VOLUME 4 ISSUE 3

GO2KARATE Magazine



LIVES IN ACTION
INSPIRING JOURNEYS OF DEDICATION AND TRANSFORMATION

MASTER YOUR SKILLS
EFFECTIVE DRILLS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

EMPOWER YOUR MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL
FREE TOOLS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

SPOTLIGHT
EXPLORING KEY ISSUES AND INFLUENTIAL VOICES

MARK SHIRLEY, MD
6TH DEGREE BLACK BELT

TRACY THOMAS,
Publisher

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PUBLISHER'S LETTER



Welcome to this issue.

Whoever you are as you read this, you share something with everyone else holding this magazine. At some point you walked into a school, bowed in, and did something hard on purpose. Maybe that was last month. Maybe it was forty years ago. Maybe you own the building now, or you drive your daughter to class twice a week and watch from the back row. The uniform changes. The reason people keep coming back does not.

That is who this magazine is for. Not just school owners, and not just black belts. Students, parents, instructors, competitors, and the people who left the mat years ago and still catch themselves correcting a stranger's stance at the grocery store.

I spent thirty-three years teaching before I sold my schools, and I still learn something in every issue we put out. That is not a sales line. Our contributors are the real thing, and they are generous with what they know. Every issue has been a little better than the one before it, and this one is no exception.

Inside, you will find the people, the schools, and the ideas moving this art forward right now. Read the pieces that apply to you. Then read one that does not, because that is usually where the good stuff hides.

Thank you for reading, and thank you for keeping this alive. Whatever your rank, whatever your style, you are part of why it is still here.

Train hard. Be good to people.

Tracy Lee Thomas

Go2 Karate Magazine | Publisher

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Every issue of this magazine feels like sitting down with family, and this one is no exception.

Inside, you'll meet a rising star whose dedication is contagious. You'll read about a master whose life's work has shaped countless students, and you'll join us in honoring a longtime community member for a lifetime of impact. We also take a moment to remember those we've lost. Their legacy lives on in every student who steps onto the mat.

This issue doesn't shy away from hard conversations either. We look at the threats facing our communities today, and we talk about the importance of self-defense, especially for the women in our lives who deserve to feel safe and strong.

For our school owners, we've packed in real tools you can use right away: ways to build a stronger dojo, tips to keep you leading, and resources to help your school thrive.

At the end of the day, martial arts is more than technique. It's community. It's resilience. It's showing up for each other, again and again.

Thank you for being part of ours.

Denise Morin
Go2 Karate Magazine | Editor



As Art Director, one of the most rewarding parts of creating this magazine is finding new ways to visually capture the strength, character, and diversity of today's martial arts community. Each issue brings together remarkable stories, compelling photography, and thoughtful design to celebrate the people who dedicate themselves to teaching, training, leading, and growing the martial arts. Our goal is to create pages that are as dynamic and inspiring as the individuals and organizations we have the privilege to feature.

Martial arts continues to evolve, but the values at its foundation remain timeless—discipline, respect, perseverance, courage, and a commitment to continual improvement. We are proud to help tell the stories of those carrying these traditions forward while shaping what comes next. Thank you to our contributors, readers, instructors, and martial artists everywhere for allowing us to share your accomplishments, experiences, and passion. Together, we are creating more than a magazine; we are documenting the people and moments that define martial arts today.

Jason Smith
Go2 Karate Magazine | Creative Director

Interview with Mark Shirley, M.D.

By Go2 Karate

Go2 Karate:
Thanks a lot for being here today for our interview with Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Dr. Mark Shirley. He's a 6th Degree Black Belt Master Instructor, a competitor, and an M.D., a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine. He spent many years in the military, retired this past August, and has worked as a fight doctor for hundreds, if not thousands, of fights across the country. He's been featured in plenty of magazines and has been part of eleven world championships. We're genuinely excited to have you. Thanks for being here. Can you tell us a little about how this all started for you?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Thanks for inviting me. It's a pleasure and an honor to be here. It started back when I went into the military. I went into Navy bootcamp in 1985. I spent twenty years in the Navy Reserves, ten as an enlisted hospital corpsman and ten as a physician officer, all with a fleet hospital unit that supported the Marine Corps. That's where my military career and my military medicine career both began.

I got out after twenty years, and five years later the Air Force came after me with a flight surgeon position, which is funny because that's exactly what I'd wanted from the Navy in the first place.



I had a buddy who was an F-14 flight surgeon, and I'd gone to a Navy recruiter once and said, "I'm looking for flight surgery for the Reserves." He told me they had no need for reserve flight surgeons. I said, "You do, you just don't know it yet." Turns out I was right; it just took the Air Force to prove it.

So, I got out of the Navy, the Air Force brought me back in as a lieutenant colonel for flight surgery training. I made full colonel and became head of aerospace medicine for the Nebraska Air National Guard. When I made colonel, I also became what's called the state air surgeon, which is the chief medical liaison for the state, the connection between the Guard's medical side and the general in command. It's a role that puts you in the room for decisions that affect every airman's medical readiness across the state, not just the people you see in the clinic, and it gave me a perspective on military medicine I wouldn't have gotten any other way.

