



Episode 353 – When Are You A Martial Artist? | [whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com](http://whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com)



**Jeremy Lesniak:**

Hey what's up everyone, thanks for coming by. This is a [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com) episode 353. Today, we're gonna talk about the controversial, the debatable subject, the question: when are you and aren't you a martial artist? My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your founder for the show, I'm the founder at [whistlekick](http://whistlekick.com), I'm a passionate martial artist and I love sharing that passion with all of you twice a week as well as with the number of products and project that we got going on. You can find all of them at [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and if you choose to buy something don't forget the code `PODCAST15` to save 15%. It's our way of thanking you for spreading the show and spreading the word about all these things were trying to do to make the traditional martial arts bigger and better. If you want to find the shows those are at [whistlekickmartialartsradio.com](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com), we've got links and photos and videos and more content than you can shake a stick and I'm not really sure how useful shaking a stick at a bunch podcast would be but you can do it. Maybe you can shake a bow or an escrima.

So today's subject actually came from an email. I received an email from an anonymous well, not anonymous but stripping the name off from a listener. And he said hey Jeremy, how do you tell when you're a martial artist? I've always wondered that you know if you didn't get to colored belts, you know you're just a white belt, are you still a martial artist? Maybe this is something you can put on your Thursday show. And I wrote back, hmm, tell me more, I think I know where you're going with your question but I'm not sure. And he wrote back are you still martial artist if you decide to stop training white belt, yellow belt or blue belt? Is there a line? And I said okay now I get it. And he wrote back again



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he said, you know I could go to a tae kwon do school and learn a few things but does that make me a martial artist? I can take a month of Krav Maga does that make me martial artist? And I love this question, I love the subject and you know I love it the most? There's no right answer. I'm gonna tell you what I think and my goal today is that you think that you consider the question. That you consider what for you is a martial artist. How do you define it and are you exemplifying your own definition because that's the key. We all need our personal code and if you define yourself as a martial artist you should be living as a martial artist. No I haven't said it on the show much lately, but there was about 50 episodes and there were it seemed like it came up every episode, to me martial arts is personal development through the lens, the perspective of hand-to-hand combat. Thus a martial artist is someone who engages in that personal development through the practice of hand-to-hand combat. Pretty straightforward. Pretty simple. But if I am not at this moment practicing, does that mean I'm not a martial artist? Well, I don't think it has to be that extreme because none of us can practice 24/7 but is there an expiration? Is there a time limit? What if I stop training for a year. Some would say that I'm no longer a martial artist, if I've gone to one class and never gone back it's been a year, I think most people would say you're not a martial artist. But what if I trained for 50 years and I stop training for a year, am I no longer martial artist? What if I become injured and I want to train, but I can't physically train. What if I practice movements in my mind, does that retain me the title of being a martial artist?

Now I love martial arts I don't think there's any doubt about that and I'm guessing that most of you due too. Most of you love martial arts and defined yourself as a martial artist. Maybe not at the entire definition of who you are, maybe you're also a spouse or a parent, all of us are children but, when we think of the things that would define our personality, our being, for a quite a few of us, martial artist is going to be in the top few on that list that definition of what makes you you. I know for me, it's one of the top three maybe even the top one. It can depend on the day.

We've put out a number of kinda quotes and motivational items on our social media, Instagram is actually the best place for most of those @whistlekick if you haven't started following us, you should. But one of my favorite quotes, I don't know if it's a quotes cause I don't know where it came from, I started saying it but I'm sure not the first martial arts isn't what I do, it's who I am and when you've trained for a long time, and you meet someone else who was also trained for a long time, you can feel it. There are people that I've met who are incredibly humble in the way they present themselves. And maybe I meet them in martial arts context and maybe they're wearing a low ranked belt and something about them just doesn't add up. This person is in the blue belt and you asked him hey did you train anything before you started let's say Kempo oh yeah and I spent 30 years in Shotokan Karate. Oh okay, that adds up now because you can feel it. Martial arts leaves in indelible mark on who you are and I've said on the show a number of times martial arts is the only thing that you could do for say six months and receive a lifetime of benefits. Now that doesn't mean that if I'm eight years old I do six months of tae kwon do, that I'm a martial artist forever and always. But it does mean that I am more of a martial artist than someone who has never trained.



