



Episode 215 – Taking a Break from Martial Arts | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hello everyone! Welcome to [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com). I want to say good morning, good evening I don't know what time it is when you're listening to this. Hopefully whatever's going on on your end you're having a good day or if it's the morning maybe you're on your way to work listening to this in the car. You are about to have a good day a great day, great week. I don't know I'm feeling pretty positive today, sat down with a guest yesterday who is just all about that positive energy. You will know which episode that is when it comes up coming up in let's see it's like just about a month now but anyway my name is Jeremy Lesniak this is [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com) and this is episode 215. Today we're talking about breaks, taking a break from your martial arts training I know it's blasphemy, right? It's come up on the show I'm going to dig in give you my thoughts on it and for those of you that might be thinking about a break there's some actual stuff in here how to talk to your instructor and all of that. If you're new to the show maybe somebody shared this episode with you, maybe you found it from searching on YouTube or just on the web. Welcome. At whistlekick we make martial art protective gear we make some apparel and we put out this podcast as well as a whole bunch of other stuff. The best place to find all of that is [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com). If you're just interested in the podcast, that's okay. We have a whole separate website for that [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) we don't do fancy names on anything we don't put hyphens in there if we put out a website you better believe you know how to spell the words that are in there, it's pretty important isn't it?



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Let's talk about this, let's talk about taking a break. Man, I can remember when I was growing up it was almost unheard of to take a break and it wasn't that people didn't want to, it's that they were almost shamed for there is this culture within the martial arts where we seem to look at someone who stops training whether they stop permanently or temporarily as less than the rest of us. We seem to take so much pride in our training that we forget to realize that it's okay for someone else to not train. I don't know about you but I have friends that are not martial artists and I still like them, I don't think poorly of them because they don't train and for those that used to train and they don't anymore, I don't think less of them for having stopped. The martial arts isn't for everybody especially the way some people present it, and that's okay. So, to look around and say oh well, taking a break that's wrong you should never do that. Well I think that's silly just because you as a person may not have wanted to take a break doesn't mean that your way is the only way, we just did an episode on that didn't we 207, right? There is no right way? There is no right way to look at the idea of taking a break these are my thoughts. It might be easier to start with, when it's not okay to take a break. And I think it's pretty simple, when you don't have a great reason to take a break and notice that I used the word great not good not okay not any old reason. I think that most of us that had been training for than a little while know that feeling of uh I'm tired, I've had a long day, I've had kind of a rough day, I just don't want to go. I don't know about you, but almost every time that I've forced myself to go when I'm in that space I'm happy I did, once in a while maybe 1 out of 10, 1 out of 20 times I think you know I might have been better off sitting at home and watching some TV but that's pretty rare and I never regret the time that I spent the time training, I might not have the best class but that's a whole different thing. A break is not an excuse for being bored, it's not an excuse for not working hard.

Martial arts is something that gives back what you put in, in fact I've talked about that on this show. One of my favorite sayings, martial arts gives back exactly and only what you put in to it. So, if you're bored well some of that's on you, most of that maybe even all of that is on you. You have the opportunity, the ability to put something different something extra into your training to make it less boring. If you're not feeling passionate about your training there may be a reason for that and that's what you want to dig into. When we talk about breaks it's often the subject of the kids taking breaks, summer breaks or taking a break because of another sport something like that and I would say most kids that I see at the various training schools that I've been at do take a break at some point. I was actually a bit of an exception and it wasn't that I didn't want to take a break, it was my mother really pushed me to stay in there. As martial arts was my thing and she wouldn't let you leave and I had mixed feelings about that, we're not going to get into that today maybe we will at some point on some episode. And at the end of the episode I'm going to talk about my advice for instructors for school owners on how to handle these breaks, how to handle the conversations with people but for now let's talk about from the other side. The person taking the break or in this case the parents and my advice to parents especially when kids start getting into that adolescent phase, 9,10, 12 somewhere in there. Kids often want to step away from martial arts and there are 2 ways to handle that, you can let them or you cannot let them. The problem with not letting kids back



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away from martial arts is that it leaves them with a really negative view. When you force someone to do something, they don't want to do it, the more you force them, the less they want to do it.

