

All rights of this book are reserved to Jonathan Bluestein © 2017. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission, in writing, from Jonathan Bluestein. All rights of the pictures presented in this book are reserved to Jonathan Bluestein, unless mentioned otherwise; except for images of Chinese brush paintings, which are either of a Creative Commons license or whose rights of usage were purchased by the author or had their usage rights handed with kind permission of their respective owners.

Before you are the first 49 pages of Jonathan Bluestein's book,

The Martial Arts Teacher

These pages were voluntarily released by shifu Bluestein in order that potential readers could examine the book and consider its contents before making a purchase. Please note that the numbers on the Table of Contents do not match this file exactly because the order of some pages was modified, but are accurate for the full version of the book. Wherein you liked what you have read in this file, please share it with students, friends and colleagues through word of mouth and in social media.

The book is available for purchase on all Amazon-affiliated websites, such as below:

[The Martial Arts Teacher on Amazon.com](#)

[The Martial Arts Teacher on Amazon.co.uk](#)

[The Martial Arts Teacher on Amazon.ca](#)

[The Martial Arts Teacher on Amazon.de](#)

[The Martial Arts Teacher on Amazon.fr](#)

[The Martial Arts Teacher on Amazon.it](#)

The Martial Arts Teacher

A Practical Guide to a Noble Way



Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank my cherished friend, **Itzik Cohen** sensei, who was and still is to me a true mentor in the art of teaching. His positive influence upon me has been long-lasting.

I would also like to thank four individuals, friends who are dear to my heart, for aiding me by reviewing the manuscript of this work before it was published. These people are shifu **Ken Gullette**, shifu **Gary Stier**, master **Keith R. Kernspecht** and **Lothar Gruza**. The four abovementioned gentlemen, all experienced and veteran martial arts teachers and practitioners, helped ensure that this book was published in pristine condition.

Lastly, I would like to thank **Buzz Durkin** sensei, a great man whom I have never met. His wonderful book, *'Success Is Waiting'*, inspired me to write this publication which you are now reading. Wherein you have found my book to your liking, please refer to his work as well.

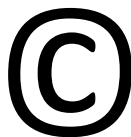


This book was written using the **Gentium** (Book Basic) font. This font is under free open-font license (created by the talented Victor Gaultney), and supported by SIL International.

All rights of this book are reserved to Jonathan Bluestein © 2017.

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission, in writing, from Jonathan

Bluestein. All rights of the pictures presented in this book are reserved to Jonathan Bluestein, unless mentioned otherwise; except for images of Chinese brush paintings, which are either of a Creative Commons license or whose rights of usage were purchased by the author or had their usage rights handed with kind permission of their respective owners.





This book is graciously dedicated to my Jook Lum Southern Mantis teacher, and friend, sifu Sapir Tal. For many years now he has been of great inspiration to me as both a martial arts teacher and a human being.






Table of Contents

Cover page	1
Acknowledgements	3
Dedication	4
Table of Contents	5
About the Author	10
Foreword	12
Introduction	16



The Heart of the School

All Eyes on You	19
Merit, Equality and Leadership	23
Not a Business, But a Community	30
The Secret Flow to Teaching Martial Arts	37

Martial Arts and the Great Learning	50
Martial Arts Students and the Middle Path	67
Change and Cooperation	74
Your Vision and Theirs	79
Carrot and Stick	81
Why Good Answers Make Dumb Students	86
Ways to Approach a Curriculum	88
What Do They Really Want	103
How to Be Happy	106
Their Special Moment	121
Park Bait	123
The Fine Compromise	127
That First Class	133
Contracts and Payments	143
People and Their Reasons	141



The 24/7 School	149
Tests and Ranks	153
Private in Public	158
Latecomers	160
Barter Glues Better Than Money	164
The Challenge of Trust	169
The Personal Touch	173
Mind Their Feet	177
Rules Are For Children	180
To Teach is Never Enough	182
Better Get It Written	186
Still Waters Breed Disease	187
The Younglings	188
From Customer to Friend	204
Cannot Save Them All	212





The Soul of the Teacher

Shifu – The Chinese Teacher	220
Examine Yourself	231
Real Time	233
The Eternal Student	234
The Language of Martial Arts	235
Better Than You	240
The Alpha Male	243
In Retrospective	248
The Extent of Your Knowledge	252
The Usefulness of Things	255
The Crime of Creating Ignorance	257
Fakes and Charlatans	262
The Naysayers	264

Assume the Best	266
Enthusiasm and Its Limits	268
You Need Help – Ask for It	270
Be Your Own Professional	273
The Part-Time Psychologist	277
Hidden Transmission in the Martial Arts	278
The Art in Martial Arts	280
Epilogue: Life and Virtue	283



About the Author

Shifu Jonathan Bluestein is a prominent martial arts scholar in our time. He is a practitioner and teacher of the traditional Chinese martial arts Xing Yi Quan, Pigua Zhang and Jook Lum Southern Mantis. His arts, shifu Bluestein teaches at his school in Israel – Tianjin Martial Arts Academy, as well as at seminars abroad.



Since the inception of the 21st century, there had been but a few dedicated martial artists who engaged in writing quality works about exceptional skills and unique abilities, as well as the related cultures, philosophies, morals and histories. Shifu Bluestein is one of these people. His mission is to share with the world the tremendous depth of knowledge found in the martial arts in order to benefit humanity. He believes that through sharing we can all grow

together, and continue to successfully develop the martial arts for the generations to come. This important mission is perhaps even more crucial and meaningful in this generation, as knowledge handed down from our martial ancestors has been rapidly disintegrating, and people have been shaping their arts into forms of cheap entertainment and light amusement, forgetting their roots.

After the enormous success of his previous works, especially the international best-seller **Research of Martial Arts**, shifu Bluestein opted to write a different type of book, intended for martial arts teachers. In this work he hopes to share advice and insights from his experiences in teaching the arts with those who have also chosen to carry forth such a monumental and important task.

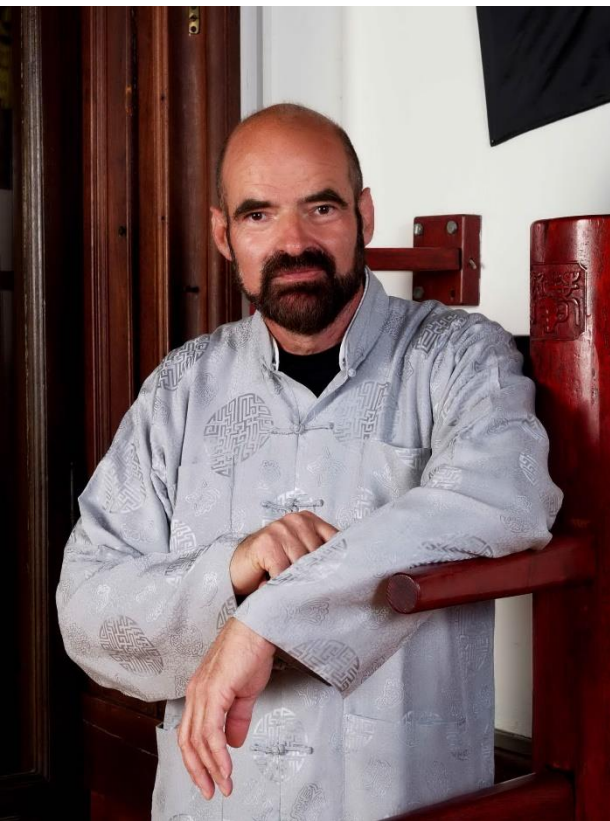


Foreword

My name is Keith R. Kernspecht. I have been a student of the martial arts since the age of 5, and a teacher of them since my late teenage years.

