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Hey there everybody, thanks for coming by. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 367. Today we were talking about balancing safety and effective training in the martial arts. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show, I'm the founder at whistlekick and I love the martial arts that's why we do everything that we do and you can check out everything we do whistlekick.com. If you make a purchase whether that's gear or a uniform or any of the other things we have over there, lots of cool stuff, new stuff being added all the time. You save 15% with the code `PODCAST15` and don't be afraid to share that we were just trying to see what the impact of the podcast is on our business. So, help us out, help us see that impact. Of course, if you want the show notes, those are at a separate site that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com we have transcripts, we have photos, videos, all kinds great stuff that help you get the most out of each and every episode.

Here's something I'd like to ask of you. Here's something really simple you can do that will help us. The next time you're hanging out with your martial arts friends grab somebody's phone, open your podcast app, and make sure they are subscribed to martial arts radio. Maybe you've got so many who has never listen to a podcast before, expose them, teach them, share this show, and the other shows you love with them, whether they're martial art shows or not. I've received tons of emails over the last few years from folks who came into podcast because of this show and now they've discovered the whole world that is podcast and they really enjoy it so don't be afraid to share.

Alright let's dig in now. Let's talk about the balance between safety in with effectiveness. Because of course there two sides in a sense of a spectrum. We can have all kinds of safe training that isn't effective



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and we could have what some would define as very effective training but has no safety whatsoever and I would suggest that the two are opposite ends of the spectrum and finding a balance is critical to your training, to your students training, to everyone training. Now of course, there are dangerous things you can do in training that have very little to even no benefit, they're not helpful and those things are foolish and for this episode were not going to talk about them. Because if you have something that is neither safe nor effective you probably shouldn't be doing it. Maybe it's fun and if it's fun you could argue that it's effective but I'm not going to go down that path because it's a really short path, right? Don't do dumb things. But let's talk about calculated risk. Everything that we do in our training has risk. Just by getting out of bed in the morning you incur risk. So when we step out when we're training, when we're doing our martial arts, there is risk involved how many people have tweaked a knee and gone down just because they turn strangely doing a stance or a turn or form that they've done hundreds of thousands of times before. It happens. But that doesn't mean we stop doing those things, we have to calculate the risk and for each of those exercises or movements or whatever it is we're doing, we are trying to mitigate the risk. Now, when we look at stances for example, there are certain things that you do or should be doing in the way that your foot is positioned and your hips and your knees so that you're not putting undue stress on joints. That's mitigating risk, sure you could do it the other way but long-term, it's going to hurt you. So we don't do that, we calculate the risk as being greater in doing and then we mitigate the risk, we reduce it as much as we can. And what's the other component to risk? What do we look at when we look at risk? We look at reward. We've all heard the phrase risk versus reward, and that's really what we're doing with our training every single time even if we're not thinking about it in that way. But the purpose of today's episode were going to think about it in exactly that way. Now of course risk versus reward is a moving target depending on your age or rank or skill if we're not thinking about rank, your goals from your training, these all change we're on that effectiveness versus safety spectrum your training should be and it shouldn't always be the same. Different people are going to respond to different kinds of training and depending on where you are in your day, in your life you may need different kinds of training. You've got to mix it up and whether or not you realize that you already do this. I'm not talking about anything today that doesn't already happen in every single martial arts school I've ever been part of. All I'm trying to get people to do with this episode today, is to think about it. And by thinking about it and communicating about it, it can become more effective, it can become more supportive of everyone's martial arts journey.

