



NEWSLETTER

Lakewood Budo Kai

Spring 2026

Feels like it's getting warmer already! Spring is right around the corner, and we haven't had as bad a winter as others have had throughout the country. Days are going to be getting longer, and warmer/hotter weather is on the horizon.

On March 6th instead of our normal open workout, we used that time for Kyu testing. We had a large group to test this time. It was a fun and exciting night.

Friday May 8th it will be Dojo's 47th Anniversary, just three more years until the big 50. We are actively fundraising and starting to plan to celebrate our 50th milestone in 2029 with a weekend long event, that will include scheduled workouts and a catered dinner at the end.

There will be no class on May 25th in observance of Memorial Day.

Enjoy the following submitted articles. Until next time, see you on the mats.

NEWS / EVENTS

CALENDAR EVENTS

05/08 Dojo Anniversary

05/25 Memorial Day No Class

DOJO PROMOTIONS

Congratulations to our students who were recently promoted

CHILDREN'S CLASS

Evan Castaneda

Paloma Chavez Paez

Malorie Fernandez

Adam Hebert

Kyler Mesa

Rylen Mesa

Esme Perez Valle

Luna Velazquez

JUJITSU CLASS

Adam Adjundi

Sean DuFrene

Jaden Garcia

Arron Hebert

Tung Kieu

Aanthony Laborian

Rylee Marr

Vanesa Piscazzi

KARATE CLASS

Wendy Michelle Levin

Anny Ley

Martial Arts Protocol

By Jim Kelton, Shihan

I was probably a white belt when I first heard the word protocol. At the time, I didn't really know what protocol was or what it meant. Everyone else in class was a higher rank and I knew that I just needed to do what I was told.

Later, I learned that protocol involved our formal conduct when interacting with, and showing respect to, high ranking visitors and guest instructors. The protocol we follow today is as ancient as the arts we study and shows our dedication to upholding Japanese traditions.

In addition to our normal etiquette and dojo courtesy rules, students learn the proper actions to be taken when a high-ranking person is in class. One of the first things we learn is to listen how the person is introduced. By paying special attention to the person's title (e.g. O'Sensei, Shihan, Professor) we know how to address the individual. We use this title when speaking to or about this person. In general, we do not speak to a high-ranking person unless they first speak to us or ask us a question.

I was a brown belt when my instructor asked me if I would like to take a trip with him and train with a higher-ranking instructor. I jumped at the chance and, instead of enjoying a relaxing vacation in San Diego with my family, I went to Las Vegas during the summer where I worked out with my instructor and an even higher-ranking black belt.

We didn't get a fancy hotel room. Instead, we slept in the dojo. I quickly learned that my instructor woke up early and it was up to me to clean the dojo before each training session. By cleaning the dojo, I showed my instructor and the higher-ranking black belt how much I valued the dojo and the training that I was about to receive. You can imagine how hot the room was during the Las Vegas summer without air conditioning. The days were long, but I enjoyed each and every training session.

Protocol teaches us that a high-ranking person's time is much more valuable than ours. By arriving at a dojo prior to higher ranks, we find we can learn from them if they make any comments prior to the start of class or the event. In addition, by arriving early, we are more likely to be taught additional techniques or learn more about the martial arts.

Benefits Children Get from Martial Arts

By Russell Kelley, Sensei

Martial arts can help with some of the many challenges that children might face these days even more so than they might have had to deal with in the past. These challenges can range from being bullied, either at school or online, obesity issues, short attention span, athletic skill, low confidence or a poor self-image. The general public's image of martial arts, mainly due to TV and movies, is that it is all about fighting, this is far from the truth. The martial arts are more about building up and strengthening one's mind, body, and character, which makes it great for children to get involved in.

“Bullying is something that no one should ever have to experience.”

The most helpless feeling for a parent is having a child who is being bullied. Bullying has been around for generations, but things have evolved due to the use of social media. Fears of going to school, out in public, or being online because of being bullied are common issue. Martial arts are one way to help children gain the tools that they need to combat this terrible form of abuse.

“Success is the backbone of confidence.”

Martial arts training helps children to become more confident by teaching them how to set and accomplish personal goals, through the progression of belts. With each successful goal completion, skill acquired, or belt rank, children become increasingly confident in their abilities and they gain self-esteem.

“Walk away from confrontation, do not engage.”

