

PREPARING FOR MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING

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In the past as well as the present, many students of martial arts have been lead to believe and even trust in the understanding of the "best or deadliest technique" they can find. This understanding has blinded the purpose of martial training and development. Often, students have asked their teachers to show them such a technique that will overcome certain standards or patterns of movements. These students have the understanding that it is the technique that makes the difference in any given situation. Their focus of understanding has been misguided and the important point of developing discipline, morally and ethically, has not been developed.

What is meant by technique? It is the student's aim to have his vision cleared of his misunderstandings of this question. If we entertain the assumption that the student already knows the answer, we have failed to guide the student in the right direction of learning. The technique is a tool or method that is used to develop the individual. Without the individual, the technique cannot exist and does not have a purpose. This understanding of technique will incorporate a certain amount of appreciation and individual purpose as far as skill development is concerned.

Instructors of many different areas of martial training often overlook this concept of teaching. A student must be introduced to fundamental ethics, theories, concepts and principles in order to appreciate the moral qualities of martial training.

In preparing for martial training, the student has many questions that must be answered. His approach to these answers will always be compared to his own ideas and thoughts. He will even assume that he understands much of what he is taught. This is a normal approach for a student entering an unusual art such as the martial arts. Often students will try to mold or give an early conclusion of what the martial skills are about before they actually learn.

The right approach in preparation for martial training is twofold--a student that is willing to learn and a teacher that is willing to teach. The student and teacher must both realize the importance of qualifying themselves in order to meet their prospective goals. The attitude of the student often determines the instructor's approach. A qualified student will perform with respect, obedience, dedication and hard work. Instructors must also qualify themselves. You cannot teach what you do not know and lead where you do not go. Students will always learn more from their instructors than what is actually being taught. This should always be taken into consideration. In many cases, the student may acquire some of the characteristics of his/her instructor. In the martial arts, because of the type of art that is (mainly dealing with fighting skills, use of weapons, and self-defense) the need for other areas of teaching is often realized. These other areas include discipline, meditation and spirituality (life itself).

A student must be open-minded when entering the martial studies and realize its purpose. One of the common interests in the martial studies is the benefit of acquiring discipline. Most students feel a need for discipline in order to learn. Learning requires discipline and therefore the student is heading in the direction of discipleship. If a student is willing to learn, whether he realizes it or not, he has already accepted a certain amount of discipline. Now that we understand that discipline is a crucial requirement in the learning process, we realize that there can be no teaching of the martial arts and no real learning of its skills from an instructor who is not qualified. In other words, there can be no teacher without a learner.

Communication is also an important area that must be explored. A student must be attentive at all times or as much as possible. Communication has often been the stumbling block for learning--especially during instructor's lectures at seminars. The relationship between student

and teacher must be a constant communication practice that will enable the student to receive all of the possible information and understanding of the instructor's teaching.

In most cases, we will find that simplifying explanations can be one of the best forms of communication. A student should be willing to communicate with his teacher on his terms, since he is the main source of information. However, the teacher must be observant enough to realize the effort being made by the student in terms of wanting to understand.

Martial arts training are similar to other training. The preparation needed is done because of the requirements demanded by such skills. The higher and most unusual skills require certain levels of preparation in specific areas.

The biggest problem that a student might encounter in preparation for martial arts training is his unfamiliarity with the martial arts; treating it as a mystery, causing him not to know where or how to make preparation. The problem should be eliminated once the student is taught by a qualified instructor.

My advice to a student preparing for martial studies is to establish a foundation of interest that will stimulate a determination to learn. Find out everything about the studies you are entering, including the teacher. Finally, do not set a time limit on proficiency or achievement of your goal.