Of course everyone's comfort, their tolerance for risk is different and a good instructor is going to guide people from wherever their comfort is towards whatever the goals are. Some people you tell them, hey you know what? I need you to step into this circle where you're going to deal with a number of simulated attackers. Just stepping in that circle is incredibly intimidating for some people. Other people will step in and say, yeah bring it. And yeah, with time training and with skill and rank and age, that gets easier for people but I've seen black belts who struggle in that environment. But I've also seen young low ranked children thrive in it. So while there is some correlation to rank-age-skill, it's not always a direct correlation an understanding where people are at is critical because the goal of every drill is



Episode 367 – Balancing Safety with Effective Training | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

different. Every drill should have a goal right? If you don't have something you're trying to get out of whatever that training is, probably shouldn't be doing it. But if the gap between what is necessary to achieve the goal and where people are at is too great, they're not going to get anything out of it. And in fact you put them at risk for injury, for at the very least not getting the result and them feeling poorly about their training, maybe even themselves, maybe even your quality of instruction, and maybe they leave. And that's not the goal. If they're not there training, you can't help them. So we want to make sure we are giving appropriate drills to people not just based on rank. Because one of the things we don't often talk about with martial artists, is that we're all people, we come in with our own experiences. Some of the people just point-blank have been assaulted, have been attacked, have been harmed or maybe they grew up in abusive homes and certain drills are going to have an almost PTSD effect on them. We have to be aware of that and not just simply push people in and say get over it which unfortunately is something I've seen in quite a few schools. As an instructor, if that seems like it's going on, be aware that some people are going to need an out and maybe you have a conversation with them.

Now let's talk about the ways that we mitigate the risk, we improve the ratio of reward to risk in our drills, in our training. The first off, proper communication. As an instructor you should be communicating to the students or the people running the drills, everyone involved they should understand what the parameters of the drill are, what the goals of the drill are, and what are the things to watch for. Make sure everyone understands, maybe you have to say it in multiple ways maybe you have to demonstrate it, you should always make sure things are communicated verbally and visually and ideally if the drill supports that [00:09:03.15] take people through what you're asking them to do. The more of these components you do the more skin register, it's gonna click for people and the more they're going to get out of it, while reducing the risk of injury or some kind of negative impact. The next want safety equipment. Now of course at whistlekick we sell safety equipment, so often times people think that I blindly support people wearing safety equipment a hundred percent of the time, absolutely not. There are times and safety equipment is appropriate, there are times and safety equipment is not. It depends on the drill, it depends on the people participating in the drill, and it depends on the goal. Safety equipment can give a false sense of confidence but it can also give inappropriate level of confidence and it depends on not only the factors I just gave you but the individuals participating. There are drills that I will run with and without gear depending on who's participating. The next one the one that I wish happened far more, identifying the students are going to be a problem. We all know those people go too hard. We all know those people who don't pay good enough attention that they are risk. Identifying who those people are and taking appropriate action whether that's excluding them from the drill or making sure they don't go first or having a conversation with them, all appropriate depending on the situation. Unfortunately, sometimes instructors do not want to make waves, they don't want to upset people so they just let this stuff happen and that really bothers me because the role of instructor whether that school owner, whoever's running the drill, is to make sure first and foremost people are safe. That's an appropriate level of safety, yes its martial arts things are going to happen. But when you



Episode 367 – Balancing Safety with Effective Training | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

look at a drill and you say you know what, that guy always goes too hard and there's somebody over there who doesn't pay attention and they're matched up, ooh that's not a good thing to let happen, so don't let it happen. Which leads to the next piece, proper pairings and groupings for drills. Often times we'll just say it's by rank, or by age or by size and it's so much more than that. It's all of those things but it's also what's going on with people that day. Energy level, attentiveness, are they dealing with things at home? All of these factors tied together so that when you pair and group people up where they pair and group themselves up, it should be a grouping that gets the most benefit to the most people with the least risk. There have been times where it makes the most sense that I as a senior rank pair up with someone very young or very low ranked. There are also times where it makes more sense that I'm paired up with people more considered my peers in terms of rank or age or size or or whatever. Understanding the goals of the drill for that day, should get you to where that needs to be. And it's never going to be a perfect fit, because you're never going to have thousands of people in class that give you such a broad sample of the type of people that are training quite often you look around and go, man here's this one outlier you know that the guy who is 6'10, 280 and everyone else in classes 5'9. I've seen that happen or the 12-year-old who it doesn't belong and in the the kids class anymore so steps into the adult class but is far smaller and far less confident than everyone else. You gotta make it work and sometimes we fall back on communication and sometimes we fall back on communication and sometimes, safety equipment, maybe the 12-year-olds wearing safety equipment and everyone else's isn't, maybe that's what's needed. Understanding the differences between people is just so crucial because our job as instructor is to set everyone up for success. Maintaining a proper and appropriate atmosphere. The more risk the drill has, the more tempered you should make the atmosphere. Say it another way, the higher the intensity, the higher the stress, the adrenaline that's coming through in a drill, the calmer everyone else should be when they're not participating. So it doesn't escalate. On the other side the less risk, the more you want to bring people up, you want to elevate the energy in the room so that they can get as much out of it is possible. You as an instructor even if you're not participating have a tremendous amount of control over the energy there and can almost puppeteer people into getting the most out of the drill. So do it, don't be afraid of that control, that power that you have just being on the side.

