



Episode 235 - Flexibility & Mobility in Martial Arts | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 235. Today we're gonna talk about flexibility and mobility within the martial arts. I want to thank you for tuning in. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host, I'm the founder of the show, this company. You check out everything we do at whistlekick.com from there you can link out to all the projects that we have going on. We got a wholesale program, we have a martial arts calendar, we have martial arts memes, we're the driving force between behindmartialjournal.com if you haven't checked that out, check it out. There's great stuff coming in from a lot of awesome people and it's not just me involved. In fact, you would recognize 1, 2, at least three past guests from the show and we are in conversation with quite a few others. Nobody's getting paid. This is just because we all love martial arts and we're trying to generate some more content and share some more stuff with all of you. So, check out all those things. And honestly, martial arts calendar martialartscalendar.com if you have events that you know are going on, please help us build out. Again, that's a completely free thing. Why do we do all this free stuff because we're trying to grow martial arts, we want to make it easier for people to find the events that are going on near them or events that interest them. Martial arts is cool and there's a lot of great stuff going on. The problem is it's hard to know about it so, help us spread the word on that please.

Let's talk about mobility, let's talk about flexibility and before I say another word here's a disclaimer, I'm not a doctor, I'm not anything remotely approaching a doctor. You're not allowed to sue me, and you're not allowed to sue whistlekick for the information that I'm saying here because you should talk to your



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doctor and other medical professionals before you do anything I'm saying here. Yeah, I think we got the legal part out of the way. Okay, mobility, flexibility. What is flexibility? Flexibility is the ability to bend without breaking. It's the ability for us to bring our foot up over our head and not have our hip break. Mobility is the ability to move easily now I can be flexible and mobile, I could be flexible without being mobile, I could be mobile without being flexible. They generally come together at least to a certain degree. In martial arts, we want to be both. Both are really important. If we have flexibility as a martial artist we can kick high, we can perform movements that we may not otherwise be able to do if you have ever seen someone do it's often called the scorpion kick. The idea of bringing that foot behind your body and up over your head looks really cool and while that exact instance may not be the most practical, the idea that you can manipulate your foot your I just kicked my chair as I was pantomiming this while I talk because that's what I do I fidget while I talk. If I bring my foot behind me and there's I have more range of motion to do stuff, I have more options. I often explain flexibility, stretching especially when I talk to children. Why do we stretch? Want to help reduce the risk of injury which orders on mobility but secondly, to improve our... To improve range motion, to improve function. If we can manipulate our body through more angles and more positions, we have more options and as a martial artist I think the more options you have, the more diverse a martial artist you are, the better the martial artist you are. Stretching is important flexibility is important mobility the ability to move easily is also known as the ability to do stuff without getting hurt. Maybe you can force your leg into a flexible position but if you can't do it easily you risk injury. And of course, getting hurt is pretty much the opposite of martial arts at least we consider the self-defense aspect.

04:16 how do we improve? How we get better at both these? Flexibility, we improve with stretching and mobility, we improve by addressing restrictions, the impingements, the things going on in our body that stop us from moving freely. Flexibility is gonna stretch the loosest part of the muscle, but mobility can target anywhere. And it's that differentiation, the idea that stretching is going to it have an impact on the loosest part of the muscle. That is why so many people stretch, and they stretch for years and they don't make any progress. It's why they don't feel better it's why there's still injury prone. Because it's not a flexibility issue they're dealing with, it's a mobility issue and really, we want to address the two together, we want to make sure that were working on improving both our mobility and our flexibility often because that's what's going to give us the best impact. They complement each other and the two together help us become a more diverse and thus a better martial artist.

