be careful; move slowly. Don't try to teach them everything in one shot. Try to give them a few techniques that will be helpful, and spend that eight week course to "weed them out". And then when you get those who are serious and want to learn more in the advanced course you can develop more with them. You can teach the Gospel to them and present Christ, teach the Martial Arts and have a really good time with them.

When you find a boys club that is opened to you, you will find them very cooperative. Generally, you won't have any problem with the parents. Most of these young people won't even have much contact with their parents. But I would recommend sending home information, letting the parents know what you are doing. Be sure that everything is done openly. You want to be sure you have everything done openly, in case of injury to one of the students. And of course, the club director can advise you concerning the legalities, insurances, etc., concerning the operation of the club. If you try to get this type of ministry started and you are confronted with problems, the Christian Black Belt Association will be very glad to help, since you want to get this type ministry started. It is a very effective type of ministry, so we want to encourage you to consider a boys club ministry, if you are looking for a place to minister with the Martial Arts.

COACHING IN THE MARTIAL ARTS:

The first thing we need to do is to give definition to the word "coach". And a coach in the Martial Arts is different from anything else because the arts are different.

First of all, a coach is not a beginner or a novice. We make it a point to at our dojo to give green belts in the lower ranks an opportunity to coach. They have an opportunity to teach and normally will be teaching beginning students. Periodically, we will call upon a beginner to be taught by them. We will call upon the green belt to do some teaching. And by the time someone has reached the brown belt rank, they are doing some fairly consistent teaching, under supervision of the sensei. So from this standpoint, by the time a person reaches the category officially of coach in the Martial Arts he has had the experience to be classified as a coach. He's not a beginner. He knows his material. He knows the techniques. This is one of the main keys in coaching the Martial Arts.

Secondly, a coach is not a taskmaster or a dictator. He is a leader. In that sense, he leads by example. He leads by showing. The coach or the Martial Arts sensei should not ask a student to do anything that he cannot do. Now, we realize that some students may have developed, for instance, the kicking ability, better than the sensei, and they may surpass the sensei in one or two areas. But generally, the coach knows what he is doing. He has done it previously and more proficient than his students. He has done this, therefore, he is teaching from experience just what should be done. He can tell the student, from experience, but he leads. He does not push.

There was an article in a Martial Arts magazine about the difference in coaching abilities, speaking of a sensei who would yell at the students, while others would be soft-spoken and quiet. And they seemed to be more informal in the latter one's class. And of course, the conclusion of the article was that you have to choose what type of class with which you are comfortable. We agree with that conclusion, but the coach should become someone who can lead without pushing or shoving the students. And the best way to lead is by your own example and dedication.

The coach, of course, is not a performer in the same sense as a student in, for instance, football or basketball. The coach is someone who has performed. But his immediate contact is that the student must perform for him. The coach can't do it for the student. The coach can demonstrate all day long, but unless the student himself will perform, he doesn't succeed in anything. So the coach cannot perform for the student. The student himself must perform it. That is one of the keys to coaching, is to get your students to be motivated to do the exercises or techniques.

A coach is several other things. We have mentioned that he is a leader. He must lead by setting the example. The students, especially the younger ones in the twelve or thirteen year old range, will look up to their sensei and identify with their sensei. So in that sense he is their leader, their teacher.

A coach must be able to teach. The teaching methods in the Martial Arts are much different from teaching methods in an academic classroom. We maintain that one of the keys to successful Martial Arts coaching is being able to recognize the problem that a student or group of students may be having, and setting up the coaching drills or whatever it may take to correct the problem and to solve it.

A coach is a communicator. He is trying to explain an art and a skill. He uses his body to communicate by actually performing the technique. He uses the language to communicate to basic philosophical basis of the art.

A coach is also a counselor. Sometimes very close relationships will be established between the sensei and students. At that point, the coach or sensei becomes a counselor, and he will end up actually counseling the students. He becomes a friend. Some senseis will be very aloof. Others will be very personable. This will depend upon the personality of the sensei, and as you are choosing a dojo or sensei, you should look at this. Is the man personable and what you are looking for?