Now here's an element that comes up in most of our conversations ego, reducing ego. Every school has people who define their place in life by their impact sometimes figuratively, sometimes literally in their training. Working to reduce the impact of that ego maybe having a private conversation with people before the drill, just pull somebody aside and say hey look who you're working with there, you don't need to crack him in the skull, bring it down and making sure you follow-up making sure that that ego isn't coming through in an unsafe manner. You're not gonna get rid of people's ego by talking to them but you can cut the cord between their ego and their actions if you stay on top of it. I mentioned next piece at the beginning with communication but setting goals understanding the goals of the drill and making sure everyone else understands the goals as well and sometimes that includes telling them what the goals are not. And as I said we do this, the purpose of this drill is to get you faster but it's not about



Episode 367 – Balancing Safety with Effective Training | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

teaching you to hit harder. Or the goal of this drill is to get you to combine movements to build combinations, but I don't care how fast you do it, things like that. Helping people understand what their parameters are gives them the freedom to explore and to become better martial artist. And of course observing. As an instructor you should be incredibly attentive to what is going on with all of the drills and sometimes there's a tendency to want to jump in to show people how things are done and that can work but when you have multiple groupings you have to be careful of that. That doesn't mean that you can't designate someone else say hey I'm jumping on this group here can you just walk around and observe? And you know what yeah someone with more training someone who's older especially apparent is likely to be better at observing and stopping problems before they occur but does it have to be. Sometimes just by knowing that there people watching, students will act better. And finally erring on the side of caution. You're never going to set up a drill perfectly. There are too many factors so when you look at what makes the most sense for these parameters these guidelines you going to give students understanding that walking it back just a hair, sometimes a lot, but usually just a little bit makes more sense than letting them cross the line. You're never gonna find the perfect line for all of these conditions so admit that, understand that, and know that most of the time students are going to push over the line instead of stay too far back from it.

And there you have it. These are my thoughts on reducing risk, on mitigating risk, on giving students the most you can from any drill. You know, a lot of times your gonna think of this stuff with regard to partner drills or group drills especially around self-defense or sparring technique, doesn't have to be that. There is risk versus reward with forms and basics and the risk doesn't have to be injury. Sometimes the risk is wasting time not giving people as much as you could. If you're trying to get people better at their stances, I'm sure you have a bunch of different drills that you could do. And if you choose the one that is less effective, well isn't that a disservice to the students? So understanding how these apply to everything that you're doing with your training make sense. Now if you're not an instructor, if you're student hopefully your training on your own and you can use some of these guidelines for your own training. Think backwards from the goals don't just blindly do the drills and the movements that are taught in class. Come up with your own, understand what you're doing, why you're doing it and if you don't know ask your instructor.

This has been episode 367 martial arts radio. If you want to find the transcript, that's at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, you can find our products some on Amazon, but everything's at whistlekick.com and you can use the code `podcast15` to save 15% on our hats, and shirts and sweatpants and what else we got over there, shoes, so much stuff. You can follow us on social media, we are at whistlekick on YouTube, twitter, Instagram, Facebook. You can email me jeremy@whistlekick.com and I love to hear from you. The best place to leave feedback for this or any other episode, is at the website under the comment section. We appreciate those comments and sometimes those comments lead to other episodes or great conversation. I appreciate you, thank you for your time today and thank you for your support of everything we do. Until next time, train hard, smile, and have a great day.



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