



Episode 99 – Why I Train | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com

Jeremy Lesniak:

What is up, everybody? It's time for another episode of whistlekick martial arts radio and here we go with episode 99 and today, we're going to talk about why I still train in the martial arts. I'm whistlekick's founder but I'm better known as your host, Jeremy Lesniak. Whistlekick, if you don't know, maybe you're new to the show, what we do here, we make the world's absolute best sparring gear and also some really great apparel and accessories for practitioners and fans of traditional martial arts.

I'd like to welcome the new listeners and thank everyone that's come back again. If you're not familiar with our products, you can learn more or buy over at whistlekick.com. All of our past podcast episodes, show notes and a bunch more great stuff, we're on a whole different website and that's whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. No hyphens or punctuation or anything funny on either of those sites. Now, from either one, you can sign up for our newsletter which we send out couple times a month, nothing too big. We don't sell your information. We keep it quick. We give you some good information, let you know what's going on behind the scenes here and it's the only place you're going to find out about who's coming up as a guest on the show.

Today, we're going to take a bit of a detour from the way we normally do things. If you're a returning listener to this show, first off, thank you, but you're also pretty familiar with the fact that I don't talk about myself a lot on the show. If it's an interview episode, you know one of those that comes out on Monday, it's all about the guest and then, we bring in some things from my experience that prompts them to talk a little more or gives some context to what they're saying but those Monday shows, those certainly aren't about me.

Now, the Thursday episodes, the topic-driven shows, I really try to make those more about the martial arts in general, right? We talk about subjects. Things that appeal to everyone but as I was thinking about what today's episode was going to be about, I realize that there are times where I need to switch that up; where, even though, I'm not terribly comfortable talking about myself and I know that might seem strange to a lot of you but I'm actually a pretty private person and putting out all of myself into a podcast, it's not something I'm always comfortable with but here, with this format, I think it's pretty important with today's episode because I think that there's some of you out there, I know there's some of you out there because I hear from you, we get these emails all the time from people that are feeling inspired or motivated or somehow taking some good substance from what we put out there and I don't know how to tackle today's topic without talking about it from a personal standpoint and so that's kind of the hope today is that this episode on why I personally train may help give some context to what you do.

I'm hoping that it may bring some motivation to your training to know that there're others out there, at least one other person, feeling similar to what you're feeling and why do I bring that up? Why does that matter? Here in the northeast, when I'm recording this, is pretty hot. It's July 5th and the show will come out in a couple days but it's warm and we've been in the midst of this warm streak and a lot of



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times here in the northeast, and I'm sure other parts of the country when it's hot, people don't get to class as much and it makes it that much easier if you're kind of struggling with your training, if you're feeling bored and there's a subject we talked about on this show a little bit but not really jumped into. It can be tough and you know what? Sometimes I feel bored with my training too and I'm going to guess that most of you out there do as well. You can love something and still not feel motivation for it a hundred percent of the time and that's okay but here are the reasons that I love the martial arts, the reasons that I train.

First off, to me, it's about identity. I'm a martial artist and I will always be a martial artist. I could lose all four of my limbs tomorrow, not be able to train physically but I'm still going to be a martial artist because the structure, the substance of who I am, the content of my character, if you will is as a martial artist. I've been training for a long time. I'm not going to put a number on that because it feels like a bragging thing. A lot of people do that and I'm not comfortable going there but when I think of myself, when I think of ways to define who I am, one of the ways that feels the best is to refer to myself as a martial artist.

Now, a martial artist is someone who does martial arts. If I'm not doing martial arts on a, I don't want to say regular basis, but if I am not considering my training as being an active process, I personally don't feel I have the right to call myself a martial artist. Now, there may be some out there that look at it differently and that's great. That's fine and I'm not saying that there is a wrong or a right way to look at it but this is part of my personal code so I need to adhere to it. I love the challenge of martial arts. There's always something to learn. If you feel like you've mastered one style, you can go to another style. If you feel like you've mastered everything in the style you're in and you don't want to go to another style, you can go back. You can go to another instructor in that style and even go to your instructor and say, hey, I'm feeling like I kind of got this stuff down and I all but guarantee, they can give you a different way to look at things that will change your perspective. What if you're a smaller person like I am? I'm 5'7". What if you're 6'2"? What would your martial art look like if you were my height? What would mine look like if I was your height? It puts a completely different spin on it. If you're a thin person versus a larger person, that, too, can completely transform your perspective on the martial arts and there's value in learning how to apply what you know as someone different because you maybe a different person someday, right? Physically, structurally or you may have to teach someone like that.

Someone once told me that martial arts was one of the few things they knew of in life where the more you knew, the more you realize, you actually didn't know that there was so much more out there to learn and I can attest to that. There are certain things that I've picked up because of the opportunities I've received as the founder of whistlekick, getting to train with some different people and it's blown my mind over the last 18 months how much I feel like I don't know. Honestly, as confident as I am in my skills, I have never felt like I knew less in the overall body of martial arts because there's more stuff coming out. There's more stuff being discovered, even though, what we do is traditional and there are historic roots to it. There's new stuff. People are connecting dots especially because of communication



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online, the internet, the passion with which some people are going back and looking for old texts. It's incredible. There's never been a better time to be martial artists. I absolutely love the martial arts community.