Let's talk about how we work on those. Mobility you can work on your mobility with cold muscles. You can get up out of your chair and you can do mobility exercises. In fact, it should be part of your warm up. It should be one of the first things that you do. My favorite way to think about mobility is to move your joints through their full range of motion and I think about circles. Anybody that's ever taken a class from me, whether it's a cross fit class, a gymnastics class, a martial arts class, I would generally bring people through some kind of range of motion joint warm up. Start of the head, and we'll move the head in full range of motion, we'll move the shoulders in circles, wrist in circles, bending the elbows generally moving down, hip circles, knee circles, ankle circles, and sometimes we will even do back stuff because



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each vertebrae that's a joint in there too. Those movements are gentle they're not done fast, they're not done aggressively, it should never hurt and if it hurts you just got to address it and addressing mobility issues, that's a little bit too broad to go into here with any kind of specifics. But generally, that results in in doing some kind of compression exercise. That could be seeing massage therapist, that could be working things on your own using a foam roller or something similar those can be good ways to address whatever is hindering your mobility. If you've ever felt really good after just taking a walk more and more people are starting to walk now and whether step counters or just because people are tired of being stuck to their desk all day. A lot of people report feeling good after walking and that's because your mobile. We're not trying to stretch, were not running, were not doing anything aggressive. The body is designed to do a lot of walking and when you walk you think about it, pretty much everything's moving. Your shoulders, your elbows. There's a little bit of movement in everything when were when you're walking. And that's great and if you feel good after walking that's a great sign that your body wants more of it. So, do it. Find ways to incorporate mobility into your day whether that's standing up and we we've all heard that idea stand up every 15-20 hour you know, whatever at your desk and have a stretch break. I actually not gonna suggest a stretch break. I'm gonna suggest a mobility break. Stand up and just kind of move around, shake it out, go for a walk. If you have the option to you know go to the water cooler take the long way, just kinda move things around. Feel good, feel your body, feel how it is. That notion of knowing where your body is and how it operates that's gonna translate to better martial arts anyway.

Stretching. There's a reason stretching his second now. We talked about stretching first flexibility first, but mobility comes first because it's the thing you can do while you're cold. It's the thing you should do as part of your warm up whereas stretching should be something you do at the end of your warm-up. You might not even consider it part of your warm-up, why? Because if you stretch cold muscles you can injure them you can get hurt. I think a lot of people out there, I know I have been injured stretching when I was cold or overstretching. Stretching in such a way that I thought I was warmed up but I really just wasn't and then my muscles disagreed with what I was asking them to do and everything around it tensed up to protect it and aww. That's the worst right like you're trying to improve your body, you're trying to stretch and become more flexible and hear your body is arguing against you. Well, if you warm up you know, get I want to say that's really a slap at get your heart going a little bit, go through some mobility stuff then maybe get your heart rate up more maybe you are sweating at this point, this is kind of the four-part warm-up I talked about this on the show. Little bit of motion, maybe some jumping jacks something that you know is never going to hurt you take it easy then you go through some mobility stuff like the circle drill I talked about. Then you go through more intensive warm up maybe you know like you 20 birdies(?) Or you know bunch of push-ups and sit ups, something like that. Something that you know won't hurt you again because you're still warming up, but it's gonna get your heart rate up and hopefully by the end you're just starting to crack a little bit of a sweat. That's a good time to start stretching. The more warmed up you are the more you're going to be able to stretch effectively. If you live someplace that gets warm and I would assume that the majority of our listeners live somewhere where it gets warm at least part of the year, those really really hot days when you just can't imagine



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actually training hard because it's so hot maybe your school doesn't have air conditioning, those are the best days to stretch because your muscles are warm you can work through things. Part of stretching isn't just the muscles and lengthening them, it's teaching your body that it is safe, it is okay to move in that way. We're not gonna get into that today. There is a central nervous system episode brewing in the background but that's part of it the idea that the central nervous system dictates not only what moves, but how far can move. How hard, how fast it can move. So, stretching can convince your body that this range of motion is safe. 11:13 I would advise you to have some kind of a stretching routine. Pick one maybe, two muscles, two things to focus on at a time and work on those muscles. You know, work on that one stretch and try to relax everything else. If you have to make aggressive movements to stretch if it hurts, it's not as effective as it could be and the best example I know of this, most of us if we want to, if we think about stretching our hips most people go to splits. The idea of a center split, do you have a center split that's something that we talk about in martial art sometimes but you know what is a better stretch for that? Lay on your back, slide your butt up to the wall, put your legs against the wall and let them hang. It allows you to relax everything but the muscles you're trying to stretch you're not fighting to stand up, you're not trying to stretch through tense muscles. There working against each other, the muscles that are stabilizing you, keeping you from falling over. The very ones on the opposite side the muscles you try to stretch. That's not the most effective thing you can do you can still do it. I still do center splits not often. If you want to really stretch effectively you're looking at holding a position for a couple minutes. 10 seconds, 15 seconds, that's not gonna do anything even close to permanent. And there are some argument in science about how long you have to hold the stretch for to be effective I found that for me two minutes can be effective, longer is better but two minutes actually seems to be on the lower end of what we're finding to make some kind of ongoing, I don't even want to say permanent, but some kind of lasting change. I want to reiterate if your stretches hurt, you are risking injury and likely the other muscles in that area are going to counter any of the progress. They're tensing up to protect you, your body's number one instinct is preservation.

