



Episode 395 – Dating within Martial Arts | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hello everyone, welcome and thank you for joining me. This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 395, today, were talking about dating within the martial arts. My name is Jeremy Lesniak, I'm your host, I'm the founder, I love the martial arts and that's where whistlekick comes in. Whistlekick, we do a whole bunch of things including this show as was everything over at whistlekick.com there's links to the various projects that were involved in all of the products that we make, and if you checkout those products and find something you like, use the code `podcast15` that's going to get you 15% off anything, any time of the day, anytime time of the year, any product even sale stuff. It's all it's all there for you. And this show's here for you twice a week, Mondays we bring you an interview with a guest, someone from somewhere in the world who has something to say, a story about their time is a martial artist to share with you and then on Thursdays, which is when we're releasing this, we bring you some kind of show on a topic maybe we bring a guest on to talk about something specific or maybe I just kinda riff a little bit and tell you about something that's on my mind and that's what today is.

If you stick enough people in a room together, eventually romantic relationships are going to happen and the conditions don't have to be let's say typical, or conventional, as anyone who has been to or worked in a correctional facility can attest. So it's no surprise that when you get a group of people together, training in martial arts that eventually there will be some romantic feelings and I'm not going to lie, I've been on dates with people that I've trained with. But today, were going to talk about the good, the bad, the ugly and I'm probably going to ruffle some feathers here because we're also going to



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talk about dating between instructors and students and that is a [00:02:15.09] topic. One of the things makes dating within a martial arts school or just within the martial arts a little bit more difficult is that, the martial arts despite the number of people participating, it's a small world. Everybody seems to know everybody and if you are geographically close enough to know someone who trains and you want to date them, you probably know a bunch of people that they trained with and they probably know you and the people you train with. So even if you're not in the same school, even if you're not part of the same style, let's just say that you are tempting fate by dating someone who also trains. Now of course ideally, if you are going to date someone who does martial arts, which let's face it, for me for many others that would be great that's, I'm not going to say it's the dream, but why wouldn't you want to share something that you are passionate about with your significant other. Most of us who have trained in martial arts really love martial arts so why wouldn't we want the person we love to also love martial arts. I'm not going to say that you can't or shouldn't do that. In fact I would encourage you if martial arts is a big part of your life, finding someone who also enjoys training is only going to help because we've had plenty people on the show, you've heard their stories, who have spouses who don't quite understand why they're so passionate about martial arts.

But there are a lot of ways it can go wrong. So let's start with dating within your own school. If you're dating someone that attends your martial arts school, that can get a little dicey. Now of course if things work out and they work out well and you agree to leave your relationship outside the doors, there are no problems but that rarely happens. The best case scenario is that periodically you may have some disputes and if those come into the four walls, that can create tension problem for everyone around you and it's difficult. And what I have seen what I advise is that in those circumstances, you agree that one of you will attend and one of you will not if you're attending the same classes because at the end of the day, your relationship and challenges that you have should not be negatively impacting the training of others. It's a responsibility that whether or not you realize, we all have it is up to us to assist to facilitate the advancement of those we're training with. And if your attendance is going to negatively impact the entire class, it's on you to stay home until you two can figure that out. And what happens quite often what I've seen is that since it's really unfair for one person to say I'm going to go, you can't or shouldn't, both people stay home and they use that time to work on the relationship. Things can get a little complicated though, when there's a significant rank difference between the students, the people dating. If one person say a very new student and someone else is more of a senior student, if that person is expected to teach the lower rank student, their significant other, that it's difficult. Because here's one of the things I've observed, one of the things that makes this challenging is that two people generally can only have one distinct type of relationship. If these two people are dating and they are students at a martial art school were one of them is expected to conduct themselves as superior to the other, that can be really complicated. It's the same reason couples don't generally work well together because when they look at each other, they want to see a partnership they want to see their home life and it can be really hard when someone in the workplace says, no I need you to go do this in a corporate way when you know just a few hours ago they were speaking to each other in a romantic way. Now if two people



