

LOYALTY

by Kevin Joe

What is Loyalty

Loyalty is the commitment, faithfulness and trustworthiness one makes to another person, group, team, country, organization, religion or cause.

The benefits to a person, group, company or organization of loyal people is obvious. Loyal people will go the extra distance, be there when the going gets tough, and are more committed and trustworthy. In the most extreme examples loyal people will give their lives to their country, family and religion.

If we want students to be loyal to clubs and instructors, and instructors to be loyal to their regions, ITFNZ and ITF we need to understand the question, what makes a person loyal?

The pursuit of happiness.

Historically the pursuit of happiness was a life in search of spiritual salvation. Life was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. It wasn't until the Age of Enlightenment combined with improved living conditions that the people started to believe that happiness was attainable. Achieving happiness is now the primary goal in life for many.

Poverty brings misery, but money does not buy happiness. Research has shown that as people became wealthier worldwide, that increased wealth beyond a certain threshold does not make people happier. Rather personal choice and freedom became the main contributors to how happy a person was. Societies which have strong communal relationships and extended families are the happiest.

Study after study has also shown that we take more pleasure from experiences than from things. The reason why is that experiences tend to be shared with others. The factor that separates happy people from unhappy people is their relationships with others.

Loyalty and relationships.

Our lives are spent satisfying our needs and desires physically, emotionally and spiritually. To fulfill those needs and desires we need other people. We can not function alone. We need to be part of a society with relationships within that society. Historically, loyalty wasn't optional. Ostracism was the ultimate disgrace and public humiliation was tolerated, as the alternative often meant death. Today leaving a group does not represent risking one's survival.

In the marketplace, where the performance or quality of a product or service is exceeded by a competitor it becomes common place to consider leaving and going to the competition. This attitude has permeated into other areas of our lives. The option of

leaving dysfunctional families, marriages, employers, religious groups and countries has eroded loyalty as part of our character and relationships.

The basic assumption behind leaving is that life will be better without that relationship, that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. Leaving is the norm. Disloyalty is almost encouraged. A selfish society is a disloyal society where the only loyalty is to oneself.

Loyalty is accepting the relationship you have with another person, group, organization or country and acting in a way that defends and strengthens that relationship and commitment. Loyalty is the counterpart to “my”. When we are loyal we have come to the decision that the object of our loyalty belongs to us. At some point we have decided that they are *my* friend, *my* club, *my* team, *my* country. The “*my*” implies psychological ownership, and ownership demands responsibility.

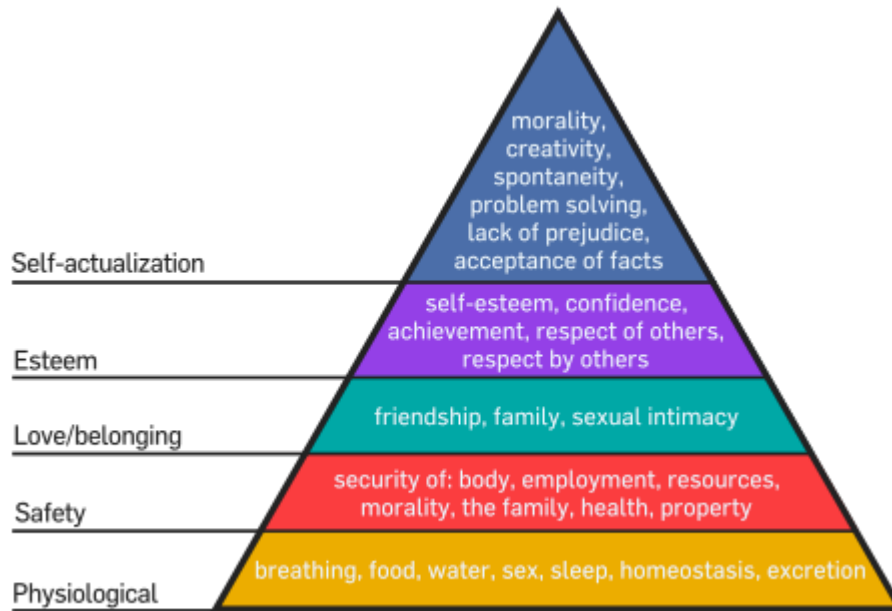
The most frequent words used to describe friendship are loyalty, honesty, respect, trust, intimacy, help and support. Strong relationships implies: *I will be there for you*. Loyalty differentiates friends from acquaintances. Loyal friends rely on one another. It requires forgoing our immediate self-interest to help a friend in need. Loyalty demands sacrifice.

But why are we willing to make a sacrifice and be loyal? It's not because we need to survive as we did once, but that we want closer relationships, because relationships bring happiness. The sense of belonging is better than loneliness and isolation.

One might also surmise that happy people are loyal, but studies have shown it to be the other way around. Loyal people are happier. This suggests that once a decision to be loyal is made, we have a greater sense of belonging and a greater connection to the person or group and then, we are happier for it.

Fulfillment

Another important factor in determining whether we are happy is our sense of fulfillment. Maslow in 1943 developed a theory known as **Maslow's hierarchy of needs** which stated that as our most basic needs are met we look to satisfying the next level of needs finishing with the needs at the top of the pyramid.



The model is interesting as it helps to explain another motivator of loyalty. We can choose to be loyal to individuals and groups and this is driven by need to form relationships but why do we choose to loyal to a cause, religion, political ideal or organization.