One of the big debates and stretching and flexibility is the notion of dynamic versus static stretching and if you're not familiar with those terms, think of this way. A dynamic stretch and these happened quite often in martial arts warm-ups, leg raises, the idea of keeping a mostly straight leg and doing like a really bad front kick where instead of bending your knee you're just swinging your leg up. And you know after doing 10 of those, your leg has loosened up quite a bit it's part of my warm up. The other side of that the static version of that same stretch would be having someone hold your leg over your head for couple minutes. Most of us have probably done both of those, most of us have probably found dynamic stretching to be easier, less frustrating, less annoying and honestly, I find dynamic stretching far simpler. Even if I'm in a more or less static position I'll pulse a little bit I don't wanna quite say bounce, because that's more aggressive than all generally make it but I will not lock into a position and just hold it there. I'll have some kind of movement because I'm trying to convince my muscles hey, moving through here is safe whereas when you're holding statically a true static stretch, you're telling your body this is the edge of a range of motion. There are benefits to static stretching there are benefits to dynamic stretching. I believe in doing both I won't get too deep into the static stretching right now just because it's a whole



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can of worms and honestly, I'm not a big fan of it. It's not something that I advocate strongly because I feel that there's a lot more risk of injury and stagnant progress people not moving forward not developing not getting better in their stretching when they're focused on static stretches. Whatever it is you need to work on flexibility wise develop your own routine, pick one maybe two stretches and try to work on them every day. Develop your own mobility routine, work on that every day as part of your warm-up before your stretching. Stretching like everything else we do in the martial arts is something that gets better as you work on and if you just pick one thing at a time you can work on it in a couple minutes a day. We all have a couple minutes that we can spend stretching, if you're a TV watcher you can accomplish a heck of a lot of martial arts benefit in even a 30-minute program or even if you just stretch during the commercials just something come up with a routine that works for you and watch the amazing progress as you work on something every day.

A good massage therapist can be absolutely wonderful in progression both in mobility and flexibility. Not only are they going to help you reduce or even eliminate some of the restrictions in your body holding you back from range of motion or stretching the way that you want to they're going to teach you a lot about your body whether it's verbally there telling you here's what I'm doing or you to start to feel things that maybe you didn't before. And a good massage therapist will listen to what your goals are and if you've been to a massage, this not it's really the same as massage therapy. Massage therapy isn't always comfortable it all isn't always pleasant. I have a few different massage therapists that I work with depending on what I am looking for they have different skill sets and for example there is one who is absolutely amazing with shoulders. I go see her when I shoulders have issues, I have another one that that I enjoy more for relaxation stuff. If you've used someone in the past don't be afraid to try someone else, ask your martial arts friends for recommendations. What are you working on right now in terms of mobility or flexibility? I'd love to hear about it. If you have questions I'll try to answer them, sometimes it can be hard over text but feel free to email me jeremy@whistlekick.com feel free to reach out to us to follow us @whistlekick everywhere. We have an amazing person handling all of our social media, want to give a shout out to Andrea she is awesome, thank you. Andrea is part of the team now and she's just doing wonderful stuff. If you've been following for a while, you've probably seen the amazing improvement as someone who is far better than I am started taking over the social media doing some good stuff about. So, give us a follow if you haven't already. I wanna thank you for tuning in, thank you for spending some of your time listening to my voice wherever you are in the world. I want to thank you and I appreciate you as a martial artist really someone who appreciates the martial arts. Take care until next time train hard smile have a great day.