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start dating and they've met each other through martial arts or even if they haven't but they begin the relationship after both of them have started training, somebody ideally both of them, have to speak to the instructor. Let them know, hey here's what's going on, we are entering into some kind of relationship or dating or whatever and we agreed to keep things separate. Unfortunately you may find an instructor who isn't okay with that. There may be instructors out there, there are instructors out there who don't want romantic relationships happening between their students. It's not the norm, it's not common, but if that's what they want then you have to respect that and possibly make a choice. Of course the biggest challenge comes with if the relationship ends and unfortunately, statistically, when the relationship ends because most relationships fail and very few relationships are left with completely warm fuzzy feelings of support and honesty and all the positive things that could happen that sometimes happen when a relationship ends. And what you are left with typically, is that things don't go so well. So my suggestion is that before anybody starts dating, you have to figure that out. I'll be honest there are people I've been interested in dating over the years through martial arts that I just flat out decided it was worth the risk. I valued where I was training too much and I wasn't going to risk putting myself in the other person and the people I was training with and the instructor through the stress if it's all part. That's not to say that my decision is the right decision for you, but it's something that should be considered. And I would suggest you figure out an action plan. If two people decide that dating is worthwhile enough that they're going to do it, they should go in with eyes wide open decide if they choose to and that relationship what happens to training. Do you agree to go on different nights? Do you agree that one of you will stop attending that school? Do you something else? I don't know. And some of you may be thinking that this is silly. But I'm going to guess that if you think that, you've never trained in a school where this happened. It gets messy, people choose sides, and I can't say that I've seen schools go under fail for this reason but I have absolutely seen attendance drop and a significant financial impact affected on the school owner. And it's not fair.

Now let's get to the juicy part of this the part that is going to ruffle some feathers because we have listeners out there who, let's be honest, have violated that this rule that I'm going to set out. Now I set this rule for myself because I feel it's the right thing to do but everyone has to do what's right for them. Now the rule for me, I don't date my students. I had a martial arts school for a couple years many of you know that, I've talked about that at times and there was a woman who came to train who I found very attractive, who let me know that she was interested in pursuing something with me and I said no. I was single at the time there otherwise was no reason to say no except that I found it a complete violation of my position as her instructor. I believe strongly that a romantic relationship should be a partnership while each and every aspect of that partnership isn't going to be equal, it should average out it should be a 50-50 or a 51-49 for really going to push it, split in everything. There should be no power imbalance no one should be superior to the other overall but yet when we talk about an instructor-student relationship that's exactly what we're talking about. The instructor has a position of authority of power of responsibility, we've talked about that through various episodes over the years that the responsibility of the instructor is to guide the advancement of the student. That's more like a parent-child relationship



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that is a peer relationship. So for an instructor to become romantically involved with the student, it becomes very difficult to maintain that one distinct relationship in class and a very different one outside of class. Now I won't lie I've seen instructors break this rule and everything go fine, but that is the overwhelming minority. More often than not, I see instructors date and even marry their students and it leaves the people around them confused and hurt and wondering is that person receiving more attention than I am because they're dating them? Were they promoted faster because of their position outside of class or even the opposite is this person being held back because are held to a higher standard because they are the instructor's spouse? I've seen it all. I've seen both sides of this and it's never healthy. But of course, it can be really difficult, it can be tempting because let's face it, if you're a martial arts instructor, you're probably spending at least a couple nights a week after work, which statistically most martial arts instructors do not teach full-time. You're spending a lot of time at your martial arts school which can make it difficult to meet people who aren't training. Dating is hard enough but to try to find someone that is outside of the most important thing that you do, I understand the challenge, the almost contradiction, the unfairness of it all, I get it. But the way I look at it, when you undertake the responsibility as a martial arts instructor, you're making sacrifices and one of those sacrifices is to treat each and every student with a tremendous amount of integrity. For each and every martial arts marriage between a student and an instructor that I know of that is worked out, I know far more that haven't. People that are left in pieces, people that have had to change schools, styles, even move because they were so wrapped up in that school and then suddenly left with nothing because they felt like they couldn't attend classes there anymore. Now some of you may be listening to this and hearing some emotion in my voice, no I've never dated one of my students. So, I'm not speaking about most of this anyway from personal experience but if observed as a fellow student, and I've spoken with many people on the subject.

Those are my thoughts and I would love to hear yours. If you want to leave a comment under 395 at whistlekickmartialartsradio.com love to read it. If you want to email me privately, jeremy@whistlekick.com I'd love to read that there. And if you're one of these people who have broken this rule, I don't you and if everything is working out and you and your partner are happy, you did what was right for you. We're all just figuring out our own way and I don't hate anyone for breaking this rule or anything like that. I'm just offering my advice as someone who has seen and heard a lot of things and talk to a lot of people. Honestly, probably more stories than most people because of what I do here with this show and the traveling I do with whistlekick. So I thought it was time to offer my advice, but of course it's free advice you didn't pay for it so feel free to ignore it, listen to it, whatever works well. If you want to check us out on social media we are @whistlekick on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram and of course you can use `podcast15` for 15% off anything at whistlekick.com. If making a purchase is it what works for you to show your support, go ahead share this or another episode leave us a review on iTunes or somewhere else or just no give us a thumbs up on social media. Whatever works. That's all I've got for you today. Until next time, train hard and smile and have a great day.