

Save the Wails! “Can’t” is a Four Letter Word.

Some people would love to start martial arts training but are afraid. They are afraid of embarrassment, afraid of failure, afraid of pain, afraid of feeling afraid. FEAR is False Evidence Appearing Real 95% of the time. It’s also a four-letter word. Fear is what makes us say we “can’t” — another four-letter word. That beginner would be apprehensive is understandable, but the whole purpose of the self-development aspect of the martial arts is to *Face the Fear and Do It Anyway*, as the book title suggests. So if there is anything that does not go over big in a traditional martial arts school its wailing and whining, “I can’t.”

Some schools militaristically demand that no one show fear. Others, a little more attuned to a variety of teaching methods and the needs of a variety of people, are more tolerant and supportive. BUSHIDO-KAI is one of them. But don’t start studying martial arts just because there is a school that will put up with your fears. Don’t start without the sincere desire to get over the unwarranted need to exclaim that you *can’t*. Many people before you have proven that you *can* since they came to the martial arts with less talent and more trepidation than you.

At BUSHIDO-KAI, we consistently get both athletic and non-athletic, both experienced and inexperienced people in the *dojo*. Over 25 years ago we got a restaurant manager, who never liked athletics and had only average coordination, begin training. A couple of decades later, he was running his own associate dojo in Boston. More than 20 years ago, a forty-five-year-old mother of 4 with no sports background registered her membership. Today she is a third degree black belt in Aiki-ju-jutsu. Fifteen years ago, a mother of two with no previous physical training, joined us with her husband and both kids. She now holds black belts in both Aiki and Karate. We have had people who literally did not know their left from their right make black belt, and we have had former wrestlers, and other jocks make black belt. What they had in common was the desire to improve themselves. Each ran into some challenges. Each wanted to say, “I can’t”: I can’t seem to get along with my partner; I can’t take that fall; I can’t block that attack; I can’t kick that high. They all wanted to say it — they all felt it for a moment or two — then they just reframed their attitude. Hey! That’s why I am here! *I can do this stuff!* And they did.

Martial arts taught them to achieve a more complete fulfillment of their potential than they had ever before attained. It also taught them that four letter words are not good for their psyche.

It seems more and more that people in everyday life want to blame someone else for their own difficulties. It’s the job’s fault (sometimes it is, but you could improve your work ethic, couldn’t you?) It’s the government’s fault (sometimes it is, but you can find a creative way to work inside the laws, can’t you?) It’s my mother’s fault (that’s a classic that psychologists love.) It’s your fault! It’s not my fault. Forget whose fault it is! Fix it. Wailing may get your wheel greased once or twice, but pretty soon it gets to be darn annoying. Save the wailing and moaning. “Wail” is a four-letter word. “Moan” is another.

“Training,” on the other hand, has eight letters, so it is at least twice as good as four, and it addresses personal challenges rather than distressing oneself and others with those annoying four letter words.

Next week, we'll talk about maintaining standards.