Right separate school of resistance, that yin yang concept that is so entrenched in so much of what we do as martial artists. The moment that kid gets the opportunity to make their own choices, they're gone and as someone who loves the martial arts, the saddest thing is they're probably not coming back because the last memories they had were negative ones. Those negative memories may fade, they may remember the good stuff that they got out of it, they may put their kids in martial arts. But they're probably not coming back and I would say that this is something that we really need to change. It's something that excuse me needs to be part of the culture within martial arts schools and we have an episode coming up on keeping teens in martial arts that really goes deep into this subject so I'm not going to get into any of that. I recorded that was [07:03 j Wilson](#) for his show and that's going to come out on his and we'll link to it but then we're actually going to bring it in really soon here too it'll be a few weeks later. I want you to check it out on his show martial thoughts. So, what do I tell parents because I have parents come to me my kid's thinking about taking a break or I'm having trouble getting so and so to class, what should I do? I think it's pretty easy, you got to dig in, why, why don't they want to come to class? Is it because their friends aren't there? Whatever it is, if it's not a problem you can solve, maybe it's time to let them take a break hey why don't we take the next month off and see if you miss it. Kids are creatures of habit, right? So, it's not unheard of that taking a break means they're never going to come back. But we're talking about younger kids so the parents have a lot of influence here and it's important that the parents are pushing this a little bit. So maybe it's a month off and you've got to go back for a month and we've got to see if there's a change there. I don't know what's right for your children, I don't know what's right for your family. I can't make that call but I know that trying to find a way to keep martial arts in your life, I think that's important people don't generally start with martial arts or start their children into martial arts because they don't think it's going to be good for them. Breaks can be good for everyone, for children for adults they can be great for focusing on important things. You know if you're unable to focus on your training while you're training maybe it's time that you take a break. We all respond to stress and to the things life throws at us differently for some people, their training is their escape. For others, they just can't shut their mind off, that's okay. I'm sort of in both camps, there are day, there are problems that I may deal with personally professionally that are, the type of thing that I want to be able to forget even if it's for a couple hours while I go train. There are others that I know are so all consuming that I need to sit with them, I need to work through them mentally or the very least I know that I'm not going to be focused when I'm training and that puts my training partners at risk and that's not fair so I'm not going to do that to them, I'm not going to do that to myself.

I've taken a number of breaks from martial arts the longest one being the really the 2 years in between shutting down my karate school and starting the training in taekwondo. That was a rough 2 years and it wasn't that I didn't train, it's that I was training so infrequently most of it was on my



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own I visited a couple of friends that had schools but the number one thing that that did was it allowed me to come back with such passion I loved that first class at taekwondo. Oh, did that make me so happy, I mean seriously the joy I remember it's been 10 years now I remember the joy there. And if you've ever taken a break from something that you love maybe you had to instead of chose to you know what I'm talking about. As human beings, we seem to look on the things that we don't have as being desirable right when I can't train I want to train the most. But for some of us when we stop doing something, we look at it and say oh I'm not missing that, why? If you stop training, if you take a break and you find yourself saying hmm I don't know that I need this in my life, why is that? Maybe it's the school, maybe it's your attitude towards the school maybe it's the place you're at in life. I think being honest with yourself about those things is critical. I used to take a break every august because just the way my life happened that worked well instead of pretending I was going to go once or twice in that month I said you know what I'm just going to take the month off. I'm going to do dome other things, most of them were not choices and when I came back in September, training was better. I missed everybody, I missed martial arts, I missed my training, I missed the way I defined myself as a martial artist but it allowed me to remember what it was like to not train. Some of you may or may not know, I started training when I was 4, I don't have a lot of context for what it's like to be someone who doesn't have martial arts in their life. I've always been a martial artist even if I haven't been training as actively as I would like to. But to have that contrast means a lot to me and I suspect to many of you. If you're thinking about taking a break, talk to your instructor. If you're too scared to talk to your instructor well that says something about your relationship with your instructor maybe with that person. If that doesn't work maybe you're more comfortable talking to a higher rank student or an assistant instructor or someone talk to someone. If you are going to take a break, don't just leave, don't just walk out the door, tell your instructor what's going on. If it's a personal thing and you don't want to get into the details tell them that they should respect it.

