

GLOBAL TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS

LIVES IN ACTION

Inspiring Journeys of Dedication
and Transformation

EMPOWER YOUR DOJO

Free Tools and Opportunities
for Growth

MASTER YOUR SKILLS

Effective Drills for
Continuous Improvement

SPOTLIGHT

Exploring Key Issues and
Influential Voices



TRACY LEE THOMAS,
PUBLISHER

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER

Welcome to the latest edition of Go2 Karate Magazine! We are especially excited about this edition because it reflects not only the traditions we honor but also the future we are

helping to shape. Inside, you'll find stories of perseverance, discipline, and leadership—qualities that extend far beyond the dojo floor. You'll also discover how martial artists across the country are building stronger schools, tighter communities, and brighter futures for their students. At the same time, we're embracing the tools that carry us into tomorrow. One of the biggest breakthroughs we're proud to highlight is the AI Employee, a cutting-edge system designed to support martial arts schools and small businesses. It's not just technology—it's a game-changer. From managing leads

and scheduling to following up with prospects and keeping your team organized, the **AI Employee** gives owners back their most valuable resource: time. That means more time for teaching, training, mentoring, and making an impact. This issue represents that perfect blend—tradition meeting innovation. Just like a martial artist sharpens both body and mind, our community continues to sharpen its skills and adapt to new opportunities.

Whether you're reading this as a school owner, a lifelong practitioner, or simply someone who believes in the warrior way of living, I hope you find encouragement, fresh ideas, and the inspiration to push forward.

Tracy Lee Thomas

Publisher, Go2 Karate Magazine



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EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Readers,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this issue of **Go2 Karate Magazine**. Each edition of our publication is created with one goal in mind: to celebrate the art, discipline, and community of martial arts. Whether you are a lifelong practitioner, an instructor shaping the next generation, or a parent exploring the benefits of karate for your child, we are honored to share this journey with you.

In these pages, you will find stories that highlight not only the technical skills of martial artists but also the values that underpin our training, discipline, respect, perseverance, and leadership. Our mission is to showcase the individuals and schools that keep these traditions alive while also exploring the evolving role of martial arts in today's world.

We believe that martial arts is far more than a physical practice; it is a way of life. It empowers people to set goals, overcome challenges, and build confidence that extends beyond the dojo. Through interviews, features, and insights from leaders in the martial arts community, we strive to provide inspiration and practical knowledge for every reader.

Thank you for being part of our growing community. Your support enables us to continue highlighting the individuals, schools, and stories that make martial arts so impactful. We look forward to sharing this journey with you.

Denise Morin

Go2 Karate Magazine | Editor



As Creative Director, I approach this magazine the same way a martial artist approaches the mat—with intention, discipline, and respect for the craft. To me, each issue is a chance to capture the spirit of martial arts in all its forms: the technique, the philosophy, the grit, and the quiet moments of mastery that happen long before the spotlight. My vision is to create a publication that doesn't just report on the culture, but embodies it—where every article carries the precision of a well-placed strike, every layout flows with the rhythm of movement, and every story honors the lineage and innovation that shape our community. This magazine is a training ground for ideas, a place where tradition meets evolution, and where readers can feel the pulse of the martial arts world on every page.

Jason Smith

Go2 Karate Magazine | Creative Director



Go2Karate Magazine Exclusive: GTMA Leadership Interview

By Go2 Karate

Go2 Karate:

I'm excited about this conversation. GTMA—Global Traditional Martial Arts—has grown at an incredible pace, making big waves in the martial arts industry. Today, we'll discuss how GTMA started, what makes it different, and where it's headed.

Joining me are Grandmaster Kathy Lee, President of Global Traditional Martial Arts (GTMA) and ninth-degree black belt; Chief Master Sean Smith, Director of Licensee Relations and eighth-degree black belt; and Brianna Hokams, Logistics Manager and fifth-degree black belt. Thank you all for being here today.

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

Thank you, sir.

Chief Master Sean Smith:

It's a pleasure to be here.

Brianna Hokams:

Thank you for having us.

Go2 Karate:

I'd love to know the story behind the founding of GTMA. What inspired the creation of it, and why the name Global Traditional Martial Arts?





Chief Master Sean Smith:

From the start, GTMA was built on the idea that martial arts is bigger than one system. While our foundation is Taekwondo, our name reflects our vision to honor traditional values while having relationships with all other styles of martial arts. Our curriculum—GShim Taekwondo—was designed by Grandmaster GK Lee, but GTMA includes a wide range of influences, not just Taekwondo.

When you look at our weapons program, our self-defense program, we cross into so many different styles, and Grandmaster GK Lee is very adamant that we are a martial arts organization, not just a Taekwondo organization. No one art holds all the answers.

Go2 Karate:

Could you tell us a little bit more about Grandmaster GK? Obviously, I've known him for many years, and he's super impressive. How do his skills and his influence tie into what he's trying to accomplish, and what his part of the organization is?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

He's the ultimate martial artist. Beyond his ninth-degree rank in Taekwondo, he trains in Jiu-Jitsu, Hapkido, and is exceptional in Gumdo swordsmanship. What sets him apart is his mindset—he always considers himself a student. He'll enter a new art and train at the rank he deserves.

That philosophy drives GTMA. We want to create an environment where everyone keeps learning, no matter their rank. Because of his reputation, GTMA attracts world-class instructors from different systems. I think that actually transcends into the organization because he can get those experts to come and work with our leadership as well. Our partnership with Master Carlos Machado for Jiu-Jitsu is an example of that.

Go2 Karate:

Where do you see GTMA growing? What's the vision of where you're going to go in five to ten years?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

It's been a ride. Our trajectory has been amazing. We started in Arkansas, Texas, Georgia, and Nebraska. Then we grew rapidly across the Southeast and Midwest. Today, we're expanding west into California, Nevada, and the Rockies. The growth is that the schools are starting to recognize that we license our material. We make it very easy for someone to be a GTMA school or GTMA club—there's not a lot of hoops to jump through. You don't have to worry about how many members you have. Everybody's treated with the same respect, and that comes from our grandmasters in the organization.

Go2 Karate:

So, part of the vision is growth in terms of geography, and I think you have some schools in other countries too, right?



Chief Master Sean Smith:

International growth is accelerating too. South America is our largest region outside the U.S. with schools in Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. The majority of our overseas schools are there. We also have a presence in Panama, and South Africa is becoming a strong market thanks to our connections there. I'm very proud of that. Grandmaster Droege is a big proponent of that. He's worked with many of the schools there in the past, and South Africa is an area that we've had some recent growth.

Go2 Karate:

That's impressive. Beyond growth, what's your biggest priority moving forward? What's the vision of where you'd like the organization to go? Is there something in addition to the actual growth of the schools that's important?

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

Training—always training. Expansion means nothing without quality. Our goal is to provide the best education possible for instructors and students. We're here to stay actively committed and involved in training our licensees, giving them the chances to train in multiple ways and different styles, but focusing on the main part of Taekwondo that we

are very proud of. Grandmaster took a lot of time in making sure that he has the best curriculum for the best shape and age of the person. If you're 60 and a seventh-degree black belt, you shouldn't be expected to train like a 20-year-old competitor.

Grandmaster created a curriculum that blends tradition with practicality. It's safe and scalable, while being modern with a lot of ancient values and traditions that are certainly respected from the past. We're really proud of that. We designed it for long-term practice. We also work hard to keep members inspired through leadership development and advanced learning opportunities.

Go2 Karate:

How do you keep that training culture alive across so many locations?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

It starts with an example. We see that in all of our camps and all of our sessions. People are hungry to train. I'll take just a note from our master's retreat that we had in Panama City, Florida. It officially started at five o'clock, but then word got out that we would have open training at noon. Practically the whole camp was there at noon. It was really amazing to see that. It was just a great chance to

COVER STORY

see our leaders working with the masters of the organization, and a lot of times you don't see that from the masters. They just have this hunger to train that our grandmasters want to provide that for them. When leaders train, it motivates everyone else.

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

And we make leadership accessible. Every licensee has direct access to our grandmasters. They can call, email, or message us anytime. It's unusual for organizations this size, but it's part of why GTMA feels personal even as we grow.

Go2 Karate:

A school doesn't have to be a Taekwondo school. They could be from other styles of martial arts and be part of GTMA. Is that correct?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

The one thing that we have is in GShim curriculum, that's our licensing curriculum. That's Gshim Taekwondo, so those are schools and clubs. We are now having affiliates become part of the organization. Again, Carlos Machado is an affiliate, but one of the most exciting affiliates and a partner with us is Grandmaster Wadley of UTA. So those schools are affiliates of GTMA. They can participate

in our trainings. It's so new, and it's so fresh that we are working really closely with Grandmaster Wadley. We have the opportunity to build that into a great relationship and a great situation for all school members. They don't have to be a Gshim Taekwondo school to be able to take advantage of the benefits of GTMA. They maintain their identity but enjoy GTMA's training, events, and resources. Our model works for a variety of martial arts schools.

Go2 Karate:

You often refer to founding masters. Who are they, and how is GTMA organized?

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

The founding masters are the leaders who launched GTMA and shaped its values. Together, they represent more than 450 years of experience. What's even more meaningful is the sense of family. At every master's graduation, when asked what GTMA means to them, the most common answer is family.

Chief Master Sean Smith:

Our leadership roles are clear. Grandmaster Kathy Lee serves as President and masters' representative, focusing on advanced training. All the masters,





whether they're a licensee or not, they know that their connection, their person to call at headquarters is Grandmaster Kathy Lee.

I handle licensee relations, onboarding, and school support. I help connect them with instruction, our different grandmasters that can help them. Whether it's a specific instruction or if it's curriculum, they come to me, and then I'll be able to get them to a Grandmaster that can help them.

Brianna Hokams and Amanda Woodward manage logistics and merchandise partnerships. Senior Master Mike Jones is the international director of tournaments, supported by regional teams across the West, Central, and East. That structure keeps communication strong and support immediate.

Go2 Karate:

You went from zero to 200 schools in 18 months. What was the system behind all that and how you guys grew so fast?

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

We didn't recruit aggressively. We didn't cold-call schools or push memberships. We immediately set

up shop and people started hearing about it and the word of mouth really grew fast. Faster than what we expected. People joined because they saw that we are all like-minded, martial artists that are focused on what they want to do as far as improving themselves and their schools.

Chief Master Sean Smith:

Another factor is flexibility. Our licensing model allows instructors to start as clubs—under 50 students—before transitioning into full schools. Many start in a church, community center, or small rental. Then when they're ready to open a club, we have all the stuff to help them get everything onboarded for an actual operating location. And then when they upgrade to a school, now they're just holding on and enjoying the ride. That makes it easier for people to take the first step without huge risk

Go2 Karate:

Talk about the programs GTMA offers.

Chief Master Sean Smith:

Our base curriculum, again, is GSHIM Taekwondo. School owners have the rights to use these.

Our programs follow a clear progression:

Shadow Moogi introduces preschoolers to martial arts in a fun, safe environment.

Dragon Squad focuses on elementary-age students, building confidence and discipline.

GTMA Athlete serves teens, adults, and competitive students. It's advanced training that prepares them for tournaments, but even those who don't compete benefit from the challenge. They can all train and be prepared for that regardless of whether they decide to compete or not.

Go2 Karate:

How strict is the curriculum for schools? If they're a GTMA school, you have a curriculum, but if they don't use it, there's not a negative consequence, correct?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

At higher black belt levels, GTMA curriculum is required for international testing, but otherwise, schools have freedom. Our philosophy is that curriculum is a tool, not a restriction. A lot of traditional Taekwondo organizations are all about the forms while GTMA really focuses on the training and then the forms will encapsulate what those students are learning. It's really a chance to learn drills, technique, and footwork, and then the forms flow out of that. The curriculum is there for them to use. It's a tool for them to use with teaching their students. We emphasize drills, practical application, and sparring. Forms are important, but they're not the entire picture.

Go2 Karate:

GTMA even provides healthcare benefits for school owners. That's rare in this industry.

