



Episode 403 – The Problem with Normalcy Bias in Social Media |
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Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone and welcome. This is episode 403 of whistlekick martial arts radio. Today, we're going to talk about some of the problems in social media and how it impacts not only the world but us as martial artists. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host on the show this show, the founder at whistlekick and I love the martial arts you should check out everything we do for and with the martial arts at whistlekick.com. You'll find links to projects and podcasts and morning shows and writing projects, there's just a ton going on over there so go see whistlekick.com we do have a store and if you choose to make a purchase which would really help us out, `podcast15` is going to get you 15% off you can use that code as much as you want. And if you want check at the show notes for this or any of the other episodes, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We bring you a new show twice a week so let's get into today's episode. The official title of this episode is problems with normalcy bias in social media, which is kind of a complex name and the term normalcy bias may not be familiar to everyone. So let me explain what that term means, normalcy bias.

Normalcy bias is the idea that because you are experiencing something frequently and it seems common to you that you might start to think that that is typical of everyone's experience, but it may not be and in the case of what we're going to talk about today with social media, it is absolutely not true. Let me give you a little bit of an extreme example that comes directly from social media, it's a problem that is actually having a pretty substantial effect on certain people and you see this primarily on Instagram, if



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you're an Instagram user, you may see that whether you're trying to find them or not, there are a lot of social media accounts that are featuring physically attractive people and saying that you know, I work out and I'm a model and here's my body and maybe here are some things that I do to get this body. Quite often they are rolling in sponsorships or brand ambassador ships to earn money and these people tend to be in pretty good shape. Some of them have had cosmetic work done, but regardless you can't argue that they've put in the time, they look good. But here's what happens there are a lot of people who follow a lot of those accounts and because the number of people that they're seeing day-to-day that look beautiful, some might say perfect or exceptional, it can make you start to think that that's how most of the world looks which of course is not the case. The real world is imperfect and most of us are substantially imperfect we have things that we like and dislike about ourselves our physical bodies could be pointed at and poked at by anyone on the planet and say oh this and that and the other thing and maybe you even do this yourself, hopefully don't do it too much, hopefully try to keep a positive, but it can be a struggle and the more that you're immersed in this world, the less you'll feel for yourself in another way, the more poorly you feel about yourself. There we go, those were the words I was looking for.

I want to talk about how this affects us martial artist. I'm not going to talk about the negative psychology of following a bunch of beautiful people on Instagram and feeling like your less than because you're immersing yourself in that world, no. I want to talk about the world of martial arts social media. There are some people out there who do some pretty exceptional things and they have a lot of followers a lot of interaction and they seem to live these wonderful exciting lives and we've had quite a number of them on this show and they talk about their stories and their adventures and they can make everyone else feel like, you know, maybe not very good martial artist because I don't have those experiences, I don't have famous friends, I'm not on YouTube, I'm not doing all these exceptional things and I want you to try to dismiss that and I'm going to tell you why, because those people represent the minority. If you look back if you look at the 400+ episodes that we've done and you will get all the people we've talked about and featured the "exceptional" the "famous" people, they're the minority and even the majority of that minority the things that they've done aren't exceptional but they are exceptional because we talked about them. Everyone of you out there has done exceptional things maybe not a martial arts, but you've done things the problem is because of normalcy bias, you don't see them as being exceptional. I deal with this, I suffer from this in a sense. I've said on the show, I've said in emails quite a bit that I'm really, I'm nobody, I'm just a guy who wanted this show to exist so I started. And now I get the opportunity to talk to wonderful amazing people. Well I've had people call me on that and say you know what you're not nobody, there's something about you that if it were not for you this show wouldn't exist. So, try to embrace that and working on that. Because just as you may listen to this show or you may follow a bunch of social media accounts and feel inadequate or less than because of normalcy bias, I feel the exact same thing. I come off some of these interviews feeling irrelevant, useless, quite down on myself at times because I want to be able to live up to the standard that some of these amazing



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guests have set for themselves for their students for others and I don't always feel that I do. In fact, quite often I feel that I don't. And one of the things that you don't get to experience, are the conversations I have before and after the episode with the guest and here's a secret most of them feel the same way. Quite often the folks we have on the show are a little bit different when we're recording versus when we're not. They're human beings, they are fallible, they have feelings of inadequacy and they sometimes suffer too. Sometimes they feel like they're not good enough.