Now let's look at some of the basic principles in coaching in the Martial Arts. The first principle is very simple.

A. Basic Principles

1) Know Your Art Or Skill:

That sounds so simple it may sound ridiculous, but it is impossible to teach something that you do not know. In order to communicate Karate or Jujitsu, the sensei must know his art. Therefore, it is imperative that any coach to truly know what he is doing.

This should be a good point for any beginning student to keep in mind, as they are looking for a sensei or dojo. We realize, of course, that a new student will be a novice and not know anything about the Martial Arts. Therefore, whatever a sensei would tell him he would go ahead and do it. This is unfortunate. A sensei may not know much but have a good "gift of gab," and be able to give the prospective student a "snow job," when he really doesn't know what he is doing, but he attracts students falsely. But a sensei cannot communicate that which he does not know.

2) Analyze What You Teach:

I found from my own personal experience, just to be there to do karate or to practice Karate is one thing, but to be able to communicate and teach Karate is something different. A person does not really being to understand the principles, or even the techniques, until he has to communicate that technique. Then suddenly, he is forced to analyze that which he would be teaching. What the movements are, and why the specific movements.

3) Apply And Develop The Best Teaching Method:

We are convinced that one of the secrets to teaching the Martial Arts is coaching or teaching methods; the drills; the warm ups; and the exercises. Whatever you use must be designed to do a particular job. It must be designed to reach a goal in the Martial Arts. If the student is having problems, for instance in a kicking technique, or having problems in Kumite, launching attacks, or are using two or three kicks in combination the sensei must develop teaching drills which will allow the students to develop that type of coordination they need.

4) Relate What You Teach To The Actual Situation:

One of the problems we have in Karate, Judo or Jujitsu is training in the Dojo. We train in bare feet and we wear the Gi. And unfortunately, we get to the point where we feel we can't even do our technique without the Gi. We feel somehow stripped of our Martial Arts powers when we are in street clothes, and we are confused.

I remember the first time I sparred, wearing tennis shoes. I was standing there ready to block a kick, reached and grabbed a tennis shoe instead of a bare foot. But it is good practice sometimes to spar in street clothes. You don't have the mobility in your kicking

technique because of the basic design of the clothes you are wearing, but you need to do this. But as much as possible, practice in the Dojo in what would possibly be an actual or probable situation. Because if this does not happen, we might simply be teaching Dojo Martial Arts, not the Karate that you might need on the streets. I'm not advocating for all your students to go out and start using their techniques on the street, but if it is apparent there is need for self-defense, there must be a true preparation. Therefore, practice occasionally in street clothes.

5) Know Your Students:

Get to know your students. Learn their needs. They are people. They are individuals. And as part of the overall relationship, as was stressed on the previous section on the definition of a coach, as you get to know your students, and relate to them, you will find that not every student has the same personality, or the same technical ability.

Some students cannot perform physically as well as other students, and as you get to know them, you can apply yourself to their characteristics. And you will do a better job of teaching them. You will do a better job of training them.

6) Relate What You Teach To the Entire Individual:

The Martial Arts deal with the whole person. There are certain arts where you only use certain muscles. But here, you are not only involved with the entire body, but also with the entire person; morally, ethically, spiritually. The Martial Arts teach more on ethical codes. Take what you teach and relate to the student. Some students are slow, and some are fast. Some have a natural speed, to make them good in sparring. Some are slow and must learn to develop those techniques and characteristics which will help them.

7) Remember You Are The Coach, In The Sense Of A Trainer:

A coach is someone who needs, who coaches, who demonstrates to the individual, and gets the individual student to do that. In other words, you take the student and say, "Do after me," and then get the student to do it the way it is done. But yet, the student does the performing.

These are a few of the basic principles that a coach must keep in mind, when teaching the Martial Arts. Let's now look at some of the particular characteristics of the Martial Arts.

MARTIAL ARTS CHARACTERISTICS:

There are some things in the Martial Arts that make it different from football, basketball or other athletic team sports.

