

Wisdom of the Martial Arts



To Lift the Mind, Body and Spirit

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The study of martial arts is a path of personal growth, encompassing body, mind, and spirit. The Mindful Lessons of the Martial Arts program is designed to support and supplement your physical practice, and to motivate and inspire you to deeper levels. Congratulations on taking the first step toward achieving all your personal goals, lets get started!

Welcome to Lessons in Mindfulness

Designed for serious martial arts students, this program will help you understand and study the philosophical and personal growth aspects of your practice. Martial arts is a path encompassing your body, mind, and spirit. When you realize the power of this concept, and see how it affects your life each day, you will become a committed and dedicated student for years to come.

Bring Your Practice Into Your Daily Life

Your physical training gets you in shape, and teaches you specific skills for self-defense. But most people don't often have to physically defend themselves. How can this training be helpful in everyday situations? Think about the confrontations you sometimes face with friends, family, or co-workers. Most of these incidents are small and probably not physical in nature, but you feel attacked—emotionally, mentally, and verbally. Unfortunately, the childhood saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," is the farthest thing from the truth. Unless you have discipline over your mind and are able to control your reactions, you can become upset, frustrated, angry, and even enraged by what appears to be other people's words or actions. By diligently practicing the techniques offered in these Lessons in Mindfulness, you will not only notice physical improvement in class, but you begin to be a master over your actions rather than a prisoner of your reactions. Day to day life will be less stressful and more fulfilling.

"Be a master over your actions rather than a prisoner of your reactions."

Gain the Maximum Benefit From These Lessons

To get the most out of these lessons, read through them once completely to get the overall theme. Go through a second time more slowly, dwelling on specific points, and practicing the techniques. Complete each assignment, and make the techniques a part of your daily routine. You will discover something new each time. Return to these lessons after you have progressed in your training. You will be amazed by the evolution of your understanding and the progression of your practice. These are the keys, which open up your practice to daily life. Without them, you are just exercising and learning to fight. This program, coupled with a serious attitude and good attendance in class, is all you need to live a healthier and happier life, master efficient self-defense techniques, and gain a greater understanding of the philosophy of true martial arts. May your practice always strengthen you in mind, body, and spirit!

Sections

1. Topic

Designed to inspire and motivate you in your practice. By giving insight into each principle, you will draw a better connection between your practice and your day-to-day life.

2. Activity

An exercise or activity that will deepen your understanding as well as challenge you to explore your core beliefs. The process helps you discover your own beliefs, rather than persuading or demanding that you follow the paths of others.

3. Technique

You will learn techniques of introspection. You will practice breathing techniques, awareness skills, and methods of intensifying your concentration. In the experience, you'll discover the importance of controlling and disciplining the mind, breath, and ki/chi (energy).

4. Glossary

Explanations of terms used in these lessons.

5. Recommended Reading

For inspiration and further education.

Topic

Sharing the Art—the Student/Teacher Relationship

An ancient Chinese proverb says that when the student is ready the teacher will appear. Once the light of inspiration begins to glow in the heart of a pupil, the influence of a great teacher expands infinitely. Historically in Asia, a martial arts instructor's status was similar to that of revered leaders or great philosophy masters. They were recognized as very wise individuals and were highly respected in the community.



“When the student is ready the teacher will appear!”

Ancient Quote

The Yin and Yang of Practice

The path of martial arts is one of personal growth and self-discovery. What is the student's responsibility in the learning process? You will be learning new techniques and interesting concepts.. Each class will be challenging, but fun. Many students say that studying martial arts is one of the most exciting things they have ever done. Most of our students have wanted to study martial arts for a long time, but for whatever reason, have put it off. Having mixed feelings of excitement and frustration in the beginning of your practice is normal. You might even feel uncoordinated and clumsy. Within the first couple of months, through regular practice, you will gain greater command of your body and begin executing techniques much better. This cycle of excitement and frustration will continue throughout your practice. The cycles change as your understanding, techniques, and attitude transform. The key is to remain enthusiastic. See each frustration as an indication of what you need to practice. Having an open communication with your teacher is vital. Their guidance and the nurturing environment of the school will keep you on track, focused, and moving towards your highest potential.

