

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTOR

Ask me this question when I was merely a white belt starting out, I would give back this answer: “An instructor is a black belt that knows a lot, if not everything, about the martial arts and teaches that to younger belts.” Now with the title of ‘Instructor’ in my name, I can give a more realistic answer - being an instructor at the Karate 5 Dojo means that I have very little knowledge of the martial arts, but have a desire, a thirst, to learn more, and to see younger belts be better than what they were yesterday.

Sensei Wilson used to ask the class a question, and would not give the answer until somebody said the correct answer themselves. The question was, “Why does a creek make a noise?” Everyone, myself included, kept saying things like “the animals living in the creek”, “the rocks at the bottom”, or “the water in the creek constantly moves”. None were entirely wrong, but not the answer Sensei was looking for. Finally, he gave us a comparison to a river, but it still took us a minute to get the answer other than “the river is wider” or “the river has a stronger current”. The biggest reason why a creek makes a noise is because it is shallow.

Sensei told us that we the students were the creek of the dojo, our knowledge only flowing so far, we were considered shallow in the arts. The black belts and instructors were like a river, having a deeper understanding of the arts, but still needing to flow somewhere to gain more knowledge. The ocean is what the other senseis, masters, and grandmasters are at the dojo. Any of these people will tell you that even they don’t know everything about the martial arts, but that doesn’t stop them from sharing what they do know with the rest of us. The ocean provides life to those that depend on it, just as the senseis of Karate 5 provide the way of life called karate with us who are willing to receive it.

With the knowledge that Sensei shares with me, I am very honored to be one of the instructors that he trusts to teach younger belts his knowledge. That being said, I do not expect myself to become better than Sensei Wilson when I learn or teach something, nor do I expect the other students to become better than him or myself. I do want to see them grow in the martial arts and become better than they were yesterday. My goal for each class, for each day, is to learn something myself, even if it’s as small as don’t do something in class, and make sure those around me have learned something as well, whether it’s the same thing I learned or something completely different.

Being an instructor at the Karate 5 dojo means that I am responsible for student growth in not only martial arts, but in their life in general, to make them a better person overall. It also means that I am the role model the students, and parents, look up to, so I need to carry myself in a way that shows that I can teach the students what they need and learn as much as I can from the senseis. There is still a long road ahead of me, but I am proud to be called an Instructor of the Karate 5 Dojo.

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