

IN THE
CLASSROOM

BY DAVE KOVAR

"LOOK FOR WAYS TO LET EACH STUDENT HAVE HIS OR HER MOMENT TO SHINE. IF A STUDENT IS PARTICULARLY GOOD AT SOMETHING, FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE HIM OR HER A MOMENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT."

How Martial Arts Schools Fill 6 Basic Human Needs

Beyond the essentials like food and shelter, there are six basic human needs. I believe that these needs originally stem from the late prominent psychiatrist, Dr. Sigmund Freud, but I first heard them from life-coach Tony Robbins. If you provide these needs for your students, their connection will be very strong and they'll never want to quit.

The six needs are:

1. The Need to Fit in

We all want to feel like we have places we belong, where we are with other people like ourselves.

How martial arts schools can fill this need: Certainly, your uniform is a good start. When we all wear the same uniform, we all have something in common. And keeping students of similar age and skill level adds to the feeling that each student fits within their class.

But, to really fill this need, we need to help our students feel that they really fit *perfectly* in their class. Be sure that they form bonds with their instructor(s) and their fellow students.

2. The Need to Stand Out

We all want to feel like we are special.

How martial arts schools can fill this need: Look for ways to let each student have his or her moment to shine. This can be done in any number of ways. If a student is particularly good at something, find an opportunity to give him or her a moment in the spotlight. When you have seen improvement, even if it is slight, let your student know about it individually, and tell their parents as well.

3. The Need for Certainty

We all have the need for familiarity and routine. Not in every detail, but at least in the general structure of our lives.

How martial arts schools can fill this need: A generally consistent class format addresses this very well. The details will change from class to class, but if your class structure is consistent, your students will find comfort in that.

And while there are very valid reasons for changing your schedule from time to time, a consistent schedule helps provide certainty in your students' experience.

4. The Need for Variety

We all need the stimulation that comes from new experiences.

How martial arts schools can fill this need: Keep your material fresh. Keep the pace of introducing new material at a level that enables your students to master the moves, but changes before they get bored. Change things up from time to time. For example, consider introducing a new three-month leadership program or a nutritional challenge.

5. The Need for Acknowledgement

We all need the feelings that come from being validated, appreciated and acknowledged.

How martial arts schools can fill this need: The first level of this is obvious. Tips, stripes and, of course, belts are symbols of accomplishment and, when they're presented with sincerity, they can be powerful methods of acknowledgement. But you can make a more powerful impact by being quick to recognize good effort, good performance and good improvement. Compliment kids in front of their parents and be sure your adult students are also recognized for their efforts and performance.

6. The Need for Contribution

We all need to feel that we make valuable contributions in the various aspects of our lives.

How martial arts schools can fill this need: Provide opportunities for students to help in and around the school. There are lots of ways to do this, from sweeping the mat to being a Storm or Swat Team member. You can take this one step farther by valuing, and recognizing community service.

The bottom line is, if you focus on addressing these six human needs with your students, you'll see a dramatic improvement in your school's retention. 🥋