A. The Martial Arts Are Motor Skills:

Just like some other sports, the Martial Arts develop and use motor skills. That means it involves the motor system of the body. That means the mind/body coordination. The Martial Arts involve a high degree of this mind/body coordination, and the techniques that are learned are your coaching method and the characteristics of the Martial Arts.

Your coaching method will determine your success and how rapidly your students will grasp it. This starts with the basic movements of drilling up and down the floor, the basic stances and then adding other techniques as they progress. As you drill, concentrate on improving the mind/body coordination. The Martial Arts sensei must keep in mind that this is the purpose in the external technique. The improvement of the mind/body coordination is vital, and how he does this in his methods will determine his success in teaching the characteristics of the Martial Arts.

B. Basic Conditioned Reflex:

The Martial Arts training also involves the basic conditioned reflex. And that is nothing more than the mind/body coordination mentioned above. Conditioning is the habit of training continually to develop the Martial Arts habits. These habits are eventually turned into reflex.

In an actual self-defense situation, the student doesn't have time to think back, and remember the technique. Go back to when you were younger, and the television Saturday morning comics had a character called Hong Kong Phooee. Every time he would get into a scrap, he would reach into his back pocket and pull out a handy book that he used in Kung Fu, and turn to the page he needed and got his answer to his problem of what to do. Well, the student on the street doesn't have that time. When you get in a self-defense situation, you don't have the time to pullout a book on Kung Fu and turn to such and such a page number to find the answer to your problem. You need to react immediately. It must be a reflex action.

So a good, solid understanding of this basic concept by the sensei will direct his teaching to the conditioning type of teaching, determined by his teaching method.

The thing would apply to Jujitsu, and perhaps even more than Karate, because Karate is offensive. In Karate you have sparring. But in Jujitsu, you cannot. Therefore, the drills in Jujitsu must be designed to improve mind/body coordination and conditioned reflex.

C. The Moral Code:

The Martial Arts also teach a moral code, the "way of the warrior," or Bushido. This concept is taught through the arts.

In your basic school sports, like basketball and baseball, there is supposed to be some kind of moral or ethical code, or good sportsmanship, but that is very simplistic compared to the moral code of the Martial Arts.

D. The Ethical Issue:

I don't know if there is really any ethical issue when it comes to football, basketball or even in college football, but when it comes to self-defense, you have an ethical issue to confront. What right do I have to turn and defend myself? That is especially difficult for the Christian. He will have a real problem with that, especially when the Bible says, "Turn the other cheek." You have a problem here.

The Martial Arts sensei must himself personally have come to grips with this issue, and must have answered in his own heart and mind this issue, and be able to communicate this to his students, if he is to do an effective job as a Martial Arts sensei.

APPLICATION:

Now let's look at applying some of these coaching principles to the Martial Arts. Let's look at the Martial Arts themselves and apply the techniques and principles.

A. Requirements:

First of all, what are the requirements for the Martial Arts instructor, the sensei? I personally believe a person has not mastered the Martial Arts until he has reached the Sho-Dan rank, which is the first degree black belt. That should be considered a minimum for a sensei to be out on his own. Someone of a lower rank could coach, or teach, if he does so under the supervision of a black belt. But even a Sho-Dan rank, we feel, should get his coaching and teaching experience in the Martial Arts under the supervision of a higher ranking black belt, since the Sho-Dan is just the "rookie" stage in the black belts.

Teaching experience in the brown belt is important. Teaching is one thing that forces you to think of what you are doing, so you can communicate that.

As we said before, being able to practice is one thing, but being able to communicate and teach it is something else. For example, in Jujitsu, I can perform various moves and techniques, but you have to communicate it to the student for the student to perform it correctly and to use it. But to ask him to turn around and explain it to someone else, all of a sudden they will be stumped. To do it themselves is one thing, but to try and communicate a hand position, such as, where to grab an opponent, sometimes it becomes frustrating. But it is good experience, for it helps them to think through what they are doing. This is one of the keys to a successful Martial Arts sensei, the experience that comes from the knowledge of doing it and communicating it to others also. So by the time a person reaches the rank of a Sho-Dan, he is prepared to teach.