Now not sharing this because I want you to feel sorry for me or for the guest or for anyone else especially yourself. I'm sharing this because I want you to understand that the bar the standard that so many of us see being held in social media, in the public eye is artificial, that's not real life and the people that pretend that there over that bar, most of them are not. Life is real, life is challenging and we all have things that were working towards this is the heart of martial arts. The definition that I often give personal development through the lens the perspective of combat, it's personal development. So to work through some of these feelings of inadequacy these feelings of I'm not good enough, I didn't do well enough, it's substantial in that personal growth. And I hope that you'll take a look at your negative, self-talk which most of us have and give yourself some permission to not be perfect. It's something I've been working on for a very long time, if you were raised the way I was, some of that negative self-talk may come as a result of the way you were raised and as challenging as it may be that doesn't mean it's not worthwhile. My suggestion is to create your own normalcy bias based on something that's a little more healthy, something that's a little more realistic. Because you do have control over it. One of the beauties of social media is that it gives you the opportunity to connect with some exceptional people and the more specific you are, the more selective you are with who you were paying attention to on and off-line, the better your building your tribe, for lack of a better word. I've said it before I did not make this up but the idea that you are the average of the people that you hang around with the most. Some of us spend a tremendous amount of time on social media and thus the people that we are averaged out to be are quite often celebrities or the truly remarkable people or let's face it, average people who present themselves in a remarkable way. That can make it very difficult to live up to that expectation that you've now set for yourself.

So here's what I've done recently I've unfollowed quite a few of these supposedly exceptional people and I'm trying to follow more real people. There are friends, there are family people that I truly love who are presenting themselves in a very honest authentic sometimes raw way in a way that I find inspiring and powerful and those are the ones I'm trying to pay more attention to. I follow quite a few of you. People who have reached out who followed whistlekick or my personal account, I try to follow quite a few of you because I want to see what you are doing because I know that you're doing exceptional things even if you don't realize it and I appreciate the authenticity, the realness of you sharing who you are openly and honestly. So here's what I would suggest you do, take a look through who you follow on social media. Now typically were talking about Instagram because most of most of us aren't spending this time on Facebook and other social media accounts in as negative a way. Typically this happens on



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Instagram so I'm gonna speak to that. Take a look through your Instagram followers, not your followers, the people you're following, there you go. Take a look at who you're following and if all you're seeing is celebrities and online influencers, to use another word for celebrity, maybe it's time to unfollow some of them and to start following some more real people. Studies are coming out there showing the real psychological effects about this so it's something we all need to pay attention to. And if you have children, I think it's time to have a conversation with them about this. Maybe you have them listen to this episode its fairly short, but if not, talk to them but what's real and what's not. It's the same conversation that was happening 10-20 years ago and even beyond with the way teenagers were looking at the folks in the magazines they were following. It's the same problem it's the same challenge but there is a way to work through it.

So, those are my suggestions. I'd love to hear what you think if this is something that you've dealt with, let us know. Best place hit up whistlekickmartialartsradio.com leave a comment in the show notes for this episode 403. You can talk to us about it on social media, we're @whistlekick on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram or you can email me if you'd like to keep that your comments private jeremy@whistlekick.com. Love to see in order come through from you, podcast15 saves you 15% at whistlekick.com and while you're there check out everything else we've got going on. And if a purchase doesn't make sense for you today, please share this episode or leave us a review on Apple podcasts or Google podcast, somewhere or just share it around. Thanks so much for your time, I appreciate you and all you've done openly, honestly in real-ly to make the world a better place. Until next time, train hard, smile, and have a great day.