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JOURNAL

2



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## Letter From The Editor

*Well, this is unexpected.*

Not the new issue you currently have in your hands, we knew we would continue the publication into a second issue. What we didn't realize was how overwhelmingly positive the feedback we received from our print mission would be.

As martial artists, we constantly seek out that which challenges us and helps us grow in the ways we truly need, even when those challenges seem insurmountable. We dare eat bitterness, so that we can savor the sweetness of earned skill and success.

Issue one had its challenges and issue two certainly did as well.

Despite that, it's still obvious to those of us working on the publication that we are on the right path. What you are holding in your hands is a collection of written words from martial artists around the world, shared by those with a similar level of devotion as you.

From the bottom to the top of our hearts, we appreciate the work put in so that readers such as yourself can expand their horizons and have "conversations" with martial artists in various experiences across the world.

Keep on keeping on and stay awesome!

*Editor-in-Chief*  
**Justin Lee Ford**



**MARTIAL  
JOURNAL**



# A WARRIOR IN THE GARDEN

**Written by Craig Wharem**

As the world continues to open back up and bloom in the new era of society since March of 2020, we need to keep our goals and ideals in perspective. As students of the Martial Arts, we study arenas of chaos and violence and through that lens we learn lessons on self-control, bravery, instinct and so many other amazing qualities.

**I**t's important to remember if you are in a leadership role at the dojo that your job is to plant seeds of character in the mind and hearts of your students. Throughout a student's day, they will encounter all the harsh realities of the world, we have a saying at my dojo: "Life Happens". As instructors, you can help younger and older students through their troubles simply by being there and reminding them that they can handle whatever challenge is in front of them.

Eventually physical skills diminish, but character growth can last throughout a student's entire life. Never lose sight on how important our role can be in the development of any students who ties their belt and steps on the mat. We have a responsibility through our roles as Martial Artists to empower those around us.


I am not advocating for you to become everyone's therapist, doctor or attorney. I am encouraging you to make sure you are leading by example with a firm, fair demeanor and that you remember your actions and decisions with students will make a lasting impact. We plant the seeds of character and integrity in our students and through their physical training we hope to cultivate those qualities, but ultimately the student needs to take

proper care for the seeds to grow.

It takes many years for most instructors to see the fruits of their labors and to really recognize the growth that they have helped foster throughout their time instructing. Sometimes we never see the “pay off” we just must have trust and faith that what we are doing is the right thing for the people in our lives and if we are not confident in that ability then it is important that you unpack and delve deeper internally to find out what you are not confident in.

If you have been teaching for a length of time, you no doubt have stories of when students succeeded and made big strides. Remember that for every student that you see make a huge stride, many others succeeded in smaller ways, and you helped them develop into well rounded individuals.

There’s an adage that floats around social media. “You teach me about war but preach peace. Yes, because it is better to be a warrior in a garden than a gardener in a war.” I firmly believe that martial arts instructors and mentors play a substantial role in the character garden, and we are fighting against unyielding negativity. Throughout your day watch for the negativity people have towards themselves when they walk into your doors. That’s the real fight, that’s where Martial Arts will be of the most benefit.

Be well, and lead with gentle strength. It will always pay off in the end. 

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## AUTHOR’S BIO

**Craig has been training in Martial Arts since 2002. He began teaching at the age of 14 and never stopped. Along with managing a school he also spends time working on helping with Instructor Development. He believes that it is important to continue to build up the next generation of Martial Arts Educators to help strengthen the future of the arts in mainstream society.**



**MISTAKES**

**WERE MADE!**

**Written by Jason Brick**

Here's the thing. Norris, Conor Lee. We're all training what I mean by this.

You're training wrong. So am I. So is Chuck McGregor and Chris Cyborg. So did Bruce Lee. We're all training wrong, and that's a good thing. Here's

## Unforced Errors in Martial Arts

**A**lthough we train for lots of different reasons, at their core, martial arts are skills used to reduce a human being to a dead body or crippled noncombatant. That's it. But that's not why we train, so that's also not how we train. We take steps — introduce intentional errors in our repetition — because we like our training partners and want them to come back another day.

For example, in BJJ we sink in a lock and gradually increase the pressure until our partner taps. In a life-or-death situation, we'd just break the joint and we would not respond to the tap. Practicing techniques in kenpo or karate, we pull our strikes short or target adjacent stronger areas. Boxers wear wraps and gloves, so they can punch much harder than their fingers and wrists could survive unprotected.

This is a universal aspect of modern training, and no style is immune.

All of these concessions to safety are necessary for modern and moral practice, but they create an issue. We excel at what we practice. Something we do 10,000 times is the thing we'll do under pres-

sure. It's unlikely we'll still do the thing we've done zero times, even though we understand intellectually that we need to make that change.

