



Character Training and Development

At Black Belt Leadership Academy, we augment the development of successful life skills during our “Huddle Discussions,” which are portions of the class where we focus on specific topics. At the basic level our topics are “School Safe / Street Safe,” which is dedicated to promoting safety, and “Character Training and Development,” which is focused on reinforcing the values you teach at home.

Huddle Discussions are participatory and interactive. We will be telling stories, asking questions and role-playing to keep involvement high. This helps children “try on” positive behaviors and practice positive choices in a safe and friendly environment. As the students gain wisdom, strength, and maturity, they will apply these skills to their own lives.

We believe that positive attitudes and respectful behaviors need to be learned and practiced if they are to guide the actions of our students in and out of the academy. Through direct discussion and role playing, students can think through and process ways of turning values into action.

During “Character Training and Development” huddle discussions we will help your child develop tools they can use to become successful Black Belt leaders in all walks of life. Huddle Discussion topics will include:

- Good Attitudes
- Good Habits
- Good Self-Control
- Good Manners

The “Reminder Pages” that follow will provide you with a way to review the topics as your child needs. We encourage you to discuss these topics with your child often. This will, of course, help them to remember the advice and allow them to more fully utilize these techniques in their lives.

Having a Good Attitude

When you have a Good Attitude you approach every day and every task positively. You expect to learn from each experience, feel positive about your efforts, and eventually accomplish at your goals. When you approach life with a good attitude, you are happier and make those around you feel good about themselves. This is one of the most important qualities of a successful Black Belt leader.

Some of the most important attitudes in becoming a success are:

- Attitude of Gratitude – Having an “attitude of gratitude” means that you are thankful for all the good things in your life and thankful to the people who helped you get them. This attitude leads you to want to make things even better for yourself and others.
- Whatever It Takes Attitude – Having a “whatever it takes attitude” means that you are willing to do whatever is necessary, as long as it is right and doesn’t hurt anyone else, to achieve your goals.
- Being a Good Finder – A “good finder” looks for the good in all people and all situations in your life. If you can find the positive value in experiences that seem negative, you will try to find solutions for problems and be a strong Black Belt leader.
- Being Loyal to Those Not Present – Be true to your friends and family. Don’t say bad things about people who are not around, and don’t let other people around you speak badly about others.

Developing Good Habits

A habit is something you do over and over without even thinking about it. We want to get rid of bad habits and practice good ones. Good habits help us achieve our goals, while bad habits get in our way.

- Self-Discipline – Doing what you should be doing, even if you don’t want to at the moment, without being told to by someone else.
- Dinner Before Dessert – Doing the important things first and the fun things later.
- Taking Responsibility – Taking responsibility for your own actions, not trying to find excuses or blame others. A responsible person takes care of what needs to be done without trying to get others to do things for them.
- Wherever You Are...Be There – Be focused on the present and don’t let yourself daydream or become distracted. Remember to **“Focus your eyes – focus your mind – focus your body!”**

It only takes 21 days to develop a good habit, but you have to work at it. To become a skilled martial artist you have to practice your kicks and punches and stances. Practice the habits above and you will be able to become a more successful Black Belt Leader.

Exercising Good Self-Control

When we have good self control, we can make certain that we do what we know is right and not let someone or something take control of us.

We need to use good self-control when we feel strong emotions like fear and anger. There is nothing wrong with being angry, as long as we control our anger and put it to positive use. Fear can help us when it keeps us from doing things that are not safe, but it can get in our way when it prevents us from trying new things or meeting new people.

Poor self-control can lead us to make bad choices or do things we will regret later. Here are some ways we can practice good self-control.

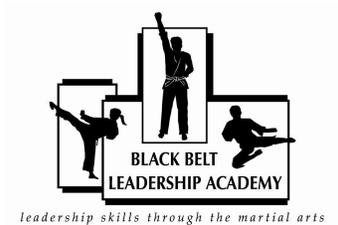
- **Mind Over Emotions** – If you can stop thinking about what makes you afraid or angry and think about how to solve the problem, you can control your emotions and your actions. Sometimes it helps to look at what you are about to do as if you were someone else watching.
- **Body Over Emotion** – Never speak out of anger and never strike out of anger. If you can take the anger out of your body, you will have more self-control. Next time you are angry, try to relax your shoulders, bring your chin up, smile, and breathe deeply.
- **Balance Over Emotion** – “Concentrate on your balance, lose your upset. Concentrate on your upset, lose your balance.” Next time you find yourself getting angry, try standing on one foot. When you change your focus, you can often find time to think of better choices.
- **Words Over Emotion** – When we change the way we speak, we change the way we feel and the way we make others feel. Replace strong negative words with words that express a more positive emotion and still clearly state the problem.

Good Manners

When other people meet you, they get a “first impression.” This means that they make decisions about you based on the way you act when they first meet you. As they get to know you better, they learn more about you from the way that you act.

