

# Lessons in Mindfulness



*Supporting the practice of serious martial artists*

## Lessons in Mindfulness



### Body, Mind, and Spirit

*The study of martial arts is a path of personal growth, encompassing body, mind and spirit. **The Lessons in Mindfulness** program is designed to support and supplement your physical practice, to motivate you and inspire you on ever deeper levels.*

What you can  
conceive and believe,  
you can achieve

## Topic

### The Power of Thought

By now, you realize that practice is so much more than just mindless robotic exercise designed to get you into shape. It increases focus and concentration, and helps you to strengthen your body and mind. Since your mind is your most powerful personal asset, this lesson will cover the power of thought.

#### **A powerful mind leads to ultimate success**

Hundreds of thousands of thoughts pass through our mind in any given day. Some are so fleeting that they barely manifest, while others, we dwell on or come back to over and over again. These uncontrolled thoughts, along with limiting behaviors and bad habits, can keep us from reaching our greatest success. High achieving individuals almost always share certain common characteristics, which help them succeed. One of their most important distinctions is an acute ability to concentrate and focus their minds. They are able to dwell on one idea for extended periods of time without interruption. Interruptions are primarily caused by unwelcome thoughts or distracting thoughts. The value of training our minds, as well as our bodies is clear. By learning to intensely focus and concentrate without interruption, you will accomplish much more in your life.

#### **Thought is energy**

The first step towards success is to determine the direction you want to go, or the desire you want to fulfill. Then, you must begin to work towards that goal. How do you do that? In Eastern philosophy, one of the accepted universal truths

is that thought is energy. Some Western scientists have coined the term, “mindstuff” to describe the relationship between energy and thought. Simply put, the longer and more frequently you dwell on a particular thought or idea with deep concentration, the faster it will manifest in your life.

This principle holds true for habits and personality traits as well as for material desires, positions and relationships. What you can conceive and believe, you can achieve. The obstacle here is that you must truly BELIEVE it. Remember, thought is never wrong. If you think you can, you are right. If you think that you can't, you are right. Successful people not only believe they can, they develop constructive habits that support their beliefs.

### **The power is all yours**

In essence, we are our thoughts and actions. Everything begins with a thought. To fulfill our desire, we must act on our thoughts. Repeating an action becomes a behavior, and through constant repetition, the behavior becomes a habit. This formula applies to good thoughts, behaviors and habits, as well as bad thoughts, behaviors and habits. Problems arise when individuals get so attached to a habit that it becomes an addiction. Developing positive habits is a good idea. But, there is no such thing as a good addiction.

Take care to build excellent thoughts, behaviors and habits for your life. Once constructed, these habit patterns can be very difficult to change. If you are living with habits and tendencies that you wish to change, remember that you created them. Therefore you have the power to get rid of them. Begin by concentrating deeply on the thought that is the opposite of your negative habit. The deeper and more frequently you think of the opposing positive thought, the less energy goes to the negative habit.

**If you think you  
can, you are right.  
If you think you  
can't, you are right.**

**Meditation is not  
a means to an end.  
It is both the means  
and the end.**

—Krishnamurti

### **Change your thoughts, change your life**

For example, if you feel that you are a lazy, low energy person who is out of shape, you begin to manifest the behaviors that support your vision of yourself. You might spend your nights lying on the sofa, watching TV, and eating junk food, until bedtime. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy that stems from how you see yourself. Change your thoughts of who you are, and how you want to live. And your behaviors will begin to change. In this case, see yourself as an energetic person who enjoys working out. Create a picture of yourself thinner, and happier, and healthier. Tell yourself that food is fuel for your body and the better the fuel, the better you feel. Through conscious and continuous effort these new thoughts will become behaviors eventually growing into healthy habits.

### **Banish the darkness**

Bad habits and addictions are sometimes overwhelming. We often blame life, or ourselves, or even God for the frustrating problems, which surround us. We become like a man in a dark room, trying to beat the darkness out with a stick. No matter how desperately we strike at the darkness, this method will not work. Making a small effort by giving a little positive energy to ingrained habits won't make them go away. The only way to banish the darkness is by turning on the light. With prolonged concentrated effort, positive thoughts and habits eventually push out the unwelcome guest who has become the master.

**It is not what you are that holds you back. It is  
being identified with what you are not.**

Our thoughts hold extreme power. In fact, in this moment, you are the sum total of your behaviors, responses and thoughts in your life thus far. Each time you latched onto thoughts, ignored thoughts, created thoughts, acted or behaved without thinking...in each and every moment you were forming your current self-image. So determine right now whether you want to change your life or just continue on. Your future resides in your thoughts from this moment on. Be ultimately aware, giving time and attention only to those thoughts you consciously choose to develop.

**Every thought is a seed. If you plant crab apples, don't count on harvesting Golden Delicious.**

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*Once there was an old, very wise Native American Indian chief with two dogs.*

*One was black and one was white. A young brave asked, "Sir, tell me about your dogs." The chief answered, "One of them symbolizes all of my bad thoughts and behaviors, and one symbolizes all of my good thoughts and behaviors. Every day, every single day, they fight. No matter which dog won or lost the day before, they start fresh in battle again the next day." The little brave then asked, "Which one usually wins?" The chief answered, "Which ever one that I feed the most."*

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**The quieter you  
become the more  
you can hear.**

**—Baba Ram Dass**

## **Activity**

### **Design Your Life**

Most people never take the time to think about how they want to live or what they want out of life. Day to day responsibilities bog them down and just trying to keep up with everything leaves little room for imagination and planning. Day after day turns into week after week; then month after month, turns into year after year. Reaching the end of their lives, most people have many regrets. Believing that they would have had more time, death takes them by surprise.