Here on this show, sometimes we address the negative aspects within this community but those are, for the most part, the minority of people. There are jerks in every community. We have them and we know who they are, at least in personality type, but for the most part, people that train are great people. I mean, what other group of people can you mix it up, bleed on, sweat with, sweat on and remain friends with? That doesn't happen in too many other places in life and I think that's fantastic.

Martial artists, while we aren't always great as a wider community to support each other within the context of schools and martial arts families, and I use that both literally and figuratively, people tend to hold each other up. They tend to support each other and help us find the best in ourselves and I really value that.

If there's one thing in life that I can look at and admit that I'm pretty good at, it's martial arts. It's something I've done since I was a child. It's something that I've put a lot of time and effort into and I've seen some rewards from that and that really boost my self-esteem. I think we all have bad days where something doesn't go right, where we don't feel that value as a human being where we kind of question our contribution to the world and for me, the place I can always back it off to is my place in the world as a martial artist. I always have that. I have my confidence in myself through my martial arts skillset and I can build from there even on the worst of days.

I love teaching. I love that feeling of passing on knowledge, things that I know. Things that I've been taught, things that I've figured out on my own, giving someone a different set of language to think about something, maybe they're struggling with something, something's not clicking for them and that feeling of being able to help someone figure something out for themselves and the first time that they get it and the look on their face when they realize it, to me, that's just pure joy. I absolutely love that and I found myself gravitating towards teaching as much as, if not more, training on my own and that's not to say I don't learn when I'm teaching and anyone out there that has spent a lot of time teaching knows that you learn a tremendous amount when you have to teach something to someone who doesn't know it.

I love the discipline of martial arts. I crave it in my life. I'm at a pretty interesting place. I will be really open here. I am a single person, I live alone and I own a business. There's not a lot going on in my life where people are telling me what to do. I have a lot of control and I like that but it's good to be reminded what it's like to be, I don't want to say subservient, but to feel what it's like to be part of a group where you're not dictating the structure and the outcome. I like feeling like I'm part of history.

Now, however you define the age of martial arts or a particular martial art, with a few exceptions of particular styles, all of the generally accepted broad-term martial arts are older than



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anyone currently alive and I like that traditional aspect. I like being part of that thing that's rooted in history that I can look back to and it makes me feel powerful and that I'm tied into that but it also helps keep my ego in check to remember that this thing that I love, that I'm part of, not only did it exist before me and it will exist after me, but it's going to exist despite me and that's pretty cool. I'm tied into something that much bigger than just little old me. Continuing on that vein, it's pretty big, right?

Martial arts is a big thing, whether you call it a sport or a hobby or a pursuit. There's somewhere around 250 million people globally involved in some form of traditional martial arts. This ties us all together. There aren't a lot of things that you can look at across the globe and say that there are more people doing that. There are not, if my memory serves for some investment potential meetings, things that we did, there's no other sport that has that many active participants globally. Even something like soccer, if I remember correctly, isn't quite there so you're part of a really large, global community and you should be proud of that. I am proud of that. I love that and that's really the last reason why I train because I love it.

I love the way I feel when I'm training whether I'm learning something that's completely new and it's challenging me, I'm struggling with it or if I'm doing something that I've been doing for my entire martial career, maybe for the ten thousandth time, I have these brief moments where something just clicks and it feels right and the movement or the form or the sparring match, or whatever it is, ends up better than I expected where those pieces of who I am and what I'm doing seem to converge to create something more and that feeling is really hard to explain. Some of you may have experienced it. I hope you have. I hope all of you have the opportunity to experience it but when I felt it, I feel like I figured out a little bit more of who I am as a person because of my training and that ties into that personal growth element that keeps coming up show after show, whether it's a Thursday show or interview show on Monday.

Those are my reason for practicing martial arts. What are yours? I genuinely truly want to hear what you have to say whether you message us publicly or you shoot something private. You can get to me at whistlekick.com, doesn't matter. The more that we know about you and what the martial arts is to you, the better we as a company can support you and the overall martial arts community so, if you want to get a hold of us, you can do so on social media. It's probably the best place. Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram, username is whistlekick in all four of those cases. You can leave a comment on the website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, under the show notes for this episode so 99. You can leave us a comment on YouTube, that's about it. There! So, let's get some discussion going. Let's hear what people have to say. I'm hoping I left out a whole bunch of reasons because he more reasons that we have for training, the more we can share that information and encourage other people to train and, as regular listeners know, I'm a firm believer the more people engaged in the martial arts, the better the world will be.

If you want to be a guest on the show or maybe you have an idea for a show topic, go ahead, get a hold of us, fill up the form on the website and don't forget to subscribe to the newsletter so you can



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stay up on all the great stuff that we're doing. You can learn more about the products at whistlekick.com or, if you're interested in sparring gear, we also have that available on Amazon. That's all for now. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!