

The Gi Yu Dojo Seminar Reflections 2018

Adam Ciarlariello- ShoDan The Gi YU Honbu Dojo

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As I reflect on this year's annual Gi Yu Dojo seminar, I can't help but be filled with pride and joy. This year was the first seminar that my son Dominic participated in the weekend event as an aspiring student to our adult program. Dominic started in the CORDS program 7 years ago at 6 years of age. I found the Gi Yu Dojo and Sukh Sensei's number on the internet. I still remember my first conversation Sukh Sensei. "Why do you want him to train here," he asked. I explained that I wanted him to gain confidence and have the ability to stick up for himself and others. "Good," he said, "We aren't training any little MMA fighters here, we are training warriors and productive members of our communities". I knew then this was a place that valued growth and development over competition and ego.

Dominic completed the CORDS Kids curriculum, earning his third tip Brown belt a number of months ago. He knew that this accomplishment meant that he would soon be joining the adult class. He was 13, 105 lbs. soaking wet, and around 5 ft. tall at the time. He was concerned about beginning to train with the adults in the adult program who are significantly bigger and stronger than him. There was quite a bit of mystery in his mind about what the adult class is like. Many of his teachers in the adult program were now going to become his training partners with him in his new class setting. He was nervous to say the least.

He took a little time off as soccer season ramped up earlier this year. However, at the beginning of the summer, he decided to recommit himself to the dojo and his training. We began attending Monday night "basics" classes and some Iaito training on Saturday mornings. It wasn't long before the seminar was upon us and he was concerned about training with the adults. But, just like each phase of his training at the Gi Yu Dojo, he challenged himself, participated in the seminar, and came out of the weekend feeling confident, connected to our school and community, and excited to train even more.

I haven't included pictures in my reflections in the past, but I felt that the pictures of this past seminar tell the story of the experience for many of us at the Gi Yu Dojo. I wanted to take a second to spend some lines of this article to share some of many pictures from this year's seminar that include my son. I have tried to look at these pictures from the perspective of an anxious teenager, parent, or student and ask myself, "What does this say about training at the Gi Yu Dojo?"





A picture is worth a thousand words. If this is true, then the images above are worth over 10,000 words. Although there is probably a lot of truth to this statement, I would argue that the images collectively have a very simple and short message summed up in two little words: “we care.” The Gi Yu Dojo and Sukh Sensei CARE!

When you listen, truly listen, you will hear this message in all of the training that we do in any class. My son heard this message loud and clear over the seminar weekend. He is as excited now as he has ever been to train at the dojo. I am proud of him for continuing his training and I am proud to be part of a community with people who approach our training with a unified vision of what is important.

Now, reflections about MY training...

I had a great weekend - in the sense that I thoroughly enjoyed the seminar and celebrating with friends. I want to thank Chris for continuing to show leadership and organize the effort to keep our dojo a safe and clean environment to train in.

I continue to work on my confidence in my techniques. I have made a commitment to overcome the injury I sustained in my back almost two years ago. One of my major challenges is that I have to learn how to fall again. I was training with Aman Sensei practicing Gan Seki Nage. At one point, he asked me why I was fighting him so much. Being an uke for Gan Seki Nage is a challenge for me right now but his words reminded me of something I learned a long time ago: “you lose sight of your goal when fear takes over”. It is something we discuss regularly with new students. You have to relax and learn how to flow with the technique. The technique is designed to capitalize to your resistance to the technique. Your training as an uke is to find this flow to protect yourself.

I have noticed this with some of our kyu rank students as they tested. You have to relax and find ways to receive the techniques for your training, just as much as your partner's. This stiffness is creating bad habits for you, as it is for me, but you have to actively work on it when you are in the moment of training. If you are still trying to figure it out, have that conversation with your training partner. Find the middle ground for your growth and theirs, regardless of which side you are on in the moment. When your training partner is practicing performing Gan Seki Nage, you need to be practicing receiving Gan Seki Nage. These are equally important. I am trying to work on this concept as we train with our various weapons as well, "kake heki" or give and take.

I had one of my better days cutting with a live Japanese sword on tatami this year. Many thanks to WS Sensei for allowing me to borrow his katana. I really focused on my grip and sinking my hips. For me, on our basic cuts, it translated to some success. I didn't get to celebrate those cuts too long before I was challenged by Sensei to try some "motionless cuts." I sometimes hate, but mostly love when he does these little "next level" challenges. I know I have a long way to go.

In the end...

I truly appreciate what training with the people of our dojo continues to give to me and my family. It continues to push me to reflect on my choices as a friend, father, professional, and leader. I will end with a few other pictures that I believe embody the training of the Gi Yu Dojo. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you have done for me and my family, Domo Arigatou Gozaimashta.