Who is Responsible for the Learning Process?

People have different ideas of the true meaning of a student/teacher relationship. Basically, in the west, the student's only duty is to show up. That is about it. The teacher bears most of the responsibility in the learning process, with little accountability on the student. The teacher searches for ways to effectively communicate, motivating and teaching the student, even if the student is not trying very hard. Should the student not succeed, the belief is that the teacher failed, that he should work harder to teach. So, he repeatedly tries varying methods until the student, despite his insincere attitude, eventually gets it. This method is not always effective, and rarely does a student internalize the real essence of the teaching. Only by direct personal experience do we really understand anything. We must have our own investment in the learning process.

The Value of Concentration and Discipline

Traditionally in Asia, not everyone was allowed to study martial arts. Great masters would accept only students who could prove they were motivated and willing to meet high expectations. The students held most of the responsibility for the learning process. Teachers were - usually serious and rather gruff - demonstrating techniques silently, or with very few words. The students had to concentrate hard to follow and learn each technique, and make use of each. As a result, awareness and sensitivity increased. Students worked very hard to keep their mind under control, because teachers did not repeat for wandering minds. In this environment, new students were almost sure to miss something, simply because their understanding had not evolved enough to grasp the complicated concepts. Classes were never adjusted for beginning students. As you can imagine, many people became frustrated and quit

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their practice. For those who continued, their beginner's wisdom expanded slowly through trial and error and they moved down the path of growth and realization. This model of teaching seems rather brutal, but some aspects are effective. Self-discovery is a very powerful way to learn. By exerting great effort to grasp the knowledge for yourself, you absorb the lesson completely, making it a part of your very being. You are not just mimicking or memorizing something that you will forget in a few months. You've discovered it on your own, and it is important to you. When the teacher just spouts forth the information, repeating it again and again, students really don't have to listen carefully, and probably won't comprehend how the lesson affects their life.

A Powerful Way to Learn

The student/teacher relationship that we employ is somewhere in-between these two examples. The learning process should be a partnership. The instructor's job is to help students grow and learn. The student's job is to work as hard as possible to absorb the lesson. The instructor motivates and explains concepts and techniques, but the student must exert maximum effort by paying close attention and concentrating in every moment. In class, if your mind begins to wander, banish those random thoughts and bring attention back to the class. You will learn quicker and will increase your concentration in the process.

Love the Practice... Not Just the Progress.

Everyone should learn the excitement of self-discovery. A great teacher points the way down a path, but does not necessarily walk hand in hand with his student on the entire journey. Sometimes, an instructor might even set up obstacles in the path, instigating change and re-evaluation on the students' part. He forces students to go around, over or through. After all, by facing challenges and dealing with change, we all develop a stronger will, and greater character.

Communicate With Your Instructor

Every student hits plateaus in practice. Even if you've made great progress so far, hitting a plateau can be quite frustrating. Sometimes students say, "Not only am I not getting any better, I think I'm going backwards." When you feel this way, stay with your practice and discuss your concerns with your instructor. A student/teacher relationship is based on honesty, open communication, and loyalty. Your instructor has your best interest in mind. He's been through his own struggles, and understands where you are. With his help and your continuous effort, you will soon feel yourself making progress again. But remember, the goal is to love the practice and not just the progress.

Honor Your Practice and Yourself

Originally in the East, the student/teacher relationship was one of great reverence. Respect and loyalty for the teacher was vital and the students sometimes even feared the wrath of the instructor. In the west, people mistakenly equate a martial arts instructor to a coach, a personal trainer, or a cheerleader. While teachers should never be feared, great respect should always be present. This balance is not easy to achieve. Your teacher may seem quite approachable and friendly. Do not confuse his friendliness and approachability. He should not be your buddy. You can find friends everywhere, but finding a great instructor is difficult. If you step over the line and try to make him a friend, you will compromise your ability to be a great student, as well as his ability to teach



The purposes of Isshinryu Karate are:

1. To strengthen the mind and body.
2. To instill self-discipline.
3. To instill self-confidence.
4. To gain a means of self-protection, the knowledge of which should never be misused.

