



## Are You Listening?

There is a definite difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is your brain acknowledging sounds. Listening takes more than that. It takes focus and paying attention. One of the major things we teach in the Dojo is focus, and one of the reasons is, so that you can apply it to your listening skills and truly understand what's being said, whether it's your parents telling you to clean your room so that you learn how to take care of yourself or telling you look both ways before crossing the street or parking lot, so you don't get hurt by a car; or your teacher at school speaking to you to learn the lessons of the day, so that you understand the concepts of each subject and learn; or your teacher in the Dojo, giving you a command, so that you can learn and practice, and keep your fellow dojomates safe. If you're not paying attention you won't really be able to listen and then you won't learn, won't get anything done, and could get hurt, and no one wants that.

Listening also requires patience and teaches respect. You need to focus on what someone else is saying and not interrupt or hope they stop talking just so you can talk. If everyone did that no one would really hear what anyone else was saying, plus it's disrespectful to the speaker. Have you ever felt when you were speaking to someone that they almost couldn't wait for you to be done, just so they could have their turn, as if they didn't care what you were saying? That probably didn't feel very good, did it? Now you know how someone else feels if you do it to them.

Truly listening means hearing the entire command or conversation and getting the whole picture of what you hear. You don't want to become a selective listener and only hear the parts that are important to you. Not only can it be disrespectful, but you may miss something important. There's a story of 2 scientists who wanted to test the theory of selective listening. One day, they were walking down a busy city street and they were talking about listening. The first man was going on and on about all of the different ways they could test that people didn't listen. The second man told his friend that most people did listen, just selectively, and what they heard depended on where they focused their energy and what was important to them. The first man said that he didn't know how they would go about proving such a theory. The second man smiled at him, and then took a

handful of change from his pocket and threw it into the air. As the money landed on the busy sidewalk, all of the sudden, it was much quieter, people stopped, some even bending down to pick some of it up. He turned to his friend and said, "Most people hear what they want to hear."

The 8<sup>th</sup> Code of Karate teaches us that the ears must listen in all directions. While often that means all of the directions around us, so that we have good awareness which keeps us from being surprise attacked or when to look for the best exit, it can also mean to listen in a direction that points inwards, that is, inside yourself. There's an old saying that says, "*In order to better hear the world outside, listen faithfully to the voice inside*". Sometimes, you can gain insight both for what you want as your goals as well as what those around you are saying, by spending time by yourself and clearing your mind whether through meditation, deep breathing exercises, going for a walk alone, or even slow thought kata practice! Try this: find a few minutes alone (and turn off your cell phone, if you have one), close your eyes and take deep, full breaths. For each breathe, count from 1-10 (or if you prefer ichi through ju), and clear your mind. If a random thought pops in your head, start over from 1, and see how far you make it. This simple mediation exercise helps you feel how many thoughts you have, and even the weight of them, and allows you to let them go which in turn may help you to find a little slice of peace in your day and help you focus on the important thoughts.

So, the next time that you're in a conversation, or your parents are trying to tell you something, or you're in karate class, try to focus on truly listening to the instruction. You'll perform better and make fewer mistakes because you took the time to make sure you understood the whole command or conversation before taking action or responding. And you may find that people respect (and in some cases like) you more because they feel like you took the time to listen and understand them. If you want to make sure you've got the full message of what's being said or doubt that you're focused and paying attention, just ask yourself, "Are you listening?"

Mr. Hopler Sr. #6-025

## Words of Wisdom

*"Character consists of what you do on the 3rd and 4th tries."*

-James Michener

*"What a caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly"*

-Richard Bach

## Dojo News and Achievements

**New F.I.S.T.**— Congratulations to Stan Li, Purple Belt, on his being named to the Assistant Instructor program, assisting on Saturday Mornings.

**Charity Event**— On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, the Dojo hosted a special concert benefitting St. Jude Children's Hospital. The concert was organized and emceed by Douglas DaSilva, Purple Belt, and featured many of the Dojo's very talented students, both playing and composing as well as Clarinetist Staff Sergeant Julian Jenkins of the West Point Band, Violinist Tzu -En Lee, Vox Novus Premiere Artist, and Robert Botti, Oboist for the New York Philharmonic. The event raised almost \$2,600 and was a huge success! Plans are already being discussed for doing a similar event next year.