B. Coaching Karate:

Karate, by its nature, might imply a little bit closer attention to the ethical issues. One of the mistakes of the many sensei, I found among the Christian sensei, is that they will be so wrapped up with the external technique they will forget the ethical part. Nothing is sadder than for a Christian sensei to teach some students and then have the students to turn around and get into trouble for using the knowledge that they have improperly. So often, this comes simply from neglect of the sensei to stress the ethical issue.

A fair amount of time in coaching the ethics of Karate, when to use Karate, and how Karate fits into one's life, is essential. The teaching of when to use Karate, and how Karate fits into one's life, one's attitude as he learns Karate, one's attitude towards those who don't know Karate, these things can continually be brought up if the sensei is alert to this.

C. Karate Equipment:

The Dojo will normally have several full-length mirrors. It is a good thing to have a wall with several full-length mirrors, so the student can see his own technique. You can tell him he is punching wrong, but he won't believe you until he sees himself do it. Then all of a sudden it dawns on him, because he can also see exactly what you are seeing. You can see if he is punching correctly, and you might be able to mimic him to try and give him an idea, but he really doesn't see it himself, until he does it in front of a mirror. So this should be considered a basic piece of equipment for a dojo. And the student should be taught how to use the mirror properly to improve his form.

A hanging bag is always good for punching and kicking. The main purpose of this is to help the student to learn as he focuses his kicks or punches on a hanging bag. It helps him get the feel of contacting something solid. Now, pulling and kicking in midair is one thing. But pulling and kicking at a bag is something different. Then you get into the basic laws of physics concerning momentum. If the student doesn't get the practice of kicking something solid, when he gets out on the street and has the need, he might surprise himself.

It may be good when practicing on the hanging bag for the student to do so with street shoes on. It will make a great difference in the kick as opposed to bare feet.

I like to use boxing gloves sometimes, and have a target. You can have students pair up, with one pair putting them on and the other student is the attacker, with the student with the gloves moving them to various positions, so the student attacker can perform punching and foot techniques. This will allow him to come in with a little more focus and a harder technique. He's hitting a target. He is hitting a moving target. And he is hitting a small target. This will improve his focus upon what he is attacking.

Concerning the protective equipment that you can get on the market; it is good. It is fine for the black belt and someone who has developed control. We have found that the lower ranks, who have especially been trained from the very beginning in Martial Arts experience, using that equipment, they do not develop proper control of their techniques, because they rely upon that equipment as a safety factor, when showing the technique should be the safety factor. Often, in my dojo, when someone enters and they bring their equipment, I will not allow them to use that equipment in the dojo, until they use control. For some reason this does not happen with black belts, but I've seen it happen with brown belts, that when someone strips them of their equipment, then no one has control. That makes me nervous. When they don't use it, they don't have control. Then that gives you a psychological advantage. This should not be. The student, whether green belt, brown belt, black belt, or whatever, should develop control. And protective equipment should be used in the proper place, but it should not be used as a substitute for control. For when that happens, you can be dangerous.

The next piece of equipment that I like to use is the portable bag or dummy (similar to something you may have seen used in football), that has handles on it so one can hold it while another blocks or kicks. Sometimes you can use a mattress that is rolled up. One student can hold the blocking dummy to you, while another student can deliver full control strikes and kicks. This allows the student to get the feel of striking with full power, while the person holding the dummy moves back and forth, creating a moving target which we find an excellent drill.

Weight training is okay as a basic overall body conditioning. Weight training, in and of itself is of no factor when used in Karate, except as a general body conditioning.

D. Training Methods:

The sensei must know what his specific goal is. He must tailor his drills to his teaching method in order to achieve a certain goal. There must be something that you want to communicate, so that, at the end of the class, you have a sense of having accomplished something. You have to think through, "What do my students need to work on tonight?" "How are we going to cover the technique, in order to improve the student's ability in that particular technique?"

