

Sword and Spirit

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— Why Budo? —

Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.

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The Dojo Superstar or the Talented Destroyer

If you teach long enough, you will meet the dojo superstar. They often have innate talent and potential, and that gets them in the door. In an undisciplined and lax environment, they can excel as the big fish in the little pond but there is only one problem—they are destructive to group unity and to the vision of a quality dojo, and they isolate and alienate other deshi. The physical benefits of having them around are far outweighed by their usual traits, which include but are not limited to:

1. They are usually arrogant and headstrong.
2. They are usually inflexible and lack the ability to uphold dojo rules, often being dismissive.
3. They can create tension in the dojo as they like to push their weight around and may even do this with sempai. A confident sempai core helps to alleviate this.
4. They are often focused on themselves, and their questions often reflect their need for attention and simply serve as openings to discuss their views.
5. They are often manipulative. This can cause great despair and even greater tension in a dojo.
6. They lack personal accountability and can easily hurt the reputation and integrity of the dojo
7. They are often charismatic and the problem can spread among others that develop hero worship because of the natural talents of the Superstar. The cool kid in class syndrome. This can create a toxic environment and make students choose sides. Not good. Not good at all.



8. They can develop a culture of dependence within certain sections of the student body.
9. If called out on their mess, they often will try to dissuade others and spread mistrust among the leadership. A truly toxic potential that is best avoided.
10. They get addicted to praise, attention, rank, and letting you know their standing in the room.
11. The dojo superstar may not push their weight around technically; maybe they know to toe the line. They may throw their weight around with their political or religious views, any of which truly should be kept quiet in the dojo.
12. They have also been known to be over-opinionated and this can destroy the usual harmony, trust, and rapport of the dojo.

Have you ever trained with these types? If you have trained for any length of time and you were paying attention, then you certainly have. In the Nihonden Aikibujutsu Senyokai, we do not promote the idea of the Superstar dojo member.

To this end, we must remain vigilant when screening potential applicants and take our vetting processes seriously. Truly, it only takes one bad apple to destroy the entire cart. 🍏



Salahuddin Muhammad is dojocho of the Takeshin Dojo and director of the Nihonden Aikibujutsu Senyokai. An overseas director (Nihon jujutsu division) for the Japanese Budo Association under his teacher, Asano Yasuhito Sensei, Muhammad Sensei is the current head of Hontai Hakkei-ryu, and a student of Shinkage-ryu Hyoho (Asano-ha). He is retired from the fields of private client and executive protection, and has also worked in fugitive recovery.



Three Month Open Enrollment Opportunity

The Nihonden Aikibujutsu Senyokai is holding a rare, open membership program. For only three months we are extending opportunities for serious budoka to join us and expand their martial knowledge, access advanced studies, and even connect directly with the Japanese sources of their arts. If interested, please realize that there is an application and vetting process. Serious inquiries only, to ittendojocho@gmail.com — your information will be forwarded to Muhammad Sensei.