## The Nature of Mistakes

Although I'm using the words "mistake" and "error", neither is really accurate. These alterations aren't mistakes. They're done on purpose. They're only errors in that they replicate something different from the ideal state of a technique for self-defense.

The error comes in when we forget that we're replicating that difference, or we remember it's there but don't understand the reasons or have never seen the source material presented without error.

What's even worse, and sadly increasingly common, is a double effect. A teacher, who has never used their art outside of the dojo, learned only the error. They realize there's an error because most teachers are curious and smart, then they make up their own "fix" that's in many ways even worse than the error-laden practice.

The bottom line here: even though I'm using the words "mistake" and "error", the only way to really do this wrong is to practice without acknowledging this truth of training.

## Okay. So Now What?

Training with these errors can be better than not training, but it can also be worse. I'm not the World's Greatest Martial Arts Trainer Ever (™), but in my travels I've heard smart people consistently give four pieces of strong advice about how to deal with those errors.

# #1

### Acknowledge Their Existence

If you've been on the internet, you've seen the argument. You know, the one where the Krav Maga guy tells a BJJ dude how BJJ doesn't teach knife defense. The BJJ dude argues "yes it does" while the Krav guy ignores how he's never worked with a live blade. The first rule of fixing any mistake is to acknowledge and identify it. To borrow a phrase, we need to start with a fearless and searching inventory of the ways our training is limited.

## Identify Where A Does Not Equal B

Practicing a technique on the mat is not defending against an attack in a bar. Shooting a target is not deploying a weapon in our home after midnight. Identify the ways your practice doesn't match reality, then find ways to narrow that list. One of my favorites is practicing techniques while winded. It's not the same physiological state as an adrenaline dump, but does give the same shaking hands, compromised thought process, and nauseated stomach. Your new method equals neither A nor B, but can help you better prepare for and understand both.

# #2

## Develop a Starting Reflex

The biggest risk with these intentional errors is that we'll develop inappropriate reflexes, then use them. One way to beat that is to identify a single move, two at most, that can get you moving if you're ever attacked. Make it a move that doesn't come up in your other training, and drill it to reflex level. That first quarter second matters the most, and this can give you the right moves and mindset during that instant.

# #3

## Staci

### SHOUT-OUT!

*Sam – You are an amazingly strong woman and I am so proud of all you are doing. Keep doing what you are. You're amazing.*

## Train With your Goals in Mind

For almost all of us, our martial arts training's real world impact is the same as any other really fun group fitness class. We'll never use it in a fight, and the fitness benefits protect us from the most common killers in the developed world. If that's all you want out of your martial arts, there is nothing wrong with that and you can pretty much ignore most of this article. If you have other goals, take what's useful from here and apply it. Make sure the way you train matches the way you want to use that training, then find what mistakes, errors, and oversight exist in what you're doing now.

# #4

## A Wider Net

You know how, usually somewhere in the first year of training, we all figured out that everything we learn on the mats also applies elsewhere in life? That's true about this as well.

What other parts of your life have process errors in them? What habits have you developed that hurt your growth, development and happiness? How many things do you keep doing even though you know they're the wrong application of a barely related lesson?

Most important, how can you apply what you've learned in your training to changing them for the better? 

## AUTHOR BIO

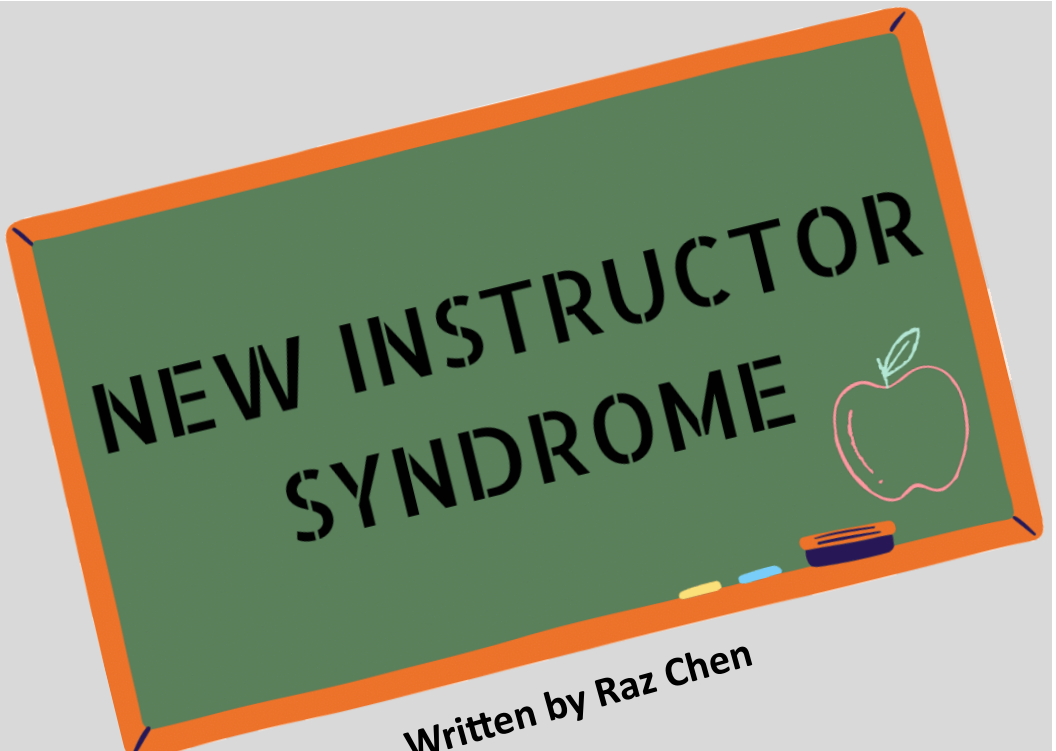
*Jason Brick is a father, journalist, and 6th degree black belt. He hosts the Safest Family on the Block podcast, where he interviews safety experts on how to best protect our loved ones. Find it on Facebook or YouTube to learn more.*

