



Episode 77 – Martial Arts Recovery & Rehab | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey everybody guess what were back for another episode of [whistlekickmartialartsradio](http://whistlekickmartialartsradio.com), this time it's episode 77. And as many of you already know, this is the only place to hear the best conversations about the martial arts like today's show about handling recovery and rehabilitation with your martial arts training. I'm the founder here whistlekick but I'm better known as your host Jeremy Lesniak. whistlekick, if you don't know makes the world's best sparring gear and excellent apparel and accessories for practitioners and fans of traditional martial arts. I'd like to welcome our new listeners and thank all of you that are listening again. If you're not familiar with our products you can learn more or buy over at whistlekick.com. Our past podcast episodes show notes and a lot more on a whole different website and that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Now from either site you can set up for great newsletter and you should\ because we offer exclusive content, discounts and all that to subscribers and is also the only place to find out who's coming up as a guest on the show. Like I said, today's episode is can a cover recovery and rehabilitation with respect to your martial arts training.

Now, let's be honest injuries happen. If you've been training in the martial arts for any length of time, you've probably gotten hurt now whether it's from not blocking as most of my instructors would've said you know, taking a shot that was a little bit too hard or placed where maybe it wasn't intended or maybe it's from some kind of overuse or something like that, you're probably get to get hurt. At the very least you can get sore, if you're never getting sore you're probably not training hard enough let's be real there right? Now sometimes that soreness is coming from overtraining, sometimes it's related to your age, sometimes it's poor movement patterns, differences in your body you know, if you are carrying around more weight you know, if you're an overweight person, you're gonna deal with some things that a lighter weight person will deal with. Now some people and this does still seem to be pretty persistent in the martial arts, will tell you just to train through it. And I'm here to tell you that that is not the best idea and were going to cover why as we get a little bit deeper into this. But, you know that's really an old school attitude and anyone that knows me as a martial artist knows that I'm a traditionalist, I love deep stances I love the approach of what a lot of people would call old-school martial arts. But, I think that with new science with new understanding of the way the body works I think we can become not only better people and less injury prone, but better martial artist because we understand the body much better than we did a hundred or so years ago when most of the martial arts that were practicing were being developed.

If you consider other physical pursuits, sports mostly, they embrace modern science with respect to the body in recovery and rehabilitation all that. And as martial artist we don't do that and I'm not saying that you don't, I'm not saying that your martial arts school does not and if you do, great, you're ahead of the curve. But I believe that the more we can look at things this way, the more that we can approach martial arts training and recovery, with an eye open to what modern science is telling us, I think we can become that are practitioners and we can push our art and our place within the martial arts world forward. I think it's a good thing. Now before we get into any specifics, I need to be really honest and throw a



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disclaimer out here, I'm not a doctor. I have absolutely no formal medical training and the majority of what I meant to tell you today comes from personal experience with my own injuries some of which are things that I dealt with for years. The rest of it comes from personal research and I'm constantly researching how all this stuff fits together, all these pieces. Those of you that know me or of listened to many of the shows know that martial arts is not the only thing that I do, I am a martial artist, I'm engaged in CrossFit, I've spent some time with parkour, gymnastics and I'm always looking at how do these things not only fit together personally but what can I learn from one that I can translate over to another. So, remember I'm not a doctor if you do something that I've told you here and doesn't work for you or you die, I can't be held responsible. If you can agree to that, please stop listening right?

So let's talk about some general recovery strategies. Now recovery isn't when you're your injured recovery is just generally we should be doing on a daily basis, right? When we train, we're breaking down her body and most of us are used to this concept we think of it from the perspective of weightlifting. When you lift heavy weights it breaks down the muscle and it's as the muscle repairs that you become stronger. Now, that's a really narrow view of it but it still has some translation over to the martial arts. When we train, when we trained hard, we're beating ourselves up we leave class, we're sweaty, maybe we're sore, and there's a satisfaction that comes from that but in order to repair properly so you can train again soon and with some intensity, you've got have an eye towards recovering. Now, the number one place that recovery happens is when you're sleeping. The body heals itself mostly and most efficiently when you are asleep and I won't get into the science of that mostly because I don't fully understand it but I know it is true. I've done enough research to know that its true and if you think about your own life, yeah it's what happens. If you consider you hopefully sleep somewhere around eight hours a day you feel better after sleeping eight hours if you go to bed with something kinda banged up, little sore than you do after eight hours of being awake even if you're not moving around a lot. So, that's the body healing. Sleep, you gotta make it a priority. I'm sure some of you out there sleep four hours a night and you think that's enough and maybe it is to be functional but it's not the way your body is built. So, I'm not can argue with the amount of sleep that you're getting but I'm going to encourage you when I train people, when I coach people, sleep is one of the first things I talked to them about. A lot of you out there martial arts is not the only physical thing that you do and we have this mentality, again, especially martial arts especially in traditional martial arts that more is better, go hard push through the pain and it's not always the best idea to leave your martial arts class, to go into the weight room, or to go rock climbing, or something like that and to do that 3-4-7 days a week, doesn't give your body the opportunity to recover. You've gotta find some balance with the physical inputs to your body that the exercise, if we wanna lump it under that category that you're doing. So. Find some balance, recognize, be willing two dial it back. You can't do everything, right and I struggle with that, I need some eye telling me that on a daily basis.

