

## Getting Older Younger 2

[Today's] youth is smarter earlier and wiser later: they reach the age of independence without having the wherewithal to prudently apply their knowledge to life. As a result, they sample this, that, and the other thing rather than accept the apparent sameness of an apprenticeship that would make them expert at something. A Jack-of-all-trades and master of none, does not a Jedi make.

From a **parent's** point of view, we want to embrace the idea of a youngster's commitment producing important rewards, but we do not want to scare the child into the thought of enduring dojo drudgery in order to eventually reap a benefit.

From a **dojo owner's** point of view, we want to make a budo "apprenticeship" attractive to the young, but not cater to the here-today-gone-tomorrow mind of today's youth so as to render the teaching shallow.

From a **traditional martial artist's** point of view, we don't care where the minds of today's youth are. Eventually, society will cycle back to seeing the value of what we are doing. For now, we'll do the best we can with the advocates we have, regardless of age and commitment. That may sound callous, but as traditional martial artists, our job is to maintain the quality of the tradition. We cannot tell parents what they should emphasize in their child's upbringing or the values they should laud, nor can we tell other sensei how to run their dojo, what value to offer, or how to package their art.

If youth is getting smarter while staying immature, parents have to adjust to their immaturity and keep up with their knowledge. Similarly, dojo owners have to offer something that is immediately appealing, does not take too long to bear rewards, but can still sustain a longer, deeper study. For this reason, I would advocate traditional tournament competition while still teaching classes that emphasize in-depth kata analysis and self-defense application. In other words, to help parents out, dojo owners should offer an enticing lure that is not totally anathema to the long-term study of a substantial martial art.

If you have read my articles for any length of time, you know that I am not a strong advocate of competitive martial arts. But I likewise am not an advocate of having empty dojo or dojo that promote 8<sup>th</sup> degree armpits portraying themselves as young roses in an ancient flowerbed.

Neither parent, nor dojo owner, nor traditional martial arts devotee can change the speed at which the young mature, the speed at which they learn, or the rate at which their maturity matches their learning. We can, however, influence them in little ways.

The world is changing so quickly that we traditional martial artists think our values will be left behind as the culture converts to faster food, an even faster coming of age, and yet faster ranks, degrees, and positions (thus missing the benefits of a slower, more purposeful upbringing, i.e. the rewards of an apprenticeship). But if we can simply influence a minority of young people to acknowledge the enduring benefits of a long term

traditional martial arts choice, we will have changed the cultural formula by adding drops of clarity, one at a time.

Being Jacks-of-several-trades is not necessarily a bad thing, but when put into the hands of the immature, Jacks become neither Jedi masters nor even Paduan learners. And our old mind-control tricks do not work anymore (picture your Sensei waving two fingers in front of your eyes). Rather than wanting the benefits of apprenticeship for those who are getting physically older at a younger age but remaining socially younger as they get older, we should simply set an example of what we as parents, dojo owners, or traditional martial artists can be, and wait for the youngsters to catch up.