**Tashi Mark E.  
Warner**

## SHOUT-OUT!

**I'd like to shout out to my Staff for picking up all the slack and putting the school on the right track.**

# NEW INSTRUCTOR SYNDROME



Written by Raz Chen

While it's not a medical condition, “young Instructor syndrome” can be just as damaging to the martial arts journey of a student. It is defined as new teachers who are trying to make up for a lack of experience by being overly focused on discipline. They are too harsh to students and act like dictators, expecting an unreasonable amount of obedience. They focus so much on making the student compliant that the practical applications of martial arts fall to the way-side.

**O**f course, discipline is the core of martial arts training, and without it, the student can never make progress. However, when the discipline becomes abusive, it is detrimental to the student and can break them.

This condition first came up when I was training as a combat instructor in the Israeli army. An army is a place of high discipline, where we are training for life and death situations. I had to be intense and hard on the recruits, pushing them beyond their limits in order to turn them into combat soldiers. That meant I needed to have complete obedience from the recruits and anything that fell below my very high expectations meant they would be disciplined. Disobedience would not be tolerated.

In the army, given the power dynamics, it was easy to become a petty despot who thrived on being the boss, ordering the soldiers around just because I had the power to do it.

That is why I was trained to never lose sight of my goal. Everything I did as a combat instructor was in service of creating soldiers who could function in the field, and carry out high-level missions under dangerous conditions. Mistakes on the base were punished by sprints and push-ups. Mistakes in the field compromised the safety of the soldiers, the safety of the civilians around them, and the safety of the country.

Now, of course, as civilian instructors, we don't have the same high stakes. Most of our students do it as a hobby, and the pressure shouldn't be as intense. However, new instructors can still get drunk on the little bit of power they feel they have and start becoming too harsh to students.

To avoid this, I have four basic rules that new instructors should use to guide themselves over the first year.

## **RULE #1**

### **Stay Humble.**

New instructors need to remember that getting their teaching credentials doesn't mean they have evolved into a higher state of being. They are still the same person they always were, just with a new title. That title is only as good as the person who wears it. If they fail to live up to the responsibility of the position and lose the respect of the students, the title becomes worthless.

## **RULE #2**

### **Believe in Yourself.**

It can be terrifying standing in front of a class of people and many new instructors compensate for that by trying to seem intimidating, mistaking obedience for respect. They often lose their temper over petty slights like students talking in class or not paying attention. Their ego takes over and they take it as an insult that the students aren't giving them the respect that they are owed. Be confident enough to realize this isn't a personal insult.

## Don't Stop Being A Student.

In fact, now is the time to create your own teacher training, through two new styles of learning. One of the students I'm currently mentoring for teacher training compared it to "scalpel style, and ax style."

*Scalpel Style:*

# RULE #3

*Ax Style:*

## *Precision Learning*

Continue to work on the fine details of the martial arts you teach, by studying with an instructor more senior to you. You can choose to take the classes as a student, or you can observe from the side and take notes. If possible, ask the senior instructors if they could watch your class at one point and give you feedback. Just because you don't have their experience doesn't mean you can't benefit from it.

## *Power Learning*

Maintaining that white belt mentality is crucial, and the best way to do it is to be a white belt again in a brand new martial art that is different from the one you teach. This has numerous benefits beyond the obvious observation of new teachers and expansion of knowledge of martial arts. This is about taking off your teaching credentials to stand on the line with the other new students and having your ego crushed by returning to being the low man on the line and having to fight your way back up. I train in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, where I'm a Blue Belt. I can easily empathize with a frustrated student who is struggling. It's the same feeling I get when a purple or brown belt puts me into a submission that I can't escape.