One of the things I like to do in sparring is to work on specific areas. Sometimes we'll have sparring just in hand techniques. If a student is strong in leg kicks and weak on the hand technique, it is worth it to work on the hands. I find that if a student is weak on the kicks, it is best to work on that technique.

You can spar from different stances. The student must then spar, using only one specific stance. Use different things like this to develop the overall ability of the student. .

E. Coaching Jujitsu:

Coaching Jujitsu is different from Karate, although the basic movements, of course, can be coached the same way as Karate, in the drills, the various hand placements, the forms of resistance, which must become automatic.

One good work is to have one student work on a Haku wrist stand and another to work on the Sho-Dan. In this, one or two other students grab the student with his eyes closed, reaching for the attacking hand. And at that point, he should immediately know which type of wrist stance to get into. But he should learn the rhythm just by the feel of his hand upon the attacker's hand. Drills like this might be helpful.

One of the things to remember is the types of drills you use. Jujitsu is not offensive. Karate is. You do not have the sparring that you have in Karate. But what I have found is you must rely upon the basic type of drills to develop the student's speed, reflexes and coordination and also the student's confidence. One of the things the students will question is, "Does this really work?" "Will it work on the street?" One of the things the student must do is learn how to flow from one subject to another, while he may be grasped from behind, or the forearm. He should learn to flow from one technique to the next. So the sensei should try to train him to develop the various skills, by coming up with new ideas.

One thing is for one student to attack while the other student blocks. Through this, he learns to use his specific Jujitsu form of arts. He must learn how to resist an overhand blow, a punch in the back or a kick in the back.

This is the key. The type of drills used. These determine the effectiveness of the trainee and the success of the sensei's training program.

Jujitsu becomes more mental. It must not be Dojo fights. You do not have nearly the danger in Karate, in Dojo fighting as you do in Jujitsu. The student must be trained to make the transition from the Dojo to the street. If necessary, practice out on the street sometimes. If you find this difficult, go find yourself a back alley. Have one be the aggressor while another be the defender. Now, don't go bouncing anyone off a brick wall, but with a little common sense, you might find this might be a help and practical. It will give them the training and experience.

A certain amount of things can be explained in lectures. I had the opportunity to learn Jujitsu in Japan, "straight from the horse's mouth," so to speak. However, the problem was I didn't speak Japanese and they didn't speak English. And unfortunately, I missed out a lot on the lectures and a lot of the literal explanation, but we were able to get by with mimic of what they did. But when it came to a verbal explanation, there was a problem. So, explaining the techniques is important. The student may not understand why you have to do a technique a certain way. So sometimes, explaining it to the students may be helpful.

Lectures should be given on the philosophy and the history of the Martial Arts. A classic example that I will never forget was a green belt in Judo, who had told me that Karate had been invented as a defense of Judo. I couldn't believe him. I just looked at him stunned. Supposedly by the time you get your green belt you know the difference between Karate and Judo and to know that Karate was not invented as a defense against Judo. However, it was not his fault. He was just repeating what he had heard in the Dojo.

A good understanding of style is necessary. There is nothing worse than a green belt coming up and asking you what style is. That is unforgivable. So lecture is important. Give enough lectures so the students will understand at least what style is and the history of the style. The student should at least know what you are talking about, when you mention the various styles are. So lectures are important.

And a certain amount of books should be recommended. Not every student out there is going to have the money or the interest in investing in a large Martial Arts library. This is going to be reserved for the sensei, and the serious sensei. But if a student is interested, he should be pointed in the direction of some books which are written in at least some of the fundamentals. All these things can be helpful. I have found that once you reach a certain level in the Martial Arts, and read from it intelligently, and reap benefits from it, if you know how to go about it. This is one thing that students need to be aware of that are available.

So coaching is not just a matter of teaching techniques. Coaching is a matter of leading and directing. That also involves the moral and ethical issues in the Martial Arts, not just the techniques.

An instructor may know when to get a student off training, while the student may not. So a sensei needs to help the student to know when to get off training, and what the extra issues are and how the Martial Arts relates to the student as a whole person. And it is important for the coach to really lead and direct the students.