A series of events had led me to the writing of this foreword. In the year 2000, I was honoured with the 10th master-grade title in WingTsun Kung Fu from the last disciple of late grand-master Yip Man. Following this event, I felt a need to investigate the internal Chinese styles, to become more complete in my training and teaching. Since the beginning of this century therefore, I have met, practiced and studied with nine of the most important internal masters of our time. All of these martial arts I researched were great, and of them I was especially fond of the Yi Quan of my friend, grand-master Yang Lin Sheng from Mongolia.

The grand-master whose style I liked most and ended up staying with was my dear friend Sam Chin. His Zhong Xin Dao (I Liq Chuan) system, based on Zen Buddhism and grounded in science and convincing logic, is exceptional.



My journey into the internal arts also included much scholarship, of course. In 2015 I purchased Jonathan Bluestein's book, **'Research of Martial Arts'**, and was delighted to see that both my great friend Yang Lin Sheng and my internal arts mentor Sam Chin were listed in it.

Intrigued by many of the things that Jonathan wrote concerning internal styles, I reached out to him via e-mail. This was the beginning of a two-year

correspondence, on the theory and practice of the internal arts, that led to him interviewing me for his forthcoming 2nd edition of that book, and culminated with my inviting Jonathan to join me in for a week in Pisa (Italy) together in August of 2017.

I felt honored when Jonathan asked me to be interviewed for his book, because while I had some experience in the external arts, the internal arts were a new research field and challenge for me. Here I followed the old maxim: Once you have attained mastership in one style, become a beginner again in another style.

From the first moment of our encounter in Pisa, Jonathan proved to be an authentic, engaged and dedicated individual and researcher. For several hours a day we conversed, shared, and touched hands; with Jonathan expounding his understanding and insights gleaned from the theory and practice of Xing Yi Quan, Jook Lum Southern Praying Mantis, and Pigua Zhang. Jonathan's openness and enthusiasm were undeniable.

Perhaps Jonathan chose me to write this foreword because I have been a teacher nearly as long as I have been a martial artist. The reason why I love teaching so much is because it is my way of learning: Pretending to teach martial arts to my students, I teach it to myself, while they listen to me and ask me questions that help me understand. Beside teaching martial arts I have always been a teacher of sorts: I taught languages and sports as a high-school teacher, in the University of Kiel I was a lecturer in the philosophical department, and since the late 1990s I have been a Professor for Sports Education for the State University of Plovdiv Bulgaria.

The martial arts, I began teaching first with Oyama Karate, in 1963, to the German riot police. At the time I was a policeman myself. From 1967 I taught Karate, Ju Jutsu and Kobudo at my own Budo Club. In 1970 I began studying Wing Chun under sifu Joseph Cheng in London, and later I was the first to introduce Yip Man's style to Germany. Since 1996 our EWTO, the European Organization of WingTsun, has mainly been

teaching the style of grand-master Leung Ting, and also grand-master Bill Newman's Escrima. The EWTO proudly counts some 60,000 members among its ranks in Germany and most other countries in Europe. The only purely internal art we teach is Sam Chin's Way, Zhong Xin Dao, for which we now serve as the European umbrella organization.

Reading his latest book, **‘The Martial Arts Teacher’**, I am impressed with what Jonathan is bringing to the table. He could even surprise a veritable Professor of Education with his ideas on teaching. Jonathan offers up real, definite opinions and advice, based upon his many years of training and teaching. He has walked the walk, and now he is sharing his experience with his readers.

This book is unique in that it covers a variety of subjects not usually discussed in a guide for teaching the martial arts, such as the delicate balance a teacher must strike between discipline and encouragement, managing personal relationships with students in and out of the classroom, establishing clear boundaries for various student interaction, mitigating contracts and payments, barter, ego, dealing with naysayers, asking for help, happiness, and the teacher's own personal development.

Of course, in his book he also talks of such topics as teaching methodology, curriculum design, cultivating a learning environment, practice time, student retention, teaching adults vs. children, as well as the role of testing and ranking.

He presents his views with passion and conviction, and you are left with the feeling that his experience has been hard-won. This is a forthright exposition of one man's



experience and advice, dedicated to fellow teachers of the martial arts.

After reading this book you will feel that you have gotten to know Jonathan personally, that you had conversation with a close friend or mentor on the ins and outs of running your own school. Not only has he shared his opinions, but he is also open to feedback.

For Jonathan the martial arts are not only a passion, not only a profession, but also a mission. Through his work he is seeking to elevate the current standard of martial arts literature and education. A worthy endeavor indeed! For me, the following quote best sums up Jonathan's approach:

“Be to your students the teacher whom you wish had been there for you.”

One could not ask for anything more.

Today at the age of 72, I am able to both look back over at my nearly 60 years of training with a critical eye, and look forward with great excitement at the prospect of further development, for both myself and for martial arts as a whole. Less than half my age, Jonathan is a young and talented martial arts teacher, educator, and innovator with many years of development ahead of him. I look forward to seeing who he, both the person and the teacher, evolves into.

It is therefore with an open heart and great pleasure that I have written this foreword.

Dr. Keith R. Kernspecht

Prof. em. Plovdiv State University Education of Sports
10th Grade WingTsun Kung Fu (Leung Ting, Hong Kong)
8th Dan Kyokushin Allround Karate (Jon Bluming, Holland)

Introduction

Perhaps you have picked up this book so you can make more money from your martial arts teachings. Then it seems you have the wrong book in your hands. Surely, this book can aid in you becoming more financially successful. That is not the main point of it, though. This book is about helping you, a fellow colleague, be a better version of yourself, in both your professional sphere and as a human being. The world of martial arts is big enough for everybody. I want people such as yourself to be better. I want our entire society of martial artists, as a whole, to become better. This is not rooted in financial success, but in education.

