

Importance of Character

When an untrained individual spars with someone who holds a rank of purple belt or higher for the first-time, it can truly feel like magic. As some have described it, it feels like you're in an ocean fighting a shark. Most people are blown away by what it feels like to fight someone who is trained in Jiu Jitsu, but with great power comes great responsibility. Jiu Jitsu is a tool. As such, it can be used for good or for evil.

That being said, it is imperative that martial artists work on their character. One's character will have an impact on how they treat themselves, those around them, and how they deal with difficult situations (what they do when it really matters). One's character will also show through from time to time during fighting when he is exposed to pressure.

Improving one's character is hard work. Just as a Jiu Jitsu practitioner should approach their technical development with some intentionality, character needs deliberate effort in order to develop to the full extent. Today, many are willing to compromise their character for the sake of likes or followers on social media. They seek popularity and try to capitalize on it at all costs, instead of trying to do the right thing and being an example for those around them. However, we believe that character development is an important aspect of reaching one's potential as a martial artist and a human being. Not to mention that everyone around you will benefit if you refine your character.

Think of the most despised professions. Chances are you thought of the professions you did because of the stereotype about the character of people who tend to hold those jobs. Any skilled profession and a character deficit is a bad combination. This is not any different with martial arts. As such, it is imperative that upper belts not only set an example in terms of their skill and technical ability, but also in terms of their character.

The idea that martial artists need to hold themselves to a higher ethical and moral code has been around for a long time. Case in point, the seven virtues of a warrior in 7-5-3 code are derived from the Bushido code of the Samurai warriors. The Bushido code strongly influenced and still permeates the Japanese culture.

THE SEVEN VIRTUES OF BUSHIDO

義

GI
Integrity

Be acutely honest throughout your dealings with all people. Believe in justice, not from other people, but from yourself. To the true warrior, all points of view are deeply considered regarding honesty, justice and integrity.



Warriors make a full commitment to their decisions.

礼

REI
Respect

True warriors have no reason to be cruel. They do not need to prove their strength. Warriors are courteous even to their enemies. Warriors are not only respected for their strength in battle, but also by their dealings with others.



The true strength of a warrior becomes apparent during difficult times.

勇

YU
Heroic Courage

Hiding like a turtle in a shell is not living at all. A true warrior must have heroic courage. It is absolutely risky. It is living life completely, fully, and wonderfully.



Heroic courage is not blind. It is intelligent and strong.

名譽

MEIYO
Honor

Warriors have only one judge of honor and character, and this is themselves. Decisions they make and how these decisions are carried out is a reflection of whom they truly are.



You cannot hide from yourself.

仁

JIN
Compassion

Through intense training and hard work the true warrior becomes quick and strong. They are not as most people. They develop a power that must be used for good. They have compassion. They help their fellow man at every opportunity.



If an opportunity does not arise, they go out of their way to find one.

真

MAKOTO
Honesty and Sincerity

When warriors say that they will perform an action, it is as good as done. Nothing will stop them from completing what they say they will do. They do not have to "give their word." They do not have to "promise."



Speaking and doing are the same action.

忠義

CHU
Duty and Loyalty


Warriors are responsible for everything that they have done and everything that they have said, and all of the consequences that follow. They are immensely loyal to all of those in their care.



To everyone that they are responsible for, they remain fiercely true.

Japanese Samurai were required to observe this moral code known as "Bushido." Bushido is literally translated as the way of the warrior.

So What Exactly is the 7-5-3 Code?



7-5-3 CODE

7 VIRTUES OF A WARRIOR

- Rectitude
- Courage
- Benevolence
- Politeness/Propriety
- Honesty/Sincerity
- Honor
- Loyalty

5 KEYS TO HEALTH

- Rational Nutrition
- Sensible Exercise
- Efficient Rest
- Proper Hygiene
- Positive Attitude

3 STATES OF MIND

- Zanshin - Alertness, Awareness
- Mushin - Clear Mind
- Fudoshin - Emotional Balance

The code is comprised of 7 virtues of a warrior, 5 keys to health, and 3 states of mind. These provide guidelines as well as goals for self-improvement. For instance, a year from now you should be wiser, more patient, more virtuous human being. You should work on your health, as well as ability to clear your mind, maintain emotional balance and focus.