One of the best ways to be a successful Black Belt leader is to treat people well so that they will feel good when they are around you. Having good manners and showing respect and courtesy are really great ways to show your leadership skills.

- **Polite Greeting** – When you meet someone for the first time, look them in the eyes, shake their hand firmly, and confidently say “Hello, my name is _____. What’s yours?” Then make sure you really listen to their answer. Finally say “I’m pleased to meet you, (the person’s name).”
- **Showing Respect** – People can only judge how you feel about them by what you say and do. It is not enough to feel respect for someone; you need to treat them with respect. Start with your parents, since they are most important in your life.
- **Playground Manners** – A leader doesn’t always go first. You can show that you are a “strong on the inside” leader on the playground by sharing with others and letting everyone have their turn. The person who says “good try” when someone makes a mistake is the real leader.
- **Magic Words** – Having good manners isn’t just about saying the right words (like please, thank you, and excuse me); it is about saying them in the right way. Your tone of voice is often more important than what you say. Show respect and courtesy by speaking in a polite and friendly way.



School Safe/Street Safe

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During “School Safe/Street Safe” huddle discussions we will help your child develop tools they can use to avoid difficulties and prevent problems so that they rarely have to rely on their martial arts skills. Self-defense is never about what you can do to the “other guy.” It is about taking care of yourself. Safety is the first line of self-defense.

Huddle Discussion topics will include:

- The ABCs of Conflict Avoidance
- The 5 Principles of Safety
- Stranger Alert
- Setting Boundaries

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The ABC's of Conflict Avoidance

A = Avoid Potentially Dangerous Situations – Stay away from danger. Be aware of potential danger and make safe choices about places, activities, and peers.

B = Be Calm, Breathe – Relax your shoulders and breathe deeply. This method will help you calm down and take control so that you can think clearly in dangerous situations.

C = Communicate with Confidence – Make eye contact and firmly say what you want. Talk your way out of dangerous situations and resist negative peer pressure.

D = Don't Make the Situation Worse by Arguing or Fighting – Fighting is never the correct choice – and physical self-defense is a last resort. Remember the value of conflict avoidance.

Use “*Wait. I'm too angry to talk. I need to go cool off.*” if you find yourself arguing with someone.

The 5 Principles of Safety

1. **Use Your Mind** – Think about the ways you can stay safe and develop safe habits. Make safe choices and figure out how you can get away from dangerous influences or situations.
2. **Use Your Words** – Try to talk your way out of trouble. Tell people what you will and will not do and why, and confidently ask them to stop doing what you don't want them to do. Sometimes a simple conversation can avoid a complicated problem.
3. **Use Your Legs** – If you are in danger from someone you do not know and won't see again, get away. If you can't think your way out or talk your way out of a bad situation, walk your way out. Walking away from trouble is not “running away” from problems.
4. **Ask for Help** – Let someone who can help you solve a problem know that you are in trouble or in danger. Protecting yourself is not being a “tattletale.”
5. **Defend Yourself** – If you are physically attacked, use your martial arts techniques to get away from the attacker so that you can use your legs to get away from the trouble. Self-defense is about making yourself safe, not about beating anyone else up.

Stranger Alert

Remember, *a stranger is anyone you don't know until your parents tell you otherwise, even another child*. Most people are nice, but some only act nice to get what they want, so we need to be careful around people we don't know.

A LURE is a trick someone might use to get you to come near them or go with them when they know you shouldn't.

- Bribery lure – when someone you don't know says they will give you something if you come near them or go with them.
- Job lure – when someone you don't know offers to pay you money if you do something.
- Assistance lure – when someone you don't know asks you to go with them to help them.
- Direction lure – when someone you don't know asks you to come close to show them how to get somewhere.
- Internet lure – when someone you have met on line asks you to meet them.

If you ever feel uncomfortable around a stranger or threatened by someone, remember
NO-GO-YELL-TELL!!!

Setting Boundaries

Boundary setting is about having a safety zone between you and whatever makes you feel uncomfortable. You have a right to set your own boundaries, and no one has the right to cross them.

- **When in doubt, get out.** You should always keep your boundaries, and trust your feelings about someone crossing your boundaries, or asking you to cross them. If you feel like someone is crossing your boundaries – if someone gives you the creeps, or being somewhere or doing something makes you feel uncomfortable, you should leave.
- “Be Aware, But Not On Guard.” This means we always try to be aware of what is going on around us, but not fearful. If you are aware, but not on guard, you will be able to recognize real danger. If you feel threatened, remember to say loudly “Leave me alone!” from your interview stance.
- Ask for help. If you are lost, or need help for some other reason, and you can't find your parents or a police officer, get help from: a parent with children, or an older woman, a person in a uniform, or someone working nearby.
- You are the boss of your body. A “good touch” makes you feel good about yourself, like a hug from a parent. A “bad touch” makes you feel uncomfortable. If anyone touches you in a way you don't like, say “Stop touching me right now!” and then tell your parents. NEVER KEEP TOUCH SECRETS from a grown up you trust.



leadership skills through the martial arts