



The Roundhouse: Headlines from Around the Do-jang.

Someone coined the phrase, "*Check your ego at the door.*" Remember that piece of advice every time you enter the Do-Jang. Ego has only three purposes: the need to control, the need to be approved, and the need to judge. That's why ego has no place in Taekwon-Do. Ego distracts you from focusing on your own personal growth by telling you to compare yourself to others. What's more, ego leads to unsafe competitiveness by making you need to prove yourself superior.

In this edition of *The Roundhouse*, we want to examine the benefits of trading ego for patience and humility.

"To be humble to superiors is duty, to equals courtesy, to inferiors nobleness."

-- Benjamin Franklin

Renowned martial artist Ed Parker said, "The true martial artist is a man so strong inside that he has no need to demonstrate his power." Think about the times you were sparring an equal or lower ranking belt who was scoring points on you. Did your ego tell you to start blocking and striking harder to even the score? This is where ego gets you into trouble. It tells you to behave without self-control and courtesy toward your fellow students. It turns your sparring partner into an "opponent" who is threatening your ego. If this happens, remember: "The point of achieving proficiency in any martial art is to be able to walk away from a fight rather than to win it."

“You know more than you think you know, just as you know less than you want to know.”

-- Oscar Wilde

Another place where ego gets us into trouble is when we label ourselves in comparison to others. By seeing yourself as only a "blue belt", you are limiting yourself. Yes, you may be at the rank of blue -- or whatever belt level you are at within the hierarchy of our school -- but you are not defined by that color. For example, we have some purple and brown belts who already display many of the character traits we expect from our black belts. Just because you are wearing a particular belt color does not limit your personal growth at that level. Only your ego does that!

“Patience is waiting. Not passively waiting. That is laziness. But to keep going when the going is hard and slow - that is patience.”

-- Anonymous

While personal growth and confidence is encouraged, you should always temper it with a good, healthy dose of humility. The ego might try to convince you that you are "too good" to be stuck at your current rank. This leads to resentments as your ego sees other students being "unfairly" promoted ahead of you. I remember being a frustrated brown belt who could not understand why I was still doing Hwa-Rang after 11 months. After all, I attended class regularly, and everyone told me that my pattern looked good. In hindsight, I realize that I was exhibiting too much ego and competitiveness with my brown belt peers. By forcing me to wait, my instructor taught me an invaluable lesson in patience that has served me well to this day.

"Where there is no struggle, there is no strength.

-- Oprah Winfrey

We all struggle with our egos from time to time. As Mr. Bailey says, "We don't expect perfection; just perfect effort." So the next time you come to class, leave your desire for ego-gratifying results at the door. Focus on your efforts instead, and you'll be surprised at how much more you'll get out of Taekwon-Do.

"The prize is in the process."

-- Baron Baptiste