Hanshi

Tatsuo Shimabuku
1908-1975 founder of
Isshinryu Karate

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you. By holding your teacher in high regard, you honor your practice and yourself.

The Teacher Looks For Effort... Not Skill

Students sometimes ask, "How can I become one of my instructor's favorites?" There are no favorites. The instructor helps and guides everyone based on his or her level of understanding. If he did have favorites, the regularly attending, hard working students would be his choice. The teacher is not looking for skill... he is looking for effort. Sometimes, effort manifests as initiative, desire, focus, and intensity. At other times, effort might be patience, persistence, or an open willingness to learn. Be like a sponge, absorbing as much as you possibly can.



Ten thousand rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full.

Ancient Proverb from China

Short Story

A student who had not been practicing very long was warming up before class. A high-ranking black belt student approached the beginner, introduced himself, and asked how his practice was going. This senior student possessed great skill and was known by all to be one of the best martial artists in the school. The beginner was excited to be speaking with him and took the opportunity to ask for advice. "How did you get so good?" He asked. The black belt student answered very seriously, "I practiced a long time, and I only take private classes-never group." The beginner thought, "Only private classes! That would be very expensive, but the price must be worth it. He is probably the best martial artist in the entire school." Before the beginner expressed his thought, the advanced student added, "No matter how many people are in the class, pretend that you and the instructor are alone in the room. Everything that he says, 'Keep your hands up! Curl your toes back! Bend your knees!' is intended for you. He is talking directly and specifically to you in each and every moment. Check and recheck yourself from now on - only take private classes." He bowed and walked away.

Activity

In this first activity we would like for you to answer some specific and personal questions to help your instructor get to know you. There is no right or wrong answer, and you will not be judged or categorized due to your answers. Be as honest and open as possible. You also may gain greater insight into yourself, spotting trends that might be strengths or areas that you wish to change.

1. How long have you wanted to practice martial arts?

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Activity

2. Have you practiced before? If yes, what style, and for how long?
3. If you have practiced before, what did you like the most about the practice? What did you like the least about the practice?
4. If you have not practiced before, what stopped you from starting sooner?
5. In other areas of your life would you say that you are a perfectionist, or a more easy going type of person?
6. What is your occupation or career?
7. In most areas of your life, do you follow through with your commitments, or do you have a tendency to quit things before finishing?
8. Have you been athletic in the past? How recently? What were your favorite activities?
9. List three things that you want to achieve or specifically gain from your practice of martial arts. Write a sentence to a paragraph to explain each one of them. (Attach a sheet if necessary.)

Technique:

Diaphragm Breathing

The Power of the Breath

Breathing is a very important component of your practice. Breath gives your techniques explosive power. In stressful situations, you can use it to relax nerves, helping you to be more calm and peaceful. Being a great martial artist without having control over the breath is impossible.

The first and most basic breathing exercise is called *hara* breathing. In the west, speech and voice coaches call this diaphragm breathing. The goal is to fill the entire lungs from the bottom up, and then to completely empty them from the top down. Most Americans breathe in their chest using shallow inhalations. The oxygen only fills the top of the lungs leaving the lower area unused or holding stale air. By breathing deeply, you more effectively oxygenate the blood stream. This benefits the heart and other internal organs as well as the muscles of the entire body.



The first and most basic breathing exercise is called *secatunda* or *hara* breathing. In the West, speech and voice coaches call this diaphragm breathing.

Sifu Robert Brown

- To practice *hara* or diaphragm breathing, lie on your back and place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. Start by exhaling completely.
- As you begin to inhale, the hand on your stomach should rise, but do not let the hand on your chest move at all.
- Pause for a count of three, and then begin your exhalation. The hand on your stomach should fall as you exhale. Again, do not let the hand on your chest move at all.
- When your exhalation is complete, pause again for a count of three, and then repeat the process.