Food. I'm not to get into my rant but I get pretty worked up about food and when that subject comes up in the amount the people spend on food or rather that they don't and the quality of food. So, let's just put out really simply the better quality food you're eating, the less work your body has to do to process



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it and the healthier you will be the easier your body will recover, if you live on food that comes out of the box and you wash it down with alcohol and that's your life, that is your choice and I won't take that away from you but that is not going to give you the best platform, platform is your body for your martial arts training. Now as sort of a subset of food there are plenty of things that you can eat more and work into your body that have almost a medicinal effect and a great example and I'll just give you one, the spice turmeric, pretty common and what of Indian food is it actual anti-inflammatory it's pretty powerful and so those of you out there that may find yourself using something like ibuprofen after class to handle some of these minor aches and pains adding things like that into your diet and again there's plenty more to do some research, that's gonna help, I'm not gonna say it's going to eliminate the need for something like Tylenol or Aleve, but if you're doing it right taken enough, it should reduce it.

And the last thing I'll throw out for what you can put in your body is water. Most of us don't drink enough water, we've been hearing that for decades check on yourself be honest, are you drinking enough water, if you're not drinking enough water it is the easiest cheapest thing you can do to set your body up for success that doesn't require making a big lifestyle change right? Sleep's gonna have the biggest impact but water is pretty darn easy to change. Now, of course of time and finances allow, there's a lot of professional help to keep your body in a general recovered state. I'm a huge fan of acupuncture. I see an acupuncturist, massage therapy is great or even not so much the massage therapist but a general relaxation massage practitioner can be really beneficial. Chiropractic care can be really effective if you find a good chiropractor, they can be your best friend as a martial artist I truly believe that. There are some techniques, some soft tissue techniques that can be really helpful grastin, in GRASTIN is one of them, you might wanna check that out a lot of chiropractors offer grastin, and it's a way of scraping out externally, you know it's not painful may be uncomfortable dealing with scar tissue. I'm also a big fan of structural integration which sort of a massage technique sometimes called Rolfing, and check out any of those, all those I have all of those done on at least a monthly basis and it's huge. It's hugely important to my body and I believe strongly that those things I just laid out the food, water, the sleep, the people that I say not only set me up for being physically able to handle a lot of martial arts training but just life in general. I don't tend to get sick very often, I don't tend to get injured very often and it's because I put a strong priority on those things. But let's say I start slacking on one of those things where I'm training a lot more than normal, I could get sore right? You know overuse is kinda the category that we want to think of that as if I'm doing too much and I'm not balancing out on the other side, I may have some overuse issues some of you might call them injuries and some ways to recognize that you know, are you having soreness it takes longer than normal. You know, rather than a day or two maybe it takes a week if you're feeling really run down or sluggish the same amount of sleep isn't bringing you back to normal, you're using extra caffeine, you're eating more than you normally would. There is a lot of different symptoms therefore recognizing overuse, but I'd be willing to bet that most of you out there had experienced it, you know you know when you're in that place and I think the key is not ignoring it a lot of people, again, martial artists were really good at saying: I'm gonna get through this I'm in a push through, we've got that commitment, we've got that drive instilled in us as white belts



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and we don't like to take a step back very often but this is where it's really important. When I talked about recovery I used the word balance and I feel really strongly that balance, is a great way to think of it especially as martial artists were taught to keep our balance in our stances, were taught to balance our various techniques when we're in self-defense or a sparring situations so were not relying on one thing too much and giving our opponent an advantage, whatever it is balance is pretty core to what we do as martial artist and all of the strategies for dealing with overuse really involve bringing things back in the balance.