Benjamin Franklin, in his excellent essay ‘**The Way to Wealth**’, brought up the issue of people’s complaint’s over high taxation. He then commented wisely, that aside from that problem of high taxes, we are in fact “*taxed twice as much by our idleness, three times as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly*”. By so saying, Franklin was keenly observant that the greatest obstacles to financial achievements and accomplishments in one’s life are usually not found in external causes, but in lack of cultivation of one’s Self. Indeed, when our Ego is unruly, and we allow trifle matters and unworthy people to be rulers upon our emotional kingdom, then how can success be spoken of?

In line with this type of thinking, the book which is here before you shall focus on the art of self-cultivation, the healthy maintenance of human relationships and the requirements for leading a prosperous community of industrious individuals; all of this, in light of the unique challenges and attributes of our distinguished profession, of the martial arts teacher.

Unlike my well-known best-seller **Research of Martial Arts**, this book is mostly not heavy on science, philosophy, history and theory. It is a light and easy read, meant to hone your skills quickly and do so within moments of reading each chapter. Every single part of this book is applicable to nearly all styles of martial arts and their

teachings. In it you will find countless novel approaches and ideas which are not commonly discussed or addressed in other works – I guarantee you that.

This book is an honest conversation, from one martial arts teacher to another. Although it may appear like a monologue, I do urge you – talk to me through the text. Ask questions and debate what is written here. After all, much of this can affect your teachings, so you need to be sure that it will work well for you. I trust though that this book will serve you, the martial arts teacher, very well.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: Be the change you want to see in the world.

Jonathan



居
中
學
堂
書
畫
院
印

The Heart of the School



All Eyes on You

You are the greatest show in town. Yes, you! How is that possible? Well, do you know a movie people agree to see at the cinema several times a week, for a month? A restaurant someone is willing to attend a few times a month for 5 years? A musician whose performances fans would attend every day for a decade? Such examples hardly exist. Yet here you are, the martial arts teacher, giving the best show in town – the crowd keeps coming, on a regular basis, some of them for years on end – sometimes for as long as they can physically stand.

Here is, then, an idea to transform your outlook on what you and I do. Did you think this profession is about long-standing traditions of heroic warriors? A great service to the community? Maybe a unique and incredible way to move the body or a vehicle for spiritual awakening? Yes, for the both of us it might be so, and more. Eventually, long-term students will come to see these many aspects to the art, too. But through the eyes of most of your students, something else stands out before the rest right from the beginning – the fact that you are on a stage, and they are attending your show. You are a performing artist, and expected to entertain. Accept that reality, and your profession will change forever.

People need an inspiration. You are **it** – the rock star of their martial universe. Otherwise, they would have been studying with someone else. In this context, your presence, and that of your teachers, is what inspires the students to become the best they could be. They want you fresh. They want you at your peak, pushing the limits, yours and theirs. On the floor or atop the mattresses, you are the embodiment of an ideal, despite the students knowing that you are made of flesh and blood ¹. They chose you because they see in you a model for

¹ I cannot stress enough the importance of keeping students in check about the fact that their teacher is ‘human’ and not ‘perfect’ and ‘flawless’. Repeating this sentence in front of students often is helpful: “I am only human”. As silly as it sounds, without humbling oneself to an extent, cult worship can be easy and quick to develop in martial arts schools.

something they would have liked to become, or qualities they wish to imitate or borrow strength from.

Are you familiar with the situation in which a famous dancer has a headache, and therefore stays at home the day of the show? Or when a great theatre actor chooses to stop his act in the middle because he became emotionally upset about something or someone? The audience tends to get agitated about such behaviours. Even the fans are not always patient. Still, these people (dancers, actors, etc) are ‘allowed’ by the public to have their little dramas. That is, because for most who come enjoy their entertainment, they are not a personal ‘ideal’. The martial arts teacher does not possess such a luxury. The reality of your realm dictates that you will most definitely deliver the goods, and do it so smoothly it would seem impossible. That is what is expected of you.

Being the role model for others, there is no room for poor decision-making in your life and teachings. Your students want strength and stamina – you cannot collapse from exhaustion before some of them because you slacked off in training for two weeks. Your students want happiness – you cannot come to class looking depressed. Your students want a moral compass – you cannot be seen acting immorally. Your students want vibrant health – you need to be so busy training hard, eating the right foods and sleeping well, that you would not even have time to get sick.

My former teacher **Itzik Cohen** sensei, I never witnessed throwing trash on the street. My teacher shifu Nitzan Oren, I never saw swearing and cursing in class. My teacher sifu Sapir Tal gave up smoking because he could not bear little children noticing a person of his stature having this type of vice. None of us are without faults, but at least in front of our students, we should strive for perfection.

To the martial arts teacher there are no ‘bad days’. Confucius said (and many repeated): “*Find a job you love and you will never have to work another day in your life*”. Those among you who feel burdened by ‘work’, necessarily have the wrong ‘job’, or need to change the way they do things. But regardless, even if you feel the onset of negativity

or distress, your students cannot be allowed to know ². Wear that smile until you become it. ‘Fake it ‘till you make it’, as they say. This is not hypocrisy – this is the striving for a completion of a mission more important than yourself.

Being a teacher, you know just as well as I do, that excellence in the martial arts is made of an accumulation of countless small moments of perseverance in time. That same devotion which earned you the right to instruct others needs to be applied to your performance on that teaching stage. There can be very little compromise about such matters. All eyes are on you, even when you think they are not looking. Do not fail those who have put faith in you. Their future is literally in your hands. Your actions will determine a lot in their lives, from their possible success with romantic partners and job interviews, to surviving serious illnesses and the onslaught of violent criminals. When the ground feels like quicksand and the sky weighs down like a mountain, keep this in mind:

You are the supporting pillar of this martial arts school. Those who in you see cracks, will scatter. From your core resonates a pulse and illuminates a light, attracting many from afar. Reach with your hand, touch with your smile. Ask and listen. Your time to ache and moan the troubles will come, later. In the meanwhile, you are the best show in town. Make them wish they could be there up with you, on that stage. Then point to them and call them by their name, one by one. Raise them to your position and let them feel, each and every one, that they matter – to you and to everyone else in

² Eventually every school ought to develop a group of more dedicated students, some of whom are to be trusted by the teacher with personal issues and troubles. But as a general rule of thumb, the majority of your students should never know the full extent of problems which may exist in your personal life. Some say that “familiarity breeds contempt”. While I tend to disagree, I do believe a strong familiarity with those who have not ‘earned’ a close-relationship status will cause issues which would later be hard to mend.

that room. Remember that once upon a time, you too were a man lost in imagination, and then your own fantasy had manifested, with the aid of those who stood were you now stride. Be to your students the man whom you wish was there for you, when you needed a shining light to guide your lost ship at sea. Do this, and they will bring their friends next time. Do this long enough, and you will never have to play in front of an empty hall.



Merit, Equality and Leadership

A good school is a **Meritocratic Egalitarian Dictatorship**. These big words have simple meanings, which are profoundly important for running a martial arts academy smoothly.