The whole time, I was also in martial arts. I started in 1979, came up through the ranks as a competitor regionally and nationally, and made the national top ten in 1987 with the American Taekwondo Association. I ran clubs in South Omaha while I was studying exercise science. That's really where military medicine, martial arts, and sports medicine all came together for me, right around the time I was finishing up my exercise physiology studies and still competing.

I went to medical school from 1990 to 1994. During that stretch, the director of exercise science at Creighton University, who wrote the sports performance series for the National Strength and Conditioning Association, approached me about doing a biomechanical analysis of a martial arts skill. I gathered my sources, did the research, and published what was, at the time, considered the first formal biomechanical analysis of a martial arts skill, a Taekwondo side kick. It ran in the NSCA Journal, which goes out to forty countries, and I was on the



cover. That opened a lot of doors I hadn't expected. A couple more articles followed in sports medicine textbooks, and I've stayed involved in sports medicine in one form or another ever since, all the way through medical school and into practice.

I was the team physician for the University of Nebraska Omaha for twenty years. In the early 2000s, a friend of mine, an orthopedic surgeon who did a lot of ringside work and served as cut man for world champion Terence "Bud" Crawford, pulled me into regional amateur and professional MMA ringside work, as well as some amateur boxing. Once Crawford hit world champion and started bringing fights to Omaha, I started working those championship cards as well, and that relationship just kept growing from there.

To date I've covered more than 4,000 professional and amateur MMA fights as a fight physician, over a hundred UFC fights as ringside physician, and ten world championship fights as chief ringside physician for Crawford, who just retired last summer as the number one boxer on the planet. It's been a privilege to be in that corner for that stretch of his career.



Go2 Karate:
Wow! How does all of that tie together? You mentioned the 3Ms when we talked before. How does it all fit into your life?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
I've always introduced myself as a 3M kind of guy: military, martial arts, and medicine. As a flight surgeon taking care of air crew, and earlier as a field surgeon with the Marine Corps back in the '80s and '90s, you're looking at operational medicine, the military athlete, someone whose body has to perform under conditions most people never face. From there it's a short step to sports medicine and working with martial artists, professional athletes, collegiate athletes. My private sports medicine practice, my work as an emergency medicine physician, and my time in a sports medicine clinic all let me take care of those athletes in different settings, sometimes the same athlete in three different settings depending on the week. All three pieces have tied together into one career, and it's been a good combination.

Go2 Karate:
It's very unique, being able to see things from that many angles. I imagine the military alone covers a huge range of people and situations. There aren't many bases you don't touch in some way. Tell us more about how you got started in martial arts and what it's meant to you.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
I started around 1979. My brother was into Taekwondo, and a couple of friends were too, and that sparked my interest. I made Black Belt in 1981, then 2nd, 3rd, 4th Degree, working my way up steadily over the years. I held 5th Degree for twenty-six years, from 1995 to 2021.

I had no real interest in testing again. I was happy with where I was. I'd run schools in South Omaha, had a commercial school with Grand Master Alan Pepin, a retired chief of police with the Omaha Police Department, as my partner. I was deep into sports medicine and ringside work by then, and frankly I figured my competition days and my testing days were behind me.

But the guys I'd come up with back in the early '80s, competing individually, Grand Master Dan Longoria, who runs a school in Lincoln, Grand Master Todd Droege down in Marietta, Georgia, and Grand Master Steve Westbrook down in Florida, had all stayed active with the organization while I went off to medical school. I trained the whole time but was never tied to a formal organization, just training on my own schedule, around my own life. Eventually it came full circle, and they reached out about a new organization, asking if I wanted to join.

I told them, "I've got this going on and that going on. What if I come in as your sports medicine doc, director of fitness and nutrition, whatever you want to call it? I can be the eyes and ears that bring something different, something not many organizations have." I felt I had something unique to offer, something most schools just don't have access to. Grand Master Longoria, an 8th Degree at



the time and about to test for 9th, told me Grand Master wanted me to test for 6th Degree. I said I was good; I didn't need another plaque on the wall. He said testing was in July. I said, "Yes, sir." I wrote out a game plan and a training program, tested for 6th Degree, made Master, and here we are.

Go2 Karate:
So how are you putting your medical knowledge to use for martial artists? What would you tell our readers that they might be missing, based on everything you've seen?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
It's about the whole biopsychosocial picture: body, mind, and soul. We have some of the best martial artists in the world in our organization, so that aspect's covered. Discipline's covered too. What I'm pushing on is the daily piece, proper health and nutrition, attacking that every single day, building a genuinely functional lifestyle, the part that doesn't show up on a scorecard but shows up everywhere else. For our school owners and the people who practice this, martial arts aren't three, four, five hours a week of training, it's a way of life. There's 168 hours in a week, and we have to think about all the time outside the mat, because that affects daily life just as much as anything that happens during a class. We have Chris Hansen, who runs Impact 168, handling the lifestyle side for our licensees, getting them goal-seeking and setting real short and long-term goals as school owners. Not just business goals but personal health goals too.