If you are going to take a break I strongly encourage you to put an end point on that. I'm taking a break for a month, for 2 months, for 3 months whatever it is be definitive in there because your training you've already put in, all that time, all that effort you owe that to yourself you deserve that to be able to keep that door open. Put it on your calendar, I'm taking a break for the month of august, it's august right now I'm not taking a break but maybe you are, that's okay but tell your instructor. If you don't want to come back when that date rolls around try waiting a little longer, if you still don't want to go back, why? Dig into that, is it the school, I find all too often people reach a point in their training at a school and I think that this is that kind of 2nd, 3rd degree black belt phenomenon and they feel like they've plateaued. Sometimes that's the school's fault, sometimes it's the individual's fault maybe it's time to train somewhere else, maybe there's an affiliated school elsewhere that you can train at for some variety. We seem to get into this issue especially in smaller schools where the higher ranks spend most of their time teaching they don't get to work on their own stuff you know I'm not going to dig into that now that's a whole other matter but I think you all know my position, I want everybody doing martial arts. And I would much rather even if I had a



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school if someone who is going to leave I'd rather have them training with someone on the other side of town than not training at all. Hopefully you agree and some advice for instructors for school owners, if someone comes to you and they're going to take a break whether that's I just need a break from training, I'm chronically injured or I'm bored or I'm unhappy or my kids are going to go play sports, or I don't have the money, whatever it is. If someone's going to take a break, don't argue with them, you do not know what is best for them in their lives. You can advocate, you can offer some suggestions but the moment the conversation you're having with them shifts from something honest to something where they feel guilty or judged that's the moment you don't get them back. We rarely know the full extent of what's going on in someone else's life so to offer help, offer support that is much more likely to bring people back after a period of time. For people to know that the dojo, dojang academy whatever you call it, to know that that is a safe space, a supportive space for all of the people in it, that is the way you bring people back. Don't charge them for the time that they're gone, if you're a school that offers contracts, that has contracts? Just delay that contract, for 12 months and they take 3 months off in the middle just kick those 3 months to the end. If people are taking a break from something, if they're trying to find their place in the world without martial arts but they're still paying for martial arts that's just as bad as the parent forcing the kid to keep training. You're forcing them to keep paying for it. Now if someone doesn't tell you they're taking a break, that's a different story but if they've come to you, you can suspend that. And check in with them, maybe every 2 weeks, 3 weeks depending on how long that break is going to be check in with them, you should be doing that as instructors anyway. If someone misses a few classes, shoot them an email, text them, call them, hey we missed you last night, everything good? Anything I can do? What do you need? The more supportive you are of your students, the more you create that family atmosphere that is so hard to leave. I have talked to people that do not want to leave their martial arts school because they love the people there even though they don't feel like getting a good education, a good martial arts education anymore. Wow that's sad but at the same time, they love the people there that much, that's powerful, you can create that culture in your school.

There we have it, breaks, taking breaks how to do it, how to talk to your instructors about it, how as instructors you should not talk to people about it. I'd love to know your thoughts on breaks. Have you ever taken a break? Are you going to? If you're a school owner, how do you feel when someone tells you they want to take a break.

Let us know on social media @whistlekick on pretty much everything. We've got the great Facebook group the behind the [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com) behind the scenes. Love to see some feedback on this over there or if you're not a Facebook user you don't really do the social media thing [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) find the show notes for this this is episode 215, 2-1-5 drop us a comment in there, I want to know your thoughts if you're not willing to share them publicly you can always email me [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com). That's all for now until next time. Train hard, smile have a great day.



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