



Lakewood Budo Kai

Fujitsu, Karate, and Women's Self Defense

The Meaning of Sensei

You probably heard the word Sensei your very first class. During the first class, students are told that Sensei means teacher. Actually, Sensei "loosely" translates to the word teacher. Apparently Japanese terminology doesn't exactly translate into English. Or perhaps there are hidden meanings in the words. Even in English we use words in funny ways. Does "Bad" really mean bad as in you shouldn't do it or does "Bad" mean "that's cool?"

Later, students find out that Sensei literally means "one who has gone before". We explain that the instructor experienced everything that the student is currently experiencing. At the start of training the instructor was a new student and learned how to bow into the Dojo and onto the mats. As a student, he didn't have a Gi until he was told he was ready to get a uniform. Like every student, the instructor struggled when learning new techniques and attempting to perfect the moves he already knew.

Students typically don't realize what Sensei means until many years later. They discover that by being a Sensei, the instructor speaks from the heart when trying to help students. Because the instructor struggled during his training, he has the knowledge and experience to help students overcome their challenges.

So when you hear the word Sensei, you'll know that it means teacher but also something much more ... a person that can guide you through the process of learning the martial arts and overcoming your challenges.