

Proper attitude in martial arts

Over the years, I have had an opportunity to befriend all types of martial artists from every conceivable system.

Teaching martial arts, working in a martial arts supply store and being involved in the Eastern Canada Chinese martial arts federation has given me a rare opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different individuals and combative systems. I came to the conclusion that most legitimate systems (i.e. not those made up by unqualified persons) have special strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, many systems share similar techniques whose execution may vary slightly. For example, White crane, Choy li fut, Tai chi, Hung ga and Cha chuan all use the sweeping motion called “sao jao” in White crane. Visually the movement and usage may vary slightly, however the fundamentals are the same. I’ve also noticed a great difference between those few accomplished martial artists and the rest of practitioners: proper mental attitude.

I believe that to be a good traditional wushu practitioner, all you need to do is to excel in your system’s basics, understand the applications, practice every day and practice as a fighter would (with your mind focusing on combative applications, strategy etc.). To do so, however, may be easier said than done. In fact, the only way to excel in any endeavor is by having the proper mental attitude prior to and during that endeavor. First you need to set a primary goal. For example, you may desire to become Canadian full contact champion, or you may seek to equal your instructor’s present skill level, or you may decide to master your system at least to the advanced level (the equivalent of a third dan in another system). You may also choose to simply become skilled in one aspect of martial arts (kicking, clawing, chin na, etc...). One needs to truly desire his or her chosen goal and desire the life-style changes that goal’s realization will necessitate (for example, to quit smoking or to watch one’s diet). You need to make a choice. Thereafter, you need to pursue that goal with the single-mindedness of a dog chewing on a bone.

Setting short term goals will be your next logical step. For example, deciding to do full splits by year’s end or your basic moves 5 times per day, or executing 500 kicks per day, are all examples of short term goals. Their realization leads you closer to your ultimate objective and keeps the progress palpable. The “raison d’etre” of the colored belt system is after all to give people short term goals.

Your next step is to schedule the time needed to succeed. A serious Kung fu practitioner should attend class at least 3 times per week. I understand that coming 6 times per week may not be possible but I do believe 3 times per week (6 hours) is a reasonable schedule

given the goal desired. In the past, I have often seen some martial clubs offer 3 year black belt programs and thought to myself "how could this be?" or "their caliber must be low". However, these programs often demand in a signed agreement that students come no less than 4 days per week. Thus, if one trains 6 years twice a week it is the equivalent of 3 years at 4 times per week. Excuses are as easy to find as rain drops in a tropical storm but those who are great martial arts masters never needed to use any-They made the time, period. No questions asked.

Your final step is to reflect upon what attitude you should have during class Basically, you want to spend your time well-especially if you have so little to spare. Thus. in training, you ought to be serious , focused and hard-working. You are training hard with your short term goals in mind. The so-called" gifted students" or "naturals" are often those that come early and leave late. They warm up properly and after training, they cool down stretching while theirs friends talk. Often, ass soon as class is over they work with equipment's, or do additional weapons training before they cool down...In the past, many Shifu were not as outgoing or friendly precisely to encourage a military type of work ethic. Although this strategy may not have always been very pleasant, it did produce tough students. In our spoiled western society, I find most students are like children who need to be congratulated for every small achievement or given a silver star as in kindergarten...

One of the greatest failings a student can have is if they never realize that it's not how much one knows but how well he executes it. stop thinking about the next move or the next form and focus upon what really counts: stances, power, speed and wit. Rather, than ask (which is rude) your instructor when you will learn your next move, ask him what you need to focus upon to become a bettor martial artist. I can say without a doubt that most Shifu love good students(because they learn so fast) and, are generally willing to teach those clever students almost anything My own experience has been as such. Indeed, the more I progressed in martial arts the more my instructors were willing and able to share with me. My Cha chuan instructor for instance, taught myself and another keen student and gifted student (julien) more than we could ever have hoped for. The fact that we had mastered our basics made it possible for him to do so. So remember quality is more important than quantity and if you excel in the little things that you do, you will eventually excel in general and learn more than you ever hoped for. I have had many students quit when they felt that they're Shifu hadn't taught them anything lately. The reason these people do not succeed is poor attitude. I believe that had they sat down and rationally analyzed their situation they would have realized that there may have been a motif behind their instructor's behavior. Perhaps, he felt that it was now time to fix those ever reoccurring mistakes before moving on. Perhaps he knew it would be counter-productive to teach new movements without polishing the old ones. For example, I have had many students ask me to teach the beautiful Cha style straight sword but in the end,

few were able to perform it properly. Why? They simply were not willing to practice the basic stances of a new system enough to execute the sword with a northern flavor.

Often, students let their sense of pride interfere with their martial arts training. They do not acknowledge a strike inflicted upon them in sparring and continue their counter attack. This is foolish and very dangerous as it encourages your partner to force you to acknowledge the strike-normally by knockdown. Others get angry when they are repeatedly struck. They feel insulted. Their ego got in the way of their goal which was to learn Did they not learn by getting hit? I've even had students whose facial expression was one of disappointment when I corrected them. Amazing! I normally thank my instructor and am very pleased as I now know what to work on...

Traditional kung fu has much to offer. It is quite complete training-internal and external, mind and body. All the professionals know one thing: To excel you must train your sportiest goals, and train with the proper attitude. In my life I have made several choicest excel at what I do; to teach traditional wushu and develop high caliber students. The choice was mine to make. What you do with your life is your choice. For those who train "just for fun" that is your right. I do not expect everybody to become an expert. I am willing to teach you. I am unwilling to lower my standards however. Indeed I am unwilling to prostitute myself and continuously teach new things to students who show no desire or ability. Thus there is a point where I am no longer willing to teach people so that they can accumulate forms like some possession in typical capitalist fashion. That point is normally at the intermediate level(equivalent to brown or black belt)Any respectable karate school would not give a black belt to students who train occasionally just for fun. You have to earn it. Well it's the same here I hope you will all think about these issues and use my ideas to help you develop a winners attitude.

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