## SHOUT-OUT!

*Kida, Raz Chen, who wonderfully teaches Imi's message of peace and makes us better!*


***All of Raz Chen's students***

# RULE #4

## Have the Big Picture in Mind.

Have the big picture in mind. All of your actions as an instructor should be in service of the goal of teaching martial arts. Your goal isn't to make them obey you. Your goal is to make them into effective practitioners. Lead by example through positive reinforcement, and education, so it's clear that your commands are for their benefit and safety, and you are on their side.

There is so much more to say, and I want to continue talking about instructor training in future articles. The transition of a student to a teacher should be celebrated. It is a sign that the martial arts tradition is continuing and there is no greater honor than seeing your student evolve their skills enough to teach others.

However, the transition from new instructor to seasoned instructor requires the humility to realize passing the certification exam is only the beginning of training. They will have to put in the work required to acclimate and thrive in their new position. More seasoned instructors also need to put in the work and share the tools and tips years of experience with new instructors. 

**Staci**

## SHOUT-OUT!

*Machina – you may not be here in Vermont but weekly game nights have made the past almost 2 years fun. You are soooo missed.*

## AUTHOR'S BIO

Raz Chen is an Expert in Krav Maga, teaching in New York City, with multiple certifications from the Sports Academy in Israel, and Wingate Institute. A former special operations infantry combatant and Senior military Krav Maga instructor, Raz taught over 10,000 soldiers, including top special forces counter-terrorism and US Marines. He currently teaches classes and seminars for the army, police, and civilians in topics like counter-terrorism, rape prevention, Krav Maga instructor certification, Krav Maga combat, and fitness. He is the creator of AVIIR, a company dedicated to functional training, protection, regeneration and longevity. Special thanks to student and co-writer Elke Weiss for her assistance.



# THE DICHTOMY OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MARTIAL ARTS

Written  
by Ezequiel  
Davidovich  
Caballero

Generally, Taiji, Bagua, and Xingyi are considered the three internal styles while styles like Choy Lee Fut, Hung Gar, Mantis, and others are categorized as external. But what do those terms really mean? Are so called internal styles really that different

from those labelled as external? Is this a true dichotomy or not? Short answer: No. But read on and see what I mean.

## INTRODUCTION

I've been practicing traditional Chinese martial arts (TCMA) for about two decades now. My main style is Hung Sing Choy Lee Fut from Fatsan but I also do Yang Taijiquan and have learned bits and pieces of other styles including Xingyi Quan and the bare basics of Baguazhang. Back when I started, I wanted to learn everything, every style out there; or at least those I found cool. With time, I realized that I'd be more than happy just learning my main style in its entirety. But those last three styles I mentioned have always fascinated me. They almost seem mystical in nature, in a way. If you've done TCMA for some time and/or are a martial arts geek like me, you've most likely heard the term *internal styles* in reference to those three schools.

## INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL

Today, those terms are mostly used as a category for different styles of TCMA. There are hundreds of different styles and several ways of classifying them. Northern vs southern, by region or province of origin, Wudang and Shaolin, animal styles, etc. Some categories are very clearly defined, others, like internal and external (at least to me), not so much.

The general assumption is that external styles emphasize the “hard” physical training; while internal styles focus on the “soft” aspects like breathing, body alignment, and relaxation. Typically the internal family includes Taiji, Bagua and Xingyi, but other styles, such as Yiquan, Bajiquan, Ziran Men, White Crane, and even some branches of Wing Chun have been labelled as such. You might be starting to guess that the dividing line is, at the very least, blurry.

## A BIT OF HISTORY

The oldest reference to these categorizations comes from the works of Huang Zongxi (1610-1695), a writer and historian from the early Qing dynasty. He was a Ming loyalist who never managed to reconcile himself with the new foreign dynasty. In one of his writings about the good old days of the Ming dynasty, he composed an epitaph where he characterized Zhang Songxi (a famous boxer of the Ming era) as a practitioner of the “internal” schools of the martial arts, different from and superior to “external” schools, like Shaolin. This is the first time we ever see the term *neijia* or internal school appear in text. Not really a text on martial arts but a political one. What did Zongxi mean by this? Most likely it was a jab at foreign influences, like Buddhism and of course the ruling Qing dynasty. So Shaolin boxing given its Buddhist roots was external boxing as opposed to the more refined internal boxing of the Ming dynasty. Of course, we don’t know what that internal boxing was.

Jump ahead a couple centuries later to Sun Lutang (1860-1933), one of the most famous and influential masters of the late 19th and early 20th century. He was a scholar, a writer, and a master of Taiji, Bagua, and Xingyi. His writings linked those three martial arts (with no relation to Zhang Songxi), Daoist philosophy and longevity qigong exercises to the term *neijia*. So what we nowadays call internal boxing or internal school mainly comes from him and his view of the martial arts. You might notice that even though both meanings of internal are completely unrelated, they both leave out the Shaolin school boxing (and those related to it). This particular distinction has, in recent times, helped market the Wudang monastery as a martial arts school.