Being a great martial artist without having control over the breath is impossible.

Learning to breathe correctly instills the power to handle stressful situations.

Having difficulty in the beginning is normal. You might feel that you aren't getting a full satisfying breath. You aren't. This is an exercise that will help you breathe deeper. You do not breathe this way all the time. By practicing this exercise, you will recondition yourself to breathe from the bottom all the way up, and then to exhale from the top all the way down. You will become accustomed to filling the lungs from the bottom. Then, you can breathe deeply using all of your lungs. When you use all of your lungs at all times, you are more energetic and more able to handle stressful situations.

Key points:

- Do not practice *hara* breathing on a full stomach. Wait at least one hour after eating.
- In the beginning, practice for a total of only five to ten minutes.
- Inhalations and exhalations should be equal in time and duration. As you perform the exercise, the breath will naturally slow.
- Practice your *hara* breathing daily, with great discipline. Do not get discouraged- you have been breathing in the upper chest for many years.
- When you have learned the technique, periodically monitor your breathing throughout the day. If you notice that your breath is not deep and relaxed, filling the entire lungs, practice this technique again.

The breath is such an important component in martial arts and life that in later lessons, we will continue the topic. Remember - the battle is within.

Glossary

In this section terms are defined in relation to your martial arts practice. Some of the words will appear in the lesson and some will be in the recommended reading. The intent is to further clarify the philosophy included in your lessons.

hara (Japanese), dan-tien (Chinese), or Seca-tunula (Chinese)

All of these terms describe the area of the body located an inch and half to two inches below the navel. Often referred to as the center of the body where movement and power originate, this is also the area where deep diaphragm breathing begins.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is to be in the moment, experiencing life fully from that perspective. The mind is still, not wandering or distracted, and completely in the now. You are doing what you are doing when you are doing it. You control and focus the mind with the power of deep one-pointed concentration and you are aware of all the activities around you. Mindfulness is to be completely awake and alert right now. Mindfulness is to eat when you eat, work when you work, play when you play, and to sleep when you sleep. Simply, mindfulness is to control your mind rather than letting it control you.

Ki (Japanese) or Chi (Chinese)

Ki is energy. The mental and spiritual power summoned through concentration and breathing. This power can be applied to accomplish physical feats that can be unbelievable. This centralized energy is possessed by every person and can be manifested through practice. Ideally, Ki/Chi can infuse a person with tremendous vitality and make him or her extremely powerful in action. Through methods learned in this program you will tap into the true power of the mind, body and spirit.



**The years
teach much
that the days
never knew.**

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Recommended Reading

Book List:

Each month, a list of recommended reading will be included for those with time and desire to study further. These books are not meant to promote one style of martial arts over another, but to educate and inspire commitment to your art and practice.

Karate-Do, My Way of Life - Gichin Funakoshi*

Budo Secrets - John Stevens

Weaponless Warrior - Richard Kim

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.

—Mark Twain

*Highly recommended

White Belt

UPPER BODY BASICS

In the following basics, step forward with the right foot, execute the technique, and **always repeat using the left side.**

All fifteen upper body basics start off in a “Ready Position”. Feet shoulder wide, toes pointing straight forward. Hands closed and on the sides at obi (belt) level.

Basic stepping is termed “Touch and Step.” From a ready position the right foot touches the left foot as it moves forward and to the right in a crescent shape. When step is completed the right foot has moved ahead one foot-length and is directly in front of it's original position. This is termed the heel/toe relationship.

Preparing the hand before delivering a block is termed a “catch”. There is a catch from number five basic through number fifteen. The catch precedes the step.