Meritocracy

This means a martial arts school is naturally and rightfully led by a small group of people who are the most knowledgeable and qualified to teach. In the beginning this is only the teacher, but as time progresses and hopefully with success in teaching, veteran students join the 'leading team'. The students need to understand that merit, and especially knowledge and ability to teach (not necessarily fighting ability), are what determines who gets more 'authority'. No one in the school is entitled to lead more than others based on race, gender, ethnicity, rank, amount of time spent training, friendships, politics, being someone's relative, etc. In martial arts, especially the traditional martial arts, Merit is what sets the tone. There are several reasons for making this clear to your students:

1. So those who hold superior or inferior social positions outside the martial arts school would not feel that such positions should affect the manner in which they are perceived inside the school. The martial arts school, by means of a meritocratic approach, encourages everyone to start anew and build themselves from the ground up.
2. So that people understand that those to be respected and listened to are those who worked harder and learned more than their peers.
3. In order for students to know and believe that within the school community anyone can become successful and respectable by his or her peers.

Despite the meritocratic approach, a teacher should instill in his students the sense that you can nonetheless learn from anyone – even

a child, regardless of whether that person holds a teaching position by merit. This is made clear to students when the teacher cares to state out loud when he had just realized something new or had an inspiration based on an interaction with a student. Another way is to note publicly when a student had managed to create and use a new and useful technique, which you have yet to teach him or that perhaps even you did not know. By doing such things the students understand that within each of them is the capacity to excel and become great. The teacher should also tell that to all students regularly, in group and private settings – that with time and effort they can aim high and reach higher.

Egalitarianism

A meritocracy only sets the tone with regards to those who ought to be looked up to and trusted with imparting knowledge. With anything else in the school, the approach is Egalitarian, meaning in the context of martial arts that everyone is required to meet the exact same standards of training, according to their level. Also, that all must carry the burden equally ³. At any stage of training, the demands, challenges and testing procedures (if they exist) should be equal. No one can receive exemptions, unless he or she are physically or mentally challenged in some justifiable way.

In every class I try to make use of all students for demonstration of methods and techniques, so even though I personally have a preference for certain students, all feel I treat them equally ⁴. Likewise, all tasks and chores are shared. Everyone cleans from time to time. The teacher cleans with the students. In my school there is a 70 year old multimillionaire who is the CEO of a large company. He

³ The teacher is the only person within the school who should be expected to work harder than everyone else, unless having grown ill or old.

⁴ This is also important for the teacher. You need to challenge yourself to be able to demonstrate effectively each technique and methods with any type of person and student.

sweeps the floor and washes the dishes alongside 18 year old kids. Every week one person is assigned on 'food duty', required to bring a bunch of healthy foods to be placed on a table and shared communally throughout the week. All take part in this duty. When there is a social gathering, I try to give most people some role in that event's organization, and aid them myself of course.

In the course of training and teaching, everything the students are required to physically undergo and suffer, you need to be able to do as well. The only exceptions perhaps are stretching capacity and fighting ability. There are always those who are naturally extremely flexible or who are too big and tough to be challenged even by their teachers⁵. The teacher may not be the best at these, and that is alright, as long as he is striving and trying as hard or harder than anyone else in the school. With this in mind, do consider that a teacher who wants to have students who will eventually train 3 hours a day, will need to let the students know and demonstrate that he is training at least 3-4 hours a day himself.

When the students understand that they are treated equally and rightfully, then there will not arise any complaints or issues regarding discrimination. You should be aware that a sense of being discriminated against or being treated unfairly by the teacher or a fellow student is a very common reason people leave martial arts schools. Often they do not even bother to share such feelings with anyone, and one day they simply disappear. With a true egalitarian spirit however, that risk is reduced to a minimum and this phenomenon rarely if ever occurs.

⁵ Those who expect a 5'7 (1.7m) teacher in his 70s to be able to fight toe to toe with an athlete student who is 6'5 (1.98m) student and in his 20s, are delusional. Though exceptions abound, usually this is not possible. One should not be expected to be able to beat all of his students in a sparring match or a real fight. Neither would I say it is necessarily a must for the teacher to be sparring with his students regularly, or at all. Such things differ from school to school. The important point is that the teacher was capable of real fighting when younger, and that he can impart sincere knowledge of self-defense and combat to his students.

Dictatorship

People come at a martial arts school with false notions about the right type of interaction with their teacher. Some mistakenly assume that having paid a person makes that man their servant or equal. Others think that a martial arts school is yet another venue for exercising democratic principles, and that they can take a vote on what they like and dislike. Both notions are misinformed and disastrous.

Wherein you live in a country belonging to ‘Western Civilization’, you are used to thinking that a ‘leader’ is someone who was democratically elected. Such a person is not necessarily a leader – he is in fact a follower. The elected representative is a follower of the majority view. He is a charismatic sheep, but alas, one selected from the herd. A true leader takes a stand and creates his own position of leadership, and a good leader does so through displaying virtue and being a model to others. Thus, a good martial arts teacher is a benevolent dictator ⁶. Only he can set the tone and determine the rules, while being attentive, empathic and considerate at all times, to the best of his ability under the circumstances.

There cannot arise a situation in which any student seeks to determine for you how to teach or how to operate the school. At best, polite suggestions for such things can be made, but only by trusted and veteran students and solely in private. Some people think that because they are men of knowledge or social position in the world outside the school, they are entitled to tell you what to do. You need to respectfully put them in their proper place the first time they try this. You need to let them know that while you appreciate their feedback and positive intentions, the school etiquette demands that they behave differently.

There exists a very delicate balance here. On one hand, you want to encourage constructive criticism for the sake of improvement, and on

⁶ The martial arts teacher should be so (a dictator) **only** within the premises of the school and while teaching or interacting with students in an official capacity. He should be very careful not to exercise the same approach elsewhere or in different circumstances.

the other hand too much of it or stating things too bluntly undermines your authority. You wish to let someone know their boundaries, but by doing so you may also insult them. The solution is to set the right tone for every discussion. For example: at the end of each class I encourage people to ask questions about today's practice. Any questions may be asked, but usually I would not allow them to ask freely. Instead I call them each by name, one by one, and ask: "Noam, any questions?"; "Gil, any questions?". Every student then gets special attention, but they also have to wait for their turn. Commonly as they begin talking, another student may be impatient and begin to speak out of order, commenting on what was said. I will often immediately shut that student and scold him lightly, asking him to wait patiently for his friend to finish. Then when the friend is finished, I do not neglect to eventually return and allow expression for what that student wanted to say, rewarding him for his patience.

The important point here is that you, and only you, are in control. No one may assume higher dominance than yours, or any dominance for that matter, without your explicit permission. Cursing, swearing or overt disrespect towards you or any other student for that matter should be met with immediate scolding and banishment – either to sit aside for a while, go home, or in extreme cases – throw that person out the school for good.