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

Yes, and it's something I'm proud of. Too many instructors work second jobs for insurance. I know one woman who stayed in nursing just to provide benefits while her husband ran their school. We wanted to fix that. After a lot of effort, we partnered with providers to make healthcare accessible to GTMA schools. It's helped people turn martial arts into a true full-time career.

Go2 Karate:

Your Global Celebration event gets a lot of attention. What makes it special?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

Global Celebration is the ultimate GTMA experience. It combines advanced training, leadership workshops, and a massive tournament. Schools from across the U.S. attend, and now international schools are joining us—from Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina. It's not just competition; it's connection. Students and instructors leave inspired and motivated.

Go2 Karate:

Did I hear that you guys did some work with the Arnold Invitational as well?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

Yes, for the past two years. The Arnold is one of the largest sporting events in the U.S., second only to the Super Bowl. There are events going on at over 11 different venues all across the city Columbus, Ohio, that weekend. We run an invitational tournament, and our Global Demo Team performs on the main stage. It's incredible exposure for our art and an amazing experience for our students. We look forward to it every year.



Go2 Karate:

What's next for GTMA?

Chief Master Sean Smith:

One of the focuses that our leadership and our grandmasters are working on this year is getting the training out to people. We want to continue to grow. We are now going into year five. It's a little crazy when you think about it that way, but to provide the training that everybody is wanting is a challenge. Of course, right when we started, it was easy to put everything on a video, put it out because everybody was used to that. During the pandemic, video was essential. Now, everybody wants that personal interaction. Nothing beats live, hands-on instruction. They want to train with people, so that's something that our grandmasters are working on, and you'll see more information on that coming out later. That's something to be excited about and expect more regional and national training camps.

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

Our mission hasn't changed: share martial arts, support school owners, and help people grow into strong leaders. We love what we do. That passion drives everything we do, and it's why GTMA continues to thrive.

Chief Master Sean Smith:

One thing that I'd like to just share is that anybody can connect with me. We are very transparent about our licensing. I can talk to anybody about it. It's really easy to connect with me at info@gtmaonline.com, and if they just want to ask, I'm here. We can have a great discussion. I'll let them know everything about the organization, about all our different levels of participation, and if it's the right fit for them, we'd love for them to be part of our family.

Go2 Karate:

Thank you all for joining us today. GTMA's growth and philosophy are inspiring. We're excited to see what the future holds.

Grandmaster Kathy Lee:

Thank you, sir.

Chief Master Sean Smith:

Thank you.



Global Traditional Martial Arts (GTMA) blends five decades of traditional Taekwondo with contemporary training systems, providing a world-class curriculum, instructor development, and marketing support for affiliated schools worldwide. Signature initiatives include Shadow Moogi (a life-skills program for young children), GTMA Leadership Program, and the flagship Global Celebration—an event featuring tournaments, seminars, and belt advancements.



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Lifetime Recognition Award

By Go2 Karate

Carlos Machado is widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) and martial arts worldwide. A member of the legendary Machado family, he grew up training alongside his cousins, the Gracies, and helped introduce BJJ to North America in the early 1990s. Known as the “Godfather of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu” in the U.S., Carlos blends old-school fundamentals with modern innovation, creating a system that is both effective and accessible to practitioners of all levels.

A former multiple-time Pan American and World Champion, Carlos has coached thousands of students globally, including elite competitors, law enforcement professionals, and Hollywood celebrities. His deep technical knowledge and passion for teaching earned him the rank of 8th Degree Coral Belt, a testament to decades of dedication to the art.

Carlos is the founder of the Carlos Machado Jiu-Jitsu Association, with schools spanning the United States and abroad. Beyond producing champions, his mission is to empower people through the life-changing benefits of Jiu-Jitsu—instilling confidence, discipline, and resilience.

Author, mentor, and pioneer, Carlos Machado continues to shape the evolution of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, ensuring that his family’s legacy thrives while inspiring a new generation of martial artists.

Carlos Machado’s charitable work mirrors his approach to Jiu-Jitsu: consistent, practical, and



focused on impact. He uses tournaments, seminars, and his vast affiliate network to transform training into relief efforts and opportunities for those in need. Recent examples include hosting the 2025 Machado Invitational In-House Charity Tournament to raise funds for Texas flood victims, and running benefit seminars to support individuals facing

LIFETIME RECOGNITION AWARD



medical crises. His schools actively participate in Tap Cancer Out, a nonprofit that has raised millions for cancer research, making Machado's teams a visible force in the fight against cancer.

Veteran support is another priority. Through partnerships with the We Defy Foundation, his affiliates provide scholarships and training for combat veterans with service-connected disabilities, often hosting open mats and fundraising events. His outreach also empowers women through Girls in Gis events, promoting inclusion and confidence for female practitioners.

Beyond events, Machado extends his mission through nonprofit affiliates serving at-risk youth and underserved communities, and by offering free educational presentations on topics like mental health. Every initiative follows the same formula: clear goals, structured action, and measurable impact.

For Machado, charity isn't a photo op—it's a habit built into the culture of his schools. From flood relief to cancer research and veteran rehabilitation, his work proves that martial arts can change lives far beyond the mat.



Carlos Machado, known as the "Godfather of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu in America," is a 10-time Brazilian National Champion and 8th Degree Coral Belt. Born into the legendary Machado family and cousin to the Gracies, he helped pioneer the spread of BJJ in the United States in the early 1990s. Founder of the Carlos Machado Jiu-Jitsu Association, with academies worldwide, he blends tradition with innovation to empower students of all levels—from elite athletes to law enforcement and everyday practitioners. Beyond producing champions, Carlos is an author, mentor, and visionary dedicated to building confidence, discipline, and resilience through Jiu-Jitsu, while supporting causes such as Tap Cancer Out and the We Defy Foundation.

Parents of Kids With ADHD... What Do I Do?

By Greg Moody

“The diagnosis made me want to prove everyone wrong. I knew that, if I collaborated with Michael, he could achieve anything he set his mind to.” — Debbie Phelps (23x Gold Medalist Michael Phelps’ mom)

What’s Home Like When My Kid Has ADHD?

Home with a child who has ADHD is often filled with love, energy, and creativity—but also with chaos, frustration, and exhaustion. You may find yourself repeating instructions ten times before shoes are put on. Morning routines can feel like battles: backpacks half-packed, homework forgotten, and constant reminders to “focus.” Dinner may be punctuated with interruptions, kids getting up from their seats repeatedly, and siblings feeling overshadowed by the constant attention given to the child with ADHD. No to mention getting your child to bed! None of this

means you’re failing—it means you may have ADHD in the household. While it’s challenging, it’s also manageable with the right strategies and support. Let’s talk about it!

How Do I Know My Kid Has ADHD?

Parents often wonder where the line is between typical childhood energy and a diagnosable condition. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – what defines these things for doctors and psychologists), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is defined by persistent symptoms lasting at least six months, across more than one setting (home, school, sports, etc.), beginning before age 12, and causing significant impairment in functioning. The three main presentations are:



STRUCTURED SUCCESS



- **Inattentive Presentation:** A child may frequently forget instructions, lose important items, avoid tasks that require sustained effort, look distracted or seem as if they aren't listening even when spoken to directly.
- **Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** Constantly fidgeting, leaving their seat when expected to stay put, blurt out answers, interrupt others, or act as if "driven by a motor."
- **Combined Presentation:** A mix of both.

It's important to recognize that no child has all the symptoms (and all children are this way some of the time), but if your child exhibits six or more in either category, consistently and across different environments, it's time to consult a medical professional. Remember: ADHD is biological, not caused by bad parenting or too much sugar (well documented), and diagnosis requires professional evaluation.

What Can I Do at Home?

The most powerful thing parents can do is create consistent structure. All kids succeed in predictable

environments. Set consistent routines—wake up, homework, meals, and bedtime should happen at the same times daily. Some other ideas are:

- Use visual schedules or charts for reminders they can see, not just hear.
- Pair structure with clear, firm expectations: ADHD does not excuse children from effort.
- Reward systems; for example weekly rewards tied to effort and behavior improvement can motivate children far more effectively than punishment.
- Tools like the highly recommended "1-2-3 Magic" (Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D., 1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12) are amazing and help you with a simple system that parents and the entire family can pick up.

Above all, maintain high expectations. While it can be tough to establish and maintain systems in your home, this helps all kids (with or without ADHD) and in the end it makes your life as a parent easier.

Martial Arts Makes a Huge Difference!

Martial arts provides a unique environment that directly sets up what kids with ADHD need. Research (see references below) consistently shows that martial arts training improves selective attention, inhibitory control, and working memory in children with ADHD. Martial arts structure teaches kids to pause before acting, improving self-control. Repetition of forms and drills builds cognitive flexibility (the ability to think in multiple ways in multiple situations), while the belt progression system (regardless of style) builds long-term goal orientation.

Beyond cognitive benefits, martial arts nurtures self-esteem. Studies show that children in martial arts programs report higher self-confidence and better social skills. Unlike traditional sports that emphasize winning or losing, martial arts is individual and progressive—students compete against their own best selves (they can go to tournament style events if they like but largely their belt rank isn't



dependent on winning or beating someone else). Classes are fast, have clear visual cues, and immediate feedback, all of which teaches ADHD children focus. The discipline of martial

“Martial arts structure teaches kids to pause before acting, improving self-control.”

arts turns hyperactivity into productive energy, inattentiveness into focus, and impulsivity into becoming a leader!

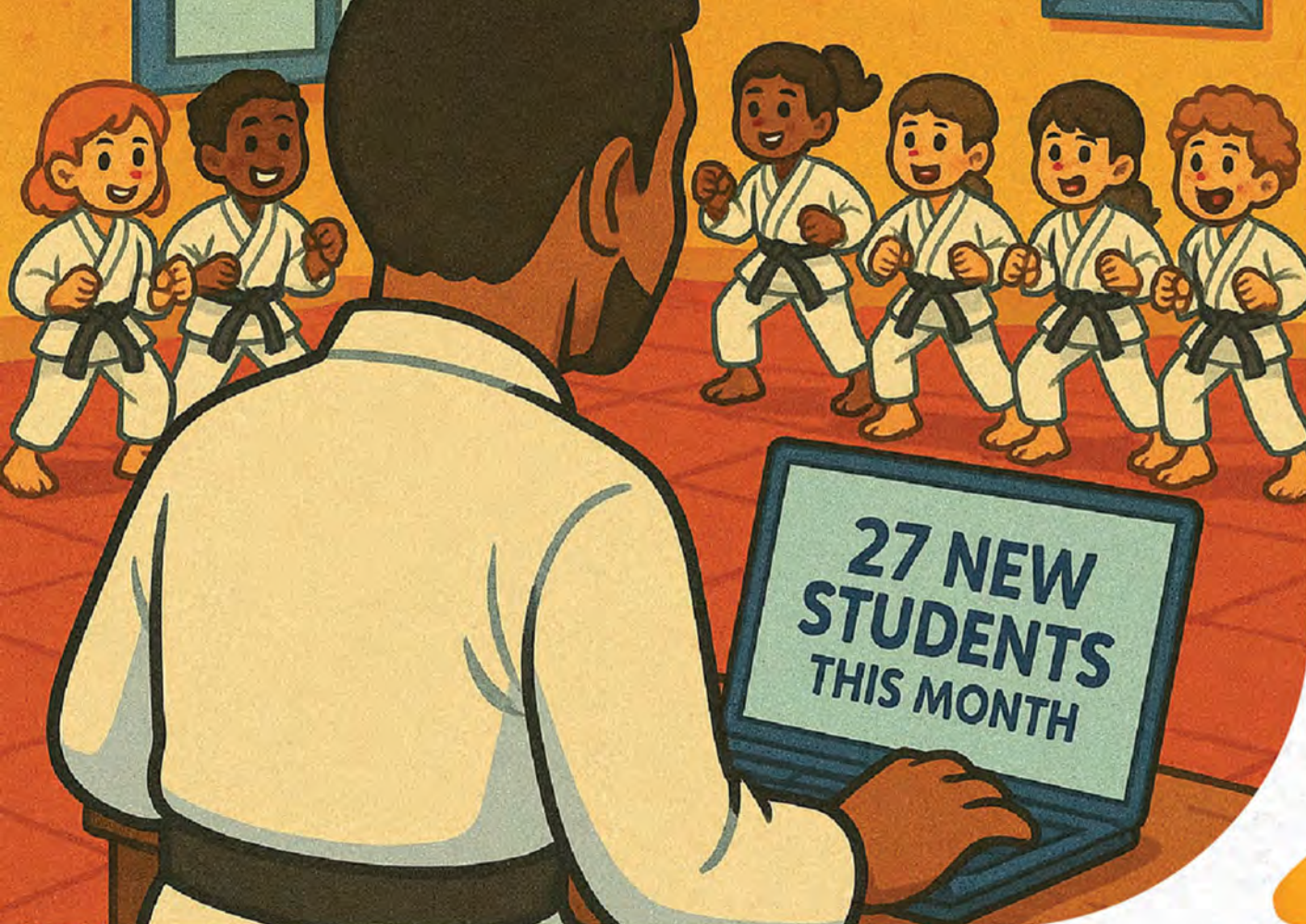
Summary

Sure, parenting a child with ADHD is demanding, but with this guidance and help from professionals and your martial arts instructor will be rewarding and even fun. By understanding what ADHD is, building structure at home, and providing support – your kids will have success, you'll have an easier home life where everyone gets along. Martial arts one of the most effective programs for ADHD, validated by both research and countless stories from families. Let's turn this challenge into grit, focus, persistence, and even becoming a leader!