## A FALSE DICHOTOMY

As we can see, the origin of the terms was exclusively political, but later became a bit less so. Or the focus shifted from state politics to martial arts politics. Nowadays, the term “internal” has become a mark or claim of prestige. A lot of people say their style is internal as a way to promote it, to make it stand out among the other harder, “less sophisticated” combat styles out there. Some use the label to mean that they train alignment,

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structure, and breathing exercises. But anyone who teaches the so-called internal arts, who can actually fight, will begin developing the physical, material body. Without proper physical training, all the principles and techniques will do you no good in a fight. And without that, it is not a martial art. Once you have that, you can add the philosophy and the less physical aspects; and attempt to apply them to your training.

The thing is, most martial art styles have something like that. Some start with the breathing and alignment, some start with the punching and the kicking. The former is very useful for refining body mechanics, but without the latter, you can't fight.

Each martial art goes about it their own way but, as David Jones from *Hiyaa!* (*my favorite martial arts podcast of all time*)

*used to say, we all have two arms, two legs, a torso, and a head, there're only so many different ways we can move. Especially when we're basically trying to do the same thing, learn how to fight.*

Seeing the internal practices as a set of principles for refining body mechanics makes the whole classification fall apart. Yes, the three styles from Sun Lutang's neijia share some emphasis on those aspects. But as I mentioned before, almost every martial art has that in one way or another. That's why, at least in my humble opinion, there is no point in using those categories to divide styles. They're better suited for sets of practices like different types of qigong or ways of training if at all. 📖



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### AUTHOR'S BIO

**My name is Ezequiel ("Zeke" for short)! I'm from Argentina, Spanish is my mother tongue, and English my second language. I've been into martial arts for as long as I can remember and have been doing Hung Sing Choy Li Fat (aka Choy Lee Fut or Choy Lay Fut, same thing) for almost two decades now with bits of other Chinese styles in it. Hope you like what I write.**

# **The Ninja Trix Story**

*Ask him what the biggest gift the martial arts have given him is, and Mr. Butts will tell you, "It's the trust thousands of parents and adult students have put in me over the years. To be able to touch someone's life and have them remember you many years later and thank you for telling them to never give up."*

*Developing an interest in the martial arts as a pre-teen in the early 70's, Steve Butts has forged a path that has led him to achieving his 7th Degree Black Belt in Moo Duk Kwan Taekwondo, to coaching Team USA from 2001 to 2012, and to today where he has owned and operated 3 martial arts schools in the Florida panhandle area. His three Martial Arts America schools had topped 1,000 student's pre-pandemic, and today enrollment sits at 850 and is steadily climbing back to pre-pandemic levels – thanks in large part to his Ninja Trix program.*

*With over 30 years of experience under his belt, Steve Butts is an avid believer in Kaizen – the practice of continuous improvement – always looking for ways for his schools to better serve their communities and grow. Enter the popular TV show American Ninja Warrior.*

*Realizing every kid wants to be a ninja, Mr. Butts created a variety of "kid-friendly" obstacle courses to mimic the TV show. Then, applying what he knew from running schools for many years – the need for structure and goals – Mr. Butts developed a comprehensive two-year curriculum drawing from Martial Arts, Parkour, and Gymnastics, and Ninja Trix was born!*

*When he introduced the program in his schools, it was resoundingly popular! There was immediate interest from his current students, as it re-energized them and their training, helping to improve retention. Then, as he began advertising the program in his community he began seeing a brand-new market of clientele! Kids and parents who previously had no interest in martial arts were flocking to his doors to see what Ninja Trix was all about! After two years of refining the program, building a vast library of management and marketing tools, and even adding birthday party materials and an official Ninja Trix uniform, Butts knew he had a turn-key program that was ready for licensing to others.*

*Ninja Trix isn't designed to replace your existing martial arts programs. Instead, it's a compliment to them! Ninja Trix students gain basic foundational martial arts skills and can channel them into existing martial arts programs of any style. It can also act as a stand-alone program, an add-on program, or an upgrade- the choice is yours!*

*Kids love the 10-piece obstacle course, complete with the obstacles they love from American Ninja Warrior, such as slant steps, barriers, and hurdles. The obstacles*

are set up on a 42-foot-long strip of carpet bond, specially developed for safety so the obstacles remain secured to the floor as kids move through them. Students won't get bored with NinjaTrix - through the duration of **our 24-month curriculum, your obstacle course will be reconfigured 96 different ways!** That's 96 separate courses for your students to keep them excited, engaged, and motivated!

