

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.*

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A great master, who was known for his amazing fighting skills, was sitting on the ground outdoors, waiting to be served his breakfast. One of his youngest students entered the garden, carrying the tray of food. The child thought to himself; the master is supposed to be a great fighter and everyone thinks that he cannot be beat. With his back to me now, I believe that I could sneak up and stab him with this knife before he knows that I am here.

Just as the thought occurred to the child, the master jumped up quickly, poised to fight. He was indeed surprised to see a smiling child carrying his breakfast. The boy put down the tray, bowed to the master and ran away.

The incident bothered the master deeply. He was clearly upset and confused. After several days, the young boy, overcome with shame, told a senior student that he had considered attacking the master. The senior student took the remorseful student to the master, where he confessed his thoughts. The master smiled and gently embraced the child. "My intuition was accurate and I thank you."

Topic Tuning in Your Intuition

The dictionary definition of intuition is *Knowing without rational processes, or quick and ready insight*. It is derived from the Latin word *intueri* which means *to see within*. It's sometimes referred to as the *sixth sense* or a *gut feeling*, and it's very often misunderstood. People relate to the whole idea of intuition in several ways. There are skeptical unbelievers at one extreme; metaphysical flakes on the other; and a large group of people in the middle who have experienced enough improbable coincidences to accept that there's something to the concept of intuition, but they don't really understand it.

The skeptical unbeliever says, "I'll believe it when I see it." Of course, when they do, they often feel tricked or duped, and take great pains to offer an alternative explanation. Many people only find comfort in that which can be explained rationally. We live in a society that is intellectually based. We place great value on reasoning, on education and the scientific method of analysis. While this focus is valuable — it has allowed more people in the United States today to live at a higher standard of living than anywhere else in the world or at any other time in history — it has cultivated an arrogant intellectualism which insists that, if we cannot measure something, weigh it, pour it into a beaker, graph it or chart it, then it does not exist.

The metaphysical flakes, on the other hand, feel that they live exclusively from the heart chakra, and are open to everything the universe has to offer. There are many people who gravitate to anything *new age*; crystals, tarot cards,

A martial artist is constantly seeking truth. Some truths are very subtle and can only be perceived on a intuitive level.

Do not compare intuition to calling the psychic hotline. It is more in line with trusting yourself.

reiki, astrology — anything in the vast ocean of paranormal phenomena draws their curiosity. Again, this tendency toward unseen phenomena is a valuable trait — it allows us to remain open to extra-cultural knowledge and traditions — but it cultivates, in its own way, an intellectual laziness and a lack of focus. The *blissed-out* syndrome. The irony is that neither approach demonstrates any real understanding of intuitive reasoning; one approach puts it on a pedestal and the other discounts it completely. Neither extreme is accurate, nor helpful. Only by assuming the position of an open-minded skeptic — not too intellectual nor too emotional — can you achieve the balance between head and heart necessary to grasp and utilize intuition to benefit your life.

We All Have Flashes of Intuition

We have all heard the stories of twins living hundreds of miles apart who immediately sense when the other is ill, hurt or in danger. Or the phone will ring and you'll "know" who it is. Or you're driving in your car and just "know" that someone is looking at you. You turn your head and the person in the next car is staring at you. Sometimes we simply "feel" the rightness or wrongness of a situation. How does this happen? On what level are we sensing these things?

There have been many studies done in the U.S. with women who have been attacked or raped. These studies have involved women who were young, old, of every social and economic class, and from every part of the country. In many cases, each victim intuitively knew that they were going to be attacked moments before the attack occurred.

Your Consciousness TV

Let's try a television analogy. Imagine a *Consciousness TV*. On your Consciousness TV, you don't have hundreds of channels like we do on cable. Consciousness TV only has three channels;

1. The Sensory Channel
2. The Sub-Conscious Channel
3. The Intuition Channel

The Sensory channel is where everyone lives most of the time. This is where we enjoy the sensations of our bodies interacting with the incredibly stimulating world we live in. One popular program on this channel is the Taste Show. Every day, it shows episodes of chocolate cake, pasta, lobster, omelettes, raspberry lemonade and every other food and taste experience we can imagine. Another popular program is Sight. The fall colors, flowers, sunsets, mountains. We stand at the ocean's shore and the Sight Show blends with the Sound Show and the Smell Show and the whole experience is incredible. We stay tuned to the sensory channel so that we can continue hearing our loved ones voices, so that we can hear great music and see beauty and interact in meaningful ways with other creatures and with the world at large.

The Sensory Channel is also the home of all those painful experiences as well. The Humiliation Show, the Anxiety Show, the Frustration and Embarrassment and Anger Shows that often seem to be on at prime time. We feel locked onto this channel all day, and it's exhausting. We try to relax with the Memory Show, replaying every show we've ever seen or been a part of—like infinite summer re-runs — but memory replays the good with the bad and, when we're tired, when we're unfocused, daydreaming or lazily drifting, nothing

To be intuitive is not a rare feat exclusively reserved for a certain population, but rather a sense that we can all develop.