About the Author

Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D., is the author of Parent Action Plan: ADHD! and a nationally recognized martial arts educator. He has combined decades of experience in psychology, education, and martial arts to help families and schools better support children with ADHD. As author, researcher, and instructor, Dr. Moody brings a unique perspective that bridges academic research and practical strategies for parents.



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Ed Parker: The Visionary Who Shaped Modern Martial Arts

By Go2 Karate

When you think of the great pioneers who shaped martial arts in the United States, one name towers above the rest—Edmund Kealoha Parker. More than just a master of punches and kicks, Parker was a visionary who took the traditions of Kenpo karate and reshaped them to meet the challenges of modern life. His journey from the streets of Honolulu to the heart of Hollywood is a story of innovation, friendship, and fierce dedication to personal growth.

Parker's humble beginnings in Hawaii gave him early insight into the reality of self-defense. Born on March 19, 1931, in Honolulu, Ed Parker grew up immersed in the rough-and-tumble world of street fighting, judo, and boxing. But his life changed dramatically when he met Frank Chow, who introduced him to Kenpo karate. Through Chow,

Parker came under the instruction of William K. S. Chow, a direct student of Kenpo master James Mitose. Parker earned his black belt in 1953 and quickly became known for his explosive style and no-nonsense approach to combat.

These early experiences on the streets of Hawaii had a lasting impact. Parker realized that many traditional martial arts forms weren't adaptable enough for the spontaneous and chaotic nature of real-life fights. His answer? Reinvent the art itself. "The true martial artist is not the one who fears change, but the one who causes it to happen," Parker often said. This commitment to innovation would become the foundation of a revolutionary new system.





As he transitioned from student to teacher, Parker began forging what would become known as American Kenpo Karate. After serving in the Coast Guard during the Korean War, he attended Brigham Young University in Utah and opened a small karate school in Provo in 1954—one of the first commercial dojos in the U.S. Two years later, he relocated to Pasadena, California, and opened a school that would remain in operation for decades.

From the very start, Parker emphasized a scientific and analytical approach to martial arts. He didn't just teach moves; he taught principles. Using physics and body mechanics, he refined techniques to maximize efficiency, speed, and impact. His new system, American Kenpo, focused on rapid-fire strikes and fluid motion, always with a practical self-defense mindset. "The man who knows how will always be the student, but the man who knows why will continue to be the instructor," Parker wrote, reinforcing his belief that deep understanding mattered more than blind repetition.

He also developed tools like the "Universal Pattern," a visual representation of motion and angles that helped students internalize movement. Parker

wasn't just building fighters—he was shaping thinkers, leaders, and confident individuals grounded in both skill and ethics.

Parker's decision to move to Southern California proved pivotal, placing him in the cultural center of a Hollywood that was just beginning to flirt with Eastern martial arts. With charisma, wisdom, and a dynamic fighting style, he quickly became the go-to instructor for celebrities. Time magazine dubbed him the "high priest and prophet of the Hollywood sect," highlighting his role as a martial arts ambassador to the stars.

One of the most legendary relationships of Parker's life began in 1960 when he gave a karate demonstration at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. As the crowd dispersed, a young man quietly introduced himself: "I don't think you know me, but my name is Elvis Presley." Elvis admired Parker's unique approach and said, "I can see you're a rebel in your field. I am a rebel, just as you are".

That chance encounter launched a 17-year friendship that would become one of the most enduring in both men's lives. Elvis began taking

LEGEND'S AND LEGACY'S

private lessons, often at midnight to avoid attention, either at Parker's Pasadena school or in Presley's Beverly Hills mansion. Far from being a demanding celebrity, Elvis was respectful, humble, and hungry to learn. Parker admired his focus and discipline, especially given the pressures that came with being one of the most famous men in the world.

Elvis had initially studied traditional karate while serving in the Army in Germany, but Parker's modern, fluid Kenpo style reignited his passion for the martial arts. To ensure that Elvis truly earned his black belt, Parker arranged for him to train under Sgt. Hank Slomanski, a tough Army instructor. After six weeks of grueling training, Slomanski approved the rank, and Parker officially awarded Elvis his first-degree black belt—not as a token of fame, but as a genuine achievement.

Their friendship deepened over the years. Parker became a trusted confidant, often traveling with Elvis as a protective companion. "I was not a paid bodyguard," Parker said. "I was there as family." Elvis referred to Parker as a "second daddy," a sign of the deep bond they shared.

Elvis often showed his appreciation with heartfelt gifts—among them, a custom Cadillac and the iconic cape and belt from his 1973 Aloha from Hawaii concert. He even had the Kenpo Karate Association logo sewn onto his guitars and stage costumes. For Parker, these were symbols of more than friendship—they were a testament to the values of loyalty and respect that he held dear.

But Parker didn't just shape individuals—he helped build a global martial arts community. In 1964, he launched the Long Beach International Karate Championships, which quickly became the most prestigious tournament in the world. It was at this event that Parker gave a young Bruce Lee a chance to perform. Lee's jaw-dropping demo, including the famous one-inch punch, captured the attention of Hollywood producers and led to his breakout role as Kato in *The Green Hornet*.

Parker had a keen eye for talent and used his platform to spotlight others. He mentored dozens of martial artists who would go on to global fame, including Benny "The Jet" Urquidez and Jeff Speakman. He also helped martial arts legends like Takayuki Kubota and Chuck Norris by supporting their careers and organizing their early events. His reach extended well beyond Kenpo, influencing karate, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts alike.

Equally important was Parker's role as a philosopher and author. Through books like *Kenpo Karate* and the *Infinite Insights into Kenpo* series, he laid out not just techniques but the deeper principles behind them. He believed that martial arts should develop the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. One of his most powerful teachings stated: "The man who is secure within himself has no need to prove anything



LEGEND'S AND LEGACY'S

with force, so he can walk away from a fight with dignity and pride. He is the true martial artist, a man so strong inside that he has no need to demonstrate his power”.

Parker's passing in 1990 at the age of 59 came as a shock to the martial arts world. But his legacy is alive and well. The International Kenpo Karate Association continues to promote his teachings globally. His senior black belts and students have carried his system into countless schools across the U.S. and beyond. Today, anyone who trains in American Kenpo carries a piece of Ed Parker's vision with them.

More than three decades after his death, Ed Parker remains a towering figure in martial arts—not just because of what he taught, but because of how he lived. He was a mentor to stars, a teacher to thousands, and a friend to those who needed one. His true genius lay in his ability to merge ancient wisdom with modern thinking, creating a martial art for the real world—an art that continues to evolve, inspire, and empower.

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More Than a Black Belt: A Veteran's Lifelong Mission to Lead and Inspire

By Go2 Karate

Betty grew up in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, a small town where community events and familiar faces were part of daily life. Athletic and energetic, she naturally caught the attention of military recruiters in high school, though she didn't initially plan to enlist. "At first I wasn't very interested," she recalls. "I thought life would just somehow fall into place after I graduated," but when it didn't, the military became the clear path. She enlisted in the Army at just 18 years old.

Her four years of service in the U.S. Army left a lasting impact on her outlook and approach to life, but they weren't her first brush with discipline and structure. That came even earlier, when she was just 12, and witnessed a martial arts demonstration during one of her town's annual celebrations. Captivated by the power, control, and artistry of Taekwondo, she begged to join, and her grandmother signed her up for classes as a birthday gift. "I was hooked from day one," she says.



A VETERAN'S CORNER



By the time Betty reported for basic training, she was already a second-degree black belt. She had a few Taekwondo patches on her bag, which didn't go unnoticed. "BIG mistake," she laughs. "The drill sergeant noticed and tried to smoke me. Fortunately, I was in tip-top shape, and he couldn't make me stop or quit, but I was definitely on their radar!" That early interaction became a defining moment, blending her martial arts discipline with the intensity of military training.

Interestingly, Betty believes both the military and martial arts have influenced each other in her life. Her early Taekwondo training already had a militaristic tone, answering up, immediate obedience, and push-ups as a form of correction. Now, as a veteran and instructor, she still brings that strong discipline to her classes, balancing it with patience and encouragement. "Most students love the extra discipline I demand in my Taekwondo classes," she explains.

The overlap between her military values and martial arts practice is undeniable. Discipline, respect, perseverance, integrity, courage, self-control, focus, and humility, all of these principles, she says, are essential to both paths. "You can't teach martial arts without having all of these principles in play."

Today, Betty continues to teach Taekwondo at her school several times a week, in addition to her own training. "I'm always trying to prepare myself and my students for what's next," she says. From organizing camps and seminars to preparing for tournaments and belt testings, she's constantly in motion. Outside the dojang, she finds joy in hiking, biking, and summer swimming days with her dog, finding balance in both solitude and community.

Martial arts play a huge role in her physical and mental wellness. Her instructors push her to keep learning and growing, and her regular visits to the VA confirm that what she's doing is working. "My doctors are always saying, 'Whatever you're doing to stay in shape, keep doing it!'"





When it comes to teaching, Betty takes a flexible approach. "If I'm teaching sparring, then I may be more of a coach, especially at the higher levels. But if it's forms or weapons, I'm more of a teacher. I tend to switch very easily depending on who I'm working with and what we're focusing on."

Her ultimate goal? To help her students become leaders in their own lives. "Learning and working out should be sometimes difficult, but also sometimes fun," she says. "I want them to aim higher, strive to be better, and never ever quit on anything meaningful to them. My students should be a star in their own lives."

Living in a military town, Betty often works with other veterans and military families. That connection runs deep. "It almost seems like we speak our own language... military language, no matter the branch," she says. "If I ever get to talk to a veteran, we always have so much in common. I feel truly blessed to be able to listen to and share our military experiences. I think it helps each of us vets get through some tougher times, just being around other people like them."

Looking back, she's grateful for the impact both the military and martial arts have had on her life. "The military turned me into someone who's served and loves her country. It made me care about what the men and women truly do for our country and those people in it. Martial arts gave me a place to share that strength and discipline."

The most important lesson she's taken from both journeys? Resilience and constant improvement. "It's about the ability to push through challenges, both on and off the mat or on and off the field, and genuinely caring about the person to your right or left, no matter who they are."

If she could offer one piece of advice to young martial artists or new veterans, it would be this: "Focus on building a strong foundation. Master the basics of whatever it is you're working on before moving on to more advanced skills or knowledge."

Through every step, whether in boots or barefoot on the mat, Betty embodies what it means to lead with strength, humility, and purpose.

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A Day in the Life of A Master

By Susan Gartski

Every day I wake up early, grateful for another chance to do what I love and to live the life I worked so hard to create. My morning ritual is simple. I look out my window, thank God for the beautiful day, and write down my list of tasks. One of my mentors once told me to “eat the frog first,” so I tackle the task I least want to do right away.