As we fulfill our basic needs and wants we look fulfilling to higher levels needs and wants like respect, achievement, morality etc. We are willing to sacrifice and be loyal when we believe a cause or ideal is worthy.

Loyalty to the art of TKD fits the above. For a student to be loyal to TKD they need to understand that TKD is not just about the physical but that General Choi developed TKD to make us better people and his goal is not unlike the goal of most religions. Hence the more a student understands the non physical aspects to the art especially the moral culture, the more likely they are to be loyal to the art.

Research conclusively shows that we get an emotional high from helping others long after the helping is done. We are more satisfied when we are more involved in the community and serve the community.

This is shown by the many who volunteer both their time and money.

Teaching Loyalty

To develop loyal students we need to ask why they would decide to be loyal. If a student in TKD views training as a product or service that they buy, where the product is learning self defense and getting fit, then it unlikely they will become loyal. We as instructors need to create an environment where the student can form relationships with other

students and the instructor. This means we need to cultivate relationships that are not superficial. They need to be given the chance to make the club “their” club.

The following is a short list of ways loyalty can be encouraged:

Show leadership that gains trust and respect.

I have found that games that help students learn each others names surprisingly positive. An example is forming small groups in a circle and throwing a pad to each other calling the receivers name as we pass the pad. The reaction has often been laughter and a great way for new students to feel more welcomed and for existing students to learn the names of those who have joined recently.

Short and hard training sessions where students and instructors support each other during the exercise, creates a sense of mutual shared experience through a tough situation. The combined clap at the end of each tabata session at Dragon Spirit Club always has a sense of community to it. The feeling that “we” did.

Camps and extra mural club activities are usually less structured and informal allowing more relaxed and memorable shared experiences.

Tournaments allows a club, region, country to cheer and support the competitor. A great example is Team NZ, where the whole country is encouraged to be part of the team. Team events eg team patterns are great for encouraging a team spirit, commitment and responsibility.

Service to a club or ITFNZ at any level builds loyalty. Allowing students teach each other creates community. Service leads to greater ownership.

Give students responsibility which shows trust, as loyalty is built on trust. Giving senior students the responsibility of teaching a particular grade group also gives them ownership of that group.

Letting students take the warm up is a great way to give them a sense of ownership.

Show commitment to students by going the extra mile.

Encourage commitment, responsibility and perseverance and respect as these are the preliminaries to loyalty and are highly interrelated. Loyalty is about sacrifice, being there. Remind students when they miss classes they effect others, they hold others back because the instructor has to repeat the class or devote more time to them because of their absence.

Training sessions that allow student interaction helps to build relationships. Eg working in pairs or small groups. Breaking up the class into smaller groups which compete with each other in races etc and students are encouraged to cheer and support their team.

Teaching Loyalty to Children

Loyalty demands maturity. While children can have strong emotional ties, loyalty is the result of personal commitment and therefore children cannot be loyal per se. But children can be taught the preliminaries to loyalty such as responsibility, perseverance and respect for others. They can be taught the importance of service.

Children can also be taught what it means to be loyal and why it is important. This can be done by using the example of how do you be loyal to friends and family. You can ask them how it feels to be betrayed. This can then be extended to what it means to be loyal to club members and to the club and what actions loyalty takes.

Toxic Loyalty

Toxic loyalties can have the potential to harm or happiness. Like love, loyalty can bond communities and enrich our lives, but when misdirected can corrode the qualities we seek.

We can be loyal to groups or individuals who can harm society, for example loyalty to hate groups. In 1934 officers in the Germany army swore an oath to Hilter and remained loyal despite his harsh treatment of German soldiers, unsound military strategy and tactics and crimes committed under his orders.

A decision sometimes has to be made when one's loyalty is toxic or harmful.

Blind Loyalty

Loyalty can mean turning a blind eye to obvious shortcomings. The brain is hardwired to *want* to believe. Researchers in psychology have found that the brain holds on to the most rewarding view of events and selectively invest in "facts" that conform to our views, even in the face of conflicting information and evidence. Blind loyalty can cause us to remain loyal even after evidence of untrustworthiness and betrayal by the object of our loyalty.

Calculative Loyalty

Calculative loyalty is based on tangible value. Loyalty is given based on a return. When the benefit of belonging to the group is perceived as gone then the loyalty also goes. This was touched on earlier, where today, society has conditioned us to think of ourselves first before any consideration or loyalty to others.

This has occurred with individual students as well as with instructors and with organisations. When students view the relationship with the club as a commercial

relationship like being part of a gym they will tend to act accordingly with little loyalty. If learning is viewed as a short term past time or sport when their goals are met then the relationship and loyalty ends. This may explain why some students who reach black belt stop training.

Another example of calculative loyalty is when a student who has joined for fitness and self defense feels they will benefit more from changing clubs or even leaving altogether.

Conclusion.

Loyalty is a desired attribute in a student from the instructors' and ITFNZ viewpoint, but it needs to be remembered that loyalty brings happiness for the student.

Loyalty like love or respect is given and not always earned but loyalty that is reciprocated is always stronger.

I have always remembered what my first instructor, Master Rountwaite would often say "that you need to more than just come along to club training sessions, get involved with the people in your club and organization, because they will keep you going. If you do TKD just for the martial art or fitness you will give up after a short time." Realizing that there will be many people in TKD that I have known and will know for a large part of my life, means that in many ways we are a TKD family. Being part of a family means how you relate changes and the strongest loyalty is to family.

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