

Bullying and Harassment

This script regarding the above is intended to provide examples of what to look out for and the actions a senior club instructor may be expected to take for the benefit of all judokas.

When the word “bullying” is used, it is fair to say that most people would associate that word with **physical** aggressive action by one person against another. However, when you consider this matter further, bullying and harassment can take many forms.

With the sport of Judo a forefront, consider the following:

1. An experienced judoka who regularly or continuously selects the same less experienced judoka for groundwork or randori and performs techniques in an aggressive manner knowing that the “attack” will not be adequately defended.
2. The silent treatment. The ignoring and / or avoidance of a judoka by one or more other judokas.
3. Ridicule of a judoka on a regular or continual basis by one or more other judokas, whether relating to size, shape, technique or the questions that judoka has raised.
4. Unnecessary touching by one judoka on one or more other judokas either during practice and / or outside of judo practice.
5. Threatening behaviour in any form.

All of the above examples could occur between adults on adults, adults on children / juniors, juniors on juniors (male or female) and juniors on adults. In addition it may not be restricted to judokas, it may well be a parent(s) on a junior judoka or judoka on a parent.

Action to be taken

First and foremost the instructor must remain vigilant. The victim of the bullying or harassment may not always make the instructor aware, may be due to fear or embarrassment.

The instructor needs to be aware of his or her own actions as a misjudged comment or expression may inadvertently be read as being acceptable to repeat and may endorse the aggressor’s behaviour.

Therefore, with a diligent and positive structure to the training session, the instructor will be able to remain approachable for the benefit of all judokas.

With these principles in place, in response to the above five scenarios the instructor may:

1. If there is such unacceptable behaviour by a higher graded judoka in training, this can be addressed by the **instructor** pairing judokas more appropriately and generally reminding higher grades of their responsibilities towards lower grades. Should the behaviour of the more experienced judoka be **clearly** unacceptable, a private chat with that judoka may be more appropriate.
2. The instructor should consider why this is occurring. A private chat with the “offender” may throw some light on the reasoning behind the behaviour and in turn may promote a resolution to this undesirable situation.

3. Any such behaviour is undesirable. This could be a “funny remark” or “banter” taken too far or repeated on a regular basis to the distress of the victim. With the above principles in place, the instructor should not allow the continuance of any such comments, moving the training session forward. Should a judoka continue or subsequently return to this behaviour, a private chat with that individual may be more appropriate. Dependant upon the nature of the comments there may be some suggestions that can be made privately to the target / victim to address the situation. For example, the comments may be regarding the person’s personal hygiene, cleanliness of gi or their own remarks to others. To make the victim aware may assist them in avoiding such unwelcome comments.
4. During training it may not be so clear to spot by the instructor and may require the victim(s) to make a complaint. If the complaint is made during the training session, the instructor should ensure that the judokas concerned are kept apart and pay more attention to the technique of the accused judoka. Clearly, during the course of training, an inappropriate touch may occur. Should these actions continue or are noticed by the instructor, a private chat with that judoka reminding them of the need to be observant of their movements may be appropriate.
5. Threatening behaviour observed by the instructor can only result in the removal of the aggressor(s) from the mat. This may be for a cooling down period or for the remainder of the training session.

The above ways of dealing with an instance of bullying and harassment are not necessarily as a result of the victim reporting the matter to the instructor, but as a result of vigilance and awareness during a training session. In the capacity as a Senior Club Instructor, the removal of a judoka from the training session is the limit of their actions and would only be taken if it were to be considered absolutely necessary. The use of a “quiet word” or “private chat” may be all that is needed to put an end to the undesirable behaviour on a less formal level. During such training sessions there will be either one or both of the Club Coach and / or Senior Club Coach available with whom any of the above matters or concerns would be reported to. Any action taken against an individual by the club would be the responsibility of the club Sensei.

Therefore, if a student approached the Senior Club Instructor and complained of being bullied at judo, the instructor should listen to the student and be clear as to the nature of the complaint and the parties concerned. The instructor should consider the severity of the complaint carefully and act accordingly. There may be a genuine misunderstanding that can be resolved quickly and easily, or the accusation may be of a more serious nature. Any complaint made by a student must be reported to the Senior Club Coach and / or Sensei (if available). The instructor can then take advice from the Senior Coach or Sensei on how to proceed.

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable. It is important for the instructor to supervise training diligently and remain approachable. Bullying and harassment can occur on all levels and within all age groups and may not always be reported. The aggressor may not even be aware of their remarks or actions. In order to maintain awareness that bullying is unacceptable within our judo club, it is important that the club makes this statement not only within the club’s written rules but also regularly at the commencement or end of training sessions, ensuring that students are aware of who they can talk to in private and in confidence, not only regarding issues within the judo club but also on any issues arising outside of the club.