I’ve always believed that a neat space means a clear mind. If my house isn’t in order, my thoughts feel cluttered, and I may struggle to focus. Before doing anything else, I tidy up and ensure everything is in its place. Then I check emails, return calls, and head out to my garage for a workout.

The garage is my sanctuary. I put some music on and get into my training. I have a quote on the wall by Miyamoto Musashi that states, “If you are a warrior then you are a warrior...do not be false to yourself” It gives me inspiration as I begin my workout. I had to start using a timer since I tend to spend too much time there.

My husband recently retired, and one of the best changes is being able to have lunch together every day. This is one of the highlights of my day.

Whenever I can, I practice piano, singing, and even a little Portuguese. My mom has Alzheimer’s, and seeing her journey has made me more aware of keeping my brain sharp.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MASTER



After lunch, I prepare for work: planning my classes, confirming appointments, and attending to social media. Then I head out to my training center which is just a few blocks away. It used to be a Chicago Public Library. It feels surreal to teach in the same building where I used to read to my kids.

Balancing my personal life with running a business wasn't easy at first. I used to fight the feeling of "always working," but I've learned to embrace it, since it really is a part of me. My family has always been supportive, and we all take pride in what I've built.

These days, I spend more time training than teaching. My goal was always to develop a trusted team of strong instructors as I get older. This way, I can step back and focus on growing the school. It is very exciting. I still teach my own classes. I keep all of my class plans as a resource, some dating back to 1999. Every so often I look back at them and think, "Wow, that was a good one!"

I believe it's important to lead by example. Teaching and training keeps me sharp. I make sure to train

every day. Every demo, every punch and kick shows my students that you can always keep going forward, no matter your age or level.

Mentorship is a big part of what I do. I know how it feels to struggle, to make mistakes, and to feel discouraged. I remember what it felt like to teach in front of my mentor and get told I was doing it wrong. I also know how it feels to be a student who just can't get a move right. Those memories help me approach my students and staff with direction, kindness and encouragement.

I'm proud of the culture we've created at the school. Everyone who walks in feels welcome and supported. There's no judgment or intimidation, just people helping each other grow stronger and more confident.

What most students don't realize is that I still train very hard each day, behind the scenes. Since 2001, I've done the Bas Rutten Fighting series almost every single day. A few years ago, I even challenged my students to work up to 21 rounds with me.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MASTER

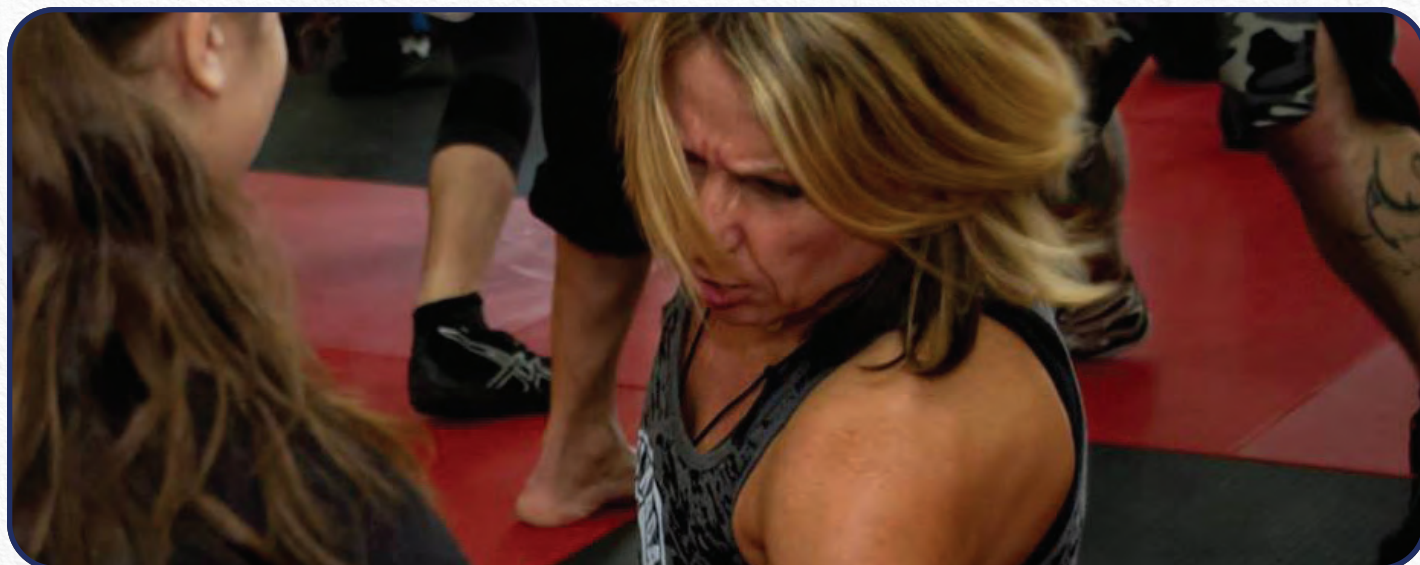
Together we proved to ourselves that we're stronger than we thought.

Over the years, my understanding of martial arts has changed. I used to see it as a sport, a form of self-expression, even a spiritual practice. Now I see it more simply. It's about getting home safe, being strong, confident and aware.

What keeps me motivated is seeing the transformations in my students. Someone comes in unsure of themselves and leaves with confidence, and strength. That never gets old.

The best part of my day is coming home after teaching great classes, sitting down with my husband, having dinner, and watching a show together. That moment of accomplishment and satisfaction at the end of the day is everything.

If I could give one piece of advice to anyone starting out on this path, it would be this: don't stop! You'll never know how far you could have come. Martial arts is training for life.



Susan Garstki is the Midwest's highest-level certified female Krav Maga Worldwide Expert Instructor, with over 40 years of teaching experience. She has trained under world-renowned masters, earning certifications in Krav Maga, Haganah/F.I.G.H.T., Commando Krav Maga, and the Raven Method. A 2nd degree black belt in Shorei Goju Karate and an Official USA Boxing Coach, Sue has been inducted into the U.S.A. Martial Arts Hall of Fame multiple times and named Krav Maga Expert of the Year. She works with the Chicago Police Department, schools, and community organizations, empowering others through self-defense, fitness, and women's safety advocacy.



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If you're looking for a school led by true martial arts visionaries, seek out the Go2 Karate BEST Business Award. This honor highlights institutions committed to sharing martial arts knowledge on a grand scale. By proudly displaying this award, these schools demonstrate their devotion to educating their entire community, both through their physical academy and their online platform.

Master Colby Winkler, Author and Instructor

By Rev Publish

Master Colby Winkler has spent years shaping the minds, bodies, and character of his students through martial arts. As both an instructor and a mentor, he has seen firsthand how the principles of discipline, focus, and perseverance transform children's lives—not just in the dojo, but in school, at home, and into adulthood. Now, in his debut book, *Unlocking Discipline: Parents' Secrets to Building Strong, Happy, and Successful Kids*, published by Rev Publish, Master Winkler shares his proven strategies so parents everywhere can help their children develop these essential traits.

Rooted in both professional expertise and personal experience, the book offers a practical roadmap for building qualities that lead to long-term success. Master Winkler begins by explaining why discipline and focus are more than just desirable traits—they are the cornerstones of resilience, emotional stability, and achievement. Drawing from years of teaching martial arts, he illustrates how children who master self-discipline are better equipped to handle academic challenges, navigate social situations, and overcome life's inevitable setbacks.



The book's structure guides parents through a logical progression: developing discipline, cultivating focus, and ultimately building follow-through—the ability to see commitments through to completion. Each section is packed with actionable advice, including setting clear expectations, using positive reinforcement effectively, and establishing consistent routines. Master Winkler doesn't just tell parents what to do; he explains why these methods work and how to adapt them for different personalities and family dynamics.

Interwoven throughout are insights from the martial arts world. Master Winkler emphasizes how training in a structured, respectful environment reinforces lessons that children can apply in any setting. Whether it's adhering to class routines, striving for the next belt, or practicing a difficult technique until it's mastered, martial arts becomes a powerful metaphor—and a practical training ground—for life.

A standout feature of *Unlocking Discipline* is its emphasis on balance. Master Winkler reminds parents that discipline isn't about rigid control; it's about teaching children to manage themselves.

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

By blending external guidance with opportunities for independent decision-making, parents can help their children develop both confidence and accountability.

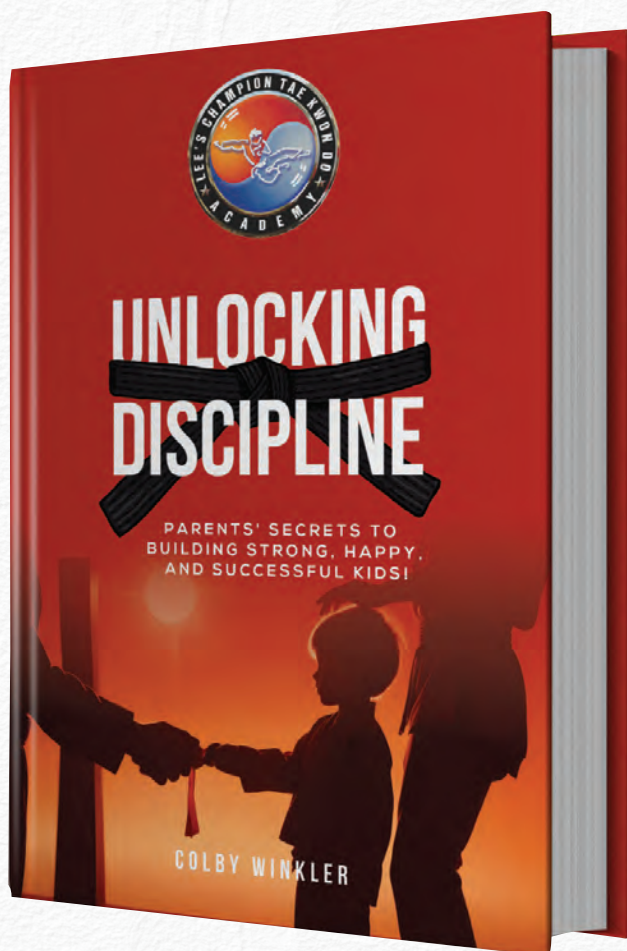
The book also addresses modern challenges, such as digital distractions and overstimulation, providing realistic strategies for helping children regain their attention spans. In an era where devices compete for every moment of focus, Master Winkler's techniques for fostering deep concentration are especially timely.

Ultimately, *Unlocking Discipline* is more than a parenting manual—it's a call to action. Master

Winkler's message is clear: raising strong, happy, and successful kids is possible when parents

commit to teaching discipline, modeling focus, and encouraging persistence. The habits formed in childhood, he argues, lay the foundation for adult success, and it's never too early to start.

With warmth, authority, and a teacher's clarity, Master Colby Winkler offers parents the tools to help their children grow into resilient, capable, and confident adults. *Unlocking Discipline: Parents' Secrets to Building Strong, Happy, and Successful Kids* is available now on Amazon, ready to inspire families to embrace the principles that lead to lifelong achievement.



Master Colby Winkler is a 6th-Degree TaeKwonDo Master and founder of Lee's Champion TaeKwonDo Academy in Mankato, Minnesota. For more than 25 years, he has inspired students to grow in confidence, focus, and discipline through martial arts. Passionate about helping families, he recently authored *Unlocking Discipline: Parents' Secrets to Building Strong, Happy, and Successful Kids!*, a book that shares practical lessons parents can use to guide their children toward success in life.

In Memoriam

Honoring the Martial Artists We've Lost

In 2025, we bid farewell to martial arts legends—teachers, pioneers, and visionaries whose impact transcended borders and styles. Go2 Karate Magazine honors their memory, celebrates their legacy, and extends heartfelt condolences to their students, families, and the communities they touched.



TAYLOR TULI WILY

JUNE 14, 1968 – JUNE 20, 2024

An American sumo wrestler turned mixed martial artist and actor (known from Hawaii Five-O, Forgetting Sarah Marshall). He competed in UFC 1 and reached the makushita 2 division in sumo. Wily died in Hurricane, Utah of natural causes at age 56.