**You and your instructors do not have to be gymnasts or parkour experts to teach NinjaTrix classes!** The Ninja Trix curriculum teaches you everything from how to spot, how to make your classes safe, and how to make your program take care of your students.



The curriculum spans 24 months, consisting of 5-minute blocks of information for each lesson. Each class gives your students a new martial art skill, a parkour skill, and a gymnastic skill. The curriculum is 100% digital - this means that **prepping for your classes is as easy as pulling out your phone** and viewing the day's lesson plan. Through a combination of written and video lessons, the 5-minute blurbs detail how to set up your course for the day, what to do on the floor, and how to make your class successful.

Ninja Trix is quickly sweeping the nation and becoming the talk among school owners in 2021! Offering a 5-mile radius of protected territory around licensed schools, territories are going fast, so don't get left out! Mr. Butts would be honored to talk to you more about how you can add this exciting new program in your school! Just go to the website ([www.ninjatrix.club](http://www.ninjatrix.club)) where you can book an appointment online, give him a call at 850-530-0234 or email the Customer Care Specialist at [leon@ninjatrix.com](mailto:leon@ninjatrix.com)!

# I'M GOING TO KICK YOUR @\$@ WITH MY MIND

Written by Steve Grogan



Anyone who has nursed a sore set of knuckles after board breaking, felt like their muscles were ripping free of their bones after stretching, or found their clothes fused to their body by sweat after sparring knows one thing: martial arts involve a lot of physical work.

No surprises there, right? After all, they are physical by nature. Even lining up with your fellow students and bowing to your head instructor is physical.

However, there is one part of martial arts training that is neglected: the mental aspect. To be specific, they leave out something I call the “Self-Defense Mentality.”

Let’s take a look at what this means.

**“MARTIAL ARTS WILL TEACH YOU SELF-CONFIDENCE”**

**H**ow many times have you seen that on an ad? For me, the answer is “too many to count.” (I’m not saying this is bad; I’m just saying it is common.)

## SHOUT-OUT!

*Smashy – It's been such a fun ride these past few years breaking bread, breaking boards, and breaking down fears. Couldn't have done it without ya!*

Martial arts definitely can teach this, meaning you begin to believe you are competent enough to perform the techniques, the forms, break boards, and so on. However, the “Self-Defense Mentality” is a different concept, and that is one that many schools ignore.

To understand the difference, we must understand the term.

## THE DEFINITION

Most people that I have met through martial arts are kind, civilized people. What I mean is when they walk down the street and they see another person, they don't think about forcing that person to hand over their wallet. Thinking like that is completely alien to them.

While civility is a good quality, it can also be a handicap if it interferes with the ability to use your skills when violence begins. That is where the Self-Defense Mentality comes into play.

Let me present you with my definition of this term:

*“The Self-Defense Mentality is a martial arts practitioner's ability to temporarily turn off the ‘civilized’ part of their brain, so it doesn't interfere with their ability to utilize their skills, leaving them with nothing on their mind other than the violent encounter at hand.”*

Self-confidence means being able to do the techniques in class; the Self-Defense Mentality means being able to use them on another person who is trying to do you harm.

## DOESN'T SPARRING PROVE YOU CAN DO THIS?

The answer: no. Sparring is a good, *legal way to pressure-test your skills, but it does not prove you can work the same magic on the street. A martial arts class is a relaxed, safe environment where you are all trying to learn together.*

While the safety aspect of class is good, it means civility is still in the mix. This manifests in the form of people pulling punches or kicks, or one person stopping to check on their partner if they land a particularly heavy blow. No such courtesy will be shown in the street.

Of course, I am not advocating that schools should start sparring as if their students *were in a street fight. What I am saying is they should teach the Self-Defense Mentality.*

## MENTAL PREPARATION FOR VIOLENCE

To achieve this, a martial arts teacher should remind their students that what they practice in class are things they may have to use against another human being someday, and they may cause bodily harm or even death to that person.

This is a hard pill for most martial arts students to swallow. Hurting others causes them a great deal of guilt, even if the harm is done to someone else who is trying to cause *them harm.*

There is one thing that all martial arts students (and people in general) should keep in mind: another person's rights end at your nose. What that means is, when someone else tries to de-



prive you of your rights, that is where *their rights end*.

You have the right to happiness. Conversely, *no one has the right to take YOUR right to happiness away. When someone attempts to do that, your mind should be flooded with anger. What makes them so special that they have more of a right to happiness than you do?*

Here is the answer: they *aren't more special than you*.

By that I am not saying you should believe you are better than them. On the contrary, you should feel you are no better *or worse than anyone else. If that is true for you, then it logically follows that the same holds true for everyone else.*

**“YOU SHOULDN'T GET ANGRY, BECAUSE IF YOU DO, THEN YOU'RE BAD, M'KAY?”**

Our society preaches that anger is a bad thing.

