

# SENSEI'S CORNER

## WHAT IS REI?

The way karate begins and ends with rei, which means "respect," as well as "courtesy." As mentioned elsewhere in previous Sensei's Corner news letters, karate students treat not only people with respect, but also such things as their school and uniforms. What this means is that we do not take these things for granted. The left radical in rei means "deity" while the right signifies "bounty." In other words, rei is the spirit of giving thanks for bounty. It is the appreciation of good fortune. What would karate practice be like without rei?

Certainly, students would not learn as much, for listening attentively to the instructor and not talking out of turn is an important part of rei. It would also be more dangerous, because cooperating to ensure a karate class is safe is also a part of rei. Without it, people would be free to disrupt class or cause unnecessary injury. In karate, as in society, smooth interaction relies greatly on courtesy and respecting social conventions. The way in which karate students express their respect most is by bowing. Students bow to the teacher before starting to work together in drills or sparring. Even before and after competition matches, which contestants try their hardest to win, they bow to express their mutual respect. After all, it takes courage and determination to enter and train for competition. By showing rei during karate class, students and teachers are saying they appreciate the opportunity to learn from each other. And by treating their classmates with courtesy and respect, students also recognize the hard work and discipline that everyone is devoting to karate. By treating things such as their school and uniforms with respect, they make certain that do not take these things for granted. Remember, not everyone is fortunate enough to be able to learn karate. Apply the principles of rei to life outside of karate class, and you have simple etiquette. Thanking guests for coming to your party is a indication that you appreciate the effort they made to attend. Proper table manners are an expression of your respect for your dining partner's right to enjoy a pleasant meal without being offended. As you become accustomed to expressing rei in karate class, see if you can show similar attention to the etiquette of daily living. And never take good people, nor good things, for granted. That is the spirit of rei.