HIROMITSU MIURA

SEPTEMBER 22, 1981 – OCTOBER 16, 2024

A Japanese mixed martial artist and former boxer, ranked in super-middleweight boxing and MMA. Miura passed away from acute leukemia at age 43.



GEANE CARLOS HERRERA

MAY 27, 1990 – MAY 18, 2024

American UFC flyweight and bare-knuckle fighter, known as “The Revolutionary.” He was killed in a motorcycle accident in Tampa at age 33.

IN MEMORIAM



FOREST CHAN DICK HARK

OCTOBER 4, 1947 – MARCH 15, 2024

Hong Kong martial arts actor and TVB martial arts choreographer. He died from pneumonia at age 76.



PETER KWONG

1951 – MAY 2025 AT 73

Martial artist, actor, choreographer, and activist, best known for roles in Big Trouble in Little China and The Golden Child. He passed away peacefully in his sleep at age 73.



SAN KIM SEAN

MARCH 24, 1945 – JUNE 3, 2025

Renowned Cambodian grandmaster who revived the ancient martial art Bokator and founded its modern federation. Often called the father of modern Bokator, he died of a heart attack at age 80.

ECHOES OF THEIR IMPACT

The loss of these masters leaves us with both grief and gratitude. Their teachings echo each time a student bows onto the floor, finds courage in a sparring round, or chooses respect over rage. As we move through 2025, and as Go2 Karate continues its mission of uniting the martial arts community, let us honor their memory by:

Practicing with the sincerity they demanded.

Sharing knowledge freely, as they did.

Serving our own students and neighborhoods with the same passion for personal growth and service.

May we train harder, live kinder, and bow a little deeper—because giants once stood where we now stand.

Last updated August 25, 2025. If you know of another martial artist who has passed this year and should be remembered, please contact the editors at Go2 Karate Magazine.

Top 5 Martial Arts Movies for Kids – and the Life Lessons They Teach

By Go2 Karate

Martial arts movies aren't just about punches and kicks. They're about learning important life lessons—like never giving up, believing in yourself, and helping others. Here are five of the best kids' martial arts movies and what they can teach us.

1. The Karate Kid (1984)

Life Skills: Perseverance, Respect, Mentorship
This classic is all about Daniel, a kid who learns karate from Mr. Miyagi. At first, Daniel thinks chores like “wax on, wax off” are silly—but they're really teaching him patience and perseverance. He learns to respect his teacher, respect himself, and never give up, even when life is tough.



2. Kung Fu Panda (2008)

Life Skills: Self-Belief, Resilience, Individuality
Po, the lovable panda, doesn't look like a hero. He's clumsy and gets laughed at a lot. But by believing in himself, Po proves that anyone can do amazing things. His story teaches kids to bounce back when things go wrong, and to be proud of who they are.



3. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (1990)

Life Skills: Brotherhood, Loyalty, Responsibility
Leo, Raph, Donnie, and Mikey show that even though they're very different, they're strongest when they stick together. They fight for what's

LATEST MOVIES & TRENDS

right, protect their city, and always look out for each other. The turtles teach kids about teamwork, loyalty, and using their skills to help others.



4. 3 Ninjas (1992)

Life Skills: Teamwork, Cooperation, Family Bonds
Three brothers—Rocky, Colt, and Tum-Tum—train with their grandpa and use their karate skills to take on the bad guys. Their biggest lesson? Teamwork. The brothers only win when they cooperate and trust each other. The movie shows kids how important family and working together really are.



5. Sidekicks (1992)

Life Skills: Confidence, Overcoming Self-Doubt, Role Models. Barry has asthma, gets bullied, and doesn't believe in himself. But with martial arts training and the inspiration of his hero Chuck Norris, he finds confidence and courage. Sidekicks teaches kids that even when you doubt yourself, you can grow stronger with practice, patience, and a little inspiration.



The Big Picture

These movies are fun to watch, but they're also filled with lessons kids can use in everyday life—perseverance, confidence, teamwork, and responsibility. Martial arts on screen (and in real life) is about much more than fighting. It's about becoming the best version of yourself. If you haven't seen one, or any of them yet, we encourage you to view them when you can.

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A Study of Sparring

By Cesar Ozuna

1. What is Sparring?
2. Why do we practice Sparring?
3. What Concepts are involved in Sparring?
4. Teaching Methods for the Concepts of Sparring

What is Sparring?

It is the exchange of techniques between two opponents; the decision of movements is directly related to the opponent's action; therefore, it is a relative action.

Why do we practice Sparring?

Sparring is a practical application of self-defense; we practice sparring because we want to learn effective fighting techniques. Once the ability to fight is developed, it can be utilized for both

defense and aggression. Our philosophy in martial arts is to utilize it for self-defense.

Self-defense is the protection of oneself, loved ones, properties, or belongings, used to counter an attack, a threat made by an enemy or unidentified object. A threat occurs when something invades our free will (mental attack) or invades our physical space (physical attack); therefore, we must learn to protect our mental and physical private space.

What Concepts are involved in Sparring?

Understanding distance: every person and community has limits, borders, and space that are relative to the type of threat. A person also has an invisible private safe zone. As long as that space is not threatened, we feel secure and comfortable.





Ability to establish and maintain distance. In Sparring, maintaining the right distance is crucial. We must be far enough to protect ourselves but close enough to be in control.

- **Distance:** The point where two private points meet.
- **Read the opponent:** To act or react accordingly it is essential to understand the opponent's actions and reactions. We must develop the ability to measure his abilities and habits to anticipate his movements.
- **Defensive techniques:** When being attacked, there are three options: counterattack, evade, or block. Knowing the opponent's abilities will help us decide which one to use.
- **Offensive techniques:** Every offensive technique we decide to use must be done with the goal to terminate the threat

Teaching Methods for the Concepts of Sparring

- **Understanding distance:** The private space is determined by the type of weapon used by the attacker, their speed, and other factors. Martial arts are limited to Kicks, Strikes, some weapons, and have to do with the attacker's Height, reach, speed, and reflexes.
- **Establishing Distance:** The first thing needed is to dominate and adjust our position using different steps: Static, jumping in the same place, changing to sides, double step forward, double step backward, step forward and drag back leg, step backward and drag front leg, step forward, step backward, slide forward, slide backward, shuffle etc.
- **Judging distance:** Spar, freeze, and confirm distance, repeat. Attack and retreat with combinations, counting, no counting, repeat.

SPARRING

- **Reading Opponent:** Weight distribution: if leaning forward, will attack and use number 2 kick (back leg), reverse punch. If leaning backward, will evade and use a number 1 kick (front leg), punch, or back fist. If in a balanced position, the opponent is in a neutral standing, it can go either way. If the moving front leg is ready to attack, if the moving back leg is ready to counterattack or evade.
- **Habits of the opponent:** Every human being acts by habits. A fighter has a favorite leg, hand, technique, combination, and fake that give us an indication of their next move or attack. These habits and techniques of the opponent can be our best allies and weapons against him/her.

Some general rules to help you with sparring:

- If the opponent is good with their hands, kick.
- If they are good with kicks, evade, block, and use your hands.
- If you are kicking and the opponent does nothing, keep on kicking.
- Attack all circular kicks.
- Block all linear kicks.
- Use block sections 1 and 2 for all punches and high kicks.
- Use blocks 3 and 4 for front kicks, sidekicks, and all low-section kicks.
- A block is not a block unless it redirects the attacker's technique, it must break



their balance, and do not attack after an unsuccessful block.

- If your block or punch reaches the goal, then kick.
- Never step back more than one step at a time. If you must, drag your leg; this reduces the distance, and then adjust.
- Always step back diagonally, not straight back.
- Look at your opponent's breathing.

If inhaling is hard and exhaling is easy, be ready to attack.

- If the opponent is too close and plans to use the front leg, shorten the distance by getting closer to make it harder for the opponent to attack.

“Sparring is more than a contest of techniques” and add “By mastering these principles, we ensure sparring remains not just a drill, but a pathway to true self-defense and personal growth...”

Sparring is more than a contest of techniques—it's a disciplined practice of distance, timing, and strategy that sharpens both body and mind. By mastering these principles, we ensure sparring remains not just a drill, but a pathway to true self-defense and personal growth.

Most students of the martial



Grand Master Ozuna, born in San Pedro, Paraguay in 1958, is a distinguished martial artist and founder of the Songahm Taekwondo Federation (STF), which unites over 200 schools across 10 South American countries. With a career spanning over four decades, he has significantly influenced martial arts globally, especially after relocating to South Florida in 1997 where he opened six ATA schools. Under his guidance, more than 300 instructors and numerous black belts—including his three daughters—have flourished worldwide. He holds multiple high-ranking black belts, including Grand Master certifications in Moo Duk Kwan and Songahm Taekwondo, and an extensive background in international business and finance. Multilingual and internationally experienced, Grand Master Ozuna is a respected leader shaping martial arts education across continents.



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Key Variations and Approaches to Krav Maga

By Michael Brown

arts will be familiar with Krav Maga. Its philosophy is common knowledge amongst this crowd, and most of them would be able to give a fair description of what Krav Maga is. They would know that it is a self-defense system developed by the Israeli military, emphasizing practical techniques for real-world situations. Its approach combines elements from various martial arts, focusing on instinctive movements and quick responses to threats. It differs from traditional martial arts, which often follow a set of rules and forms, and is designed for effectiveness in life-threatening scenarios. Krav Maga is a dynamic system that empowers

practitioners to defend themselves against armed and unarmed attackers, fostering confidence and resilience. What can be harder to understand is that there are significant differences among Krav Maga practitioners. That is what we will be addressing today.

I come from a large family. The average number of people at our Thanksgiving meal each year is around 40! I have 26 nieces and nephews. One year, we served three turkeys! We are a very diverse group. Family members will travel from Singapore, Spain, and all over the United States.



This large family includes a wide range of personalities and backgrounds. They live in different cultures and hold unique worldviews, and there are even some different religions. We are, however, unified in the emphasis we put on family and the love that we share.

Martial arts is like this. I conducted a Google search on the various styles of Karate and lost count when I reached over 50. Through these different styles, there were countless offshoots and variations. Krav Maga is no different. Let us take a look.

- **Military Krav Maga:** This style concentrates on techniques and tactics optimized for military personnel in combat situations. The motto of the IDF, or Israel Defense Force, emphasizes, "Tough in training, easy in combat." There are significant differences in training methods between IDF Krav Maga and civilian practices. In the IDF, Krav Maga serves as a broad term for training that focuses on cultivating mental toughness and aggression beyond the use of weaponry. The training may involve rigorous physical challenges, Pugil Stick training, and might incorporate techniques from various martial arts like Muay Thai. The emphasis is on developing a mindset that prioritizes mental toughness over specific techniques. This mental toughness is indicative of Krav Maga training as a whole but is especially important in military training. An example would be Special Forces training in the United States. If you were to interview a Green Beret, SEAL, or Marine Raider, you would find different mission training parameters, but they would be unified in how they would have a mentality of 'No quit!' This is also indicative of how the IDF works. It has been said by an IDF member of their Krav Maga, "it is 90% mindset and 10% technique."

- **Law Enforcement Krav Maga:** Law enforcement threat neutralization training focuses on equipping officers with the skills and knowledge to safely and effectively stop or eliminate an immediate danger, typically by disarming, disabling, or deterring a threat. This training is crucial for police officers to respond effectively to dangerous situations, ensuring the safety of themselves, the public, and the individual posing the threat. Tailored for police and security personnel, this style focuses on techniques relevant to arrests, control, and managing potentially dangerous individuals in law enforcement contexts. Overall, Law Enforcement Krav Maga training aims to enhance officer safety, improve decision-making, and provide effective tools for managing a wide range of situations while upholding the law. An important consideration in Law Enforcement Krav Maga is the rules of engagement that officers must follow. For instance, choke holds in many states are not allowed. This became national news in 2014 when Eric Gardner died from a chokehold from a police officer in Staten Island, New York. Because of this situation and others like it, choke holds and "dangerous striking techniques" have been banned from most law enforcement agencies.
- **Civilian Krav Maga:** This is the most widely practiced form of Krav Maga, adapted for self-defense by civilians of all ages and fitness levels. Grounded in real-world scenarios, the techniques are practical and applicable to everyday situations. Civilian Krav Maga teaches defenses against common attacks and emphasizes adaptability to various environments and circumstances. The techniques are designed to be simple and easy to learn, focusing on natural movements and instinctive reactions, allowing



practitioners to quickly acquire and effectively use the techniques under stress. Simplicity is a vital aspect of effective self-defense; hence, instructors aim to teach moves that are straightforward, practical, and memorable. There is no room for limiting the Rules of Engagement in personal self-defense.

