

North America



WADO INTERNATIONAL KARATE-DO FEDERATION

DOJO CONNECTION

DECEMBER 2007

East Coast Wado Karate Club

Belt examinations were held recently at our WIKF Nova Scotia club with the following promotions being made:

Kids Colored Belts

8th Kyu; Yellow Belt

- Will Cutler
- Stephen Forrest
- Joshua Oates
- Nathan Oates
- James Williams

7th Kyu; Orange Black stripe

- Jacob Cole
- Oliver Cormier
- Thomas Hong
- Shawn Murley
- Colton Smith

7th Kyu; Orange Belts

- Danielle Charette
- Logan Miller

Grading Adults

8th Kyu; Yellow Belts

- Wendy Johnson
- James Black
- Abel Yewondwossen

SYSTEMS THINKING

James Bender author of, How to Talk Well, tells a story about a farmer who won the blue ribbon at the state fair for the quality of his corn. When interviewed concerning how he grew such quality corn the farmer reported that he shared his seed corn with his neighbors. When asked why he did that he replied, "Why sir, don't you know? The wind picks

up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn."

The story of the farmer and his corn illustrates what is known as systems thinking. The late Dr. W. Edwards Deming explained that, "A system is a network of interdependent components that work together to accomplish the aim of the system." Since a system is a collection of parts that interact as a whole to optimize performance for the system as a whole we can think of WIKF as a system. There is one aspect of a system that many people have a hard time grasping: You cannot improve the performance of the system as a whole by only improving the performance of its individual pieces. We know that a system cannot be divided and get identical separate parts. For example you can divide a pile of sand into two or more separate piles but you cannot divide a cow and get two separate cows. We also know that in a system each part continually affects the other parts over time. Systems thinking is a way of thinking and talking about the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of the systems.

We know that higher quality learning and teaching occurs when the dojo of WIKF operate as a system instead of as individual dojo doing what they want. Any organization achieves more when the parts are all focused on a common mission and vision, and when training is aligned with that focus. That's why learning together like we did at the recent Suzuki Cup is so important. It gives us a common focus and vision about the technique we practice. I really do think that the senior members of WIKF share a common focus concerning training. We get that focus from having trained together under the direction of Suzuki Sensei for many years. I hope that in the

future we will continue to operate as a system, continue to train together, and continue to share a vision of Wado karate.

The Strategy of Great Effort

What is the secret to any person's success? The answer is always the same no matter who the person is. Put in the blood, sweat, and tears to go after what you want for as long as it takes.

No matter what goal a person is working toward, all successful people have a consistent mindset that promotes persistence, determination and ultimately success. Failure for them is not an option. They think differently and don't settle for mediocrity in their efforts and their performance philosophy. They know that the quality of their everyday effort is a moment by moment mind set that is a roadmap to success.

Skilled karate students realize that the path to real skill is about coping with failure, missed opportunities, and disappointment. But by adhering to a strategy of giving consistent great effort with every technique they perform, every time they train, their chances of gaining superior skill become greatly enhanced.

“TANREN- To forge with hard work, sweat, and many hours of dedication, folding together the elements of the body, mind, and movement.”

A Practical Approach to Improvement

If I want to improve my performance, my classroom, my job performance, my business, or my dojo, every problem can potentially be addressed at three different levels:

Level 1: solve the immediate problem

Level 2: improve the process that created the problem

Level 3: improve the system that created the process that led to the problem.

Here is an example of what I am talking about. I have an aggressive dog that will bite people and fight with other dogs. A Level 1 fix might be to put a muzzle on him and walk him on a leash. A Level 2 fix might be to build a large fenced in area to keep him away from people and other dogs. A Level

3 fix might be to get him some training to curb his aggressiveness.

I have to admit here that for several years we did not have a Christmas Party at my dojo because we didn't have enough students to have a party. Years ago when I taught in a public school classroom I learned that when things were not going well in my classroom it almost always was because I was doing something I needed to stop doing; I needed to start doing something I wasn't doing; or I needed to do a combination of both. One of the things I learned was that improvement in any arena is as much a mindset as it is a set of tools or methods. You are probably familiar with the saying, "If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always got." Or like one of my students said one day, "You can't plant corn and expect to get beans."

When a problem has been around for a long time (low student enrollment in the dojo for example) and previous efforts to resolve it haven't resulted in improvement it may be time to dig deeply into the causes in order to develop a more long-lasting solution. So I took a long, hard look at my dojo and myself just like I use to do when I taught in a school classroom setting. After digging more deeply and visiting many other dojo that are successful I concluded that I had a preconceived notion about the problem and I was wrong. Or as Pogo, the cartoon character, said, "We has met the enemy and they is us!"

I would like to offer a problem solving method you may find useful in dealing with real problems in a real world where things go wrong every day. So here goes:

1. Try and clearly identify and define the problem.
2. Analyze the problem. Be patient with learning as much about the problem as you can before attempting to define the problem too narrowly.
3. Establish practical goals for improvement
4. Study and decide on solutions
5. Plan for implementing the solutions
6. Implement on a small scale
7. Monitor and look to continuously improve.

I am happy to say that we are having a Christmas party this year and that the dojo is now growing and prospering. I hope everyone in all of our WIKF dojo enjoy a blessed Christmas Season and a prosperous New Year.