One of the strategies to help you live a full and satisfying life is to take the time to design your life. Take some time and think about the direction you wish to go. Write down what you want out of life. Using a five-year block of time, begin with the end in mind.

- In five years where do you want to be? Who do you want to be with, and what do you want to be doing? Be as specific as possible, encompassing areas of your life such as relationships, career, children, salary and savings, relocation, education, hobbies and activities, and any other areas that you see fit.
- After documenting your five-year plan, begin to break it down and ask the question, “What do I need to do in four years to achieve this? And then three years, two years, and one year? Eventually break it down to month to month.

At the end of this process you should have a step-by-step plan, written down for each category. Be as specific as possible and do not become overwhelmed with the assignment. Just remember the adage, “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.”

Don't get caught in the trap of saying, "I don't know what I want," and putting the assignment off. This is your life. You are the one living it. You are the one who gets to decide the direction of it. Choose to use both your heart and your head. Remember, what you write down is not set in stone. You are the author. You have the power to change your goals at any time. Just in completing this assignment, you dramatically increase your chances of living the kind of life you want. As you can see, this is vital. Do it now!

Once you have your life completely designed in as much detail as possible, the next crucial step is to make yourself accountable. Sharing your desires with three or four people you trust will help you stay committed. Finally, write your monthly goals out simply and clearly and place them in a prominent place at home or work. Review them monthly to check on your progress. Remember, constant repetition of desired behavior will lead to your success.

*When you are finished, keep your work for future reference, and, in as much detail as you feel comfortable, share your goals with your instructor.*

**If you take too long in deciding what to do with your life, you'll find you have done it.**

**—Pam Shaw**

**Sow a thought and you reap an action; sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny.**

**—Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**Power of mind is infinite  
while brawn is limited.**

—Koichi Tohei

### **Technique: Visualization**

In this lesson we have discussed the power of thought. Nothing empowers you better than the technique of visualization or imagery.

- To begin, sit comfortably and take 6-12 deep diaphragm breaths. On the last exhalation, place in your mind's eye a mental picture of your desire, giving it as much detail as possible. The experience should be similar to watching a movie that you have written and directed. The longer and more vivid that you can hold the picture in your mind with deep concentration, the more energy you give to that thought, and the quicker it will manifest in your life.
- Once you pick a specific desire, visualize it the same everyday. If you wish to change or add to the picture, carry the changes over to the next day. The consistency of the image or thought is important.

**Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will fueled by a clear vision.**

The following true story illustrates the power of this technique when practiced regularly and with deep concentration.

*Tom loved to play golf. After several years of playing three times a week or more, he became a better than average golfer. Not a pro, but he could beat most of his friends and family. Although he had reached a plateau, he just loved the game. One day he was forced to stop playing altogether. For over seven years Tom was unable to step on a course, or even swing a club. When he was finally able to return, to everyone's astonishment, his first game was 8 strokes below his best score ever.*

*Tom's improvement was an amazing mystery to everyone, because seven years earlier, Tom had been captured behind enemy lines. As a POW, he was forced to endure horrible conditions. Locked in a cell, stripped naked and chained to his bed, he was rarely fed. His only contact with other human beings was when he was being tortured. Having no hope of release, Tom resolved, "They can capture my body, but not my mind." To keep his sanity, he began to visualize himself playing golf. Everyday in his mind, he would drive to the course, get his golf clubs out of the trunk, change his shoes and play eighteen holes of golf. Seeing the game in such detail that, he would sometimes retie his shoes. Every step, every stroke was visualized. Over four hours each day he mentally played his game.*

*After seven years of being in captivity, Tom was finally rescued. The visualizations Tom practiced to stay sane actually improved his game. His powerful concentration continued to aid him in every aspect of his life when he returned. He rebuilt his life with great success, creating an even better life than before.*

**Who looks  
outside dreams,  
but who looks  
inside creates.**

This is a powerful technique that will work for everyone who chooses to use it consistently with deep concentration.

The greatest waste  
in all the world is living  
below our potential.

—Harold B. Lee

## Glossary

### **Mental focus**

The art of staying one-pointedly focused or completely concentrated on the activity at hand. It demands a deeper level of concentration than just being mindful.

### **Spotlight or laser beam concentration**

To focus attention and concentration one-pointedly on a specific thought, activity or action to the exclusion of all other sensory input or other thoughts.

### **Floodlight concentration**

The ability to observe an area, staying focused on many things at the same time.

One of the easiest ways to understand the distinction between spotlight and floodlight concentration is to pretend that you are fighting in a tournament against one person. The ring is defined and the other person is the only one who will be attacking you. In this instance you would be using spotlight concentration. Attention is focused completely on that one individual. Now, pretend that you are being attacked by three or four people on the street. You would now need to employ floodlight concentration. You would need to be aware of all of them simultaneously. Many times in day-to-day life, being able to switch back and forth between these two forms of concentration is important.

## Recommended Reading

*\*Zen Mind Beginners Mind*—Shunru Suzuki

*Tear and a Smile*—Kahlil Gibran

*Reflections on the Art of Living*—Diane Osbon

*\*Highly recommended*

Those who are  
enlightened never  
stop forging  
themselves.  
The realizations  
of such masters  
cannot be expressed  
well in words or by  
theories.

—Morihei Ueshiba

## Notes

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