

# The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #35

## The "C" Line

In climbing high to reach nobility,  
and supportive of their sibling Ds,  
are the Cs of Character, Courage,  
Commitment, Concentration and Consistency.

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*The first essential step to a spiritual life is character.*

Saint Sawan Singh

*Only a man's character is the real criterion of worth.*

Eleanor Roosevelt

*The first prerequisite of a gentleman or a lady is a good  
moral character. If that is not there, what else is left?*

Saint Charan Singh

*Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount.*

Clare Boothe Luce

*Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities...  
because it is the quality which guarantees all others.*

Winston Churchill

*The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion  
to their commitment to excellence, regardless  
of their chosen field of endeavor.*

Vince Lombardi

*Concentration and mental toughness  
are the margins of victory.*

Bill Russell

*My ability to concentrate and work toward  
that goal has been my greatest asset.*

Jack Nicklaus

*Consistency is the foundation of virtue.*

Francis Bacon

*Consistency, madam, is the first of Christian duties.*

Charlotte Bronte

*A consistent man believes in destiny,  
a capricious man in chance.*

Benjamin Disraeli

*In any team sport, the best teams have  
consistency and chemistry.*

Roger Staubach

Continuing in the discussion of success in life and in our personal achievements are the five Cs, siblings to the five Ds. These foundational virtues are: Character, Courage, Commitment, Concentration and Consistency.

## **1. Character**

Character is a virtue we build. Hopefully, we come into this life with good, even great, character. If not, and if we want to live a good and noble life, we must construct it, especially if we want to grow in the spirit. Furthermore, we must do this in spite of our failings. As Saint Sawan Singh states: *The first essential step to a spiritual life is character.* This is further corroborated by Eleanor Roosevelt's observation: *Only a man's character is the real criterion of worth.* Saint

Charan Singh admonishes: *The first prerequisite of a gentleman or a lady is a good moral character.*

Building a strong character is like creating a garden. We need to plant the right flora, feed it, water it, and keep it pruned and properly cultivated. If we don't take excellent care of it, it will turn into a weed field, thereby losing its beauty. Character construction is a continual process in the making.

It's not easy to build and maintain a good character. This world is full of challenges, temptations, struggles. Being human, we're bound to stumble and fall at some point or another. As the saying goes, *Every Saint has a past and every sinner has a future.* Yet, if and when we fall, we must pick ourselves back up, clean ourselves up, examine why we stumbled and fell, make the appropriate corrections and then continue moving forward. To remain fallen is to deny our sincerity to grow. There is no disgrace in falling down. The disgrace is in not getting back up and carrying on. It's just like learning how to ride a bike, a horse or perform any other skill. We fall, we get back up, get back on, and get back getting on. It's a developmental process. We just have to keep working at it. Rome wasn't built in a day, nor are our characters. The thing to keep in mind, however, is that a good moral character is the goal if we want to reflect the excellence of life that we're capable of reflecting. Therefore, even though we may fall, we must not stay fallen. Giving up is a greater crime than falling down. Should we fall, as well we may, we need to get our bones, minds, morals, principles and spirits back up, make the needed changes, learn the needed lessons and press on because if we don't, it's a guarantee we'll never grow, never get better and never realize the kind of quality of character that is the hallmark of all great souls. Character building is a process, and in life, as in the path to becoming a Black Belt, the process is the product.

## **2. Courage**

How many victories in life, how many blessings, how many opportunities have been lost for want of courage? As both Clare Boothe Luce and Winston Churchill declare respectively: *Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount, and Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities... because it is the quality which guarantees all others.*

Courage is being bold, fearless, intrepid, brave and resolute. It is the act of challenging our demons and dragons and not letting them control, limit, define or destroy our lives. Without

courage, we would not stand up to the forces denying us or attempting to limit and dictate to us how we should live.

Courage, like character, is often a developmental process. Facing our fears, standing up to the bullies and bad guys in our lives, staring down our demons and engaging Goliath on the battlefield are how our courage is nurtured and sculpted. Little by little, battle by battle, shaky knee instance by shaky knee instance we grow until we eventually emerge from the Cocoon of Conquest a daunting and exalted hero.

Some people come by courage naturally. Others don't. This should in no way discourage anyone from learning to become more courageous. In martial arts, courage is developed by confronting an opponent in a controlled sparring environment and fighting him . . . all by oneself. Hopefully, this is done in a nurturing, safe and positive environment rather than through the school of hard knocks and street life. By learning to fight the fight by ourselves . . . alone . . . and not look to or rely on others for support or to fight our battles for us, we learn to be self-reliant, independent and courageous. It is probably one of the most satisfying accomplishments in a martial arts student's life to learn to have courage.

Going through such a transformation from tentative individual to courageous soul is a wonder to behold. Once courage is elevated to a meaningful level, the world becomes a totally different place, a place where one can walk freely without fear, maintaining a sense of confidence and dignity reserved only for those who have challenged and conquered the demons, dragons, rascals, rogues, goblins and ghouls of life.

### **3. Commitment**

A commitment is a covenant, pact, promise, assurance, duty and obligation. If we have a desire to succeed or achieve a particular goal or condition in life, we must create a covenant, a promise to ourselves to achieve that end. If others are involved, then we must give an assurance to them as well. The thing is, we can't achieve success without commitment.

In this modern give-it-to-me-now world, commitment is becoming a rare quality, sadly. Yet, success and true achievement will never be realized without it. People may do their best to fool themselves and others, but in the end such gains will only be seen for what they are, hollow specters of illusion.

#### **4. Concentration**

This subject has been covered in the section, *Concentration is the first key*. Its power and importance in the process of success are mentioned here by two of the greatest athletes in their sports: Bill Russell, the famous basketball player with the World Champion Boston Celtics, and Jack Nicklaus, one of the most famous and accomplished golfers of all time. Russell declares: *Concentration and mental toughness are the margins of victory*. Nicklaus corroborates this statement saying, *My ability to concentrate and work toward that goal has been my greatest asset*. Need more be said? Concentration, it is a vital component in the process of achievement.

#### **5. Consistency**

If we're ever going to realize our goals, being sporadic will not get the job done. We need to be consistent and go through the often boring process of practicing our craft over and over and over and over and over and over again. Get the picture? We must be relentless in our consistency.

Francis Bacon's assertion that *Consistency is the foundation of virtue* is a worthy proclamation. Virtue is steadfast. It doesn't waiver. It is consistency - the activity of faultless regularity, that gives virtue its foundation. We could never rise to the level of being a Black Belt without it. Starting and stopping, and starting and stopping are lethal to the attainment process. If we're not consistent, we lose momentum and conditioning and therefore have to regenerate them. Doing so might work once or twice, but after a while such sporadic and intermittent behavior fail us. Ask any successful professional in any art and they will tell you that it is the daily practice, the ability to stay regular and consistent that is one of the great keys to their success. So should it be ours.

Thus, in summary of these last two sections, the five Cs - Character, Courage, Commitment, Concentration and Consistency, coupled with the five Ds - Desire, Dedication, Determination, Discretion and Discipline are critical essentials to our success in life. They are wonderful virtues we would all do well to emulate.

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