We watch dramas and comedies on T.V. to make us feel better, relax and unwind. If we were really serious about being peaceful, we would watch the breath.

wastes our time and energy as much as endless reruns of the Memory Show, or its new and improved spin-off, the Imagination Show.

Actually, all thought is part of the Sensory Channel as well. This channel is on all day every day, and the volume is usually turned up quite loud, so it's no wonder that the only other channel that gets any real play in our lives is the subconscious channel. After spending 16, 17, 18 hours a day loading up on sensory stimulation, we tune in the subconscious channel every night to go to sleep. We go there in order to rest, watch a Dream Show or two, and get ready to go back to the next day on the Sensory Channel. Multi-tasking away, we play as many programs as possible at the same time all day. We know it's stressful, but we keep telling ourselves that all of these things simply HAVE to be done each day. We're not even surprised anymore at stories of multi-millionaires or other apparently successful people snapping or dropping dead of heart attacks.

The Third Channel

What we forget is that we have a remote control; we have the ability to switch stations. Even more importantly, we forget that Consciousness TV offers more than just the sensory/waking channel and the subconscious/sleeping channel. We rarely utilize our third option - the Intuition Channel. Many people are not even aware that it's there, but intuition, our *sixth sense*, is running its own programs all the time. The Peacefulness Show, the Calmness Show, The Relax-and-Let-it-All-just-Be Show. What we need to get these shows every day is just slightly better reception. We just need to learn how to tune in.

To be receptive to the Sensory Channel, we need to be awake and sensing. To be receptive to the Subconscious Channel, we need the body and mind to be sufficiently fatigued. To be receptive to the Intuition Channel, the body and mind need to be fully awake but *relaxed*.

Intuition is not thought, does not come from thought. Intuition has been described as a feeling in the gut or the heart. Some people might describe imagination similarly. So, what's the difference between intuition and imagination? This sometimes gets confusing, but remember: intuition originates as a feeling and is never wrong in its predictions. Imagination originates as thought and is quite often wrong in its predictions. Unlike imaginative fantasy, a true intuitive experience changes you; it leaves you with a new perception and understanding. The intuitive feeling is borne out by results in the real world and you recognize the feeling the led you there. Switch off the Sensory Channel. Tune in the Intuitive Channel. Learn to be silent and listen to that which is not spoken. Learn to recognize and acknowledge that small voice, the gut feeling or thought that comes *without effort*. As you become calmer and more centered on a day-to-day basis, as you become more adept at mediation, your intuition will develop, the signal from the channel will grow stronger.

When you recognize intuition, trust it and act accordingly. Opportunity not only knocks in our lives, but often it pounds on the door. But, be careful while trying to develop intuition; don't confuse it with imagination. Remember, one is feeling and the other is thought. One is fast and bright and intense, the other is deep and full and majestic. Imagination will help you set goals and accomplish tasks, but a well-developed intuition will allow you to spontaneously feel the rightness of a person or situation or decision. It's not that one is better

The five senses often drown out the sixth sense. It is only by quieting them that you can hear your intuition.

Sight
Hearing
Taste
Touch
Smell
Intuition

than the other. Both are necessary. Understand, all three channels on Consciousness TV are crucial; *the important thing is that you take control of the remote and know when to switch channels!*

Before making any major decisions in your life you should do several things. Using your skills of reason, think it through. Imagine how it might work out if you do it *this way*, or *that way*. Then, take the time to relax the body and mind. Switch channels. Tap into your intuition and now, *feel it through*. When you consistently align your reason, beliefs, desires and intuition, your life takes on a synergy that allows you to overcome, or more profoundly understand, obstacles and perceive them as opportunities.

There are Six Senses

And what does all of this have to do with the practice of martial arts? Martial arts are based on sensitivity and awareness, relaxation and concentration. Discipline over the mind, discipline over the body, controlling emotions, learning to fully use the senses, and to unplug them. Martial arts are about becoming a master over your actions, rather than a prisoner of your reactions. A martial artist is constantly seeking truth. Some truths are very subtle and can only be perceived on an intuitive level. To achieve happiness and balance, a martial artist must tune in to all three channels of consciousness TV.

**To experience
stillness, you must
go beyond the mind.**

Steve was a great martial artist who started his practice in his late twenties. He had been interested in martial arts earlier in

his life, but never pursued it until his cousin invited him to an introductory class ten years ago. From that day on, Steve practiced hard everyday. He attended classes two or three times a week and practiced at home when he didn't go to class. He was good in all areas, but his bread and butter techniques were his kicks. He kicked hard and fast, low and high. He could kick almost anyone, whenever he chose. Steve was proud of his kicks, but wished that all of his techniques were as strong. He worked very hard all aspects of his training, but kicking was natural and easy for him. In sparring, he found that he could easily win if he relied on mainly kicks. He sometimes appeared to be unstoppable. In point tournaments, he was fast and accurate. In full contact tournaments, his kicks would knock his competitors out. Everyone in the school had a healthy respect for Steve's ability.

