



Episode 393 – The Problems with The Way Self-defense is Taught |
whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey there everybody, what's going on welcome! This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 393. Today, were going to talk about the issues I have with the way self-defense is taught in the martial arts. My name is Jeremy Lesniak I'm your host on this show, I'm the founder at whistlekick and the martial arts is something pretty passionate about. So we bring you the show with my voice and often times the voice of others two times per week. Every Monday we do a conversational episode, an interview with someone from the martial arts, from somewhere in the world, some style or other, and we get to see how similar we all are despite differences in who we are and what we train where we do it. Thursdays we bring you a topic show kinda like this, just something I'm interested in talking about or maybe we have a guest come back on, somebody that you've probably heard from before, and we talk about some particular subject, something of note to conversate about in the martial arts realm. And of course, you can find the show notes for this and any of the other episodes at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, but if you head to whistlekick.com you can see all the projects all the websites that we're working on as well as the things we sell. And if you use the code `podcast15`, you can get 15% off any of those things that we sell at whistlekick.com

Alright, so here we go. Let's talk about the issues I have with the way self-defense is taught. Now I'm gonna be honest this is probably going to ruffle some feathers. If you're an instructor who is teaching



Episode 393 – The Problems with The Way Self-defense is Taught |
whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

the self-defense curriculum, that your instructor taught you there's a good chance that you're, well I'm just gonna say it, you're doing it wrong. I don't generally say that and the reason I am willing to make that statement now is that, for most people what they would define as a proper or correct self-defense curriculum, is something that would enable the students to defend themselves adequately to make a significant difference in the outcome of some kind of violent altercation. Now I've had the luxury of traveling around the country, training with a whole bunch of people and I've come to realize that the majority of martial arts schools, traditional martial art schools, are teaching a self-defense curriculum that is based in some falsehoods. Some misunderstandings of the way that not only violence occurs, but also the way that people learn. And so my effort here is not to point fingers, it's not to simply upset people, I hope, just as I hope with every episode that we do that it makes you take a look at what's going on and form your own opinion. If you are someone who is lucky enough to train in a school that has a realistic and appropriate self-defense curriculum, awesome. Then this episode is not attacking you in the way you do things. But statistically you're not in one of those schools so let me talk about what I mean.

Self-defense in martial arts are not the same thing not even close. They do have overlap. But the amount of overlap is far lower than we think. Now this is not to say that training in traditional martial arts, training informs, training in basics, training in even sparring doesn't make you a better person. Absolutely it doesn't, I don't think there is any argument there. It is not to say that training in those things doesn't improve your chances on the street, because it does. But it doesn't improve them nearly as much as most people think because when we talk about those aspects of martial arts and then we incorporate them into a self-defense curriculum, you know what's missing most of the time? Psychology what actually happens not just emotionally, but psychologically, physiologically to the body in some kind of event. Now let me give you an example of what I mean. As I said I get the opportunity to travel and quite often when I travel I'm invited to share something to teach something and when I don't have anything better, to share when there isn't something that is more clearly going to be enjoyed and educational in the class, I'll do some fundamental self-defense training. Because, this idea of getting people to realize that hey our self-defense curriculum could use some work. It's something that interests me. So here's the drill that I often use and I have talked about this on the show before, If you've heard it bear with me we'll talk about the outcome and will move forward in a moment. I generally take a class split them in two and line them up across from each other, two lines down the length of the training hall. I'll take one person pull them out and stand them at one end, they turn around and then I will go through these two lines of people and designate roughly half of them as "attackers" then I turn the person at the front around, they don't know who the attackers are and they are expected to walk through these two columns of people. The attackers will throw a single slow safe attack, generally a punch or a simple kick or something, the defender is expected to defend that attack and then continue moving. Now it's a pretty simple drill but that doesn't mean it's easy because what happens for most people, the moment that they start walking through the moment they don't know who the safe people are, who the attackers are or what is being thrown at them, they have a tremendous stress response



Episode 393 – The Problems with The Way Self-defense is Taught |
whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

and they don't know what to do about that. Now I've run this drill at a variety of schools different ages, different ranks, different styles, just different and time and again the majority of people I would say, 90% of the people participating fall apart. Doesn't mean that there in a puddle in the corner crying, but it means that the techniques that they have practiced that they feel so confident in don't happen for them. Now what happens in the get to the other side? They realize whoa, I'm not very good at this. And a lot of those people have some, I don't wanna say trauma because that's too strong a word but they have some significant doubts over their ability to defend themselves. And let's be honest they should.