Our Grand Master, G.K. Lee, wants us practicing well into our later years, and you can't do that on a bad diet. World-class training with crappy fuel is like putting bad gas in a Cadillac body. You can have the best engineering in the world under the hood, but if you're running garbage through it, you're not getting where you want to go. Everything has to be on the same page. That's what I'm trying to bring into the GTMA organization, the whole biopsychosocial wheel, so the whole martial arts athlete is covered, not just the parts that show up on the mat.

Go2 Karate:
How's that gone so far, in terms of getting it implemented?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Very well. I gave my first presentation at our inaugural national camp back in May 2021 and have given a number since then, including some over Zoom when I couldn't be there in person because I was working an ER shift that weekend. The response has been good, people actually show up and ask questions afterward, which tells me it's landing. I'm doing another presentation at Globals in July, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Go2 Karate:
How often do these folks actually train with you or learn from you? I'm curious how much they have to pay attention to all this day to day.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
They can pay as much attention as they want to, but once they start advancing in years, the things I'm talking about start to matter to them whether they were paying attention early on or not. The body keeps the score eventually, whether you've been listening or not. They all have my cell number, they all have my email, and people text me at random times, asking questions about a sore shoulder or what to eat before a tournament. We also try to meet up a few times a year at minimum, in person, not just over text.

Go2 Karate:
You mentioned nutrition and diet specifically. What are people usually missing or getting wrong? Are there a few specific things our readers could start with right now?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Yeah, absolutely. Across the general public in this country, we've focused way too much on a crap diet. I mean that in all caps, completely refined and processed food. The standard American diet is what we call the Sad Diet, because it'll make you sad. The inflammation that's taken over people's bodies, hypertension, obesity, Type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, cancers, all of it traces back to a microscopic level of inflammation that's directly tied



to what people are eating. It's not one bad meal; it's years of it, compounding quietly until it shows up as a diagnosis. The goal is simple: decrease the crap, increase the good, increase the fiber, increase the fruits and vegetables, and slowly move people away from a diet built around a culture of highly processed, high-calorie, low-nutrient food, toward something that's nutrient-dense and lower on calories.

Go2 Karate:
When you say highly processed, what does that actually mean for our readers? I'm sure everyone understands Twinkies and Ding Dongs are processed, but where else should people be looking?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
That's right. Think of the grocery store like a vacuum that's designed to suck you in. The healthy stuff, your fruits and vegetables, sits on the perimeter. Once you get into the aisles, that's where the boxed and canned, heavily processed stuff lives,

row after row of it. If you pick up a box and look at the ingredient list, you'll know it's processed. The goal is to spend less time in the aisles and more time on the perimeter. And honestly, that ties into something they're working on out in Washington with the MAHA movement, Make America Healthy Again, trying to make that healthy perimeter food more affordable. You shouldn't be able to walk into a grocery store, spend twenty dollars on processed junk, and fill an entire cart, while twenty dollars of real food barely fills the seat where you'd put your kid.

So, that's the goal: more time on the perimeter of the grocery store, less in the aisles. If it comes in a package, a can, or a box, try to avoid it and stick with the whole stuff around the edges of the store.

Go2 Karate:
That's a really interesting way to put it, the perimeter. I've never heard it framed that way, but thinking about it, that's exactly right, the good meats and produce are all out there on the edges of the store.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
They absolutely are.

Go2 Karate:
That's a great metaphor, one I'll probably steal. What does highly processed actually mean, technically? Is it about things like high fructose corn syrup, or just ingredients that are too far removed from the farm?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Let's put it this way. If you go back to the early 1900s, there was a real push toward processed foods, an abundance of those and less of the healthier stuff. Most processed food traces back to petroleum-based products, petroleum, oil. Highly processed means things like your dyes, Red 40, Yellow 6, which come out of petroleum-based chemical processing, and all of that has to be FDA regulated. The FDA can't regulate whole foods. You can't regulate something that comes from God, fruits, vegetables, things that grow out of the ground. There's no regulation on that, because there doesn't need to be. Regulation kicks in once you start tweaking food with pesticides, with petroleum, with chemicals, once you change the chemical structure and add something synthetic that wasn't there to begin with.

Go2 Karate:
Then a simple way to put it would be food that's been modified by outside chemicals or processes?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
GMO-based. Genetically modified fruits, genetically modified food. If it's been engineered or chemically altered before it gets to your plate, that's the category we're talking about.

Go2 Karate:
We could probably do five articles on this. I'd genuinely love to put together a series for Go2 Karate Magazine if you're willing. I think that'd be great for our readers.





Dr. Mark Shirley:
I'd love to!

Go2 Karate:
You're clearly passionate about it, and this is something our readers should pay real attention to. What else would you want them to know about your background?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Just that people like me, with a real passion for health, sports medicine, and a martial arts background, are pretty rare. Not many people make it to the rank of colonel. I think I bring something unique to the table, but mostly I'm trying to get people to make lifestyle changes, to look seriously at chronic sleep deprivation, daily stressors, long hours, shift work. All of that affects the body, day-to-day function, blood pressure, in ways most people don't connect until something goes wrong. We take it very seriously.