One evening Steve and Louie were sparring in class. Louie was also very accomplished and had practiced for many years. Louie didn't have any specialty, or stand out in the way that Steve did. He practiced hard and was a nice guy. Louie's attitude had helped him in becoming one of the best partners in the dojo. He was very good working with lower rank students, yet could step it up for intermediate and higher ranks. Louie enjoyed practicing intensely with advanced students, but had good control. He didn't mind hitting hard or getting hit hard.

On this night, Steve and Louie were both moving fast and furious. They were tagging each other pretty good, yet

**Often the hands
will solve a
mystery that
the intellect has
struggled with
in vain.**

Man's task is to become conscious of the contents that press upward from the unconscious.

recognized decisive techniques and moved on. This was a serious practice and both men were engrossed. The practice would oscillate between complete relaxation, sizing up each situation, and explosive combinations. In between, you could hear a pin drop. From across the room, the master watched two of his best students square off. After twenty minutes or so, Steve recognized that Louie was very relaxed, so he took the opportunity to fire his fastest and most powerful kick. He immediately found himself thrown into the air. He came down hard, and only the years of practice falling saved him from serious injury.

The master stopped the practice and abruptly turned to face Louie. Believing that he must have done something wrong, Louie's heart sank. Then the master asked, "Louie, how did you know that he was going to throw that kick?"

Louie responded hesitantly, "I don't really know."

The master asked again, "How did you know?" Once more, Louie said that he didn't know.

The master pulled the two men closer and said, "He did not telegraph that kick and it was much too fast for you to use that throw. You moved without hesitation, with certainty and power. It could not have been anticipation – the senses had no reason to believe that the attack was coming. You knew without knowing. You responded to intuition."

Louie was a little confused. He said, "But I didn't know what was coming, I just felt what I should do."

"Yes," the master said, "that feeling was the response, and sometimes feeling is knowing." Looking at both men he remarked, "This was a good lesson. Remember it and learn from it." He bowed and walked away.

Activity

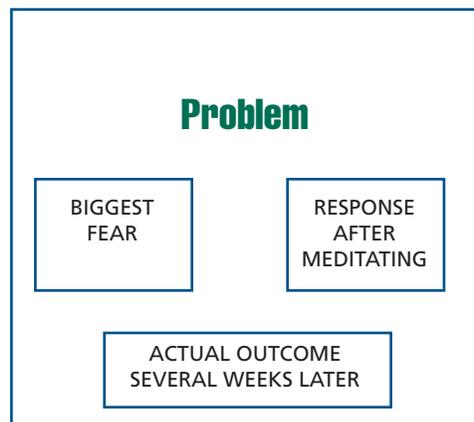
Imagination vs. Intuition

The activity this month is to compare the imagination with intuition. Use a dated journal, or daily calendar, go to today's date. Put a headline with a clear description of a worrisome problem. On one side of the page, under the problem, draw a box. After thinking about it and coming up with your worst case scenario, write your biggest fear in the box, the outcome that you most dread. Then, sit for a couple of moments and practice diaphragm breathing and meditation. When your mind and body are still and you have reached a level of calmness, quietly ask yourself, "what will probably occur," or "what can I do about this?"

In this emotionally detached state, wait for a response and then write the response in the box on the other side of the page. Then draw a third box, and put it in the middle, at the bottom of the page. Now, move ahead in the journal several weeks or

even months (depending on the problem) and choose a date and write a note to go back to today's date.

When the day comes, go back to the box that you left empty (in the middle) and write down the outcome of that problem.



When you hear or read something you may intellectually understand it, but to truly realize it and internalize it, you must experience it.

The balance between head and heart can be one of the most difficult to achieve.

Then compare the actual outcome to your imagined scenario and to your intuitive scenario and determine which was actually closer to reality.

If you use this activity for an extended period of time, you will find that rarely, if ever, do your worse fears come true. On the contrary, the results will more than likely convince you that when you are calm and relaxed, you will tap into a more accurate result or conclusion.

This exercise simply shows that while imagination can run wild, you can learn to trust yourself when you are calm and centered. This exercise is long term, and it is recommended that it be used for six months or more to accurately be measured. At the end of the month submit an example of how you are using this exercise.

Reminders

Creating Rituals to Calmness

**Learn to listen
to that which is
unspoken.**

This month the reminder is to take and maintain control over your internal environment. To trust your intuition you must first have intuitive experiences. A hostile or agitated mind, full of anxious, frustrating or exciting thoughts are the primary reason that many people do not develop intuition. In short, they never take the time to become calm and peaceful. Allowing the mind to become still seems to be the last thing that comes to mind. But it is this discipline of consistently taking control over our internal environment that will allow us to develop our intuition.

Start creating habits or rituals throughout your day that help you become calm and relaxed. Never forget that it is the pauses in the music, the white space in art that let us appreciate it. In our lives, this translates to the quiet and relaxing moments that help us to refocus and connect.

Here are some suggestions for creating habits and rituals:

- Begin your day with diaphragm breathing, meditation and reading inspirational works.
- Before lunch, practice tension and relaxation techniques.
- Go for a short walk.
- Practice form or basics.
- Affirmations
- Take a nap!

Recommended Reading

The Book

Alan W. Watts

Intuition at Work

Gary Klein