



Episode 294 – Grandmaster John Graham | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



### Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there! Welcome to whistlekick martial arts radio episode 283. Today we're going to talk about why expertise is good and why expertise and physical skill are not always the same thing. But first I want to remind you to ask you, not quite pleaded, but hopefully you will consider, if you have not, heading on over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) checking out our products. If you haven't made a purchase yet, that's okay, we do the show to spread information to build the martial arts community but hopefully some of you will buy some things because otherwise we can't do the show. We would value you as a customer and welcome you into the whistlekick family. That's enough of a commercial for now.

Let's talk about today's subject if you've spent any time looking at martial arts videos on YouTube, you've probably learned to not read the comments. But if you do read the comments and you're able to rise up from the horrendous depression that tends to come about when you look at how terrible people can be and how critical they are, you find that there's a trend. This trend isn't limited to YouTube it happens all over the place basically everywhere it happens in martial arts schools, it happens at seminars and it's the idea that the moment someone can't execute a technique perfectly, in the eyes of the viewer, that everything that person says or does is irrelevant. Now let's consider that for a minute how many of us do all their techniques perfectly all of the time? Nobody. Because if we did we wouldn't be practicing let's consider that a moment, none of us are doing anything perfectly at all ever. And the moment that you think you are you've likely forgotten the entire purpose of martial arts. It's about growth and the reason that we can continue to grow as martial artists, as human beings is because there



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is no endpoint. There is no perfection. We can know things, we can know a lot, we can do really good things whether it's internally or externally being an expert, it's relative but it's good. You may have heard the 10,000 hours rule. The idea that once you've done something for 10,000 hours, you're an expert. If that's something that you do full-time would say is a job, you're probably an expert in around five years. However, when we talk about martial arts very few of us are training 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year. In fact, I don't know anyone the training that often. For most of us that expertise is going to come in at least 20 years. Most likely 40 to 50 and that's when we tend to see people in really hi ranks. That expertise comes around the same time that your old by most definitions. Maybe you started martial arts really really young, that expertise that'll show up in your 40s or 50s. And what's interesting about that is it your body is going to start breaking down. I don't know anybody in their 40s or 50s that says you know what my body works perfectly. I'm 38 years old, there are things in my body doesn't do quite the same. Now, I am committed to keeping my body and is good shape as I can but I'm aware that there are some things that are quite the same they were in my teens even my 20s and I know that that's going to continue to change over time. But when we insist that expertise has to correlate with skill it's just silly, it leads us to discounting everything, everyone says. And in fact, it's it's a contradiction because we tend to accept expertise with our schools, our own school within our own styles or systems but all too often not when we look at other schools or styles or systems. We look at the practitioner and think, well you know they didn't pull her hand back or you know they leaned backwards on that kick or their toes are in the wrong place. And the idea that every single thing that that person says or does is useless or relevant because they do something maybe wrong but perhaps just differently than you do, it's ridiculous.

If we look closely we can find something to discount about everyone even yourself, even your senior ranks, even your instructors, even the grandmaster of your system. None of us are perfect and we would do better to accept that. Now in logic this is referred to as an ad hominem attack, the idea that we discount everything this person says or does because of something that they do wrong. It happens in politics all the time and frankly I'm sick of that attitude, I'm sick of it permeating everything that we have going on in the world. I can't affect the rest of the world, I don't even know that I can affect martial arts community but here on this show, I'm going to speak my truth in my truth is that everyone has something to teach even if they don't know that they have something to teach, even the newest white belt has something to teach. Have you ever sparred with a student on their first or maybe second class? They put movements together in ways that you would never even imagine. I find white belt some of the most dangerous folks to spar with because they're not indoctrinated to the way that the schools I train do things. They come up with their own stuff it's creative it's amazing and they're the ones that tend to hit me the most to be perfectly honest. We have a choice, we can take every opportunity that we have to learn to empty our cup, to consider every single point of view availed to us or not. Even if you train with the dumbest, most worthless people on the planet if you're willing to consider their points of view, their techniques, what they bring to the table, at the very least you're going to learn greater compassion, empathy, and you're likely going to get better at teaching and helping them improve,



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whether that's directly or indirectly. And I don't think those things are, things you shouldn't do. When we talk about growing as a martial artist, compassion, empathy, the ability to instruct those are on the list, I don't know anyone who doesn't want those things.

This is my challenge to you, I would love for you to look differently at the way others teach and instruct. I don't know about you but I've been part of some seminar some classes with instructors that made me wish I had hair so I could pull it out. If you don't know I'm not gifted in the hair department and I've cut off most of what's left and it's exhausting to spend time with those people. But what I do, as I work really hard sometimes to find something in what they're saying or doing, that is worth looking at even if it's to consider why it is wrong. To allow my own beliefs to be so fluid as to argue against them, to take the knowledge being presented to me and temper it with my own experiences. I would like to think that most of the time the things that I think can do with regard to martial arts make sense for who I am and my goals. But once in a while I end up with something small and a couple times I've ended up with something much larger that made me take a step back and say 'whoa' if I hadn't really been trying to learn these things when it come about. Learning is a skill the ability to open your mind and listen and try and consider requires effort. You just want someone to sprinkle knowledge on your head, that's fine but you're going to lose out on opportunities to get better. Remember, your way is not the only way episode 207 if you haven't listened to that one there is no right way. Be willing to have the humility to recognize you are imperfect as a human being and as a martial artist. Because once you do that you can start to get better. The moment you think you know, you're done learning. You are literally done learning and that is that is depressing and I'm thankful that I will never be in that place. You don't have to be, no one has to be.

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