Go2 Karate:
It sounds like what you're seeing a lot of with martial artists is that they've got a ton going on and a real passion for the craft, but they're missing some of these other pieces.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Exactly. Looking at the whole picture. When I talk to our GTMA licensees this July, I'm going to focus mainly on lifestyle, especially sleep deprivation.

Go2 Karate:
Especially in this field. You teach classes until eight or nine at night, then clean up the school, maybe grab something to eat, stay up later than you should, and you're back up at eight the next morning starting the whole cycle over on a few hours of sleep, building a school while running on an entirely different clock than the rest of the world.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Exactly right. We try to account for all of that, good food choices, staying well hydrated, water with electrolytes throughout the day, and trying to round out that whole biopsychosocial wheel.

Go2 Karate:
You've done so much. What's the drive behind taking on all these different things? Any one of your career paths on its own would be a massive success.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Definitely working my butt off. Our daughter's getting married in September, so there's extra stress on top of everything right now, on top of the day job and the sports medicine practice and the martial arts presentations. After that, I'm planning to make some lifestyle changes of my own. I'll still be full-time in emergency medicine and running my sports medicine practice, but the goal is to draw down on emergency medicine and get to sports medicine full-time, at least four days a week. That's the target, and I think it's realistic once things settle down this fall.

Emergency medicine runs hours of nothing, nothing, nothing, then it's balls-to-the-wall, crazy, adrenaline junkie territory, and then the crash afterward, a rhythm that's hard on the body in ways people outside the field don't always grasp. Up until a couple years ago we were working 24-hour shifts in the ER, and it got to be too much,

too unsafe, making decisions on people's lives at three or four in the morning with no sleep. I went to administration and said we needed to renegotiate down to 12-hour shifts. Even now, at the end of a 12-hour shift, I'm beat up, brutally beat up some days. So, I'm making changes on that front, because I can't preach this stuff to martial artists, military people, medical students, and residents, and not practice it myself. This past year's been pretty stressful. Something has to give, and I'd rather make that call myself than have it made for me.

Go2 Karate:
Physician, heal thyself, or however that phrase goes. Sounds like you're finally taking your own advice.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Yes.

Go2 Karate:
But with this kind of drive, I'd guess you'll keep adding things even as you cut back elsewhere.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Probably true. People have told me I need to learn to say no. But I've been this way since I was a kid in grade school, whatever I take on, I go to the Nth degree, and that's how I've approached my whole life, work, training, family, all of it. My wife's the same way, she's a flight attendant for United Airlines, and that's how we raised our kids, no half measures. Our oldest son is a Naval Reserve officer. Our daughter is a fourth-year medical student, currently working with Senator Kennedy on the MAHA movement out in Washington, DC. Our youngest son works as a corrections officer in law enforcement. Different paths, but nobody in this family is short on work ethic.

Go2 Karate:
I think the readers here, and most of the martial arts community, share that same drive, and I'm glad they got to hear some of this from you today. It's clear you've thought about this a lot, not just lived it.

One last question to wrap up. If someone reads your name on this list forty years from now and asks who Dr. Shirley was, what would you want them to know?

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Just a well-rounded guy who really wanted to help a lot of people get healthier and live longer, more productive lives. That's the bottom line. Everything else, the rank, the fights, the titles, is really just the path that got me there.

Go2 Karate:
Perfect. Thank you so much for your time today, it's been a genuine pleasure talking with you, and congratulations again on the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Dr. Mark Shirley:
Thank you, sir, I appreciate it so much.

Interview done by Greg Moody, Ph.D.

"This exclusive feature interview done by Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D., for Go2 Karate Magazine.

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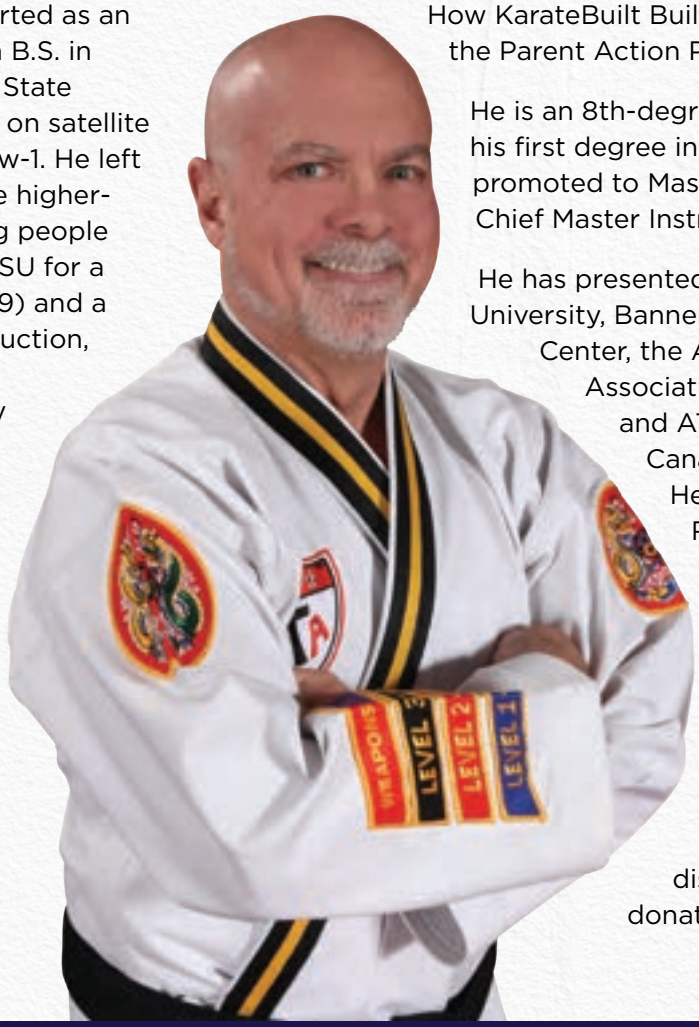
Lifetime Recognition Award

Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D., is among the nation's leading martial arts instructors and researchers. He has been named the American Taekwondo Association Instructor of the Year, and his schools have been named National School of the Year eight times, producing more than 18,000 students and 1,800 black belts.

His path is unusual. He started as an aerospace engineer with a B.S. in Engineering from Arizona State University (1987), working on satellite missions including OrbView-1. He left engineering in 1995 for the higher-impact work of developing people directly and returned to ASU for a Master of Counseling (1999) and a Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction, specializing in Special Education and Psychology (2012). He is a Licensed Associate Counselor in Arizona and practices psychotherapy through Integrated Mental Health Associates in Scottsdale.

His doctoral research broke new ground: the first controlled academic experiment linking martial arts training to improved self-esteem outcomes in children. His findings have informed bullying prevention curricula adopted by martial arts schools nationwide. He is the national expert on bullying and martial arts and an Olweus Bullying Prevention Certified Trainer.

He is the author of 20 books, including the #1 Amazon Best Seller Bullying: Truths, Myths, and What To Do!, The Life Skills of Leaders, Karate Built! How KarateBuilt Builds Success and Values!, and the Parent Action Plan series.



He is an 8th-degree black belt who earned his first degree in 20 months and was promoted to Master Instructor in 2007 and Chief Master Instructor in 2020.

He has presented at Arizona State University, Banner Health Group / Melmed Center, the American Taekwondo Association, Arizona school districts, and ATA academies across Canada and South America. He is V.P. Development at Rev Marketing, Senior Consultant at Martial Arts Wealth Mastery, and the owner of KarateBuilt Martial Arts.

Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D., has given more than $100,000 to schools and to American Red Cross disaster relief. The school donations funded programs,

equipment, and student activities at his schools. The Red Cross giving went to disaster relief, where money arriving early does more good than the same money a month later.

The dollar figure is the smaller half; the larger half has been delivered in hours and never carried a fee.

Scholarships and reduced tuition are standing policy across his schools, not an exception. A family that wants their child in the program and can't cover tuition still gets trained. Several earned Black Belts, and some came back to teach. The policy costs real money every month, and it isn't going anywhere, because the child who most needs confidence is usually the child least able to pay for it.



His anti-bullying work runs through public and private schools as free assemblies, seminars, and staff sessions. It teaches students what to say before anything physical is on the table, gives bystanders a way to step in without becoming the next target, and gives teachers a response that lowers the temperature. He also delivers free community training in conflict resolution, parenting sessions for families dealing with defiance and anxiety, and works with therapists where clinical practice and physical training overlap.



Chief Master Greg Moody, Ph.D. is an 8th Degree Black Belt and Chief Master Instructor who has spent thirty-four years running martial arts schools and has taught more than 18,000 students. His Ph.D. is in Curriculum & Instruction with a specialization in Special Education and Psychology, and he holds a Master's in Counseling and a Bachelor's in Engineering, all from Arizona State University. He is an award-winning author of twenty books, including the Amazon Bestseller Karate Built! He owns KarateBuilt Martial Arts and works with school owners and instructors on enrollment, staff development, and the programs that keep students training.

Turning Energy into Purpose

By Glenda Aliaga

At six years old, Alenzo was the kind of child who seemed to move faster than the world around him. His energy was constant and unfiltered. He would interrupt conversations, struggle to sit still in class, and often acted before thinking. What some saw as defiance was, in fact, a difficulty with impulse control that made everyday situations overwhelming in his reality. Many teachers shared with me that he had a spark, but worried about his inability to focus in the classroom. I knew that Alenzo needed an outlet. He needed something that would not suppress his energy, but shape it. I found that outlet in the form of karate.

The first time I took Alenzo to the Martial Arts System dojang, I watched him step onto the mat with high energy and excitement. He seemed restless and unfocused while he mimicked the movements quickly and clumsily; oftentimes throwing himself to the floor and rolling around! It was obvious that the structure of karate was challenging for him. Being able to stand still as the instructor spoke felt like an eternity for him. Listening, quietly and attentively, tested his patience. In those early days, progress was slow and frustration came easily. I remember speaking with Grand Master Ozuna, sharing that maybe



RISING STAR STORY

Alenzo wasn't mature enough to develop the discipline, respect, and commitment required for karate. Grand Master told me he saw great ability in my child. He spoke of his awareness, his agility, and his determination! All these qualities proved that my son had the potential to keep at it and not give up!