NEWS FLASH: Society is wrong.

Anger itself is not good or bad; how it's used is what determines its moral quality. The person attacking us when we are standing around is using anger in an evil way. If we use it to knock them out, we are using it in a good way.

Another fact about anger: your attacker has no problem using it, so neither should you. In fact, it is *imperative that you use it because if you greet evil with politeness, evil will always triumph.*

Imagine telling an assailant, “You're trying to stab me, so I'm going to punch you, okay?”

It's easy to imagine how that exchange would end.

# You have enough things to worry about when running a tournament




## CONCLUSION

Legally, a martial arts class can go only so far in providing a realistic simulation of what real-world violence would be like. The only thing that can make a kind person flip the switch from “civilized” to “(temporarily) violent maniac” would be a real threat. Since they know none of their classmates present that, the switch can never truly be flipped.

With those limitations in mind, a martial arts instructor needs to remind their students that they have the right

to happiness, no one has the right to take it away, and they have the right to be angry with anyone who does.

By extension, this means they should feel no guilt if they have to pound that person into the ground for doing so. The sooner they realize this, the safer they will be. 

Awards don't have to be one of them



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### SHOUT-OUT!

*Andrew and Jeremy – so effing proud to know you both and call you friends. Here's to more Martial Arts Mayhem with you. Never settling again!*

**Staci**

### AUTHOR'S BIO

Founder at Geek Wing Chun, Steve Grogan has been practicing Wing Chun Kung Fu since 1995. While not a Sifu, he is as passionate of a martial arts practitioner as you could hope to meet.

His YouTube channel (Geek Wing Chun) gives free training tips and ideas for people who want to get better at Wing Chun but can't make it to class as often as they'd like.

Check it out by simply typing "Geek Wing Chun" into the YouTube search field!

# MY LEFT BOOT

Written by Donovan Blair

How do we define ourselves? Humans? Democrats/Republicans? Seriously, I'm positive that any martial artist reading this defines themselves *as a martial artist. And when that ability to DO martial arts is taken away then what? Are you just a person? I'm struggling to come up with an answer.*

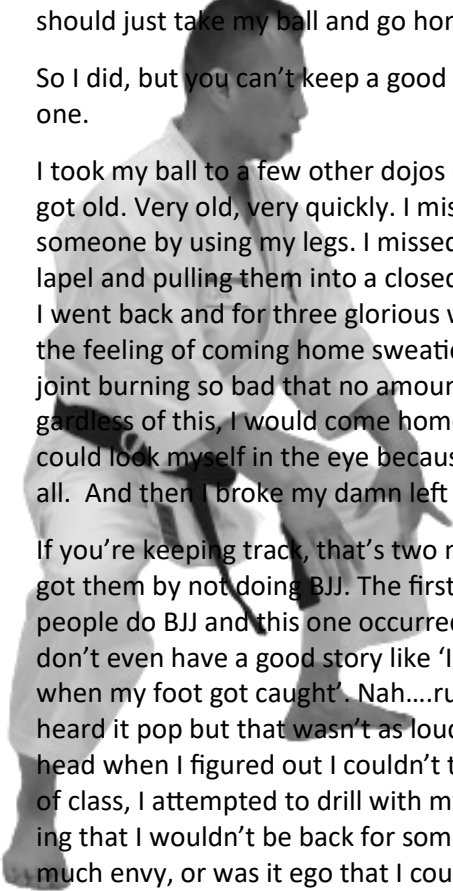


Since I began training in martial arts injuries have occurred, knocking me out of commission and it's the worst hell I can

endure. And this is coming from a guy raised in Sherman, TX so I know about hell. For the past fifteen years, I have shaped my personality around that of someone who trains martial arts—TKD, BJJ, Kung Fu, Okinawan Karate...hell, I'll try Gymkata.

Yes, I'm also a professional musician, but the recent two years have shown me that my touring life can be taken away because of a cough. I'm not happy about it but I have to focus on something I can rely on. Playing music defines me and has since 1985 but I've had too many pillars of strength crumble. We're only allowed seven and I'm down two.

A few years ago, I began to train in BJJ after months of badgering from my



good friend who had just gotten his black belt and opened an academy. I went full steam ahead and got to the lofty rank of 3<sup>rd</sup> stripe white belt. Fret not, the autobiography of how I achieved this feat is coming, so don't worry. After losing two tournaments, I was training hard for another and feeling good. That's when I hurt myself by turning my left knee ever so slightly until it popped. Long story short, I was screwed and quit BJJ because the injury cemented what I knew in my heart—that I wasn't any good and should just take my ball and go home.

So I did, but you can't keep a good man down. Or in my case, a mediocre one.

