



Episode 483 — Becoming A Better Martial Arts Teacher | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

How's it going? This is whistlekick martial arts radio episode 483. Today were talking about the skill of being a martial arts instructor. My name is Jeremy Lesniak your host for the show, founder here at whistlekick, and everything that we do is in support of the traditional martial arts. If you want to know more about what we do, check out whistlekick.com that's our online home it's the place to also find our store and if you make a purchase in there make sure you use the code PODCAST15, that will save you 15% off and this show, the show gets its own website—whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. We've got two brand-new episodes for you every single week because our goal here at whistlekick is to connect, educate, and entertain the traditional martial artist throughout the world. If you want help to show and the work that we do, you can do number of things. You can make a purchase, share an episode, follow us on social media, we're @whistlekick everywhere you could think of. You could tell a friend about what we're doing, maybe pick up one of our books on Amazon, leave a review somewhere or support us on Patreon. Patreon.com/whistlekick, Patreon is a place where we post exclusive content blogs Audio, Video and if you contribute as little as five dollars month, you're gonna get access to it. You can probably hear in my voice that I'm a little scratchy, yes, I had a cold now, if you're listen to this near when the time it came out, I don't have the coronavirus. Hopefully will move on from not only the illness itself but the fear that striving so many people to do so many silly things. To be clear I am not belittling the illness or trivializing the severity, I am trivializing the silly irrelevant actions that some people are taking but that's not what we're talking about today. What are we talk about? We are talking about teaching.



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Now, we've covered the subject in a few different ways over the years but today specifically I'm addressing the skill set of being a martial arts teacher. Now, this topic came up in a conversation in the Facebook group that we run, Martial Arts Fun and Friends it is a no politics positive conversational Facebook group with hundreds of people in it and you can either search for that or if you go to whistlekick.com you'll find a link in the navigation menu to it. It's been a fun group we have multiple posts coming through on most days and so far, everyone's been really great, we've been doing this for a few weeks now so. It's a great opportunity for me to get some discussion topics to expand upon on the show. Everything we do relates back to everything else kinda like martial arts.

I think we've all had the unfortunate experience of learning something, were trying to learn something, from someone who knew the material but didn't know how to teach it and this shows up quite a bit in martial arts. You have people who become very skilled, even expert level practitioners, but when it comes to teaching those things, the things that made them great, they're not always so great. And then sometimes you have the opposite you have people who are moderately competent but are excellent instructors. And it's not what you would necessarily would think would happen. One would think that if you're good at something, you become really good at teaching I think but that's a completely different skill set. The ability to learn, the ability to do, and the ability to teach are very separate and that's were tackling here today. I'm going to offer you some advice on how to become a better martial arts instructor, I'm gonna offer you advice on how to teach the skill set of teaching and how if you run a martial arts school you might consider making some adjustments that will help improve the skill of all of your teachers.

The first bit of advice I have, when you're teaching you need to boil things down you need to get to the one skill or concept or technique that you are trying to teach. If you start from that, if you start from that first thing and build your drills and your conversation around that, things tend to go a lot better. I see a lot of martial arts instructors who try to impress people especially at seminars and we've done entire episodes on teaching to people at seminars, people who you don't normally work with and the complexities that go into that. But even within one's own school I see people who are trying to stack too much, they teach a form and they try to teach 12 movements at a time. What about teaching one? And then one more. When you start from very basic things, people get the ability to spend time with them. You teach one thing, they have a chance to focus on one thing. You try to show them 12, they might get one thing. Now, why do instructors do that it's for one of a few reasons, it could be that they learn differently and they forget that others learn differently than they may learn. It could be ego. It could also be the fact that that's how they were taught and I think that this is what it is for most people. Most instructors teach the way they were taught which assumes that if that's what they're going to do, that's the way everyone else wants and of course that's not true. So, break it down start from one simple basic thing and when they get that then add on.

Next, if we consider that teaching is a skill set and it is something that you need to have practice at doing, we should start teaching people how to teach very early on. I've participated in some



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martial arts schools where if you've been in class more than a month and a brand-new person comes in, you may be asked to demonstrate or to work with that person on the really, really basic stuff. If you know how to punch, you can teach that punch. Here's the great thing about that, by teaching things it makes you better at them and of course there are some benefits to the person learning because they don't feel as intimidated if there are new students. But you're also removing some of the fear, some of that stigma of standing in front of the class the first time teaching everyone because you've been teaching one-on-one and small groups your entire martial arts training career and you're gonna figure some things out through that. The people that I see who do the worst at teaching are people who are in the black belt have never taught anything anyone and are asked to step in and take class. Maybe the instructor is out sick or maybe something else has happened maybe you need to split the class and hey can you go work this thing with this group and they just don't know how to handle it. They can do the thing all day long but they've been thrown into a situation where in theory they have experience but they don't. So, I suggest in every martial arts school, everyone should get the opportunity and really, it should be a choice to teach things to people from a very early point. There's no downside there.

One of the things I found to be very helpful for my skills as a teacher, as a coach, instructor structure of various physical disciplines is taking classes from different people. If you only ever learn martial arts from one person, it's going to be very hard to learn different ways to teach martial arts. So, this is why seminars and training multiple schools and in getting help from others become so critical because you start to understand hey if this doesn't work then maybe this will work, then maybe this will work, and you have a variety of tools in your toolkit to try to pass on that concept. If I am trying to teach a sidekick and the first drill I picked works for 2/10 people, I'm not to move on to teach something else, I need to get eight of 10 or ideally 10 of 10 people at least understanding that concept. Maybe they're not going to be able to implement it at that moment, maybe they need to go practice more with it but 2/10 is enough so I pull something else out of my toolbox and say okay let's work on it this way. Let's work on it this way and maybe every time we work on it more and more people get the concept. But that toolkit has only been developed from attending a variety of martial art schools and learning from dozens, if not hundreds, of martial artists over the years. I consider every time I work with someone to be an educational opportunity both ways. If I'm partnered up with someone I hope they have something to teach me whether or not they realize.

And then the last piece I want to leave you with and this is the piece that I see happen the least often is getting feedback as a teacher. And the surprises me because of martial arts we get feedback on everything— oh your toes aren't pointing in the right direction, we are really picky and that's part of what we do, that's part of what makes martial arts special. But why not offer feedback on teaching? Now I know some schools do this and maybe your school is one of them and you're yelling at the microphone or the phone, whatever you're using to listen to me right now. You're yelling at something saying Jeremy my school does this and great. But in my experience, that's not what happens in most schools. If you truly want to have the best



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instructors, you need to have a curriculum for teaching them how to teach. They need time, they need goals and they need to be reviewed. And if you do those things your instructors will become much better instructors. To be honest I had very little of that growing up and throughout any of my educational opportunities. You know I did get some people say well try this, try that and I did receive some feedback and that was really helpful but most of what I have learned has come from training under people who were thoughts of the teachers and I took those experiences and said okay clearly I don't want to do that, I don't want to do that, I don't want to do that. And I kinda self-reviewed am I doing that? Am I doing that? Oh, I did that, I don't want to do that. Again, so if you don't have someone to critique you, you've got a wonderful tool, almost everybody has one it's a smart phone. Video your class, sit down and watch it, how did it go? You can see based on the response from the students behind you how it went. Did they learn the things you want them to learn? You're a teacher, what is your job? Your job is to pass on knowledge. If you didn't pass on knowledge appropriately that's on you to find a new way a better way and become a better instructor. If you have thoughts on how to become a better teacher, I'd love to hear them.

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