Karate introduced Alenzo to concepts he had never truly experienced before. Concepts such as self-control, respect, and perseverance were abstract in his mind. But class after class, he learned to bow before entering the dojang, answer loudly, "Yes Sir", wait his turn quietly, and also to listen carefully. As time passed, with the repetition and consistency of these small acts, it was evident that changes were happening. He didn't transform overnight. There were plenty of times when he would forget his form movements, rush through techniques, or lose focus while practicing. I always felt confident in his instructor's ability to guide Alenzo back from feeling insecure, emphasizing that mistakes were part of growth, which in turn, help you learn faster.

As time went on, something shifted. Alenzo began to understand that slowing down actually helped him improve. I saw how he took pride in doing a movement correctly rather than quickly. His ability to stand still, at attention, without moving became the norm! He was controlling his impulsiveness, and his reactions became more thoughtful. This newfound discipline began to carry over into other areas of his life. At school, teachers noticed he was more attentive, raising his hand instead of calling out. He showed more patience with his classmates and was more aware of how his actions could affect others. His grades in conduct finally had improved!! Alenzo did not struggle so much with his academics; it was always his conduct that kept him from receiving honor roll recognition.

Now, three years later at age nine, Alenzo is being recognized as a Rising Star within his dojang. This title is not just about skill, though his technique has improved remarkably, but more about his growth as a person. He attends every class with focus and enthusiasm, demonstrating consistency that once seemed impossible. He practices at home, not because he's told to, but because he wants to improve. When he struggles with new forms or techniques, he no longer gives up in frustration. Instead, he takes a deep breath, refocuses and tries

again. He has even been recognized at his school for receiving honor roll, three quarters in a row!

What makes Alenzo stand out is how he influences others. On a few occasions, his instructor allowed him to help during a level one class (white, yellow, orange belts). Alenzo helped the younger students learn basic movements, offering encouragement and patience. I noticed how shy and unfocused students gravitated toward him, maybe because they felt he understood their challenges. Alenzo now leads by example, showing that discipline is not about perfection, but about effort and persistence. His journey gives other parents hope that impulsiveness can be honed, in a positive manner, through the art of karate.

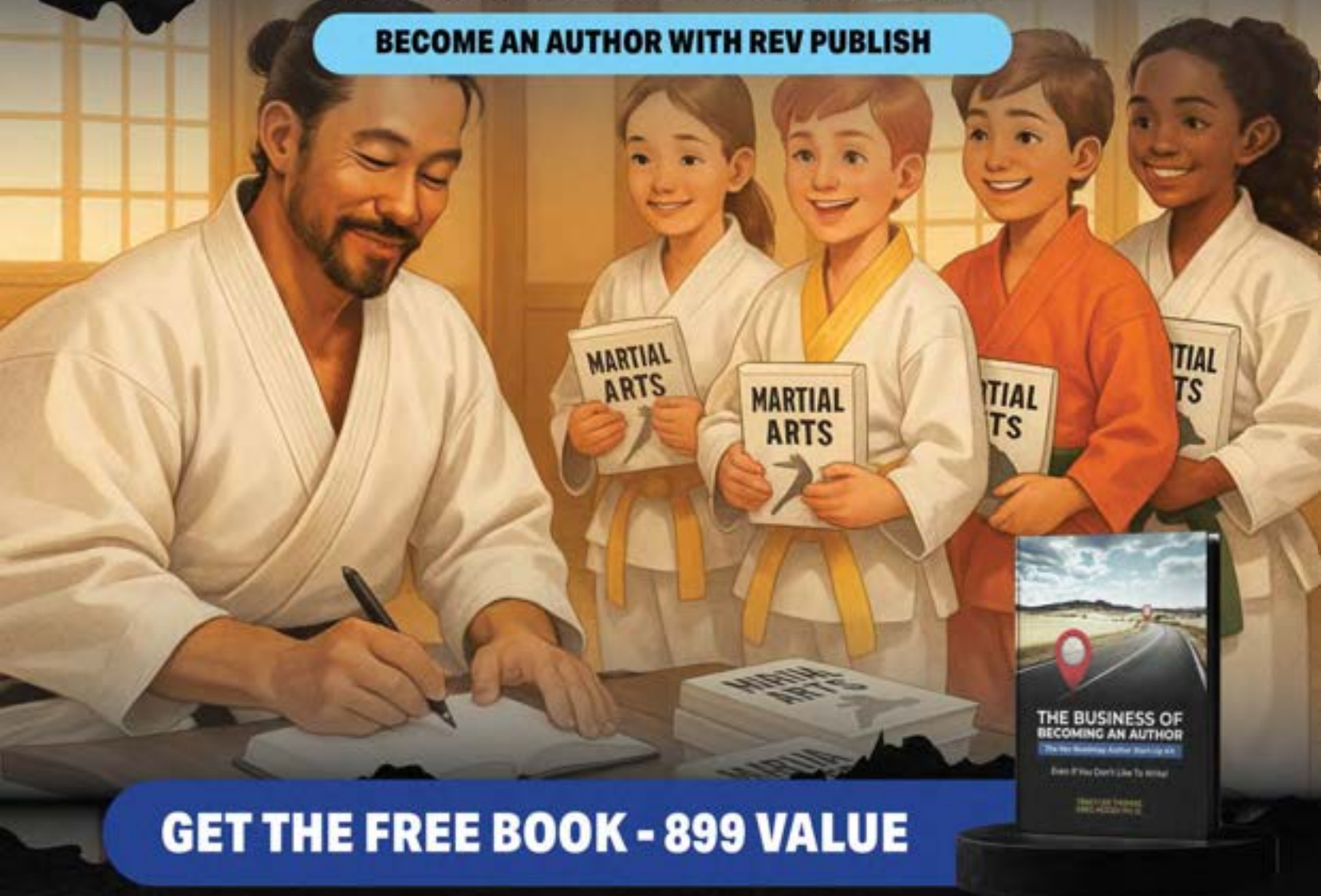
This story isn't just about martial arts; it's also about personal transformation. Alenzo has overcome behavioral challenges by channeling his energy into something positive and structured. He's become a child who is more confident, more thoughtful, and more resilient. His passion for karate is evident, not only in his skill, but in his dedication and attitude. Whether he's working on a difficult school assignment or involved in a disagreement with a friend, he applies the lessons he has learned through karate: to pause, think, and respond with intention.

