

A Perspective on Self-development and Motivation in Karate



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IOGKF World Technical Advisor, Sensei Bakkies Laubscher, takes the time to give his perspective on the mental and personal development side of Karate training, an aspect which is too commonly overlooked in today's society...

Introduction

The 'Why'

For everything we do or attempt in life, we (should) have a 'Why'. The strength of this 'Why' is directly related to our success in whatever we attempt. The same therefore applies to our progress and development in the martial arts – a strong and clearly defined "Why" will enable us to define, formulate and pursue our objectives. The intensity with which we attempt to reach these objectives and the energy we put into this attempt in a sober, thinking, controlled way, will determine our success in our own Karate Do development.

We all have a different 'Why' for practicing martial arts – ranging from health reasons such as keeping fit to self-defence reasons or a need for social interaction. It is also important to realise that our 'Why' can change at any stage along the way and that we can 'upscale' or 'downscale' our 'Why'. Upon reaching a certain point along the way, certain environmental and/or personality changes may have occurred, influencing our advancement. I do not think that any of us started our Karate training with the idea of becoming a Master – it is the result of a few 'Why' changes along the way, when realisation and clarity manifest themselves *because of a natural filtering process that eventually determines the state of expertise.*

Motivational Perspective

There has always been a relatively big 'drop-out' rate in Karate and there are many reasons for this, usually because of a change in the Karate-ka's environment or personal life. In the process many people with good potential are lost. It could be argued that societal and economic changes also play a role, but these can be controlled by motivating people properly.

The drop-out rate does have an impact on the Dojo and serious Karate instructors because of the financial implications. Unfortunately, compromise and accommodation techniques, such as adjusting traditional teachings downwards and giving people 'what they want', are short-term thinking and will eventually have a detrimental effect on traditional Karate in the future.

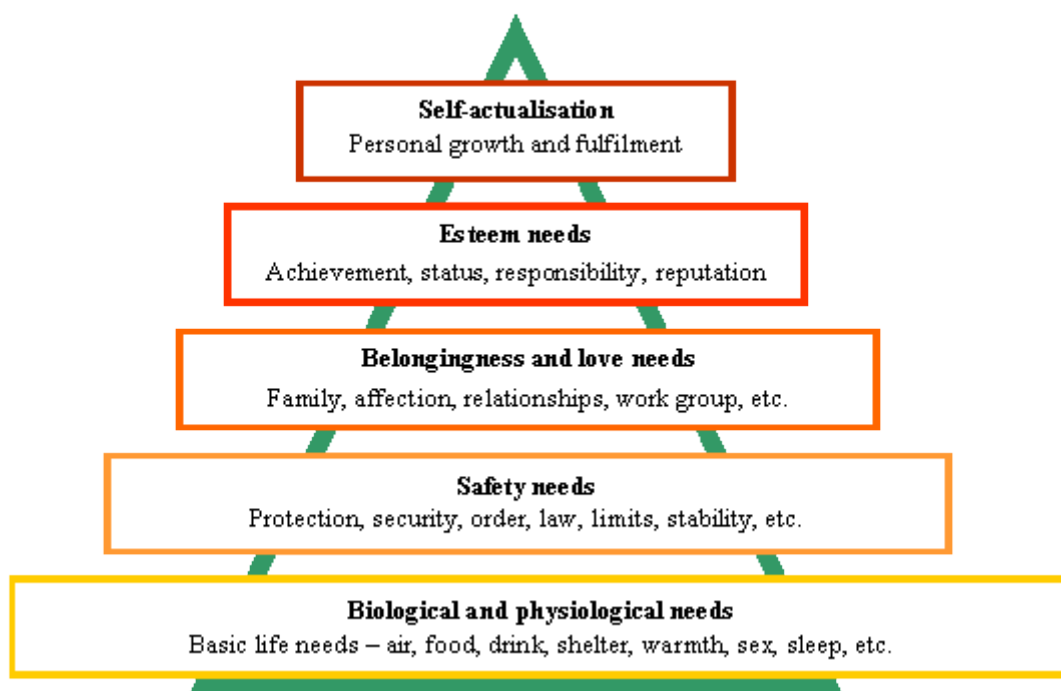
Instead of compromising on our presentation of traditional, classical Karate, we should use motivational techniques to retain members.

There are many motivational models but, basically, motivation can be grouped in two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic. With extrinsic, we mean those external factors that drive a person. Factors such as fear, peer pressure, the expectations of the parents or the Sensei,

and threats – a combination of positive and negative factors, because people do not always do something because they want to do it, sometimes they feel they should do it!

Intrinsic means to do things because you want to do them – you enjoy doing them and you are growing as a person while pursuing these goals. A good teacher (instructor or senior as a role model) will skilfully utilise both types of motivation, gradually moving away from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation by ‘painting the big picture’ for the [student](#) and periodically adjusting it to set new objectives. With our grading system, we have a perfect structure for this: a young Sho, Ni or San dan would need a lot more extrinsic (butt kick!) motivation to get to the required level, but from Yon dan onwards the approach to Karate should become a lot more ‘self-driven’ (based on Maslov’s ‘self-actualisation’ need discussed below).

To understand how people determine or define their ‘Why’, it is necessary to understand people’s needs. Abraham Maslov’s hierarchy of needs, defined in the 1940/50’s, is a very basic [model](#) but it is still very relevant. Maslov defined five basic needs. It was expanded in the 1990’s to eight needs, which are basically incorporated into the original five.



Maslov’s five needs

If we study the diagram we can see that 1 to 4 are extrinsic factors and 4 (50/50) and 5 are intrinsic. We also notice that the higher you ascend on the pyramid, the more it becomes ‘self-driven’ or intrinsic – **self-actualization**. This implies personal growth, maturity and fulfilment are at the top of the pyramid – think about a billionaire who continues with business ventures to make more millions! In our case, a Master or senior who still tries to improve all the time!

