

The Black Belt Book of Life - Topic #36

The Learning Process

Learning is a process
that's challenging and fun,
comprised of three distinctive parts:
Acquisition, Integration, Execution

*I am learning all the time.
The tombstone will be my diploma.*
Eartha Kitt

*When the student is ready,
the master appears.*
Buddhist Proverb

*I don't think much of a man who is not
wiser today than he was yesterday.*
Abraham Lincoln

*The ink of the scholar is more sacred
than the blood of the martyr.*
Mohammed

Learning is a lifetime process. Because knowledge is infinite, learning will never end. To think we have ever come to the end, or will ever come to the end of the learning/knowledge spectrum, is unrealistic. This is why the famous singer, Eartha Kitt, said:

I am learning all the time. The tombstone will be my diploma.

The learning process has three distinct parts:

1. Acquisition
2. Integration
3. Execution

1. Acquisition

Acquisition means to acquire. As a martial artist we acquire knowledge from classroom instruction, sparring with opponents, competing in tournaments, practicing, reading books, watching videos, sharing ideas with others and just plain observing all aspects of the art. So it is with any subject.

Yet, just because we acquire knowledge and gain information doesn't mean we have learned. It simply means we have obtained. Hopefully, the knowledge we've obtained is top-notch and instrumental in creating a foundation for our success as we move to the second stage.

2. Integration

This second phase of the learning process is where both the hard work and magic happen. It is here that we take the knowledge we've gained, incorporate and combine it into a workable whole. The rub is that this phase is also the longest phase and, frankly, it really never ends because our learning never ends unless we choose to stop learning, especially if we're in a constant pursuit to achieve perfection in our chosen profession, art or skill.

This phase demands patience, persistence, determination. The acquisition part of the journey is often exciting because it's new, fresh and we're motivated. But the goal of mastery and perfection in the integration phase takes seemingly endless time . . . and sweat . . . and effort . . . and struggle . . . and tears . . . and trying and more trying, a little success and more effort and on and on. But that's life. Anything worth achieving demands our greatest effort and integrative wholeness. It is in this phase that we learn that the process is the product, and if we're savvy, we learn to love and embrace the work.

3. Execution

This is the stage in which the results of our hard work and effort are realized. We gathered the information in the acquisition phase, honed it in the integration phase, and now in the execution phase we get to apply it and see the fruits of our labors.

This execution phase is the "do it" phase. We haven't learned anything until we can *do* the thing we're learning. Frankly, if we know something, we can do it. If we don't know it, we can't do it, whatever "it" is. To know is to do; to not do is to not know. We don't need to announce our ability in any field or in any skill. Our ability, not our words, will speak for us. It is this 'ability to do' that gives us confidence and sends a clear message that we have learned.

~finis

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