In a world that oftentimes expects quick and easy results, Alenzo's journey is a reminder that meaningful change takes time, patience, and unwavering support. From a hyperactive six-year-old, struggling at school with impulse control, to a focused and inspiring nine-year-old Rising Star, his growth is a true testament to the power of perseverance and the impact of strong mentorship. With the right guidance, commitment, and mindset, even the most unlikely child can become a confident, disciplined, future leader.



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Trouble Never Schedules an Appointment

By Tracy Lee Thomas

I opened my first martial arts school in 1991, right after my service in the Navy. For more than three decades I built and ran a small chain of martial arts and Krav Maga schools, and I sold the last of them only recently. In all those years on the mat, I watched the same thing happen over and over again. A nervous parent, a shy kid, a stressed professional, or a grandmother who decided she was done feeling vulnerable would walk through the door, and a few months later they walked taller. They moved differently. They saw the world differently. That change is not magic. It is training, and it is available to almost anyone willing to take the first step into a Martial Arts School.

The hard part is the first step. Most people put it off until something frightening happens to them or to someone they love. I want to make the case for the opposite approach. The smartest time to walk into a martial arts school is long before you ever think you might need one, because trouble does not call ahead, and it never schedules an appointment. Never.



The Reality We Live In

Let me give you the honest picture, because honesty is more useful than dramatic. There's good news in the national data. The FBI reported that violent crime across the United States fell an estimated 4.5 percent in 2024 compared with the previous year. By several measures that is the lowest violent crime rate the country has recorded in about two decades. That's real progress, and the people working to make our communities safer deserve credit for it.

Here is the part the headlines tend to skip: a falling rate is not the same thing as a small number. In 2024 alone, law enforcement agencies reported more than 14 million criminal offenses to the FBI, and on average a violent crime occurred somewhere in this country every 25.9 seconds. Read that again. Every twenty-six seconds, on average. By the time you finish this article, the count will have climbed by dozens. A statistic that is trending down can still describe a country where serious harm happens constantly, all day and all night, in big cities and quiet towns alike.

And some crimes have moved the wrong way. Carjacking is the clearest example. Across a group of ten large cities that consistently track it, carjacking rose 93 percent from 2019 to 2023. Even after carjackings began to ease in 2024, the rate remained roughly 60 percent higher than it was in 2019. This is not a faraway problem either. National survey data show that carjackings are more likely to happen at or near the victim's own home than anywhere else, a majority involve a weapon, and a large share occur after dark. Add in home invasions,





ATM robberies, and the violent encounters that never make it into a clean statistic, and the lesson is simple. Crime does not vanish. It moves around, it changes shape, and it waits. Martial Arts training will prepare you.

Crime is a lot like weather. It improves, and it worsens, it shifts from one region to another, and no forecast ever guarantees a clear day. A calm week tells you nothing about the storm that may roll in next month, and a quiet neighborhood can change in a single season. And then there is lightning. It can strike anywhere, without warning, on a day that looks perfectly clear. Most violent encounters are exactly like that, sudden and unannounced, finding people who assumed it could never happen to them. You do not control the weather, and you cannot stop the lightning. What you control is whether you carry an umbrella, whether you know where to take shelter, and whether you taught yourself what to do the moment the sky opens up.

The Gap Where 911 Cannot Reach

Whenever you can call for help, call. Dial 911. Get to a safe place, hand the situation to professionals, and let them do their job. That's always the first and best option.

But there is a gap that every honest safety conversation has to acknowledge. There are moments when calling isn't possible. The phone is in the other room. The encounter unfolds in seconds. You are pulled toward a car, cornered in a parking garage, or woken in the night. In those moments there is no dispatcher, no patrol car, and no time. There is only you, your awareness, and whatever you trained yourself to do before that moment arrived. As a last resort, when escape is blocked and harm is coming whether you act or not, you have to be able to protect yourself. A good martial arts school is where ordinary people learn how to become their own first responder.