The differences that you find in Krav Maga will largely be dependent on what the mission is. Whether it is a soldier whose mission is killing the enemy on the battlefield, an officer arresting a violent protester, or a civilian defending him/herself from an assault on the street, the difference will be found in what your objective is. The objective will be what drives your training. What becomes apparent, however, is what unifies these different groups. Krav Maga is practical, efficient, realistic, and adaptable to your specific mission!

Train Realistically and Stay Safe.



Michael Brown is an author, eighth-degree black belt, and Master Instructor of Taekwondo. He is a certified instructor under Krav Maga Worldwide and Warrior Krav Maga. He has been serving his community in self-defense training for over 30 years. Michael enjoys working with the Military, law enforcement, and civilians in the Fort Bragg area. He is a two-time world champion in sparring and a former Captain in the United States Marine Corps. He is a firearm safety expert and instructs students in Advanced Concealed Carry techniques. He trains church Safety Teams in his spare time, and he enjoys teaching alongside his wife, Master Kimberly Brown, and son Michael. More information can be found at PunchNKick.com and KravMagaTactics.com.

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The Timeless Power of Pressure

By Travis Tooke

When I began my journey in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu twenty-seven years ago, I was like most young practitioners—hungry to prove myself through speed, power, and relentless motion. I loved the feeling of scrambling, outpacing my opponent, and forcing positions through sheer will and athleticism. In my mind, domination meant movement. If I wasn't moving, I wasn't winning.

But the longer I trained, the more I began to feel something different—something slower, heavier, and infinitely more difficult to escape from. It was the kind of pressure that made you question everything, not aggressive or frantic but deliberate and suffocating. And it came most often from my coach, Master Carlos Machado.

As a teenager, rolling with Carlos was both inspiring and exhausting. He didn't muscle his way through techniques or blitz his opponents. Instead, he melted into you—his weight magnified by perfect positioning and timing. What amazed me wasn't just how effective he was, it was how easy he made it look. I would struggle, twist, bridge, and flail, but nothing worked. His control was quiet, but absolute. The match always ended the same way: with me trapped, frustrated, tapping out, and learning.

Years later, I felt that same sensation training with legends like Saulo and Xande Ribeiro. What struck me wasn't their speed or explosiveness, it was how heavy they felt. These were not massive men, yet they could turn a simple cross-face into a prison. Their mastery didn't rely on overwhelming force



but on deep understanding. They weren't faster than their opponents. They weren't even necessarily stronger. But they were always ahead, and they never gave space away for free.

That's the art of pressure.

In the early stages of training, most people chase the wrong attributes. It's easy to fall in love with speed, power, and slick movements.



They give you results, especially against less experienced opponents. There is nothing wrong with using your athleticism when appropriate, but over time, those attributes fade. Speed slows. Strength wanes. Athleticism is becoming harder to maintain. What endures, what transcends age, is control, and control is rooted in pressure.

Pressure in Jiu-Jitsu isn't just about pushing down on someone. It's about connection. It's about taking away space, little by little, until your opponent no longer has choices. It's about learning how to become heavier without adding weight—how to align your body with gravity in a way that makes every breath, every movement, a struggle for the person underneath you.

There's a philosophy behind pressure that mirrors life itself: doing less but doing it better. Not rushing but remaining present. Letting go of wasted motion and learning to make every inch count. When you

train with pressure as your foundation, you begin to develop a sense of stillness in your game. You stop chasing submissions and start building inevitability. Submissions no longer feel like attacks; they feel like conclusions.

When I teach my students today, I emphasize pressure not just as a technique, but as a mindset. It's easy to teach an armbar or a guard pass. It's much harder to teach how to become immovable. I want my students to learn early what took me years to understand—that true dominance on the mat is not about force, but about inevitability.

Some of the greatest moments in my own training have been the quietest ones. Those moments when I realized that I didn't have to rush. That I could feel my opponent's breath, sense the shift in their posture, and adjust my weight just enough to collapse their frame. That's where Jiu-Jitsu really begins—not in the chaos, but in the calm.

JIU-JITSU

What's beautiful about pressure is that it allows you to age with grace in this art. I've been teaching for over twenty years now, and though my body isn't as fast or resilient as it once was, my Jiu-Jitsu has never felt stronger. I don't need to beat people with speed. I don't need to explode out of bad positions. I've learned to trust my connection, to use gravity, to control the rhythm of the roll. When you can control the rhythm, you can control the outcome.

I often tell my students: if you want to win now, use speed and strength, but if you want to win forever, learn pressure.

That's the gift Jiu-Jitsu gives us—not just a set of techniques, but a deeper understanding of how to move through the world. With patience. With purpose. With pressure.

Because in the end, it's not about how fast you can move, it's about how still you can make your opponent feel.



Professor Travis Tooke is a 5th-degree Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu black belt and the owner of Team Tooke Martial Arts Academy in Houston, Texas. With over 27 years of training and two decades of teaching experience, he continues to share the deeper philosophy of Jiu-Jitsu with students of all ages and backgrounds.



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How Nutrition Supports Focus, Mood & Resilience

By Lisa Agens

One of the many benefits of Martial Arts is the practice of focus and resilience. Whether you are learning and practicing martial arts for fitness, competition, or self-defense, it all starts in your mind. Learning and improving techniques, maintaining composure and discipline, and practicing mindfulness are all skills you use on and off the mat and can be carried through to your day-to-day life.

How you approach your nutrition can be a vital tool in supporting your focus, resilience, and overall mood, which often translates into better performance. Your brain is just like any organ in your body; treat it well, and it will serve you well. The nutrients you gain from proper nutrition are the foundation for your body's ability to function and function well.

Nutrition and Focus

Your brain uses about 20% of your body's energy. That is somewhere between 200 and 500 calories, depending on your size. Glucose is the main energy source for your brain, but it is not the only one, so making sure your brain is "fed" is just as important as feeding the rest of your body. Healthier nutritional choices are associated with overall improved focus.

There are some key nutrients that help with overall brain health.

- **Omega-3 fatty acids (DHA & EPA):** These are found in fatty fish as well as flaxseeds,

nut butters, hemp seeds and some nuts, like walnuts. These seeds and nuts are calorically dense for the nutrients and serving sizes, can lead to overeating, and are higher in carbs than some people can fit into their diets. Omega-3 is integral in brain development as well as cognitive function. It helps us process information quicker, improve learning and focus, and reduce brain inflammation, which can improve mood.

- **Protein & Amino Acids:** Not only does protein build muscle, but helps build neurotransmitters, which affect mood, focus, and cognitive abilities.
- **B vitamins (B6, B9(Folate), B12):** B Vitamins help with energy production, signaling, synthesis and repair. They also lower your risk of depression. B Vitamins are found in animal protein, seafood, leafy greens, and eggs, to name just a few.
- **Antioxidants Vitamins C, E, and Beta-carotene:** Antioxidants are not only a defense system against oxidation within the brain but also in the repair process. Many foods, like citrus, leafy greens, almonds, and carrots, provide these antioxidants, and the best way to see what you eat and how it reflects these nutrients is to use a food tracker app to break down your food into nutrients.
- **Iron and Zinc:** Iron and Zinc are vital

for memory, attention, and information processing. There are two types of iron: heme and nonheme. Plants and fortified foods have NONheme iron and animal protein, like lean meats and seafood, have both nonheme and heme iron. Understanding there are two types of iron is important because heme iron has higher bioavailability (better absorbed by your body) than nonheme iron. As with Iron, Zinc supports brain functions but also the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which help our mood.

- **Healthy Fats:** Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are considered “good fats” and important in brain health. We already talked about Omega-3, but other healthy fats are important, too. Avocado, Olive Oil, and certain nuts and seeds can help boost healthy fats. These fats play not just structural roles in brain health but functional roles. They help us process information and emotions as well as work with neurons.
- **Carbohydrate Balance:** Glucose, the main energy source for your brain, is derived from carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are in virtually every food. Depending on your source of carbohydrates, complex (whole grains, veggies, etc.) or simple (refined foods and sugars), you could be helping or harming your overall health, including your brain. Complex carbohydrates are preferred, overall, as they will help keep blood sugars more stable.
- **Hydration and Cognition:** As athletes who tend to sweat, there should be emphasis put on Hydration & Electrolytes. Being deficient in hydration & electrolytes can lead to lethargy, fatigue, decreased coordination, and brain fog. For more on Hydration and Electrolytes, check out Volume 2, Issue 1 of Go2 Karate Magazine.

Iron Rich Foods



Per 100g raw except where indicated
Not a complete list

Proteins

Beef Liver 4.9mg Sardines 1.7mg
Beef, Flank 1.6mg Canned Tuna 1.5mg
Raw Egg 1.2mg Chicken, Dark .8mg
Pork Loin .5mg Shrimp .5mg
Chicken Breast .4mg

Vegetables

Spinach 2.7mg
Broccoli .7mg
Tomato .3mg

Other Carbohydrates

Kidney Beans, canned 1.5mg
Pinto Beans, canned 1.3mg
Garbanzo Beans, canned 1mg
Potato .8mg
Butternut Squash .7mg
Sweet Potato .6mg



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Nutrition and Mood

Many of the nutrients found in food create various parts of our body. Neurotransmitters are one thing that is greatly supported by nutrition. Serotonin and Dopamine are two “Happy Hormones.”

- Tryptophan is a precursor and the building block for Serotonin. Tryptophan is an Essential Amino Acid and is found in foods like poultry, eggs, and soy. Our bodies cannot make tryptophan, so we must get it from our diet. Serotonin is the neurotransmitter/hormone that helps regulate your mood as well as your sleep, appetite, digestion, learning ability, and memory. Serotonin also helps suppress appetite!
- Tyrosine is a precursor to Dopamine. Tyrosine is also an Amino Acid found in animal proteins. It can be created by the body from phenylalanine. Dopamine is the “feel-good” neurotransmitter/hormone and is an important part of your brain’s reward system. It’s associated with pleasurable sensations, learning, memory, and more. Dopamine can be “addicting” (good or bad) and is short-lived, leaving you wanting more.

Nutrition and Resilience

When we think of resilience, we often think, “how well do I bounce back?” That ability to “bounce back” is not just physical but also mental. Our stress responses, inflammation, ability to heal, and our ability to recover all can be supported by our nutrition.

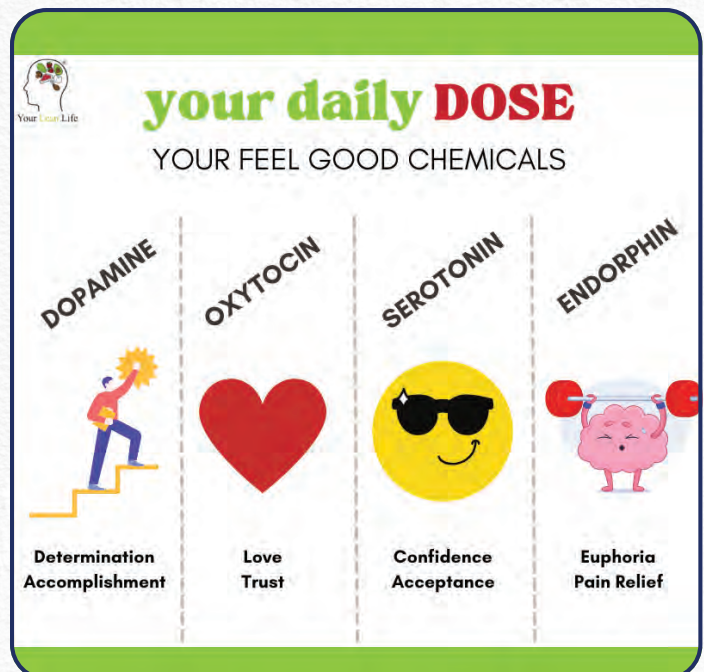
- Vitamin C, B-complex, and Magnesium help modulate the body’s stress response.
- Chronic inflammation impairs mental and physical resilience, so foods rich in antioxidants combat oxidative stress.
- Protein provides amino acids that support brain and muscle repair and recovery.
- Nutrition affects circadian rhythm, melatonin production, and quality of rest.