The most difficult thing of a confrontation is to simply walk away from it, with social media it's even more difficult. The one that walks away can be labeled a coward, which can make bullying more severe, not only in person but also on social media. Children that are confident, has high self-esteem, and is self-confident, walking away becomes a lot easier. Children that understand they have the choice to engage or not is a very empowering feeling. If a physical confrontation is unavoidable, knowing that you can defend yourself is very important. A very terrifying feeling for a bullying victim is not knowing how to defend themselves if forced to do so. Having the knowledge of how to defend themselves will prepare the victim for a fight and can help to eliminate the threat quickly, reducing the likelihood of serious injury, and aid in escaping the situation as soon as possible.

The physical health benefits that are gained during martial arts classes are very numerous. Just to list a few: improved respiratory health, muscle building, flexibility, weight loss, and improved reflexes and coordination. All these helps improve a child's athletic ability and helps reduce obesity issues. The repetitive training in martial arts is helpful in improving a child's attention span. With the mental focus that this type of training requires helps a person to keep on track and stick to one task and learn it.

Saying "I Can't" Should Not Be Allowed in Class

By Russell Kelley, Sensei

One of the most common phrases an instructor might hear a new student say, especially from children, is "I can't". I know I personally do not like and can only imagine that no instructor likes hearing that phrase said by any student. In my experience, when most children start taking classes with us it is their first experience not only with martial arts but their first experience in any physical activity outside of school or playing with friends.

Let's talk about using the phrase "I can't" for a minute. When a student starts saying they can't do something they are already doubting themselves; submitting to defeat before they even try. Beside doubt new students have a fear of being hurt or getting hurt. Seeing other students performing exercises or techniques that they have been doing for some time with ease gives them anxiety and makes them nervous. If this mental barrier increases, it can lead to the student quitting.

What are you as an instructor supposed to do? Work with the student and do the three following things. Remove the doubt. Remove the fear. Positive encouragement.

I find taking a few minutes to talk to the student can help. Encourage them that they can perform the exercise or technique they are being asked to do. Do the exercise or technique with them breaking it down to simple actions can help them realize that they are able to perform the activity. Pairing them up with another student that is of similar rank, not a higher rank student but one that is of lower rank experiences white or yellow belt, to work with is helpful in relieving the anxiety of doubt and fear of hurting themselves. Encouragement has far more weight to it when it comes from a peer than when it comes from a higher rank or the instructor.

If they are working with a group, the worst thing an instructor can do is remove them from that group because it will make them feel they are being singled out. This will make them feel like the spotlight is on them and increase their nervousness and anxiety. Only remove them from the group if there is a safety concern or if it is in the interest of the well-being of the student. If you must remove them from the group for one of the mentioned reasons, take them to an adjacent room, or if you can't, out of sight of the rest of the class so that you can talk with them. Giving them this little special attention helps relieve their anxiety about taking classes.

Removing the doubt, removing the fear, and giving positive encouragement will help any student with their growth. With doing that you can turn a student on the edge of quitting into a long-time student.

Lessons Learned from Danzan Ryu Jujitsu and Physical Therapy

By Narin Rath, Sempai

Trust, respect, discipline, and personal development are some of the core values of Danzan Ryu Jujitsu as a student is partnered with another to perform their techniques. Without these values taught by a higher-ranked student or a sensei, injuries can occur to the student or to their partner. For instance, one of Danzan Ryu's curriculums are throwing techniques. An untrained individual being thrown can injure their head, their hip, or both, if they are not taught how to breakfall in different directions. Breakfalls are fundamental in Danzan Ryu to protect one's head, spine, and hip. They are emphasized at the beginning of class by tucking in one's head to their chest, rolling diagonally across one's back, and to slap the mat with one's hand. Additionally, slapping the mat with one's hand allows the impact energy to be transferred throughout the body rather than directing the impact to the back or hip. Ultimately, by learning to breakfall, throws can be properly performed without concern of injury.

While injury prevention is one of the goals of each Jujitsu session, injuries can still occur, albeit rarely and unintentionally. Throughout my four years of practicing Danzan Ryu Jujitsu, I have had four injuries that resulted from my active lifestyle but presented itself in Jujitsu. Each injury could have been prevented by many factors, but stretching was a factor that I neglected the most. Thankfully, as a prospective Physical Therapy student working in the profession as an Aide, I was able to rehabilitate my injuries with the guidance of my Physical Therapy Director. During this time, not only did I learn a lot about the profession, but I understood the "how" and "why" injuries can occur. Without delving into the minutia, the main gist is that if one body part is injured, other body parts are affected as a form of compensation. Nonetheless, I am able to use my rehabilitative experience as an example to empathize and be compassionate with patients recovering from an injury or from surgery.