**Sleepover**— On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, our Dojo had its 1st sleepover. Students had a special class, dinner, watched a movie, played games, and had an awesome time sleeping over in the Dojo.

**Congratulations**— Ethan Lafazan, Orange Belt, leveled up to advanced hip-hop in dance at 8 years old, where the rest of the class is 10-11 years old!

Sophia Keoskey, Purple Belt, participated in her school's, Mendham Township Elementary, Math-A-thon fundraiser for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and raised over \$3,200! She has consistently been the top earner at her school. Miss Keoskey was also the inspiration for the Dojo's Special Concert for St. Jude.

Jarred Veljkovic, Blue Belt 2, and Ethan Lafazan, Orange Belt, both participated in Randolph Track & Field program in 2017. Jarred finished strong with times of 22.5s in the 100 yard dash and a 1.32m long jump. Ethan overcame obstacles this season, including being the youngest on his team, and with the help of good coaching and his inspiring parents improved over the season with times of 41.69s in the 200m and 1:40.23 in the 400m, both personal bests! It was an excellent season— congratulations Jarred & Ethan!

Estefania Borrero, Green Belt, has been accepted into Morris County Votech for high school as an artist. This is a major achievement as she was part of a smaller group accepted from hundreds who applied. Congratulations Estefania!

*Save the Date:*

### 3rd Anniversary Dojo Picnic

When: Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

1:00 - 5:00 PM

Where: Freedom Park, Picnic Pavilion

Who's invited: All Randolph Martial Arts Academy students & their families

Sign up with more information is coming soon...

### Black Belt Promotions

Congratulations to the following individuals who were promoted in 2016:

**Michelle Acosta— Shodan— Dec. 2016**

**Leeann Hopley— Yodan— Dec. 2016**

**Eric Hopley— Rokudan- Camp 2016**

These individuals worked very hard over the years and made an extra effort to earn their rank. Kanpai!



Mr. Hopler Jr. has been studying the martial arts since May 1990 and has been actively teaching since 1994. He earned his Black Belt in June of 1996 at Karate Camp, and more recently earned Rokudan (6th degree Black Belt) at Karate Camp last year. He is a Certified Instructor of the Randolph Martial Arts Academy.

***Here's what he has to say:***

All people study the martial arts for different reasons (as shown in the 5 Aspects) & most peoples' change over time. Originally, I started as a means of self-defense as I was getting picked on in grade school. In time, that reason has changed to studying for Karate Do (path or as a way of life) and while it has taught me self-defense, it has also given me confidence, discipline, stress relief and much more. Choosing the school was easy, it was close to my parents' house and my older brother was a green belt II there. I just thought I was signing up to learn how to fight. At the time I had no idea how much more I would learn beyond 'kicking and punching' (of course I learned those too), but for this article I would like to expand upon Karate Do, and some of the things it teaches us beyond just self-defense.

One of the things I've learned along the way is how to control and harness my emotions. It's been my experience that there aren't truly negative emotions if you know how to properly channel and embrace the energy they provide. Anger can have many negative consequences if used destructively, however it can also be used positively to drive you to succeed and not accept any less than the best from yourself. Conversely, the negative side to happiness is complacency. As the old saying goes, virtue lies in the middle - and the key is to be in control of your emotions, not going to one extreme or the other. If you're not in control of your emotions, they are in control of you. Get angry, get happy, get sad, it's ok to experience and show emotion as long as you remain in control and don't dwell on them too long. A good definition of control is being able to stop at any given moment, whether it is a technique in kumite or keeping your emotions in check. We all have bad moods, but we shouldn't let them control us. Be able to use your passion and intensity when you need it. I've learned that kata is emotion in motion; you're in the middle of a (imaginary) battle and get a chance to express and get out the emotions as if you were in a real fight. It is controlling your emotions and body at the same time and it can be cathartic.