So here's what we do with this information we realize that there is a difference between the technique and the psychology. And in most self-defense curriculums in schools, the teach technique they don't teach psychology. They don't teach how to handle the unknowns. The variability in what is happening. Some schools do and some styles like let's say Krav Maga are more prone to discuss these concepts based on my experience than others. But if the extent of your self-defense is having one person or two people designated as the attackers who are going to throw a single technique, just as in the drill and talking about, but you know who it is and when it's coming I'm sorry it's not going to work. Now that doesn't mean that those drills are useful to start getting people to think. But the problem is if you recall being a very stressful situation you probably didn't think so well. That doesn't happen. We don't fall back on our best training, we fall back on our worst training our lowest level of training. And for the majority of people in martial arts they have been training long enough that their lowest level is anything that happens with in their training. It tends to be people freaking out, turtling up, covering their head and getting punched or stabbed because they don't know how to respond otherwise. If you are self-defense curriculum is based around block, counter or avoid, counter and you're not discussing what it is like to be in a fight and trying to develop drills as I've offered one is a suggestion, that gets people to respond under stress under the sense of the unknown, then I'm sorry you're setting them up for failure.

Now there is one advantage to the curriculum that is available in most schools, it gives people confidence. Now is it a false sense of confidence? Absolutely. But it does give them confidence and we know that bullies, attackers, muggers, whatever violent people are less prone to attack someone who exhibits confidence. So despite the curriculum there is an advantage there. So it doesn't mean that nothing would be better because it wouldn't. But let's go back to that false sense of confidence. If you're falsely confident in your skills, there does require some unlearning in order to move forward. And my challenge to you out there whether you're a student or a school owner may be a higher level instructor, is it this stuff needs to be discussed. It needs to be incorporated into curriculum and there's plenty of ways, that's great English wasn't it? There are plenty of ways that we can reconcile the two. Everything that we incorporate in self-defense needs to involve elements of not this really at the same time but elements of the unknown, the disadvantaged, the confusion, the stressful.



Episode 393 – The Problems with The Way Self-defense is Taught |
whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

So here are some examples of ways you could alter the drills, the curriculum that you already may have that would make it more effective. Do with the lights out. Have people close their eyes. There's the drill that I gave you but you could do the same thing in a circular format. You could change up the number of attackers and the number of defenders. What if there were four attackers and two defenders people fall apart they don't know how to defend in a partnership. How often do we talk about that in traditional martial arts almost never. You can start to incorporate loud noises, most people are not comfortable making their yells, their kiai's, their kiup's whatever you choose to call it. Most people are not comfortable with those and most people freak out a little bit when they are used around them, put a blindfold on people. Limit them to one arm as if they had broken arm. Start to mix it up. If the drills that you're doing for self-defense are the same every time, it's not going to work but because people will adapt to the drill, they'll start to get good at the drill not the concepts that the drill is trying to teach. And I know running a school in teaching is difficult it's time consuming. But if you're going to say your teaching self-defense the moment you do that, there's an obligation that you elevate the caliber of your education because someone's life is at stake. They are putting their trust in you to help them protect themselves.

If you go on YouTube and you watch video of actual fights, even fights with martial arts, you'll see that sloppy, it's ugly. Everyone gets hurt. A lot of people fall down. It doesn't look anything like television or the movies. Sometimes it's hard to determine who won. But if the name of the game is to survive, that doesn't matter. You're doing everything you can to make sure that you're not injured or worse, on the ground. I want to hear what you think. I want to hear what you do in your schools to make self-defense better, to improve it. To make sure that the students taking that curriculum are educated, informed and stand a better chance, a statistically significantly better chance because of your involvement. And I'm going to be very direct, if you take money from people for self-defense, if that is an all in your marketing, if you say come here I will teach you self-defense and they do not leave the school after some reasonable amount of time and I'll let you define what that is, with a statistically significant better chance of survival, then what you are doing is wrong. Doesn't mean you should stop teaching, it means you should fix it. Get better, always get better and then share that information. We are living in this very interesting time right now in which there are a lot of people out there who are passionate about the subject. So if you're not learning more about how to teach proper, realistic, applicable self-defense, it's because you're not trying. I'm not the person to teach this to you I'm simply the person trying to get you to realize date needs to be taught, that it needs to be learned and we need to change this dynamic. I'm not saying that we stop doing forms, I'm not saying we stop doing basics, if you know anything about me in the show, you know I love those things. But I'm saying we gotta change the self-defense stuff.

So go ahead shoot me an email let me know what you think jeremy@whistlekick.com or even better leave a comment at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com under episode 393, the problems with the way self-defense is taught. This is what I want to hear about. Let's talk more about this, let's share ideas let's



Episode 393 – The Problems with The Way Self-defense is Taught |
whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

benefit let's support and help each other, this is critical. Don't forget you can follow us on social media we are @whistlekick on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. And you can head on over to whistlekick.com use the code `podcast15` that's can get you 50% of everything that we do. I hope you enjoy this episode I hope it made you think and if it made you angry, good. It made you sad, good. The only response that I think is bad is indifference. And ironically that's pretty much the only bad response to a violent altercation. No I didn't plan that out I like it when it comes full circle. Until next time. Train hard, smile, and have a great day.