



Episode 303 – Paradox of Overweight Martial Artists | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everyone. Thanks for tuning in, whistlekick martial arts radio episode 303 or if you were my third-grade teacher, you would require that I said it as three hundred three because you can't have an "and" in a number. She was very passionate about that. I don't know why I just remember that. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm the founder here at whistlekick, I'm your host here for martial arts radio and today, we're going to talk about a subject that might ruffle some feathers and I'll get to what that is in just a moment. Why am I willing to ruffle feathers, well I've been considering this is the first episode that I'm recording since episode 300, the live 20hour video broadcast extravaganza, it was basically a really big q&a, it was a lot of fun. I was joined by two of my great friends who have also been on the show and we just had a great time with it but one of the questions that was asked, what do you see coming in the next hundred episodes? And I've been thinking about that and I'm making a commitment to all of you, I am not going to hold back on certain subjects because I'm afraid that they would ruffle feathers. I've slowly become more confident with that, I'm slowly embracing the position I guess that I have, the ability to speak to all of you and get you thinking. I've never said I want you to change your mind to what I'm saying, I don't want you to blindly follow what I say, think or do but I do hope happens from these episodes whether it's a topic show or a conversation from a Monday episode, is that you will consider what you do, how you do it, why you do it and continue to make the best choices for you for your family for your school. That's it. That's all I want is for you to think.



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Now today's episode is titled the paradox of the overweight martial artist. I'm not trying to hurt anyone's feelings here, I'm not speaking to any of you in particular, I'm not speaking about anyone in particular and I would like to suggest that if this episode offends you, I'd like you to consider why. Because I can't control your actions or your reactions if you're bothered by anything that I say today or on any episode. I'm going to suggest that you likely already were bothered. If I suggest that there is a paradox in martial artists being overweight and that bothers you, you're probably already bothered by martial artist being overweight whether that's you personally or someone you care about, it's okay. You're welcome to send me hate mail. I get hate mail from time to time, it doesn't... Well that's not true, I was about to say it doesn't bother me, it does bother me. But I do engage into civil discourse. If you disagree with what I'm about to say, that's okay. Shoot me an email, jeremy@whistlekick.com. If you're gonna get nasty about it, well I'm just gonna delete it whether that's email or social media, because that doesn't help anybody. Now we've discussed this subject before and the episode that comes most to mind goes way way back and I believe it was Hanshi Jim Smith on episode 16. A man who lost a significant amount of weight. Now, unfortunately Hanshi Smith has passed away, he was the first guest we had that passed away and a really good man and a great episode, you should check that one out for no other reason than he was a good man and holds a very unfortunate first in the community that is martial arts radio. But he spoke pretty directly about how important it was for martial artists to be in shape, to not be overweight. Now this episode is not about judgement, I'm not saying that anyone is wrong, or bad if they're an overweight martial artist. I'm saying that it is a paradox, a conflict, and the further we get in time in training the further we get in rank, in skill, in responsibility within the martial arts world, the greater the conflict. I'm not going to look at a white belt on their first day and say you know what, the fact that you for optimum health should lose some weight is in direct opposition to your martial arts training and you are wrong. However, if someone has been training for thirty years and they are unhealthy and they are unfit, and they're carrying around a bunch of extra weight that even they would agree should not be there. Well, I'm not going to judge I am going to draw a greater line, correlation between my point that is in conflict with their standing as a martial artist... And here's why I say that. I have never met a martial artist who didn't consider their training, their martial arts training at least partially relevant to self-defense. Everyone has a different level of importance that they place on self-defense within their martial arts training, for me it's a smaller component. We have had folks on the show, I can think of people in particular who consider the self-defense aspects the foundation, the majority, for some schools it's the entirety of what they do. Well, that's a conflict because self-defense is the action protecting yourself, of protecting your life, your well-being, of protecting those around you that you care about. And there's no single greater controllable adversary to your life and your well-being than being overweight. The multitude of health problems that arise from that, I don't have to tell you that, you all know about that. But, to be overweight and to be a martial artist and to say, I'm going to teach you self-defense when someone is missing, the greatest piece of protecting themselves, I don't understand it. Now, I'm gonna talk later about why this is not easy, it is a simple concept but the implementation of it is far from easy. So, don't think I'm coming down on you or on anyone else if you identify with this. We teach conditioning within the martial arts. We tell the world that martial arts are great for fitness and yet so many instructors are overweight and that conflict is poor marketing, it



