

# Sensei Says

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Back to school and the end of summer - that means back to busier, more rigid schedules for most of us. The freedom of summer is always a much-appreciated break, but schedules give us a disciplined plan to work toward our many goals.

I like to think of self-discipline as, "being able to do what I want to do, even when I don't want to do it."

When I was a teenager I figured out that the only way I could keep myself excited when it was time to go to martial arts class was to never allow myself to think about not going. Skipping class was not an option. Quitting was not an option. I never allowed myself to think of how much fun it would be to just hang out with my friends, ride my bike, or just do nothing. When it came time to get ready for class I just did it. It was too easy to imagine myself doing something more fun (and usually lazier), but thinking such thoughts just made getting ready to go even harder. Why think of other things I could do, when I already had something I wanted to do?

Of course, once I got to class I loved it. And afterwards I was always glad I had gone - because martial arts was something I loved!

Most people have given up on at least one very important goal because of a single moment's weakness. In one instant they decide that a moment's pleasure is more important than the fulfillment of a long sought after goal. Such important decisions should not be made on the spur of the moment or when under duress.

Parents can help their children learn how to be self-disciplined by not letting the child stop until they have fulfilled a previously established goal. Even though martial arts can be a lifelong pursuit for some, most eventually stop. How they stop can establish lifelong habits of self-discipline.

It seems a shame to me that so many students train hard for years, and then quit without feeling like they reached a goal. If nothing else, they should set a goal to complete their final month. This is one of the main reasons I instituted the policy requiring notice on the 15th of the month before a student's membership ends.

Unfortunately, some parents find it easier to let the child quit, because it makes the parent's life easier. Some even think, "Well, if you're going to quit anyway, then there's no point in me hauling you to class the rest of the month."

Usually, if the parent makes an agreement to allow the child to stop after the month has been completed, the child gets over the hump and doesn't want to quit. Kid's love challenges and they love to have some control over their lives. This tactic often really motivates them, if not, at least they fulfilled a goal before stopping.

Years ago a very serious five-year old suddenly announced to his parents that he wanted to quit. After fifteen minutes of talking with him I got to the root of the problem. Why the sudden decision to quit? It was dark when karate got over, and he couldn't play outside anymore.

Daylight savings time had just ended.

That's the scary thing about excuses; they always seem so logical at the time!

- Alan Best