Through Karate Do, I have learned to focus (kime) on one thing at a time. I've learned to set goals and work hard, step by step, until they're achieved. I've learned the fine line of when to cut bait and move on, and when to never accept failure and keep persisting. I have learned that something that I was embarrassed about at first (as I'm sure most are), my kiai, is actually a great tool. I have learned to be self-confident, especially at first when my tendency was to fall back into my shell as I am naturally shy. I've learned the three R's of learning: repetition, repetition, and repetition. I've learned that attitude and enthusiasm, especially when consistently positive, are what drives you, and you can fake it until you make it. I've learned problem solving, even when the solution is that I have to walk to the dojo to get to class. I've learned that you alone are responsible for your own actions. I've learned that you need to force yourself to ignite a passion for things, sometimes when you don't feel like it. I've learned that there really is nothing quite like karate camp. Speaking of which, I learned how to save for karate camp, a little bit at a time, so I could pay my own way. I've learned that through perseverance anything is possible. I've learned it's ok to make mistakes as long as you learn & work hard at improving for next time. I've learned proper discipline, self-control, and respect and what they mean to me. Through my experience, I've seen the improper way to teach those values and can recognize when it's done right. I've learned to take pride in myself and my karate. I've learned to give my best even when I'm feeling my worst. I've learned to always have empathy for and kindness towards others. I've learned that sometimes there is no substitute for experience, so try new things. I've learned how to find & follow a role model & to surround myself with positive people, which are most of the people that I've come across in the dojo. I have learned that courtesy is as important as what you say or do. I've learned that actions speak louder than words. I've learned you have to be congruent, consistently doing what you say you'll do. I've learned not to take anything for granted. I've learned a sense of order and of being a part of something

**bigger than myself. I've learned that you always have to keep learning from whomever and whatever you can. I've learned that life is short, so kanpai when you have the opportunity!**

At the heart of Karate Do is the structure that karate, especially our schools, provides for all ages. The structure & discipline are invaluable for young children, but still of value to all ages. Although it's rare now that I've been studying for 27 years, I've stepped out of line from time to time and needed that centering to correct and put me back on the right path. The structure is deceptively simple. Come to class and do your best. Come back to your next class. And next. And next. Until it's a good habit. Until it's a commitment. Call to ask permission to be excused. It wasn't easy for me to commit when I started; I wasn't good at committing at that time. And I enjoy it now as much if not more than ever. The toughest part to committing to anything is the first month or so. At first, my parents gave me the initial push, then my teacher and I made sure that I continued coming back.

I've found that the path does not end when you join the senior class as I did in 1992. It didn't end when I made Black Belt at karate camp 1996. It didn't end when I made Rokudan in karate camp 2016. It doesn't end when you start or finish \_\_\_\_ kata. In fact, it never ends. There are goals in the meantime, but the ultimate goal is to perfect yourself and your character. Now, I'm far from perfect, but that is where I strive and as I strive, I improve myself. Studying has instilled in me the desire to want to constantly make myself better, to want to be a better person and take action. Now, I love the teaching program that I have been a part of since 1994, because not only am I improving myself for myself, but attempting to improve others. I try to be the best example that I can and pass on the knowledge my teacher imparts to me. In addition, I get to make a difference in other people's lives for the better as my teacher has done for me. Being a karate ka (student) is as much about studying karate as it is about improving your life, a life ka, if you will. It is about the journey, so don't rush things. Take time and enjoy your time being a white belt, a blue belt, a Shodan, etc. As part of the journey, your teacher pushes to improve you and your character along the way, and it is the journey that makes us who we are. I am thankful that I have been shown a path, like true North, that even when I'm in uncharted territory, centers me to the right path to follow no matter what; and a teacher who points me toward the right path if I lose my way.

I'd like to thank Mr. Jenkins for founding this wonderful association that I was lucky to find and for instilling the values in his students – especially my sensei Miss Felenczak - that I try to pass on to others. Speaking of which, I'd like to thank her for teaching me more than just karate, but also for keeping me on the path (sometimes forcefully). Finally, I'd like to thank my brother, Dan, for founding the Randolph Martial Arts Academy and working countless hours to keep his dream, and our school, alive & growing, and for giving me the opportunity to teach and touch the lives of others in his school. Whether you're on the path for a short walk or for life, I hope that it has impacted you for the better. Stay on the path, keep moving & improving, and all is possible!

Kanpai,  
Mr. Eric A. Hopler Sr.  
#6-039