I still bitterly remember a few mistakes I had made when I first began teaching, when I was still too gentle in my role as a dictator. Once I had a male student who was about 18 years of age, quite immature. The class was stretching, and I with them, as that male student took note of another student, a woman a few years older than him. That woman was quite flexible, and the student complimented her politely about her flexibility. Then he asked that woman for permission to “further comment on something which may be a bit more controversial”. The woman, flattered by the earlier comment and not sure what to do, told him to go ahead. That young fool then said that “her boyfriend must be a happy man” – obviously making a most inappropriate sexual remark. It was at that moment that I suddenly realized failure to not stop that discussion from its onset. I scolded that student well in front of everybody, explaining how awful his words were. Later I also had a conversation with the female student and apologized to her for this ugly interaction, assuring her it would not happen again. This was not the right way to act. I should have actually sent the guy straight home at that moment, and later demanded him to write an apology letter to the other student. But at the time as a young and less experienced teacher, I was cautious about making a big fuss and creating social uproar. I had never had to kick someone out of class at that point. I should not have hesitated. Beyond being nasty towards a fellow student and setting a bad example for everyone else, that student in his actions was also undermining my authority.

After that event transpired, I never allowed for similar things to happen ever again. Now I know better. Whenever I hear a student beginning to speak or even think out of line, I stop them right there. Sometimes a student will say: *“Shifu, may I ask something which may be a bit more controversial or not as polite?”*. I answer: *“No! You may not!! Think about it several times over, and if you still wish to say it, then talk to me privately after class ends”*.

Students who believe they know better than you are also a nuisance and cause social disharmony. More on such students and their nature

I have written more in this book, in the chapter called '**Martial Arts Students and the Middle Path**'.

While it is important to maintain the position of the undisputable leader of your student community, one also has to cultivate humility and modestly (to a degree), and imbue within the students the sense that outside the school premises you are an ordinary human being, just like them. You may carry a unique set of skills and abilities, and they should still respect you wherever you go and at all times, but they should also recognize your humanity.

One of the best ways to ensure this happens is to commonly tell stories of one's teachers and his respect for them, and make sure one continues to have teachers, for as long as possible. In Hebrew we say: "Every man needs a Rabbi"; meaning that each of us needs, for his sake and for that of how others see him, to have a higher authority to continue to guide and teach him. Showing sincere appreciation for others who are more skilled and knowledgeable than oneself, in words and actions, is a good way to demonstrate and prove that you do not consider yourself 'superior to everyone else'. Know that you can expect your students to treat you in the manner that you treat other people, and especially your teachers and superiors.



Not a Business, But a Community

After I opened my first martial arts school, throughout the first years, I was getting a lot of advice from whoever was willing. It seemed that most people were focused on the business side of things. They were talking of ‘leads’, ‘selling’, ‘marketing’, ‘contracts’, ‘customers’, ‘going with the market demands’, etc. This was also a major emphasis in articles and books I read at the time about how to operate a martial arts school. But over the years I have come to believe and support the notion that running a proper and upright martial arts school – a serious traditional school, is in fact more about understanding people, than finance. More about a community, than a typical ‘business’. Then let me speak of communities.

In the 1990s, British anthropologist and neuroscientist professor Robin Dunbar discovered an old truth about mankind. He realized through his research that humans are best thriving in groups of up to 150 individuals. This number, 150, was henceforth known as **‘Dunbar’s Number’**. What happens is that most of us find it difficult to maintain over 150 meaningful relationships. In modern times we may have hundreds, at times thousands of so-called friends, family members, acquaintances and colleagues. But normally only a handful of these interactions make for significant relationships. The rest never achieve any noteworthy depth of interaction. There are several reasons for this, among them:

- Humans are programmed to live in modest tribes, which tend to break up into smaller tribes if they become too large.
- We cannot physically handle the personal details of hundreds or thousands of people or to care for them

emotionally with sincerity.

- On the purely technical level, we do not have enough time for so many serious relationships.

So we are limited to a core group of roughly 150 important individuals in our lives, and most of us will do with less than that (in fact we prefer and tend to thrive with less). Put a bunch of humans in a group larger than about 150, and they begin to require centralized organization and specialized laws to maintain order among them. Our core '150 clique' is also mutually supportive and protective, providing us with communal backing and a sense of security.

Modern society confuses us in that respect. We want and need to have the sense of belonging to a tribe which is small, but which tribe ought we belong to – that of our family? The tribe of our nation state? The tribe of our favourite sports team and its fan club? Perhaps the tribe which is the company we work for? Or the tribe of childhood friends?... Even one's religious congregation often numbers over 150 individuals. Oh, so many tribes to choose from, and altogether too many people to interact with. We find ourselves torn between our obligations to various tribes and intimidated by their mass. This problem causes a lot of stress to modern humans, who desperately seek to belong, but feel tiny and insignificant in the ranks of huge tribes, with too many members to them. Some even go to extreme measures in order to stand out, and use violence to create a personal statement, life-meaning and goals for themselves (as particularly evident among sports fans and even terrorists). Many do such things as means of desperation, in light of their inability to deal with the sense of being 'no one' and having no meaning in this world, as they exist in huge groups without a social role or a purpose assigned to them. This is unlike in small communities of people which are self-sustainable, where there are no idle hands – everyone has a job and a role to play, because then everyone in the tribe are co-dependent.

The martial arts school can be for a person the cure and solution for this social illness of feeling isolated and insignificant in a world made of enormous tribes. Your martial arts school could and should provide people with a proper sense of community which is friendly, welcoming, mutually-supportive and small enough in scale to not threaten the innate capacity expressed in Dunbar's Number ⁷. The martial arts school is a world in and of its own, with the main agenda hopefully being the personal and communal growth of the people who are its members. Therefore, the martial arts school is a non-political entity, and is not supposed to clash in its objectives with other 'tribes' a person may belong to.

When professor Dunbar came up with his number of 150, he had in mind ancient human tribes who lived in groups of roughly this size, and would split when they grew too large. Dunbar hypothesized that in such tribes, much of the time would have been dedicated to 'social grooming'. In nature, this type of activity involves the animals helping each other stay healthy and maintain a close bond from the actions of grooming, cleaning, petting, massage, hugging and other such positive interactions. The martial arts school is not that different. As long as the general atmosphere within the school is not too competitive, we martial artists do actually engage in something very much akin to social grooming, as we come into close and intimate physical contact for the sake of forming strong bonds and helping each other stay healthy. That is, at least, one of the goals of a worthy martial arts school.