As instructors, we can use 2 to 4 to motivate our students ; 1 and 5 we don’t really have control over.

In practice, very basically, we can see that:

Need 2 We need to create an environment of safety, trust, discipline and consistent standards in the Dojo without turning people into sheep or little ‘mini-me’s’ of the instructor! Everybody cleaning the floor together, tidying the Dojo and adhering to the Dojo rules contributes to a positive environment. With the focus on free-thinking and human rights, people have forgotten the importance of discipline in a learning situation. No effective transfer of knowledge is possible if chaos prevails in the class!

Need 3 We need to encourage positive social interaction. It should be obvious what the negative impact of uncontrolled social behaviour, by teachers and seniors in front of their students, can be on a Dojo or organisation. Students have their own friends – they need a teacher and a role model, not another friend!

Need 4 The importance of recognition can never be emphasised enough. From the lowest to the highest grade, a simple *‘that was really much good/much better than last time’* could change a person’s ‘Why’ for the better indefinitely. But it is important to realise that people are not (all) dumb – they know their grading was not as good as you try and make it out to be! Be realistic in your recognition and be careful of ‘teacher’s pet’ situations, where the same person or Sensei’s friends and family are the only ones getting the recognition! This is also where delegation begins to play an important role – to have someone realise that you have complete trust and believe in their ability to do a task correctly.

What we also need to realise and learn from this model is that you cannot really motivate someone to prepare for their next Dan grading or be as serious about Karate training as Miyagi Chojun Sensei, if they are going through a divorce, having their house repossessed, just got married or just got fired.

All the above should be used by instructors for the benefit of their students and by instructors and students for their own benefit.

The Total Karate-ka

“Brains and beauty are God’s gifts; character is your own achievement” – Anonymous

Over the years, during IOGKF South Africa’s annual Instructors Gasshuku (where we do planning, motivational and enrichment seminars in addition to traditional training), we have formulated a prototype model, called the “Total Karate-ka” which we use to help our instructors and members define their ‘Why’ and their objectives to get to that ‘Why’. These are the areas you need to focus on if you are serious about the martial arts!

Note that a vision statement is a ‘dream’ or ‘pie in the sky’ – it can never be reached or achieved, but it is used to direct you to what or where you want to be. It explains why we speak about a martial art or ‘way’ – an art or ‘way’ is ongoing and is not a destiny, it is a journey!

We have basically defined a ‘pie in the sky’ or **vision** of what the perfect or ‘Total Karate Person’ should look like and we have defined the following basic qualities:

<u>Physical abilities :</u>	<u>Personal or Behaviour qualities :</u>
<p><i>We profess to be practicing a fighting art, so physical abilities are non-negotiable!</i></p>	<p><i>Higaonna Sensei has three very strong values: loyalty, honesty and respect! We added a few and they are not necessarily listed in priority – you determine what is important for yourself!</i></p> <p><i>An important fact is that people <u>cannot change their character</u>. Character is manifested by the time you are ten years old, but you can adjust and control your behaviour with <u>constant effort</u>.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ General Fitness ○ Power ○ Speed ○ Physical appearance ○ Technical correctness ○ <u>Ability to apply</u> technical skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Loyalty – Loyalty to yourself, your teacher, your fellow Karate-ka, your country association and your international association. ○ Self-discipline – Starting with your own appearance, attitude and behaviour. This also <u>continues off the Dojo floor!</u> ○ Maturity – Your students, teacher and fellow students do not expect the same behaviour from a yellow belt and a Yon dan. ○ Objectivity – The concept is probably emotional control! The ability to separate yourself entirely from the emotional when confronted with a decision-making or conflict situation. ○ Consideration – For other people, starting by coming onto the Dojo floor with a clean Gi that does not smell unpleasant and allowing other people to eat from the buffet first! ○ Manners – Every country has different customs, but good manners are universal – listening more to what other people say than what you speak, is a golden rule. No swearing, etc. in the Dojo! ○ Endurance – Never give up! You can develop this by correct positive thinking. ○ Perseverance – Don't stop when you are tired – continue regardless! ○ Approachability – Can anybody, junior or senior, speak with you, or do you have such strong pre-conceived ideas that they do not even consider it? ○ Honesty – Will you buy a second-hand car from this person? ○ Commitment – One of the finest character traits to have. ○ Human Being – I usually do the following test: I take that which makes the person important away from them and see what's left of that person! Some people are naked if you take their money or position on the Board or Karate away from them! Vanity does not cover up everything! ○ Integrity – The most important characteristic in my

In the June newsletter, I touched on the physical side of Karate with the article on Hojo Undo and most of us focus the physical side ninety per cent of the time. You should pay just as much attention to personal qualities as you do to physical attributes! Karate is 50/50 physical prowess and personality. This is not a new concept – in Latin we have the famous expression:

‘Mens sana in corpore sano’

– ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’ or ‘a sound mind in a sound body’!

So now you can re-establish your own ‘Why’ and set yourself objectives to get there – you might need to start with a ‘strengths and weaknesses’ analysis of your own physical abilities and personality traits. A simple example could look like this:

WHY	OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
I need Karate for my own growth	To improve my loyalty	<p>I will never, ever discuss any other person in a negative way.</p> <p>I will always defend my fellow students if they are being criticised by others – regardless.</p> <p>I will never speak negatively of any other instructor from our association</p>

‘The better you do something, the more you enjoy doing it and the stronger your ‘Why’ becomes. That is why constant practice, progressing from supervised practice to self-practice, in both physical and personality/behaviour areas, is not negotiable if you want to truly get into the martial arts!’

Acknowledgements

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