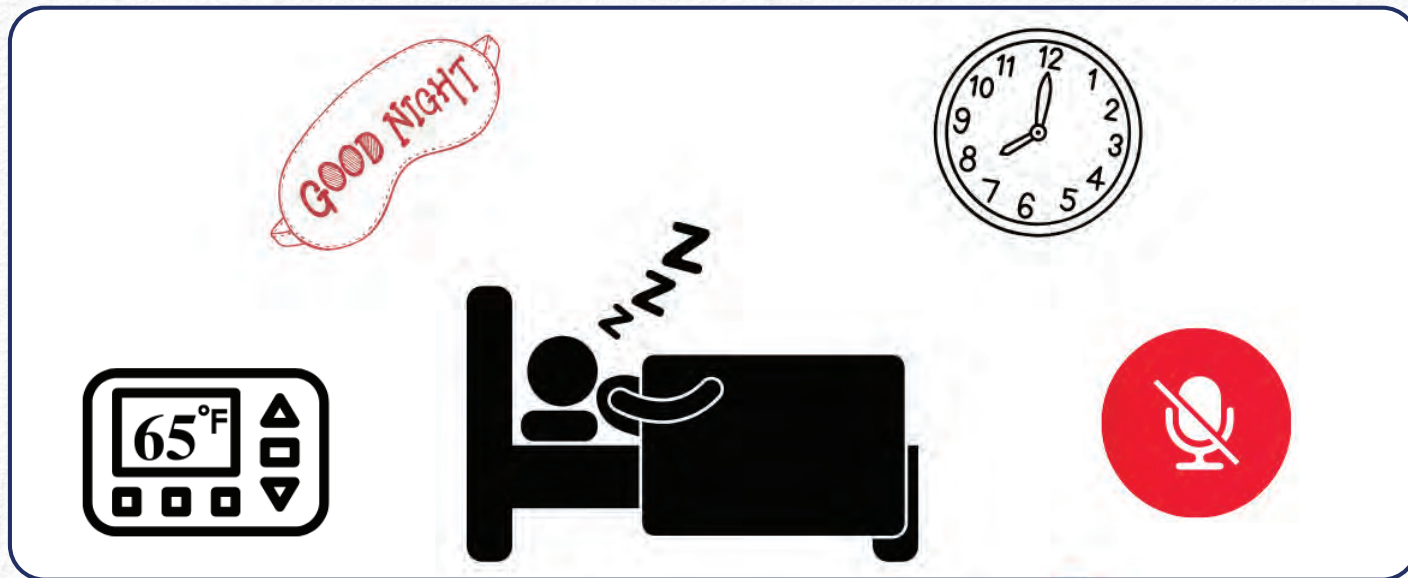
How well you treat your body outside training, nutrition, stress management, sleep management, and recovery management will undoubtedly improve your performance in training.

Daily Diet Tips:

Eat a variety of whole, minimally processed with limited processed foods.

- What is “whole food”? They are typically foods that have not been processed or minimally processed, and some may be processed but not through refining or had ingredients added to them. You want to eat as close to its origin as possible.
- Unprocessed or Minimally Processed Foods include the natural edible food parts of plants and animals.
- Processed Foods may have added salt, sugar, or fats, but are, in essence, 2-3 ingredients, possibly ready to be eaten and still close to a whole food.





- Ultra or Highly Processed Foods incorporate salt, sweeteners, fat, artificial colors and flavors, and preservatives that promote shelf stability, preserve texture, and increase palatability with several processing steps and are usually “ready to eat.”

Include sources of lean protein, lots of vegetables, healthy fats, and some complex carbohydrates, and stay hydrated, including electrolytes, and limit caffeine/sugar.

Mindful Eating:

When planning your food or eating your food, be intentional. Understand what you are eating and why you are eating it. What is the food providing

you, and is it actually meeting your needs, or are you making justifications?

Supplementation (if needed):

Use responsibly under medical guidance. Make food your priority for macro and micronutrients.

Your focus, mood, and resilience can all be supported with nutrition and minimal supplementation. If you are already in good training habits, you may be surprised by just how much better you can cope with your training and recovery when you turn your attention to how you are fueling your body. You are the sum of all your parts, body and mind, so use all the tools in your toolbox!



Lisa Agens: Transitioning from a career in dance to dental hygiene, Lisa struggled with weight gain. After many diet failures, she educated herself on nutrition and built healthy habits. As the founder of Your Lean Life, LLC, she's helped hundreds lose weight through a whole-food, fat-loss approach. A passionate teacher and coach, Lisa holds multiple certifications in fitness and nutrition, including ISSA, Precision Nutrition, and NASM. Learn more at www.yourleanlife.com.



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The Art of Recovery: Training's Secret Weapon

By Dr. Shirley

For many martial artists, the focus is always on the next punch, the next kick, the next training session. We push our bodies to their limits, striving for perfection in every movement and building strength and endurance with each repetition. While this dedication to hard work is essential, the true secret to becoming a better, stronger, and more resilient athlete isn't found during training; it's found in the hours and days that follow. The art of recovery is perhaps the most undervalued component of any serious athlete's regimen. It's when you're not training that your body rebuilds, repairs, and adapts, ultimately allowing you to reach new levels of performance.

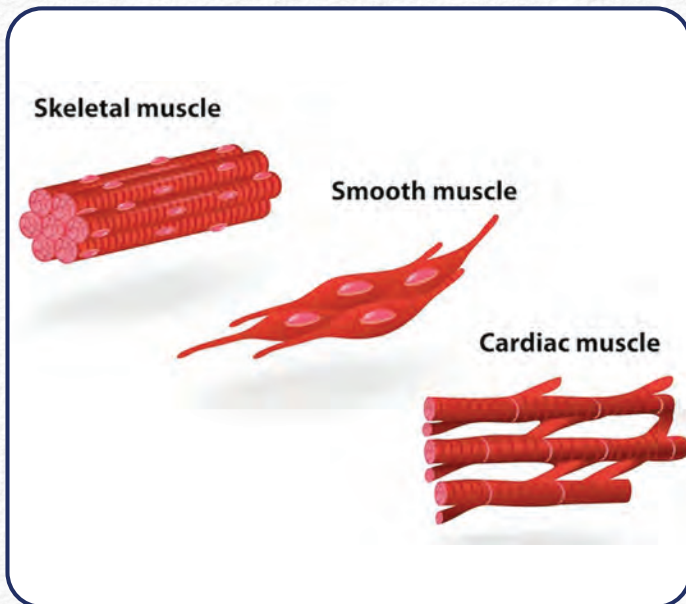
Why Recovery Matters

Think of your body as a high-performance machine. During intense training sessions, you're creating microscopic tears in your muscle fibers and stressing your tendons and ligaments. This process, known as catabolism, is a necessary part of growth.

However, without adequate time for recovery, your body can't complete the crucial process of anabolism—the rebuilding and repairing of these tissues. This is when your muscles get stronger, your tendons become more resilient, and your body adapts to the demands you place on it.

Neglecting recovery is a surefire way to stall your progress and increase your risk of injury. Inadequate rest leads to a state of chronic fatigue, where your body is constantly playing catch-up. This can manifest as persistent soreness, a decline in performance, and an increased susceptibility to illness as your immune system becomes compromised. One of the most significant benefits of recovery is improved blood circulation. This enhanced blood flow helps to efficiently deliver oxygen and nutrients to damaged tissues while simultaneously flushing out metabolic waste products, such as lactic acid, that accumulate during intense exercise.





The Big Picture: Daily Monitoring

True recovery isn't just about what you do after a tough session; it's a holistic, 24/7 commitment to your body. To optimize this process, you need to monitor several key factors daily:

- **How you feel:** Pay attention to your body. Are you unusually sore or fatigued? Do you have persistent joint pain? Listening to these signals is the first step in preventing overtraining.
- **Nutrition and Hydration:** Your body needs fuel to rebuild. Protein is essential for muscle repair, while carbohydrates replenish your glycogen stores, giving you energy for your next workout. Proper hydration is critical for every physiological process, from nutrient transport to regulating body temperature.
- **Sleep Quality and Quantity:** This is arguably the most critical component of recovery. It's during deep sleep that your body releases growth hormone, which is vital for tissue repair and muscle growth. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night.

- **Daily Movement and Mobility:** Even on rest days, staying mobile helps prevent stiffness and improves blood flow. Gentle, low-impact activity keeps your joints lubricated and your muscles from tightening up.

Active vs. Passive Recovery Techniques

Recovery methods can be broadly categorized into two types: active and passive. Active recovery involves low-intensity movement, while passive recovery involves no movement. Both have their place in a well-rounded regimen.

Active Recovery Methods:

These techniques promote blood flow and reduce muscle soreness without placing additional stress on the body.

- **Yoga and Stretching:** Gentle stretching and yoga poses improve flexibility, increase range of motion, and help to release muscle tension. They also promote mental relaxation, which is a key part of recovery.
- **Foam Rolling:** Often described as a self-massage, using a foam roller can help to release muscle knots and trigger points. This technique, a form of self-myofascial release, can improve blood circulation and reduce post-exercise soreness.
- **Swimming and Water Exercise:** The buoyancy of water reduces the impact on joints, making swimming an excellent low-intensity activity for recovery. The hydrostatic pressure of the water can also aid in circulation, helping to move fluid out of tired muscles.

Passive Recovery Methods:

These methods typically involve external tools or treatments to aid the body's natural recovery processes.

TRAINING RECOVERY

- **Hydrotherapy:** Using water for recovery, such as in cold plunges or hot baths, can have significant benefits. Cold water immersion (CWI) can reduce inflammation and muscle soreness, while warm water can relax muscles and increase blood flow.
- **Massage:** A professional massage can help to break down adhesions in muscle tissue, reduce stiffness, and improve circulation.
- **Compression Garments:** Wearing compression sleeves or socks can help improve blood flow back to the heart, reducing swelling and a feeling of heaviness in the limbs.
- **Ice and Heat Therapy:** The use of ice can help reduce inflammation and numb a sore area, while heat can relax muscles and increase blood flow. Often, a combination of both (contrast therapy) is used to create a “pumping” effect that can aid in the removal of metabolic waste.

The science behind recovery is well-documented. A 2013 review published in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* highlighted the importance of adequate sleep and nutrition for optimizing anabolism and preventing injury. Research on foam rolling, such as a study in the *Journal of Athletic Training*, has shown it can significantly reduce delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that hydrotherapy and compression garments are effective at reducing recovery time and improving subsequent performance.

By integrating these practices into your routine, you’re not just recovering; you’re investing in your long-term success. Recovery isn’t a passive activity; it’s a deliberate and strategic part of your training. It’s where your hard work translates into tangible results, allowing you to return to the dojo stronger, faster, and more prepared than before. So next time you finish a grueling workout, remember: the real gains are yet to come.