At this point in time, I am currently rehabilitating a second-time injury to my lumbosacral area. The first time it happened was when I first started Danzan Ryu. Years of heavy weightlifting resulted in my body becoming stiff. After a few sessions of being thrown, my lumbosacral area was strained. Fortunately, I was advised to stretch over time, and have done so since then, yet it wasn't enough. Years later, one of the advance breakfalls caused my hips to take a majority of the impact and led to my second lumbosacral injury. Since then, I have doubled the frequency of my stretches from one time a day to two or three times a day. Thankfully, I now no longer have pain and am able to do my advance breakfalls again, to which I am ecstatic about.

Nevertheless, weightlifting has many benefits to the mind and body, but it most often strengthens the body in one-dimension, or one plane of motion. For instance, the barbell squat works in the sagittal plane, an imaginary line that divides the body symmetrically from the left and right. In order for the barbell to move vertically up and down, the hips and knee have to flex and extend. In contrast, Jujitsu works in three-dimensions, utilizing the frontal (front and back of the body), the transverse (upper and lower body), and the aforementioned sagittal plane, where twisting and contortion of the body is involved. These motions work in conjunction and movements are quick and jerky. Further, these movements are novel stresses placed upon the body, and for a stiff individual, can result in injury. Fortunately, there are stretches that facilitate the incorporation of the other planes of motion and can help in rehabilitation and post-exercise recovery.

With this in mind, each injury is a story in itself, teaching valuable lessons to those that are open to learn from it. To say that this second lumbosacral injury is a life-changer is an understatement. The injury was traumatic that slightly bending my back caused unfathomable pain to my back. After this recovery, I became a firm believer of Physical Therapy, allowing me to bring awareness to the benefits it can garner. It has also changed my health priorities. That is, to not chase high amount of weight for strength training like I used to, but to have a good

amount of strength for daily life. Additionally, to stretch more than once a day, to continue eating well, and to get adequate amount of sleep. In essence, to promote longevity so one can live to old age without risk of injury.

Fellow reader, regardless of being a Danzan Ryu practitioner or not, injuries are your body's way of signaling you to rest and rehabilitate, even if your mind is telling you to push through the pain. If you are a Danzan Ryu practitioner, please trust yourself to learn breakfalls properly and safely. Additionally, trust your partner to perform techniques correctly and without risk of injury. If the pain persists, I will highly recommend seeking an outpatient Physical Therapy clinic to rehabilitate. It's better late than never, and the earlier the pain is addressed, then there is less worry long-term. Further, one can always consult myself, and I'd be more than happy to help. In the end, I hope your ongoing jujitsu journey bodes well without injury.

SENSEI'S NOTES

The "Got To" verses the "Get To" mindset

It is easy these days to get buried under the long list of things we "Got To" do. "I got to go to work". "I got to teach classes". "I got to prep for testing". "I got to go to the store". This mindset turns everything we do into something we are obligated to do, not something we want to do.

Using "I get to" is more than just a simple rewording of "I got to." It's a mindset shift that moves us from feeling trapped or burdened by responsibilities to recognizing the privilege and opportunity in those moments. Instead of feeling like we're required to do something, we begin to see the value in it. This simple change in language can have a profound impact on how we approach not only daily tasks but life in general.

When we say, "I got to," we often feel forced or obligated to complete a task, which can create stress or resentment. This mindset shift from "I got to" to "I get to," however,

allows us to see the positive side of our daily duties. It reinforces the idea that we have control and choice, and it helps us embrace gratitude for the experiences and opportunities we're given.

By replacing "I got to" with "I get to," we begin to focus on what we have rather than what we lack. Gratitude has been shown to increase happiness and reduce stress. Making this shift a regular part of your life can be incredibly powerful. Start by paying attention to moments when you automatically say, "I got to," and consciously replace them with "I get to." It's a simple practice, but over time, it will start to reshape how you view your responsibilities. The more you practice, the easier it becomes to approach life with a sense of gratitude and excitement

This small shift from obligation to opportunity can completely change how we show up. It reframes our work as a privilege rather than a burden. As martial arts practitioners we get to be a positive force in our communities. We get to watch our young students grow in confidence and discipline. We get to see adults reach goals they never thought possible.