Every Jiu Jitsu practitioner should constantly work on growing in the seven virtues (yes, all seven, you don't get to choose). Your approach to health will have a profound impact on your Jiu Jitsu as well as the overall quality of your life. As such, the code contains five keys to great health. Finally, there are different states of mind that a fighter needs to master in order to be the best Jiu Jitsu practitioner they can be.

Definitions of the 7 Virtues of a Warrior

- 1) **Rectitude** – morally correct thinking and behavior. It is simply the willingness to do the right thing regardless of consequences.
- 2) **Courage** – ability to do something in the face of fear. It is the inner strength to face fear or resist opposition.
- 3) **Benevolence** – a disposition to be kind and to do good.
- 4) **Politeness/propriety** – intentional consideration and courtesy towards people around you and the situation at hand. This means treating others with respect.
- 5) **Honesty/sincerity** –only telling the truth to yourself and people around you. A genuine integrity in character and action.
- 6) **Honor** – To have honor for someone is to have profound respect and reverence towards them. To have honor yourself is to hold yourself to a high ethical standard. If you break that ethical standard, you lose honor.
- 7) **Loyalty** – faithfulness in relationships and alliance.

Notes on the 5 Keys to Health.

- 1) **Rational nutrition** – You don't have to be on a strictest or the newest diet. However, if 85 percent of the food you consume is not healthy, you will eventually pay a price for your lifestyle choices. On the other hand, if 85 or 90 percent of the diet you consume is healthy, in the long run, you will reap the benefits.

- 2) **Sensible exercise** – This implies a balance. Everyone needs some exercise (perhaps at least a few times a week). However, avoid overtraining as it will also lead to health problems. When trying to get in shape pursue longevity as opposed to fast results. This will require the exercise of patience.
- 3) **Efficient rest** – Rest is just as important as exercise is. Do not neglect it.
- 4) **Proper hygiene** – in the context of Jiu Jitsu, this means washing your Gi, or other training clothes after every single practice, showering before each practice, making sure your nails are properly trimmed, and making sure you take a thorough shower as soon as you can after practice.
- 5) **Positive attitude** – Your mind has a tremendous impact on your development and performance. Take conscious effort to recharge and make sure that you are maintaining a positive attitude.

Definitions and Notes on the 3 States of Mind.

- 1) **Zanshin** — This means awareness, alertness, and readiness. This means being prepared 24/7. Unlike a boxer, who may train for three months to prepare and get his body ready for a fight, Jiu Jitsu practitioner has no off-season. You never know when you might need to use your Jiu Jitsu. As such, you should be always prepared. Jiu Jitsu is a lifestyle. It is important to develop an ability to focus so that during a fight you can solve specific problems in front of you.
- 2) **Mushin** — Literally translated as “no mind.” With too much on one’s mind, a fighter can not react properly to situations in front of them. As such, it is important to be able to clear one’s mind. During a fight this might mean clearing one’s mind of the adversity just faced or mistakes just made and focusing on problems at hand.
- 3) **Fudoshin** — This means a “state of emotional balance.” To achieve this balance means to control variations in your emotions. There should not be big ups and downs. During a fight this means controlling both positive and negative emotions. For instance, you must control fear in order to react in an optimal manner, but you must also control excitement in order to avoid reckless mistakes.

When can you work on Zanshin, Mushin, and Fudoshin? During practice is a good time to start. When first walking in on the mat, that’s why we bow. Take this time to intentionally clear you mind. Some days this might be easy. Other days, when you have more going on outside of Jiu Jitsu, it will be more difficult. But don’t waste an opportunity to practice clearing your mind. You can practice Zanshin during drilling and sparring. Avoid unnecessary talk during drilling. If you have a question it is absolutely appropriate to ask your instructor or your training partner. However, if you don’t have any questions, don’t distract yourself or your training partners

(socializing is great, but keep it to before and after practices). Instead, focus as much as you can on the move you are practicing. Feel every single motion. Clear your mind, and focus entirely on the technique. Finally, when you are sparing work on your ability to maintain an emotional balance. As mentioned above, control both negative and positive emotions. This will let you think and react in a rational manner.