But beyond a community and perhaps through it, the martial arts school delivers a promise perhaps even greater and more important to its members – a sense of personal meaning for each of them. You

⁷ Even a martial arts school which goes beyond 150 members typically divides into several compartments or sections, usually based on rank, seniority or both. Thus, each part of the school is still a miniature community in its own right. Still, under optimal social conditions, the martial arts school should also not number hundreds of people.

see, outside the confines of religion, people seldom speak of meaning anymore. Instead they speak of money, schooling, politics, television, status, sports and the likes of these empty subjects. But provide a person with meaning and that person has hope for himself and for the world. With meaning and hope, that person can be happy, and make others happy as well. Then the world becomes a better place. Meaning in turn is commonly created through two things: work and direction. One has to do some challenging work. Then this work needs a serious direction – a worthy purpose. Martial Arts fit here quite nicely. They make people work hard, for a purpose. This gives them meaning, which also builds hope, in turn leading to happiness and a better existence for us all.



Some teachers focus too much on the training, and forget to talk with the students at length of the many good reasons for doing all that hard work. You would be surprised – they forget the reasons. They need weekly reminders. Then there are teachers who talk much of the purpose but do not make their students work as hard as they should. This is also not a complete solution. One needs both the hard work and the right direction (purpose and reasons) to get to creating a meaning for oneself. So make sure that in your classes you have both.

Then in conversing with your students, relate these aspects to that community you all share. Because all of that hard work and the many words expressing the purpose of it are not worth a damn if the students cannot act humanely and honorably towards each-other, and in their interaction with other human beings. Do make that connection. Lead your students to realize that improving their moral character is in this school directly related to their ability to develop martial prowess. But do not just say it – do it! Demonstrate to them how those who will not make an effort to improve themselves, you will not offer them the opportunity to grow as martial artists. This would be making the connection for them artificially, of course. But over time, or so one would hope, they would naturally come to see for themselves why the building of character through a belonging to a community is a vital asset in one's life and personal development.

Consider how most modern human 'tribes' all share the same issue, of their members being so different to one-another. What makes a tribe 'work'? That would be a shared sense of culture and history. These exactly are the strengths of your martial arts school. You want your students to be heavily invested in a local culture which is unique to your school or organization, and remember well their shared history. Let me break this down into the two components:

Shared culture: This includes the very type of practice that you do and that is unique to your school; the special language you use for the martial arts taught in the school; things which excite the senses like

incense, food, music or tea you drink before class; private jokes among school members; your etiquette as has been developed traditionally in your school and the morals you all believe in; the technical and philosophical discussions which relate to your particular martial arts practice; proverbs and anecdotes commonly spoken by school members; etc. All of these should be encouraged.

Shared history: This pertains to the sense of having been through a lot together through months, years and decades of training. This is expressed by repeating historical stories, tales, allegories and such in written form, but more so in verbal discussion. Oral storytelling of the school's best and most beloved histories should be something you and veteran students do frequently. The value of these for communal well-being is truly priceless. Also important are stories of one's own teachers and those of those teachers who came before him, too. It is good to provide the historical context of the society, country and times these men lived through, to ensure the students could relate.

You should actively pursue the creation of a shared culture and history within the school. Actions as such should take place on a weekly basis. Every week should contain at least several things or elements which strengthen the shared culture, and a few moments of reliving shared history.

Even a person who attends a class at your school for the first time can sense when there are strong foundations in shared culture and history. In fact, such people are more attuned to these because they are outsiders and take nothing in the school for granted. Sometimes they can be frightened by the overwhelming amount of new input. However, if you and the students make a sincere effort to share with them that culture and history, and go out of your way to be welcoming and forthcoming, then from a liability in presentation this turns into an advantage. For the newcomer will realize he or she are now invited to be a part of something deep and meaningful, and this is what a lot of people covet and wish they had in their personal lives.

You may have noticed that nothing here in this discussion of the school community has even the slightest connection to money. There are many books about running a martial arts school, and a lot of good information in them concerning the handling of finance, advertising, marketing, accounting, legal issues, and the likes of these. Yet all of these subjects, while **very important** to learn and master, bow in insignificance and are trivial when compared with the need for a vigorous, supporting and unified student community. For a school with a malfunctioning community full of unworthy individuals is like a person sickly and without a soul, and such a man is damned regardless of how much money, lawyers or accountants he has. Therefore, you need to augment your mindset. Your school may be a business, but it is first and foremost a community. Take care of that community as a foremost priority, and watch the school thrive.



The Secret Flow in Teaching Martial Arts

There is a hidden mechanism in the teaching of martial arts, which pervades everywhere regardless of school and style. This mechanism, I believe, is the key component in achieving success in the teaching of these arts. I will now tell you all about it, and how to put it to practice with ease. But first, let me have a short discussion with you, from one martial arts teacher to another, about the nature of what we do.

I personally am not fond of referring to martial arts as a ‘business’, even if teaching them is one’s means of making a living. But were we to equate the martial arts to some type of business, then what type of business would they be? I say we are in the **‘customer preservation business’**. This is true for everyone who teach the martial arts. The goal of the martial arts teacher, whoever he or she are, is to gain a certain amount of students, and then keep them for as long as possible or required. This is the reality even if one does not charge a fee for his teaching, and certainly if one needs to earn money from this dignified profession.

Here is another interesting and related anecdote - you need to keep the students more than you need new students. Why? Because martial arts are always a small business venture. With 100 students, a martial arts teacher will likely earn a very good income. With 300 students, you can even become a rich man (not that this should be the goal of teaching martial arts!). Even the largest schools very rarely surpass 300 students, and I dare say that any school with over 350-400 students is no longer really in the business of ‘teaching’ – it is in the business of making money (for most schools, that’s true even when they cross the 200 student line). But in any case, the number of ‘customers’ one needs in this ‘business’ is rather small. Many will even

suffice with as little as 10-70 students. A martial arts teacher who can get the number of students he aims for, and can keep them attending classes for years, does not need any new students coming, at least not on a regular basis. Therefore, mastery of the ability to conserve the student population will resolve almost completely the ‘business side’ of the teaching. A teacher who can keep all or most students, essentially has nothing to worry about but the teaching and the practice – this is what we all want.

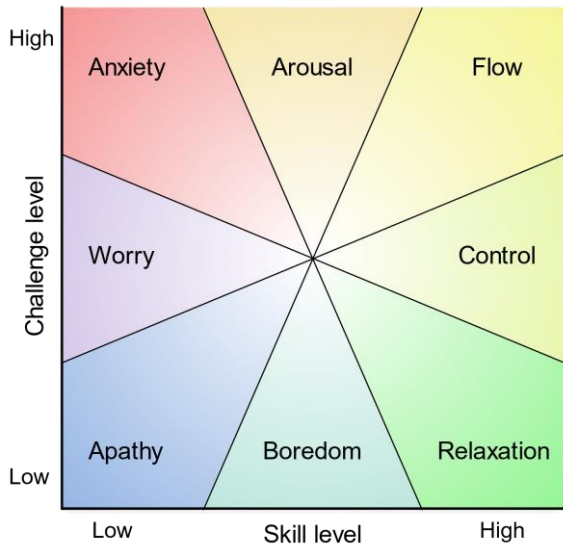
There are unfortunately many things we cannot control. Disease, marriage, having children, injuries outside the school, moving far away, army service, major changes in personality and more... all of these will take students away from us over the years, and there is little we can do about it. But there is the one thing we can control, and that is **the quality and the nature of our teaching**. Here we can do something, just one single thing, to make a tremendous improvement in our ability to keep the students with us. That one thing is no less an art than the other skills we practice and teach. That thing is the application of **Flow Theory** to the teaching of our martial arts. Bear with me now for a single paragraph, while I explain to you what this theory is, so you can later understand how it may be easily applied to teaching the martial arts.