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doesn't work. Just as we've talked on the show about martial artist being good people, just as we say that we will teach people especially children respect and all these other wonderful personal attributes and then, some of us go off and go rogue and become complete jerks. That one jerk does a complete disservice to every martial artist worldwide. It makes it harder for us to attract students because there is a conflict there. Just as there is a conflict, and someone saying we teach fitness and yet the person teaching fitness is grossly overweight. Being fit, being healthy, it is difficult, it is not easy and I understand that as well as anyone and you know, a little bit of personal information here, for those of you that don't know me personally, you might look at me and think, oh he's small, he's thin, he has never had a struggle with weight. Well I have. Just because I've never gotten to the point of being obese does not mean that I have not struggled. I have struggled. I've struggled quite a bit actually, I have some genetics that maybe I wish I didn't have and I have diabetes on both sides of my family and there is a lot of work that goes in everyday to maintaining the physique that I have which honestly, I'm not happy with. There's a gut that I do a pretty good job of hiding in most of the way that I dress. But you've ever seen me at the beach, you would know. And I'm not saying that where I'm at is better or worse than where you're at, I'm just trying to say that most of us have some understanding of what it's like to look at our body and not be happy with it. That's a whole different subject, we're not going down there but I will say, the only reason I brought that up is to, I guess empathize to say, I get it. I'm lucky and that I have the knowledge and the time and I've had some role models who have helped me understand how to work with some of these challenges that I've got and I keep my weight under control and that's really all I'll say about there.

So we as martial artists we really need to model the behavior that we claim martial arts and [00:09:31.00] if we want the wider world to continue to see us as people as human beings that they want to emulate, if we want non martial artists to become martial artists, we need to be good to each other but we also need to be in shape, we need to hold ourselves then I guess each other accountable, there are plenty of martial arts schools that have fitness guidelines for achieving black belt. Those guidelines seem to go away after first degree blackbelt in most of those schools that I've witnessed, which creates this situation. Because higher rank blackbelts tend to spend more time teaching than training, it becomes, simple, not easy, I guess maybe it is easy. It becomes easy to not train as much, to not expend the calories, to continue taking in the same amount of food and not burning it off. And it doesn't happen overnight I think we all know that. But that also means that the reversal doesn't happen overnight. Teaching someone physical self-defense when you are 100 pounds overweight is a paradox, it is in conflict. Notice that there is no judgement in those words. I'm drawing a correlation, an inverse relationship between those two things. And don't think that I'm the only one connecting these dots. Martial artists and non-martial artists see this, they talk about this. We see silly things and this is a kind of a silly thing, this episode isn't to teach you how to lose weight, it's an episode to inspire you, to see the opportunity of change. I have no data for this, whatsoever but if we think logically, everything else being equal [00:11:31.20] a potential student would choose a martial arts school with a culture of fitness over one without a culture of fitness.



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This is where I ask to hear from you, I want you to email me, I want you to comment on the show notes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com I want you to reach out, on social media, I want you to let us know. What did you think of this episode? What are you doing in your school, in your life, to maintain a culture of health and fitness to avoid this paradox or what if you completely disagree? What if you think it doesn't matter? There are certainly benefits to being bigger, you can put more weight behind your techniques and if we think about self-defense, you don't really need to kick higher than say the knee. If I have an extra hundred pounds on me and I hit you in the face with a jab, that's gonna hurt more than my current weight. So, you could make a case for benefits with self-defense. And if you wanna take that position, I wanna hear from you. That's what I've got today, episode 303 the paradox of the overweight martial artist. I wanna thank you for tuning in, thank you for giving me space in your ears today. I hope you're well. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.