

Using Goal Setting to Improve Your Karate

Goals			
Immediate	Short Term	Intermediate	Long Term
Class Goals - Specific things to work on in class	Test Cycle	1 Year	Life Goals
Set 3 to 5 things that you want to work on during class - be specific. For example - bending knees in kibandachi, picking up the knee on a front kick	Two to 4 months between tests for most students	What you want to accomplish in one year.	Why you keep training in karate
For Low Ranks these things should improve technique for next test	Reaching the next rank	For most young beginners this would be 3-4 tests per year. For older students 5-6 tests per year.	For most Low ranks this will be earning the brown or black belt
For High Ranks - should be things that improve your technique	Improvement of Technique	Improvement of kata-chi.	Improvement of quality and quality of life, teaching, earning higher black belt rank

How to determine your immediate goals. We have seen how to reach our life goals. Successful life goals start back at the immediate goals we set for ourselves during class. By being tenacious in setting and following up on our immediate goals, we will reach our life goals. Thus the crucial point is to discipline ourselves during each class to improve some aspect of our technique. In order to determine what our immediate goals are, we need to figure out our weaknesses. The best way to do this is to sit down and list your 10 worst things. These should be specific. They should not be just front stance, but the part of the front stance that needs correcting - foot position, raising the knee and so forth. You may need to watch yourself in a mirror or have a higher ranking student look at your technique and make suggestions. Once you have figured out your 10 worst things, order them from one to ten. One should be the very worst. The top 3-5 items should be your immediate goals. After working on these immediate goals for a time, review the list and see if you need to make changes either in the order of the list or in what is on the list. Then again attack the items that become the very worst. The idea is that by working on the worst, these worst things improve and other things become more immediate concerns. This constant on-going determination of your class goals becomes the cornerstone to reaching your life goals because after every class you can be one step closer to reaching them.

Why is goal setting important? As a martial artist you want learn to everything. The greater your knowledge as a martial artist, the greater the skill and ability to protect yourself and those you are responsible for (family, country.) This is to say, that your survival and that of your family and loved ones could depend on what you learn. If you miss something or ignore it, you can be defeated and those you are responsible for can be harmed. That is failing your duty as a martial artist. Now it is impossible to win all the time and you can perform well and lose. If you have tried your best to learn and used all your skills and lose, then you can be satisfied within yourself that you have given your best. What martial arts teach is the ability to be tenacious and enter into a situation with out fear of winning or losing, just doing your best.

Performance plateau problems. At higher levels, performance plateaus can be created. These can occur inadvertently. Knowing when and how these can occur is important to improve your practice of the martial arts. Developing the hands can work in opposition to developing the feet. Improvements in flexibility in kicking can negatively impact on stances. Practice of one thing can cause other things to suffer. So you must continuously be evaluating and changing your technique to reach a balance. If you work on the hands, you will improve your hands and your kicking will go down hill. So you change to fix your kicking your stances can suffer. Each time, however, you should make sure that you never return to the prior point. That is, as your kicking goes forward, you want to keep the rest of your technique from retreating to a lower level then previous. Each time you take two steps forward, you do not want to take more then one step backwards. If you work on your stances and allow your kicking to return to pre-stance improvement levels, you will not feel that you advanced. If you turn around and fix your kicks back to where they were and your stances return to the previous level, you have gained nothing. This is how goal setting, when is not done correctly, will cause you to plateau out for a while and not get any gains. Awareness of this push-pull between the various uses of the body can help identify a plateau problem early on and give you a warning to fix or avoid a training plateau.

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