Flow is a popular concept in modern psychology. It was ‘discovered’ by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who was the first to make a science out of this common human phenomenon (no, his family name was not typed by my cat walking on the keyboard). Everyone who had ever lived have experienced flow many times in their lives. You know it too. Flow is the state you experience when you do something which is for you, subjectively speaking, the most difficult you can handle with ease, and you also really want to do it. When that thing you are doing is quite difficult but you can still handle it with ease, and you are also motivated to do it, you experience a blissful state of great joy and inner concentration which is detached from time and place. It is this ultimate moment in time when you do something and everything

works exceptionally well. You feel uplifted, euphoric, and completely engulfed in the moment.

Although people who write of Flow often use examples from the lives of the very skilled and gifted, Flow can in fact be experienced by anyone – including each of your

students, no matter who he or she are. We all experience flow commonly in play, whether it be football, baseball, soccer, box games, card games, sexual activities, handling a musical instrument we have some skill with, etc; Cooking, driving, gardening, singing, dancing, and countless more activities – even negative things like killing and waging wars - whichever things humans can find to be ‘fun’, they can achieve a state of flow while doing them. Flow can even be achieved by thinking challenging thoughts in your mind, without moving. Computer games especially are built to make flow happen. This is the reason computer games have levels of difficulty, and often many of them. The player, based on their skill, can choose how challenging the computer game is going to be for him. What the player actually does is to draw the line of flow for himself. He chooses a level of difficulty which is, for him, difficult but not too much, and that level of challenge, together with the player’s interest in the game, makes the experience the most enjoyable. Likewise, Flow can also be experienced through a wide range of human endeavors, including the martial arts of course, if the person is skilled enough. There is much more to this phenomenon with regard to martial arts practice, and I have written of it more extensively in my international best-seller, *Research of Martial Arts*.



Athletes often refer to flow as ‘being in the zone’. When in flow, one performs best with his set of skills. It is also the state in which **we are able to absorb the most and learn best from what we are doing**. It makes sense therefore, that as martial arts teachers we would want our students and ourselves to spend as much time in flow as possible. It would benefit all of humanity if that were the case. But here is the problem we face as martial arts teachers – although our martial arts can manifest flow like any other skill, their training methods were not designed to make flow happen immediately, but rather after a very long time. This all relates to our ability to conserve the student population, and I shall now explain how.

In the martial arts we tend to most commonly have two types of approaches to teaching people. These two approaches, put simply, are “take it hard on them” and “take it easy on them”.

The first approach is embodied in the traditional martial arts schools, but also in the sports-oriented schools. In such martial arts schools, students are expected to work very hard to achieve skill. They either suffer through painful training, a type of training which stresses their strength and stamina to the utmost, or both. This could be in the form of holding low stances for prolonged periods of time, placing the body in awkward and difficult positions, suffering a beating from others, exhausting their aerobic or anaerobic limits, etc. This is the Yang end of the scale – too difficult. With this approach, there is the underlying and often unspoken expectation that only the best (most fitting) will survive, and that indeed happens – usually fewer people tend to last and continue over the years than the teacher would have liked.

The second approach takes the opposite route, considering the martial arts as a sort of pastime. The teacher does not believe the intended population has what it takes for more serious martial arts training. Therefore, the teacher keeps the training and curriculum at a low level of physical and mental challenge. This is fantastic for recruiting students. Many people come and within their first class already feel as if they have achieved something. Then this experience

is repeated in many classes. But the student also senses quite quickly that the practice is not challenging enough. That is akin to a person who is 'too easy' when going on romantic dates with others, and because of this is eventually shunned by most potential partners. This person becomes that martial arts school teacher, and just as many come at his doorstep, sooner than later most leave. This is the Yin end of the scale – too easy.



As you may remember from earlier, I have asserted that Flow is found in the delicate balance between 'too difficult' and 'too easy'. Bringing the student into a state of flow again and again is, in my opinion, the most reliable way to keep that student interested and pursuing the practice for a lifetime. This is because of the nature of Flow, being experienced as a blissful and joyous state which is self-perpetuating and addictive, all the while providing significant personal growth. Yet there is a reason most schools do not make the effort to keep

students in flow. The Yang schools want a serious student who is hard-working, so they do not wish to compromise their teachings to 'spoil' the students (or, for that matter, to bend over backwards to make a student happy). The Yin schools wish to make money and fear pushing it in classes will drive the students away. What then can be done to accommodate for these challenges?

Well, I should start by saying that back in the old days, things were simpler. Just 50 years ago, people were overall far more physically hard-working and willing to take on challenges, and less likely to complain. Martial Arts were very new to the Western world and people did not have expectations of something they did not at all understand. Nowadays we have populations in the Western world which are, on the whole, high degenerate. In addition to that, the sophisticated brainwashing by the modern media had led people to believe that what they watch on the screen is not only reality, but something they can learn and apply in reality on all walks of life. This led us to this day and age, in which a new student attending our schools usually has two prominent qualities, regardless of age:

1. He knows less than he thinks he knows, especially of the martial arts.
2. He can physically do less than he thinks he can, especially in the martial arts.

Because of problem number 1, the student is often too quick to decide whether a martial art is right or not for him, before truly experiencing it. Because of problem number 2, the student will tend to have a disproportional response to his successes and failures in training. Put in other words – people today lack good body constitution and self-awareness of body and mind. This makes the challenge for martial arts teachers greater than before.



To make Flow work with the students we need to change our mindset. We have to decide and **believe** that the student, albeit being a novice, can genuinely reach flow or near-flow experiences, if we provide him or her the right conditions for it. Also, we have to realize something else which is very important: While it is true that we want only the best and most appropriate people as our students, going to extremes will not necessarily help us get these people. Just look at what I have written in the previous paragraphs. Most people are not ready for real martial arts training when they come at our doorstep. Neither should we expect them to be ready. We should make them so. By learning to accommodate our teachings to many types of people, over time a significant

number of students will evolve their body and mind, changing their attitudes and seriousness about training. Were we to go by 'only winners' or 'only losers' approach, then we shall get very few winners (if at all) to remain after 5, 10 or 20 years of teaching, or rather thousands of students who came and went without many or any to carry on what we do at a decent level.