Let me start with a question that might make you

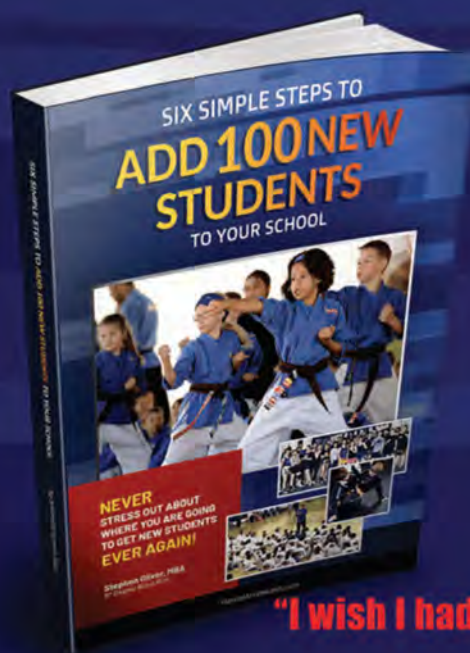
Scientific Foundations



Dr. Mark E. Shirley is an Emergency Medicine physician at Memorial Community Hospital in Blair, Nebraska, with subspecialty board certification in Sports Medicine. He recently retired as a U.S. Air Force Colonel, Flight Surgeon, and State Air Surgeon with the Nebraska Air National Guard after 35 years of service. In that role, he served as the state’s Chief Medical Officer, medical liaison to the Adjutant General, and oversaw the medical readiness of pilots, flight crew, and more than 1,000 service members. His distinguished career earned multiple commendations, including the Legion of Merit, for leadership, innovation, and excellence in military medicine.

A 6th Degree Black Belt and Master of G-Shim Taekwondo, Dr. Shirley is the Sports Medicine Physician and Director of Fitness & Nutrition for Global Traditional Martial Arts (GTMA). With over 46 years of experience as a martial artist, he has been instrumental in advancing training, performance standards, and athlete well-being.

Dedicated to mentorship and service, Dr. Shirley has trained future physicians, guided military medics, and supported community health initiatives. His lifelong commitment to medicine, military service, and martial arts reflects his values of discipline, resilience, and service to others.



"This book is now a requirement for all of my staff. These aren't just theories, these are principles the author, Grand Master Stephen Oliver used in his own martial art schools for 40 years!" Jason Purcell, Family Black Belt Academy, Seattle, Wa

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Your Dropout Rate is Killing Your Business (And It's Completely Preventable)

By Stephen Oliver

uncomfortable: What's your real dropout rate? Not the number you tell prospective students or quote in marketing materials, but the actual percentage of students who quit your program within their first year.

If you're like most martial arts school owners, you are probably running somewhere between 70% and 100% annual dropout rates. You've accepted this as "normal" because it's what everyone else experiences. You tell yourself it's just the nature of the business – that martial arts isn't for everyone, and natural attrition is expected.

You're wrong. And that mindset is costing you thousands of dollars every month.

The Hidden Cost of "Normal" Dropout Rates

Let's do some simple math. If you have 150 active students paying an average monthly tuition of \$300 or more, you are generating over \$ 45,000 in monthly revenue. With an 8% monthly dropout rate, you're completely turning over your school every year. Start with 150, enroll 150, end the year with 150 year after year – hamster on its wheel.

That means you need to enroll 3-4 new students monthly just to maintain your current numbers. In most markets, acquiring a new student costs between \$100 and \$200 in marketing and sales efforts. You're spending \$300-600 monthly just to replace students you're losing unnecessarily.

But here's the real kicker: schools implementing





systematic retention strategies routinely achieve dropout rates below 3%. Some of our client schools report rates as low as 1-2% monthly.

The Four-Month Window That Changes Everything

Here's the truth that will transform your school: 80% of all dropouts occur within the first four months of enrollment. This isn't opinion – it's a documented fact across hundreds of schools and thousands of students.

This statistic represents both your greatest challenge and your biggest opportunity. By focusing intensive retention efforts on this critical window, you can reduce your overall dropout rate to exceptional levels while building long-term family relationships that generate referrals and renewals for years.

But most schools do exactly the opposite. They put new students in regular classes, assume they'll figure things out, and hope for the best. When students quit after six weeks, instructors shrug and blame lack of commitment or bad timing.

The Real Reasons Students Quit (Hint: It's Not What You Think)

Students don't quit because martial arts is hard. They don't quit because they are not naturally athletic or because they discovered they don't like martial arts. Students quit because schools fail to provide what they promised during enrollment.

The top three reasons for student dropout are:

- 1. Lack of visible progress:** Students can't see how they are improving, especially in character development that schools heavily promote but rarely measure.
- 2. Weak relationships:** Students feel like numbers rather than individuals, with instructors who don't know their names or care about their personal development.
- 3. Unmet expectations:** Parents were promised character development but see only technique instruction, or students expected faster advancement than realistic timelines allow.

Notice what's missing from this list? Nothing about natural ability, family schedules, or financial constraints. The primary reasons students quit are entirely within your control as an instructor and school owner.

The Prevention vs. Cure Philosophy

Most schools practice "crisis management" retention – they try to save students who have already stopped attending. By the time you are making desperate phone calls to missing students, you've usually lost them permanently.

Successful schools practice "prevention-based" retention. They identify potential problems before students miss classes and address concerns before they become reasons to quit.

This requires systematic tracking of attendance patterns, progress indicators, and family satisfaction levels. When a student misses their second class in a week, effective schools make concern calls immediately. When a student seems frustrated during class, instructors schedule private conversations to address challenges before they snowball.

What Doubling Your Retention Really Means

The real impact compounds over time. Students you retain become referral sources, long-term family relationships, and eventually advanced students who contribute to your school's reputation and culture. Many become assistant instructors, summer camp helpers, and community ambassadors.

Schools that excel at retention don't just have more students – they have stronger communities, better reputations, and more sustainable businesses.

The Character Development Disconnect

Here's a harsh reality: if you're advertising character development, confidence building, and life skills as primary benefits but lack systematic methods to deliver and measure these outcomes, you're committing false advertising.

Most schools prominently display character development messaging but treat it as a nice bonus rather than core curriculum. They give occasional lectures about respect and discipline but have no systematic progression, measurement, or recognition systems for character traits.

Parents enrolling their children for character development deserve the same structured, progressive instruction they'd receive for physical techniques. Without systematic character curricula, measurable progress tracking, and visible recognition systems, character development remains an empty marketing promise.

Your Next Steps

If you're serious about doubling your retention (and your income), start with these immediate actions:

1. Calculate your real dropout rate by tracking every student who enrolled in the past 12 months and determining exactly when and why they quit.
2. Implement intensive follow-up procedures for any student who misses a scheduled class, with personal phone calls within 24 hours expressing concern rather than demanding attendance.
3. Create systematic character development curricula with measurable progress markers and visible recognition systems.
4. Focus your best instructors and highest attention levels on students during their first four months of training.

Your teaching might be excellent, but if students aren't staying long enough to benefit from it, your technical skills are irrelevant. Fix your retention systems first, and everything else becomes easier.

The difference between struggling schools and thriving institutions isn't better marketing or superior technique instruction – it's systematic attention to keeping the students you already have.



Stephen Oliver is founder & CEO of Martial Arts Wealth Mastery, the elite coaching program for the top Martial Arts Schools (MartialArtsWealth.com). This article is an excerpt from a series of teaching books by Stephen Oliver with Jeff Smith and Greg Moody available at ExtraordinaryMarketing.com

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ADHD in Your Martial Arts School!

Part 1: Spotting the Kids Who Need You Most

By Dr. Greg Moody

"I didn't let ADHD prevent me from achieving my goals, and neither should you!"

- Howie Mandel

Introduction

Ever wonder why that one student can't keep his feet on the floor while you're explaining a form? ADHD isn't a lack of discipline or too much sugar, it's a neurodevelopmental condition that affects about one in ten U.S. children. As instructors we see hundreds of kids each year; spotting and supporting those with ADHD is something you already do. This article is about how to do it better!

Most children fidget or lose focus occasionally; that's normal. But ADHD is a persistent neurological issue. Parents often sign their kids up hoping martial arts will "burn off energy," and some worry that a structured environment might be too demanding. Structure is exactly what these kids need. We see far more children than a typical school teacher - hundreds each year versus a classroom teacher's few dozen - so we're in a unique position to see what others might miss. Understanding ADHD helps you guide families.

Identify, Don't Diagnose

You're not a psychologist, or a doctor but you are a professional educator - we need to know the technical part of this diagnosis. The DSM 5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - the doctor/therapist/psychologist standard) defines ADHD as a persistent pattern of inattention or hyperactivity impulsivity that interferes with development. There are three presentations: inattentive, hyperactive/impulsive and combined. Read this to understand, talk with

parents; the diagnosis comes from a doctor or mental health professional.

Inattentive ADHD

Inattentive ADHD isn't about laziness. Kids may:

- Avoid or delay tasks that require mental effort, like learning a new form or memorizing terminology.
- Lose track of materials and forget instructions, misplacing belts or gear and drifting off during drills.

They may stare into space; it's neurobiology - part of who they are, not disrespect. Often these kids do not get diagnosed and "fly under the radar" because they are not disruptive.

Hyperactive & Impulsive ADHD

Hyperactive/impulsive kids are easier to spot. They:

- Fidget and tap hands and feet, even when asked to stand at attention.
- Get up when they're supposed to stay put, wandering off line or running across the mat mid instruction.
- Have trouble waiting their turn, may blurt answers or move constantly, as if driven by an inner motor.

These are the kids who run around when you're demonstrating a block. It's impulsivity, not disrespect.

Look for Consistent Patterns

Every child has off days. ADHD behaviors are consistent across time and situations. An inattentive child will struggle to stay focused across drills and classes much of the time. A hyperactive child will

bounce around on and off the mat. If a student struggles to maintain focus in every class regardless of activity, start a supportive conversation with their parents. Ask, “How is she doing at school? Do you see the same things at home?” You’re not diagnosing; you’re observing, guiding and finding out what the needs are so you can help.

Debunk the Myths

ADHD often appears alongside autism, anxiety, learning disorders or oppositional defiant disorder. It’s not caused by poor parenting, too much sugar or video games. It’s a condition with genetic and neurobiological roots. Girls often go unnoticed because they’re less disruptive. Recognizing this keeps us from taking misbehavior personally and allows us to approach students with empathy and strategies.

When to Talk to Parents

Often parents have no idea their child might have ADHD. Some may suspect but don’t want to accept it, while others already have a plan. Approach a conversation with them with curiosity and support, not accusation. Examples: “I’ve noticed Johnny has trouble staying focused. Here are some things I’m trying in class. What works for you at home?” If they haven’t considered ADHD, encourage them to talk to their pediatrician. If they already have a plan,

align your strategies with theirs. Partnering with parents is essential because children thrive when home and school environments align.

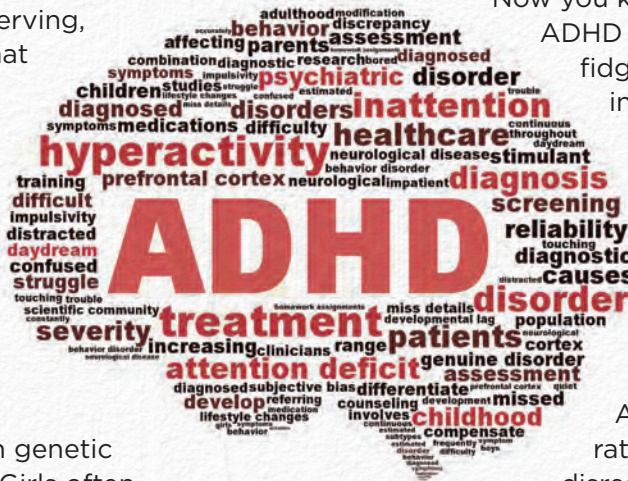
Summary

Now you know how to identify them.

ADHD it’s more than the occasional fidget. It’s a consistent pattern of inattention, hyperactivity or both that persists across situations.

As instructors we’re uniquely positioned to see the signs early and guide families – again, we see hundreds of kids a year while an elementary school teacher may see 25. Recognizing that ADHD is a neurological condition rather than bad parenting, disrespect or misbehavior is a

first step. This allows us to respond with compassion as well as have high expectations. In Part 2, we’ll go into strategies for teaching these students: maintaining high expectations, using immediate reinforcement, pacing classes, structuring the curriculum and partnering with parents. This will be great for all students, not just our ADHD kids. See you next time!



About the Author

Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D., is the author of Parent Action Plan: ADHD! and a nationally recognized martial arts educator. He has combined decades of experience in psychology, education, and martial arts to help families and schools better support children with ADHD. As author, researcher, and instructor, Dr. Moody brings a unique perspective that bridges academic research and practical strategies for parents.

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