So the first thing to do is accept that the things that you're doing for your general day-to-day recovery have not been enough. If what you're doing for recovery is adequate to balance out your training you will not experience overuse. Now, there may not be enough hours in the day, you gotta be honest with that, gotta be honest with yourself. So accept that, take a step back, and the first thing to do is be willing to take a break, take a day off, take a week off, take a month off, there were several years where I was taking the month of August off, I think I've mentioned that on the show before and as I look back, I'm okay with having done that. It was really important for me but I know at the time I felt really anxious about it because I love martial arts but I was feeling a little burned out. My overuse was just as much mental as it was physical at that point but I knew those several years, when I came back in September, man I was all over, I was pumped to be back, I was excited and my training went so much better. So don't be afraid to take a little bit of time off, you probably wanna talk with your instructor, whether it's because you can take some time off or because you're feeling like that's not can do it or you're not willing to do that or you want to try some other strategy. It's important that your instructor or your instructors know what you're going through because you may need to make some kind of modification to what's going on. If overuse is manifesting itself as a physical thing, you know your right shoulders a lot more stickier sore than it normally is and maybe you want to dial back what you're doing on the right side your body. Well, you probably want to tell your instructors so they don't think that your become suddenly lazy with half of your body, I don't know. But be open with that and hopefully your instructors are willing to accept that and if they're not well, maybe there's a whole other conversation [00:16:25.12] that is outside the scope of the show. Other things you can do dealing with overuse, get some extra sleep. If you're feeling run down and you've been sleeping eight hours a night, there's no magic formula for eight hours in fact there've been studies done removing people from day-to-day life putting them in rooms without Access to the sun, you know Windows and just letting them go about their life and seeing how much do people sleep naturally. Human beings are wired for somewhere around 10 hours of sleep a night and if you think of other mammals, dogs, cats, how much of the day do they sleep it's a tremendous amount. Of sleep is really what sets us up for success in life and it should be probably the first and probably didn't even order these well I say it's the first thing you should do if you're feeling like you're overusing your body. Now if you're not doing that or you want to add extra layers get some better quality food take a look at what you're eating throw more water in there, you know, really ramp it up. Be willing to spend a little bit extra money to get some better food into you. Those professionals



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that I mentioned back in the recovery section, any one of those extra visits get another massage things like that those are all really really gonna help.

And let's take a second let's talk about massage, because I feel like there's this stigma with massage. Massage, I want to go see them massage therapist or some of the does massage because you know, I'm a big tough person and I don't need to spend money to make, to have someone make me feel good, right? It feels like there's this disconnect for a lot of people. A good massage therapist will leave you feeling like you've just left training. You've worked, you are sore, but you feel accomplished some of the worst pain I've ever endured in my life was at the hands of a great massage therapist. But incredibly effective, good ones understand the body in a way that maybe we don't as martial artist but we can understand and I think everybody should spend the time in the money, find a good massage therapist and see them frequently. Sometimes we experience things that are a little bit beyond overuse, they're beyond getting tired, they fall into the realm of injury. Now, minor injuries could be aches or pains that really go beyond just a day or two it's not just something that happen at class and oh you know, clash shins with somebody. Now we're talking about stuff that continues on more than a few days and it starts to limit what you can do. It gets in the way of either your training or your life, maybe you've got reduced range of motions, something like that. And when you get to that point, there's a decision to be made if you ignore it it's not to get better on its own or it's extremely unlikely and in fact it could escalate to something a little bit more severe so as soon as an injury starts to pop up, that's really the best time to address it. When you're dealing with an injury the number one thing to do is to figure out what is the source of the problem. Now if you clash shins with someone and you got a severe bone bruise, okay that's pretty obvious, we know what happened there. Maybe you get some shin guards, maybe some whistlekick shin guards, but if it's something else, you know your shoulders' not working quite right and it's creating pain when you do a particular movement, maybe don't know what started all that. And there are a couple ways forward here but again, you've got to figure out what's causing it and that's often gonna require some professional help again, whether that's a chiropractor or your great massage therapist that hopefully you've already found or someone else your instructor may be really good at helping you identify these things, but spend the time figure out what's going on start putting together a plan talk to your instructor if you're gonna keep training through this, figure out what it is that you're going to stop doing to allow the injury to get better. You know, doesn't matter what you're doing outside your training, if you keep banging into that problem, you know, if you get if you don't stop the the input that's creating the injury your wasting time, you're wasting money on trying to heal it outside of your training.

Now, I mean to say something that's probably too upset a few of you out there, pain relievers are not cures. Ibuprofen is great, but if you find yourself taking a bunch of ibuprofen to deal with an issue, you're being foolish. You're working yourself into a whole that as you age will get worse and will potentially keep you from martial arts training earlier than if you address the problem. Please don't do that, please don't hide your injury your symptoms with something synthetic or even something natural. Don't put tablespoons of turmeric in your body and an ignore the fact you're doing something that's