I took my ball to a few other dojos of other styles and played there. And it got old. Very old, very quickly. I missed the challenge of trying to choke someone by using my legs. I missed grabbing the shit out of my opponent's lapel and pulling them into a closed guard that Jim Brown can't escape. So, I went back and for three glorious weeks felt like a man again. I'd forgotten the feeling of coming home sweatier than I can ever remember with every joint burning so bad that no amount of Ibuprofen can make it go away. Regardless of this, I would come home *smiling*. I felt like I wasn't a quitter and could look myself in the eye because I knew I was going to try, that's all. And then I broke my damn left foot.

If you're keeping track, that's two marks in the injury column for BJJ but I got them by not doing BJJ. The first injury happened while watching other people do BJJ and this one occurred while I was warming up to do BJJ. I don't even have a good story like 'I was going for a deep De La Riva to pass when my foot got caught'. Nah....running backwards and my foot slipped. I heard it pop but that wasn't as loud as the screaming that began in my head when I figured out I couldn't train. I knew, immediately. For the rest of class, I attempted to drill with my partner Matt but had the sinking feeling that I wouldn't be back for some time. I watched my friends roll with so much envy, or was it ego that I couldn't go out and prove myself? Either way, when the ER doctor confirmed a few hours later that it was broken, I knew I was sunk. I looked at the X-rays and saw the break (nearly threw up) then noticed the scarring on my foot. Apparently breaking boards with your feet isn't good for them...who knew?


Now, anyone reading this because they found the magazine in the Dr's office will think to themselves 'big damn deal. You'll heal and go back in a month or so' but they don't have a clue as to what is going on in our heads. We don't do martial arts to hurt other people, we do martial arts so we

don't hurt ourselves. I don't drink or do drugs. At 17 years old, I got the straight edge and never looked back so this is the only way to stop the constant buzzing that's in my head. Sound crazy?

Yep. Does it work? Well, I haven't gone off the deep end yet, so I'll say yes.

I can't speak for other martial artists but when I train, it's myself I'm fighting against—not Sean or Colby or Thomas. I'm my constant rolling partner, they are just a physical representation. When I leave the school, it's still my own voice that's clowning me for the crap I did wrong. 'Should've put your leg on their hip, then the armbar would have worked and you could be a four stripe instead of three. Dipshit'. My inner voice has issues. This is why I train, to shut that asshole up and when I can't due to an injury is when the depression comes in, because the voice validates what you already think--that you're Captain Stubing on the Suck Boat and never getting off.

When I leave class something strange happens in my brain...nothing at all. There's no buzzing, only complete silence and a glow from the core because I know my best has been tried, at least for that day. Take this gift away and what are you left with? Not much, I can tell you that. We all have our issues and this is the way that we as martial artist's deal with what's going on the outside.

For me? I'll take being nearly choked out by a fifteen year old blue belt to watching my toes grow a darker shade of purple any day of the week. 

## **AUTHOR'S BIO**

Donivan Blair was born and raised in Sherman, TX. He studied Music Theory but decided to apply his education on the road for the past thirty years instead of finishing a degree. He has been a musician, barista, data coordinator, gymnastics instructor and Taekwondo instructor. None of these jobs were without fault, especially 'musician'. Since 1991 he has made 20 albums and toured the American continent, Europe and Asia with Hagfish and Only Crime. For the past 13 years he has been the bassist for Texas favorite the Toadies. He began writing his first book "Even If It Kills Me" (YMAA Publications) while on the road in 2015 about his black belt journey in Taekwondo. Upon release it was a Silver Winner for the Benjamin Franklin Award. When he's not writing he can be found drinking coffee, trying to learn Rush songs, training in martial arts and drinking coffee. He lives in Amarillo, TX with his wife Shelley and, since his bass guitars are his children, their 13 kids.

## Letter From The Publisher

How do you follow up on success?

When Justin and I started talking about the print edition for Martial Journal, we outlined a number of hopes and requirements. Those elements took a long time to coalesce, but the first issue was a success. A powerful one, with a great deal of positive feedback and cries for “more.” For those of you who have done something well on the first try, you truly know the weight of pressure. Can we get better from here? Was this success a “one-off” or would we be destined for greatness?

The answer came quickly, as we floundered on a variety of small items, pushing our timeline back again and again. It was frustrating but necessary. We’ve both agreed, each time the subject comes up, this is a publication rooted in quality, not quantity. Or, as the case may be, timeliness.

As my mind does, I’ve spent time reflecting. And in those reflections, it’s obvious that what we’re working through now is not failure, or even diminished success, but reality. The first issue went well because of all the people associated with it. Oh, and a lot of luck.

This time, we learned that even a bit of poor luck can have cascading consequences. And, as martial artists, we learn from those lessons, improve our processes, and aim to make different mistakes for Issue 3.

Because there will always be mistakes.

The only thing we can do is learn from them and try not to repeat them.

*Publisher*  
**Jeremy Lesniak**



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