



Episode 433 – The Mindset of the Beginner Martial Artist | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey, what's up, everybody? Welcome! This is a special road edition of martial arts radio. Haven't done one of these in a while. I'm not sure what episode number this is. I think...about...just in case it changes, I won't say anything. Let's do the intro. Okay, if you're new to the show you might want to check out whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. That's where we post all of our episodes, everything we've ever done episode-wise is there for free. We've got transcripts, we've got links, we've got photos, sometimes there's video. Everything's arranged by subject and style and for the guest interviews which we do on Mondays, there's a navigation menu for where they're from, lots of stuff. If you haven't been over there recently, check it out. You can sign up for the newsletter while you're there too. If you haven't been to whistlekick.com, that's our digital hub for everything we've got going on. Of course, there's links to things like whistlekick martial arts radio, links to martial journal, I can't talk, martial journal, martialjournal.com; our online content site where we have people writing about martial art and it's all for free. There's no advertisement on there, nobody gets paid, it's great! It's a wonderful site. Check it out! What else do we have at whistlekick.com? We've got our store where we have all of our products from our protective equipment to our uniforms, t-shirts, sweatshirts, pants, hats, a lot of cool stuff over there and if you use the code `PODCAST15`, that will give you 15% off everything in the store.

Let's talk about today's subject. Today, we're talking about the mindset of the beginner martial artist. This is probably going to be a two or a three-part series. Today, we're going to talk about beginners. We might talk about intermediate, I'm not quite sure how that one's going to play out but then, we'll



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definitely do one of the advanced martial artists. So, let's talk about the mindset of the beginner martial artist and I'm thinking about someone who's really, really new. Now, if you haven't been a new martial arts student for a while, you might have forgotten what that felt like. Maybe you were starting when you were young so your understanding now is completely got. You completely forgot what it was like to be 5 years old, starting class or even, 4 years old or any years old starting class.

To start martial arts is kind of a big deal because if you've never done martial arts before, you aren't quite sure what you're in for. Anybody who starts anything is nervous, they're scared and getting yourself to show up to something is the hardest part. If you're a parent, if you have children, you know that sometimes getting a child to do something new can be really, really difficult and it takes a lot of effort, it takes a lot of encouragement, maybe some bribery, some bargaining, to get them to do something new. Not even doing it willingly, they're just kind of begrudgingly agreeing okay, I'm going to show up to this thing to not cause a scene. I'm changing lanes. Why is it important to understand what is going on in the head of a beginner martial artist?

Because the better you understand them, the better you can relate to them, the better you can teach them, the better you can help them grow and make it beyond the beginner stage so for purposes of argument, let's move past the part everything up to them showing up. What's it like when they first walk in the door? Because you don't have a real say over what goes on before they walk in the door.

That new martial artist walks in the door and they've probably never been in that space before. They've probably never been in any martial arts space before so they're looking around, they're seeing sparring equipment, maybe they're seeing some wooden boards, maybe some broken boards in a pile. There might be some heavy bags. There's probably a class going on and people getting ready for a class and it is overwhelming. It is downright scary because most of us like to be good at things and we like to understand things. We like to have that sense of comfort that comes with, if not control, at least being able to comprehend what's happening and when you're a new person stepping into a martial arts class for the first time, you don't understand, you don't comprehend and you're definitely not good at it. you might get somebody once in a while who thinks yeah, I'm going to be great at this but that's not most people. that's not 98% of people. The vast majority of people acknowledge that this is going to be different and new and scary and hopefully, fun. So, on top of the confusion and the fear, there's some hope. What are they hoping for? They're hoping that they're going to learn something. They're hoping that they're going to enjoy it.

Beyond that, everybody has hopes but it's much more individualized. It comes down to their why. Why have they shown up that day? Are they looking to get better at self-defense to protect themselves? Are they looking to get in better shape, to lose some weight? Are they looking to develop a new skill or meet new people? everybody's why is slightly different because it's not just one thing. It's a variety of things.

The best thing to do when you meet someone who has just walked in that door is to say hello, to be friendly. Don't bow to them. Introduce yourself in a friendly way. Here's what I do. When I meet a new



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student, if it's in the context of me teaching where I know it's important for me to uphold rank, I will tell them hi, my name is Jeremy but when we're in class, you need to call me Mr. Lesniak and they get that. If I'm talking to an adult, I might change it a little bit. Hi, my name is Jeremy, nice to meet you. In the context here, I go by Mr. Lesniak. It's part of our whole group and they'll say oh, okay and they'll appreciate that you told them that. What happens in a lot of schools, hi, I'm Mr. Lesniak. Well, that's weird. Nobody else introduces themselves out in the world like that. Even teachers these days seem to be a little bit more resistant introducing themselves that way, academic teachers.

So, what else is going on in their head? They start their first class and they're doing their best to copy everything that's going on but everything that they're doing is different. The way that you start class, the bowing in, maybe there's some kind of pledge or verbal component and then, they start doing movements and it's all foreign to them and if you're talking about kids, they have a hard enough time connecting their body to their mind with things that they get. How often have you watched a small child just fall over while walking? It happens all the time. Now, you're asking them to do things that they've never seen before and, let's face it, they're probably doing a terrible job at them?

So, what do we do? We understand them and say hey, you're making a good effort. You make sure you pay special attention to them. Make sure that the fear, the discomfort, the concern over not getting things right is as limited as possible because we're showing them support. We're showing them positivity. We're showing them that we care because that matters. We want them to know that we care. We want them to know that we want them to stick around and get better and keep coming back. You want them to know that we value who they are and that we recognize that they made the risk in coming into class.

Everything that we just talked about happens more than the first day. It's not just the first day that they walk in there. It happens for a long period of time and everybody's feeling like this last different lengths. For some people, it might be a couple weeks. For others, it might be years. It fades. It doesn't go away one day. It tends to drift out so you want to pay attention and make sure that you're acknowledging them and giving them the support that they need. If you're an instructor, you know everybody needs different amounts of support, different types of instruction so knowing where they're at, being able to read between the lines and see how much of what they're doing is coming from a place of concern and fear helps you interact with them, teach them accordingly. It's critical. It's one of the most important things of getting them to stick around, to retaining that student and move them up to the intermediate or the advanced ranks.

If you take away nothing else from this episode, I want you to remember that no matter how friendly you are, how kind and compassionate the people in your school are, the person walking in the door is afraid. Don't do things to add to their fear. Do things to give them comfort and if you focus on that, they'll stick around and they'll move on up to who knows what. The more I'm thinking about this, the more I'm pretty sure I think we're doing an intermediate episode so I'm probably going to turn this off,



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take a short break and then I'll be back for, we'll call it part 2, the mindset of an intermediate martial artist.

Head on over to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, get a transcript for this, we'll probably do an audio only episode as well. For those of you who are used to seeing this only on audio, the video is going to be up on YouTube and whistlekick.com, you can use the code PODCAST15 to save 15%. Sign up for the newsletter we send out a couple of months. There's some fun stuff over there. there's content available nowhere else in the newsletter. You want to follow us on social media, I hope you do. We put a lot of effort into our social media, @whistlekick, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram, those are the main places, and my personal email, jeremy@whistelkick.com, we'd love to hear from you. I hope you have a great day. Until next time, train hard, smile and have a great day!