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creating that pain find the source Deal with it and hopefully you can move on. So, when we think about that piece that I just said, the idea of of not just kind of barreling through the pain of covering it up by taking a handful of pills, for a lot of us as martial artist that doesn't quite line up with our experiences or what we've been taught. But a lot of those attitudes go back quite a ways, we understand the body a lot more than we did and honestly regardless of your goals as a martial artist whether you're there for fitness, whether you're there for self-defense, whether you're there for personal development or some other reason, risking major injury by pushing through minor injury doesn't lineup, it doesn't help you towards whatever that goal is. Now if you're in competition or you're in the middle of the test, sometimes those lines get really blurry. I've certainly experienced injuries both within the realm of a black belt testing and within competition and I don't regret doing that when I'm training, I know the difference between good pain and bad pain as one of my instructors used to put it and I'm not going to just keep pushing through some bad pain so I can do a few more repetitions of something that I could do at another time. Now if you can't find the source of the problem on your own find somebody who can, I think I already mentioned that you may bump into a professional who is pushing surgery at this stage that's rarely required, I'm gonna to pushback on that say you probably don't need surgery for dealing with a minor problem. It's almost always excessive, now if we get into major injuries which will talk about in a minute, that's a whole different story but ultimately it's your body and remember that it's your body and you're the one who is taking responsibility for whatever is happening so make sure that you're comfortable with whatever the plan is build yourself a team, your instructor, professionals, family, friends and whoever it is and get their input but be willing to make the decision for yourself at the end of the day.

Now minor injuries are going to happen, we already agreed on that. So how do we prevent injuries? One of the first things we can do is called pre-habilitation instead of rehabilitation bringing things back to normal place we can do extra work to prevent the need for that rehabilitation. Something like weight training that can be really, really instrumental in helping us handle the knocks, the getting banged around. I mean, there's a lot of other great benefits that we training can bring in for us as martial artist but injury prevention is a great. Now if you have some kind of acute issue that you know keeps popping up for me I've got some shoulder stuff that I deal with and one of the things that I do help deal with that some of my pre-habilitative work involves using kettle bells. I've also had a couple sprained ankles so there are some ankle exercises that I do and all even sure that one with you I spent some time walking on my toes, on my heels, and on the inside and outside of my foot. It gently stretches and also strengthens the muscles and the ligaments in the ankle and that's been really really helpful for me. When the other keys to preventing injury is making sure using proper form. And I think I've mentioned this on the show before one of the things I see, when I travel around his push-up form. As martial artist we do a lot of push-ups but most of us seem to do push-ups wrong, elbows flare out and all kinds of other things and that's really a bad set up and I see a lot of rotator cuff surgeries waiting to happen when people are doing push-ups. For the record, how should you be doing push-ups easiest thing to



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think about is your index finger points forward the entire time trying keep your elbows closer to your body.

So let's talk about major injuries. So what's was the difference between a major and a minor injury? The minor injury, you could push through it. You could grit your teeth, buckle down suck it up, you know, a number of other clichés, major injury, you really can't. You might be able to do other things, but you're not gonna be able to force through that pain. Oftentimes is not a pain issue, it's a function issue. Now if you experience some kind of major injury, don't ignore it. Get help right away, that usually means a hospital, who were not talking about oh, sprained my ankle, we're talking about I collapsed to the floor and it felt like the fire of a thousand suns in my knee that's the kind stuff you want to go get checked out right away because you don't know, it's not worth risk. So get some help. Now injuries in this category rarely just get better, you're going to need some help. You're going to need a doctor, there's probably gonna be some physical therapy involve something like that and except that that's part of it, that's part of being a martial artist is that sometimes these injuries are going to happen and were gonna have to approach that recovery, that healing with the same attention and intention that we would any other aspect of our martial arts training. If you want martial arts to be a lifelong pursuit you've gotta be cautious here. You know, a lot of us are really anxious to get back to our training but pushing too far, too fast yeah, you maybe you're getting back in, you're trying to get in a week or two early but you might set yourself back weeks or months or you may end up doing damage that can't be repaired a second time. It's not worth that risk. Again, whatever your goals are as a martial artist that, doesn't line up, be smart. Of course this is really a quick look. Actually, this ends up being of little bit longer of a Thursday show that we usually have hope that's okay with you guys, as I got into putting together the outline got a little bit long but this was some good stuff and I wanted to make sure that we covered it all.

Now are there common martial art injuries that you've experienced are people in your training are dealing with and you'd like some advice or maybe you want to share with us what you're doing for recovery, pre-habilitation, or you'd like some additional strategies for things that you're experiencing or maybe just have parts of your body that are prone injury and you want to know how other people might handle it. Best thing to do shoot us your comments whether it's on social media we're on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram username is whistlekick, or you can leave us coming on the website whistlekickmartialartsradio.com under this episode, episode 77. And forget you can also find all of our episodes on YouTube and you can leave a comment on episode 77 there. Hope to hear from some you. So if you want to be a guest on the show or maybe you have an idea for show topic for one of these Thursday episodes, go ahead, let us know fill up the form over at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, don't forget to subscribe to the newsletters so you can stay up on everything were doing and you can learn more about the products we carry over at whistlekick.com. That's all for today so, until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day.