

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #29

Grown Ups, Own Up

In living life from birth to death
and in the filling of its cup,
responsible people realize that
Grown Ups, Own Up.

Responsibility is the price of greatness.

Churchill

*If you want to cut your own throat,
don't come to me for a bandage.*

Margaret Thatcher

*Let everyone sweep in front of his own door,
and the whole world will be clean.*

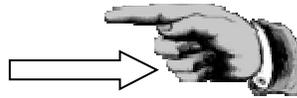
Goethe

*You are responsible for yourself.
You are not responsible for the world.*

Saint Charan Singh

We are all responsible for our own actions, accountable for everything we have done, are doing, will do or have failed to do. This is an irrefutable fact of life and no social convention or passing mindset, however much cherished by the masses, can alter this truth. If we are grown up, we own up to our life, our choices and their consequences. Pointing a finger of blame at others for our actions is not only wrong, it is degrading to us because it speaks directly to our lack of character. Besides, when we point a blaming finger at someone else for things we've done we must not overlook the fact that three of our own fingers are pointing back at us, reminding us in a three-fold capacity that we are the one to blame.

The 3 Fingers of Blame



Notice where they're pointing.

This principle of self-accountability has been heavily under siege through the last few decades of the 20th Century into the first decade of the 21st Century and there seems to be little diminution of its lack of application. There is an infestation of non-accountability spreading like wildfire in our culture, an infectious disease destroying the nobility of man, and the disconcerting part of it is there seems to be little concern about its proliferation. The idea of hurting people's feelings takes precedence over one's character, and when feelings trump character, there is strong reason for concern. Honestly, what's more important, one's character or one's feelings?

For example, if we're overweight, it's no one else's fault but our own. We're the one who puts the food in our mouth, fails to exercise and take proper care of our God-given bodies. It's not the fault of the fast-food chains serving huge portions of food loaded with fat and sugar and supported by slick advertising campaigns. Are we helpless automatons devoid of any semblance of self-control or thought about what we're ingesting? Are we dogs on a leash, moving here and there, totally under the command of the leash master?

If we're addicted to drugs or alcohol, is it someone else's fault? We made the original choice to put ourselves in a position to become involved with these poisons. If we hurt, injure or kill someone while under their influence, is it the fault of the alcohol and drug companies and their relentless marketing machines? Notwithstanding the nefarious nature of these poison peddlers whose focus is not on the health and well-being of people but on their own bank accounts, we can't blame our usage on them or on anything or anyone else. Certainly, we cannot claim innocence.

If we physically harm someone because our temper gets out of control, it's not their fault, it's ours. Nor is it the fault of society, our background, parents, the weather or the government. If

we're adults, the buck stops with us and we, not anyone else, are responsible and accountable for our actions. There simply are no excuses. *Grown-ups, own up.*

Martial arts training is an excellent vehicle for teaching accountability. Whether we're sparring, performing katas/forms [choreographed routines], practicing self-defense techniques or extemporaneous attack drills, we are totally and completely responsible for what we do, and if we hurt someone else or become hurt, it's our fault, plainly and simply. If we injure a fellow student, ninety-nine percent of the time it is because of a lack of our own self-control, faulty technique, lack of care for the other person or an unrestrained ego on the prowl to prove its silly superiority. Contrarily, if we get hurt, invariably it's because we didn't move when we should have, missed a block or parry we should have made, lost our balance or our concentration. Ultimately, we are the reason for injury and our finger should be pointed at us, not someone else.

At the Karate Institute of America we have a standing rule: *if you get hurt, it's your fault*. No pointing fingers at anyone else, especially during fighting. If you chose to engage, you must accept responsibility for what happens in the engagement. Children [of all ages] make excuses for their behavior. Adults do not . . . or rather should not. *Grown ups, own up*. This is the way of life, and for the individual who seeks a sense of self-worth and dignity, there is no other option. Is this tough love? Perhaps it is, but it is only directed to those whose characters are still in the growing-into-adulthood stage. Hopefully, the adulthood stage comes sooner than later.

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