

# Sensei Says

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My, what a stir I caused with my last article! Some people took me far too seriously, others saw straight through my ruse, others wondered who would write such a thing, and others, well...they just didn't read it! Yes, it is true. I am the one who wrote the "testimonial." After all, it is my column. So, you might ask, what does it all mean, and why did I write such a crazy thing?

Well, mainly, I just thought it was funny.

I like the expression, "Life is too serious to be taken seriously." I have been accused of having a peculiar way of looking at things. There is now documented evidence of it. In my own defense, I believe that to fully understand something you have to study it from all angles. If you just look at things the way everyone else does you will only learn what everyone else already knows. "Dare to be different" is how some say it.

My sometimes-misguided sense of humor has even won me the esteemed title of Sensei Humor (say it fast three times) by some of my longtime students who have endured years of gut-wrenching abdominal exercises feigning laughter at my attempts at humor.

But there was a more serious lesson hidden within my testimonial.

I wanted to point out that, unlike in fantasy, martial arts masters do not continue to become more and more physically powerful as they age. A lifetime of training and good health eventually leaves you weak and frail. Recognizing this while we are still young will help us to appreciate what we have, while we have it. And, more importantly, allow us to establish lifelong goals, which are based on reality, not fantasy.

What is meant by "while we are still young?"

Right now, you are the youngest you will ever be in your life. That has been the case since you were born, and will remain the same until you are dead. Every moment of your life you are both the youngest you will ever be, and the oldest you have ever been. That is the state in which we always live.

Any physical goals must be considered short-term. Short-term goals are important, but shouldn't be confused with lifelong goals. What happens if you are successful when your only goal is to excel at a physical act? What if you fail? What comes next? Your feelings of success quickly turn to feelings of emptiness of purpose. You could spend all of your life building up to one point in time, then spend the rest of your life looking back at that one point if your physical goal was your end-goal. To guarantee success in life, physical goals should be considered stepping stones towards lifelong goals. This is the "Way" of the martial arts.

What is the "Way?"

It is the philosophy that life is a journey. A journey that takes us nowhere, except through time. Along the way we are allowed to journey outside ourselves. We learn how to kick, punch, and yell; how to read, write, and do arithmetic; and we have countless adventures. We even get to meet others who are traveling on their own journeys. But, the Way we are traveling leads to a place of inner peace, understanding, and joy. Even though our time is too short to reach the journey's end, the closer we get, the greater we appreciate every moment we are able to continue on.

- Alan Best