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You see to me being a martial artist is part of a spectrum and on one end of the spectrum we have someone who is never trained. Someone who is ever engaged in martial arts practice, someone who doesn't have any interest in martial arts. And on the other end, you got someone who trains 5-6-7 days a week, maybe they have a school, maybe it's what they do when they get up in the morning and when they do when they get home from work. Maybe it defines not only who they are but everything about them. And I know people like this, people who have been actively competing for 30-40 years. People who travel the world sharing their knowledge. People who if martial arts was taken away from them would probably die because they wouldn't know what to do without it in the same way that most of us would know what to do without breathing. So if we consider that spectrum, we all fall somewhere on that spectrum and we all define that line, that tipping point of what makes us a martial artist differently. And not only do I think that's okay, I think that's important.

There are moments, I will confess, where I struggle with my role as a martial artist. I don't have the time to train the way I want to, I still train. I train most days but my training is not as extensive as I would like it to be and sometimes I feel guilty about that because of not only how I define on the spectrum that tipping point when martial artist is but the tipping point of where I feel I want to be. This is a pretty similar discussion to the idea of what constitutes martial arts and I've made my opinion on that subject very well-known and I will repeat it here, no one has the right to tell someone that what they are doing is not martial arts because it is so entirely subjective and none of us have the objective right to say something is or is not martial arts. If it works for you and everybody's in the equation is happy, then do it. Now there are some things that by obvious definition are not martial arts. If I'm playing soccer I'm not doing martial arts. How do we know that because were calling it soccer. But guess what, I could take a dozen of you what you want to soccer field dress you up in a uniform, put belts on you and I can teach you martial arts skill using a soccer ball. I can run a class on a soccer field with soccer balls and we could call martial arts, it'd be ridiculous but we could still check the boxes that work in most martial arts. And thus, we could do the same thing we can make the same argument about martial artist.

Now, if you've gotten this far in the episode you might be getting frustrated with my wishy-washy, my refusal to draw a line in the sand. So I'm going to tell you my own personal view of what a martial artist is. I don't know if I need to reiterate that this is my opinion and you are not only entitled to yours but should have one of your own and it does not have to be the same. And I will not fall you if yours is different even dramatically different. If we meet some time for a beer or a cup of coffee, maybe we chat about it because I want to hear what you think. But this is what I think, a martial artist is someone who has trained physically in the martial arts recently as they define recently. Has every intention honestly to engage in that physical practice again soon however they define soon. And is currently engaged in the application of the lessons that they have learned as a martial artist. Let me unpack that a little bit, to say it a simpler way, you trained, you're going to train again, and you're working on the stuff you learned while you were training. The physical piece is pretty obvious, whether we go to a class or we train on our own, we've got the physical component to what we're working on that we are attempting to better. But it's that, that last piece that application of what you're learning peace that I think is the most critical and



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I say that because I've known folks were confined wheelchairs that I hundred percent define as martial artist. There are people who are martial artists there in a coma right now, have they stop being a martial artist? I know people who did not die they've been on the show because they were martial artist and they went to something amazing in a physical sense something traumatic. If they were not a martial artist they would not have survived that situation. And in those cases, what were they applying? They were applying their strength of will in some schools it referred to his indomitable spirit. Their refusal to give up, their insistence on living their lives. One of the lessons I'm working on right now is my refusal to let the criticism of people who do not matter affect me. It's something that when I think about it, I first started learning as a child in karate. Some of the other kids who were lower ranked than me would mock me for practicing or for my skill or for my really loud passionate kiais. And as someone who grew up socially awkward and unaccepted, that was really difficult for me and guess what I'm still working to apply that lesson. I've got better but I'm still working on it.

Martial arts in a martial artist I think at the end of the day is something that that defies definition. You know it when you see it. And in doing that, in saying that it's subjective and I'm okay with that. I don't think everything needs to be defined clearly, I don't take everything needs to have a standard set upon it and if you do, that's okay. I think it's what I got on this. I want to thank the listener for writing in, if you have questions or ideas for topics I would love to hear them. In fact we haven't done a Q&A and while, I would love to do another Q&A so go on send me an email, [jeremy@whistlekick.com](mailto:jeremy@whistlekick.com) or find us on social media @whistlekick Facebook ,Twitter, YouTube, Instagram. Head on over to [whistlekick.com](http://whistlekick.com) and use the code `podcast15` to save some money on a shirt or some gear or uniform, a hoodie. What else we got over there? There's a bunch of stuff. I'm gonna go sit with a cup of tea now that I've put myself onto this contemplative mood that makes it hard to think and speak even more so. I hope you have a wonderful day and until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.