Coming from a background teaching the traditional Chinese martial arts, I would like to address the appropriate solutions for the more Yang-inclined schools – those in which the teachers tend to expect a hard-working mentality from the get-go.

The most common problem I see today in such schools is that the curriculum is simply not well made for modern society. Often the curriculum itself is excellent, but it begins at too advanced a level, physically and mentally. The curriculum of such arts often assumes a population of students which has been doing tough physical labour, often in fields, from early age. This is not where we are at today. This was well understood by pioneers in Okinawan Karate during the 20th century, who were wise to accommodate for the problem by creating many kata to be taught even before the 'beginner' parts of the curriculum. This pre-beginner direction is the way to go. It allows a student to be challenged, but not too challenged, and then when this becomes easy, he or she can begin training the 'real' art. Actually, it is often stated in Okinawan Karate and other arts, that true training begins with the first black belt. This is exactly because, everything before that was simply beginner-friendly material. Sadly, for Okinawan Karate and Japanese Karate, that experiment also failed



miserably in many schools in which the beginner mentality was preserved in the long-run, and people could never get past that stage of training, even when they ‘earned’ their black belts.

But the undertones of this approach are valid. The teacher needs to create a version of the curriculum that suits the physicality and mentality of the student, and then from it slowly increase the intensity and difficulty until the ‘real training’ can begin. In this manner, the student can experience Flow or near-flow states, by keeping the practice challenging and difficult, but not too much. But where stands the limit between making it easier, and prostituting one’s art to accommodate for a student’s needs? From my personal perspective, I believe you can determine the limit by asking several questions:

1. Does the student actually make progress towards ‘real training’ by doing this stuff?
2. Will this type of training lead to the ‘real training’ within a reasonable amount of time?
3. Is this level of training respectful of the student and of his honest wishes?
4. Can this type of training yield any useful skills for either self-defense or health?
5. Am I taking care to add difficulty when the practice becomes too easy?

Through these questions, you will know whether your attempts to help the student are alright. Remember though, that such modifications ought to be made on a student-to-student basis. The changes need to fit the special needs of each student, and what his or her unique challenges are. One of the reasons that the creation of ‘beginner kata’ caused problems for Karate in the long-term in many

schools was that these kata were created for the masses, and not optimized for each practitioner. Not that creating new forms is necessarily the way to go, either. Sometimes single movements require changing. Other times the height of steps and stances or their length beg your attention. Rhythm is also an issue. Following a fixed rhythm of practice is not conducive to the individual. As in the teaching of music and language, each person needs to follow a personal rhythm before they can mold themselves unto the rhythm of the group and of the art. Forcing people to blindly follow rhythm before they can execute movements well is in my opinion, albeit a common teaching method, not a very effective one. The alternative of course, in the manner of more personalized teaching, requires more



attention, effort and ingenuity of the teacher, which is why most teachers opt to forgo such an undertaking.

Keeping the student in flow has more to do than just the physical movement themselves. It is also affected by how said movements are perceived by the student. A beginner is strongly affected by his extreme feelings and

reactions to the practice. This has to be controlled, through the use of physical and verbal language. A few examples:

Smile to make the student relax when it hurts. Frown and make displeased sighs when the student fails to meet his and your expectations. But most of all – know when to quickly transitions

between negative and positive feedback with accordance to the student's actions. Do not forget to include both! Commonly a teacher praises too much or too little; yells too much or too little. Strike a balance in such things. The 'carrot and stick' method never fails. With children I make it even more pronounced. A child whose mind goes wondering too much and too often might get a gentle slap on the cheek and a moderate raising of voice to put him in place. Then 5 minutes later when he makes a sincere effort to concentrate, even if he does not succeed with the technique, I may give him a hug, and then at the end of class applaud his efforts in front of the other students. One must use both the carrot and the stick to help the student locate the right point between 'too easy' and 'too difficult', and this relies on the development of empathy and subtle skills for manipulating people.

Another thing I do is to suit the classes to the level of the people who attend them. I take advantage of the changing attendance for this purpose. When today's class features mostly the less skilled or the more skilled, I will change the teaching content to 'meet them at the flow point'. When the classes have people of varying levels of skill, I will teach one thing, but then as people work on their own or with partners, I will go personally to those more advanced and issue detailed modifications in their ear so they could increase the level of challenge to their flow point.

Then it is important to remember that once a student reaches a certain level, he needs to learn to 'eat bitter'. That is, to practice by your order or through his own initiative exercises, techniques and methods which are not in a 'flow state', but rather challenging to the point of eventual physical near collapse and failure, involving much pain and duress. **Eating Bitter** (Chī Kǔ 吃苦), a Chinese term, refers to that substantial effort one needs to go through and maintain for years, against one's own intuition, to gain higher-level skills. Eating bitter is torturous by nature, and therefore not suitable for beginners.

But it is the only path to true skill in the martial arts. Then, fortunately for those who persevere, eating bitter for years on end eventually leads once more to experiencing the entire art in flow, without any suffering. All of the philosophy embodied in this chapter is meant for a teacher to be able to lead as many students as possible to the gates of bitter training, and have them arriving there ready and mature to accept that sort of challenge. Once there with all of one's being, the way to excellence is almost guaranteed.



The Chinese understood this well for centuries, which is why their arts have the social model of 'entering the gate'. In the traditional Chinese martial arts, regular students came for pastime classes in which not much was expected of them, and the higher methods, skills

and techniques were also kept from them. Then if a student had proven himself in training and as a human being via various means, he may have been accepted into the inner martial arts family and ‘enter the gate’ of the family compound (a metaphor based on the fact that in the past many Chinese lived in walled compounds with gates, and family affairs would be conducted behind closed doors). This is a good model which helps distinguish those who still require special accommodations and flow-encouragement, and those who are mature enough to suffer of their own volition and accept the pain which will eventually lead them to true flow, in the manifestation of truly advanced practice and application.

Here too however we have a challenge, in that there is a definite line between that regular student and the inner-family student. But people, sadly, are volatile creatures. Many can prove themselves to be worthy for a while, making great progress, and then later through life’s circumstances deteriorate and wither into a lower version of their former Self. Then, they may no longer abide by the standards of a student who had entered the gate. This is why traditionally, many Chinese teachers waited a long time, often several years, before admitting a person into the family. This was also a request which had to come from the student, and not the teacher.

Whichever teaching model and paradigm one chooses, Flow is the way to go. Do not be tempted to act upon your Ego, and expect the student to be this or that. As a teacher I take the greater responsibility for my relationship with my students. Although they have to meet me half-way, I can wait forever on the road if I did not provide them with a decent enough map. Therefore, make sure the students walk the right path, and be by your example their compass. Then you will find, that things tend to flow smoothly on their own.