1. **seiken oi tsuki** (say' ken) (oh-ee) (tsoo-kee)
Step out (RF), (R) straight punch to solar plexus
2. **jodan oi tsuki** (joh- dawn) (oh-ee) (tsoo-kee)
Step out (RF), (R) uppercut to chin
3. **seiken gyaku tsuki** ((say- kehn) (gyaw' koo) (tsoo-kee)
Step out (RF), (L) straight punch to solar plexus
4. **jodan gyaku tsuki** (joh' dawn) (gyaw-koo) (tsoo-kee)
Step out (RF), (L) upper cut to chin
5. **gedan barai seiken tsuki** (gay' dawn) (ba-reye) (say' kehn) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) closed hand at (L) shoulder, then Step out (RF). (R) down block followed by (L) straight punch (defense against kick to pelvic bone)
6. **chudan uke seiken tsuki** (Choo' dawn) (oo' kay) (say' kehn) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) closed hand stacked on top of (L) closed hand at (L) side, then Step out (RF).
(R) middle block followed by (L) straight punch (defense against middle punch)
7. **tegata barai nukite** (Tay-gaw-ta) (ba-reye) (noo' kee-tay)
catch-(R) open hand in front of pelvic, thumb toward you, then Step out (RF).
(R) open hand clockwise circle block followed by (L) spear hand to solar plexus (defense against hook punch)
8. **jodan tegata uke jodan tsuki** (joh' dawn) (tay-gaw-ta) (oo' kay) (joh' dawn) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) open hand, palm facing up, on top of (L) closed hand at (L) side, then Step out (RF).
(R) open hand over head block followed by (L) uppercut to chin (defense against a club attack to head)

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9. **jodan uke seiken tsuki** (joh- dawn) (oo' kay) (say' kehn) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) closed hand stacked on top of (L) closed hand at (L) side, then Step out (RF).
(R) closed hand over head block followed by (L) punch to solar plexus (Defense against straight punch to head)
10. **ura uchi seiken tsuki** (oo' ra) (oo' chee) (say' kehn) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) closed hand in front of pelvic, then Step out (RF).
(R) upper block covering ½ face, (R) back fist to bridge of nose followed by (L) punch to solar plexus (defense against sucker punch)
11. **gedan barai go den choku tsuki** (gay' dawn) (ba-reye) (go) (den) (choh-koo) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) closed hand at (L) shoulder, then Step out (RF).
(R) down block followed by five rapid punches (defense against kick to pelvic bone)
12. **chudan uke go den choku tsuki** (choo' dawn) (oo' kay) (go) (den) (choh-koo) (tsoo-kee)
catch-(R) closed hand stacked on top of (L) closed hand at (L) side, then Step out (RF).
(R) middle block followed by five rapid punches (defense against middle punch)
13. **shuto uchi shuto uchi** (shoo-toh) (oo-chee) (shoo-toh) (oo-chee)
catch-(R) open hand, palm facing down at (L) shoulder, then Step out (RF).
(R) open hand low block followed by (L) chop to side of neck (defense against low punch to pelvic bone)
14. **o-uchi o-uchi** (oh-oo-chee) (oh-oo-chee)
catch-(R) open hand, palm facing forward with fingers pointing down at (R) side, then Step out (RF).
(R) open hand push block followed by (L) and (R) hook punches (defense against sucker punch to body)
15. **hiji no ato tsuki** (hee' jee) (noh) (aw-toh) (tsoo-kee) Catch-cross arms in front of solar plexus, Step back with (R) foot into a "T" stance, then slide into "Cat Stance", deliver a (R) elbow thrust at attacker behind you, then (L) closed hand over head block, followed by setting (L) arm in front of solar plexus. (Defense against bear hug from back and punch in front). The words we use when teaching number fifteen are: cross, T, cat, elbow, block, set.

It is not required to learn the Japanese terminology for the upper-body basics at this stage of your training.

This sheet is supplied to assist in the reinforcement of information learned at the school. This form is not intended to replace learning these techniques correctly from your instructor. Please use this curriculum sheet for reinforcement purposes only.

A third degree black belt or higher must sign off on this form to test!

Student name

Instructor

Authorized Signature

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