

Woods's Top 16 Reasons Why Students Stop Attending 2

Last time, I discussed 10 of Andrew Woods' 16 reasons why student stop attending class. The remaining six reasons are: (5) fear of injury, (6) lack of positive feedback, (10) teacher's pets, (11) instructor star syndrome, (15) poor testing procedures, and (16) too much emphasis on tournaments. I felt that those discussed in part 1 had been addressed by martial arts businesses, but unfortunately, could not be fully addressed because they were often self-contradictory. I have put these seven in part 2 because, at least partially, I agree with them.

• Fear of Injury

It is logical that a student would want to avoid injury. If attending class means having *no* chance of injury, then he is not engaging in a martial art, but if it means having a *frequent* chance of injury, why would he continue attending? He is not training for war, after all, and even if he were, frequent injury prevents his facing battles in the future. Martial arts classes should be challenging but safe.

• Lack of Positive Feedback

It is understandable that, in a learning environment, corrections will far outnumber praises. If the master is too easily pleased, the student will have no standard to which to aspire. However, it is also helpful to, as Ken Blanchard suggests, catch the student doing something right. If you praise and congratulate 20% of the time, the other 80% is much easier to take.

• Teacher's Pets & Instructor Star Syndrome

If an instructor is so puerile as to not notice he is favoring students or favoring himself and his own aggrandizement rather than his students' improvement, the students *should* be refusing to return. A certain amount of publicity may be well-earned and may make the students proud of their instructor, but the instructor's needing to feel kingly by making the students feel like serfs is taking advantage of the superior position held by any instructor.

• Poor Testing Procedures

I have long had a problem with the inconsistencies of formal testing. We have formal tests because, by and large, students do not like to be submitted to the subjective judgments of one person (the head instructor). In a formal exam, allegedly the requirements are known in advance and the board of examiners will come to a consensus about the student's skills. Unfortunately, because grading standards are not consistent, often a student has to take an exam—often an expensive exam—more than a few times. While a student should accept a failing grade as part of the learning process, he should easily be able to see how to correct his errors and compare his performance to those students that did pass, for his own edification.

• Too Much Emphasis on Tournaments

If the school emphasizes tournament competition, a student should not be surprised if he is urged to enter tournaments. Too often, however, the school does not make this emphasis clear when the student is enrolling. If you are studying to self-defense or self-development and your teachers or other students are constantly nudging you onto the tournament floor, it's time to find a school that blends better with one's goals.

We are a long way from 1993 and many martial arts business have addressed Woods's challenges. Still, the above concerns linger.