



ISKF NORTHWEST REGION

1336 Bellevue Way NE #3, Bellevue, WA 98004, (425) 765-9161

Instructor Code of Conduct

7/22/2014

This document is intended to make explicit acceptable and unacceptable behavior for instructors with respect to their students. The goal is to create certainty that any student training in an ISKF dojo in the Northwest Region will be safe 1) to protect the ISKF and the Northwest Region from possible liability and 2) so that instructors can recommend ISKF dojos to traveling or relocating students with confidence.

Three problematic instructor/student relationship issues are covered: sexual abuse, physical abuse, and verbal/emotional abuse.

General dojo safety is beyond the scope of this document but it is the instructor's role to ensure the safety of all the students in the dojo. Therefore, the instructor needs to make sure that all assistant instructors and senior students also understand and adhere to this code.

Background

The instructor/student relationship is complicated by the following factors:

Historical training methods. In the past, training methods that are clearly unacceptable by today's standards were common practice. There are stories of instructors hitting students for poor performance, or deliberately having senior students punish junior students for breaches of etiquette. These stories are still told with a feeling of nostalgia that can cause confusion in students and young instructors as to whether these sorts of behavior are acceptable today.

Hierarchical social structure. Karate training is organized around a very hierarchical social structure, much more so than most other modern activities and organizations. This power structure can easily lend itself to abuse, and again old stories and popular media can encourage this abuse.

Expanding limits and comfort zones. A benefit of karate training is that students are pushed out of their comfort zones. Good instructors can take students beyond their perceived physical and mental limits. However, it can be difficult to find the line between getting the best out of students and abusing them, as each student's perception of this experience is unique.

Sexual Abuse

All ISKF Northwest Region instructors who work with children are expected to complete the *Boy Scouts of America Youth Protection Training* course. Therefore, details on avoiding even the appearance of abuse with respect to minor students will not be repeated in this policy.

Instructors are responsible for ensuring that the dojo is free from sexual abuse and harassment, whether perpetrated by instructors or by students in the dojo. Sexual harassment

includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexually harassing nature.

This is a particular issue when there is a power differential between the individuals involved; i.e., the harasser is an instructor or a senior student. However, any student consistently demonstrating this kind of harassing behavior can unreasonably interfere with other students' performance or create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Physical Abuse

Karate is a martial art, and it is understood that students will incur minor bumps and bruises along with sweat and sore muscles. However, students should never feel that they are in danger of injury from their instructors or that pain or injury is being deliberately inflicted.

In no instance is an instructor to strike a student. To be clear, there is an old-fashioned practice of *toughening up* students so that they are accustomed to taking blows either for kumite or self-defense practice. These are not acceptable dojo training methods.

Also, it is not acceptable to use excessive training or conditioning exercises as a punishment.

Verbal/Emotional Abuse

Instructors need to impart strong feeling and help with motivation in the dojo. However, yelling at students or embarrassing or humiliating them is not acceptable or effective in the long term.

It is not the instructor's job to punish students physically or verbally for failures in results or even effort. Use encouragement or perhaps try creating a challenge or competition instead. Ultimately, the level of effort expended is up to individual students who may be training for very different reasons anyway.

When remedial actions do need to be taken in the dojo; e.g., for breaches of etiquette, safety concerns or disruptive behavior, especially for children, be careful to always be fair and respectful. An instructor should never appear angry or act in anger.

Coaches in various sports struggle with this issue and instructors are encouraged to read about their experiences online or in coaching memoirs and manuals.

Remediation

Suspected abuse or harassment by senior students or assistant instructors is to be brought to the immediate attention of the Chief Instructor of the dojo, who will investigate and determine appropriate remedial actions.

Such action may be as simple as pointing out the offending behavior to the student or instructor and explaining how and why it is inappropriate. Conversely, it may be as severe as suspending or expelling a consistent offender from the dojo. If a student must be expelled for abusive behavior, the Northwest Region board is to be informed so that other dojos can be warned.

Suspected abuse or harassment by the Chief Instructor of a dojo is to be brought to the attention of a Northwest Region board member; the board will then investigate and determine appropriate remedial actions.