The Truth That Surprises Almost Everyone
Here is where I have to be straight with you, because false confidence gets people hurt.

Most people assume the whole point of martial arts is to win a fight. They picture training as preparation to stand your ground and physically defeat an attacker. I want to gently take that idea apart, because it is the most dangerous misunderstanding. Fighting back is risky. A weapon changes everything. Multiple attackers change everything. No black belt on earth is bulletproof, and any instructor who promises otherwise is selling you something I would never sell. But they can teach you a system that may save a life.

So if winning the fight is not the real goal, what is? Not having the fight at all.

> **“Trust your instincts, scan for the small warning signs that come before trouble, and notice the moment something feels off.”**

This is the counterintuitive truth that decades on the mat taught me. People who train in martial arts are, as a group, less likely to be the ones who get robbed, mugged, or pulled into violence. Not because they are eager to throw down, but because they almost never have to. Training rewires how a person moves through the world. They walk with intention. They notice the man who does not belong, the car that circled the block twice, the exit they would take if something went wrong. Predators look for easy targets, people who are distracted, unaware, and unsure. Trained students stop looking like easy targets, and most danger quietly chooses someone else. The fight you win is the one your awareness ends before it begins.

The Growing Threat Series and the G.E.A.R. Method
This is exactly why I wrote the Growing Threat Series. I wrote it for two readers at once: the martial arts school owner who wants to teach real-world safety, and the everyday practitioner or parent who simply wants to be ready. The series covers the situations that change lives in an instant: Psychology of Violence, Active Shooter Response Training, Carjacking Response, College Bound Readiness, Anti-Kidnapping and Abduction Training, Severe Weather Survival, and Home Invasion Response Training.

Running underneath all of it is a single framework I introduced in my book Real World Danger Awareness. I created the G.E.A.R. Method, and it exists because in a crisis nobody rises to the occasion. People fall back on what they have practiced. G.E.A.R. gives you something simple enough to hold onto when your heart is pounding and the clock is short.

G is for Guard. This is situational awareness, the foundation of everything else. Trust your instincts, scan for the small warning signs that come before trouble, and notice the moment something feels off. Most danger announces itself first, if you are paying attention.

E is for Evacuate. Move decisively toward safety. If a situation feels wrong, you are allowed to leave. Leave the party, the parking lot, the conversation, the street. The willingness to walk away early is one of the most powerful safety skills there is.

A is for Avoid. When you cannot simply leave, use distance, obstacles, and smart positioning to keep an attacker from reaching you. Put a car, a counter, or a locked door between you and the threat.

R is for Resist. This is physical action, and it’s the last resort, not the first. You resist only when escape is blocked, and harm is imminent. It’s the fire extinguisher behind the glass. You hope you never break that glass, but if the room is on fire and



there's no other way out, you're grateful it's there and that you know how to use it.

Notice the order. Three of the four letters are about never having to fight. That's not weakness. That's wisdom, and it's the heart of what a quality school teaches.

How to Choose a School the Right Way

So you're convinced, but where do you start? Not by signing a contract online and not by picking the closest sign on the highway. You start by visiting in person, with your eyes open. Here's exactly what to do.

Call ahead and schedule an appointment. A professional school will welcome that call and set aside time for you. How they treat you on the phone tells you a great deal about how they will treat you as a student. Warmth and organization on that first call are good signs. Pressure and a hard sell are not.

When you arrive, watch a class before you ever participate in one. Sit on the side and observe. Is the floor organized and does class start on time? Does the instructor control the room with respect rather than fear? Are students of different ages and abilities engaged and challenged at their own level? Watch how beginners are treated, because someday that beginner will be you or your child. A great school makes a brand-new student feel capable on day one.

Look past the kicks and punches at how the school is actually run. Ask who owns it and who teaches the classes you would attend. Ask how instructors are trained and certified. Ask how they handle safety, and listen for whether they teach awareness and avoidance, the Guard, Evacuate, and Avoid parts of real protection...

Then try a class yourself. Almost every quality school offers an introductory offer, often a free or low-cost trial lesson or a short starter program. Take it. Nothing on paper tells you what time on the mat will. Notice how you feel walking out. Stronger? Clearer? A little more awake to the world around you? That feeling is the beginning of the change I

watched in thousands of students over thirty years. There are so many great Martial Arts schools across the country.

Walk Through the Door

I am passionate about this for a simple reason. I have seen what martial arts does, firsthand, across our country and around the world. I have watched it turn fear into calm, hesitation into resolve, and ordinary people into harder targets who move through life with quiet confidence.

> **"I have watched it turn fear into calm, hesitation into resolve, and ordinary people into harder targets who move through life with quiet confidence."**

It is changing lives every single day, and the only thing standing between most people and that change is a door they keep meaning to walk through. Schedule an appointment today!

Trouble will never schedule an appointment with you, so schedule one yourself. Call a school this week, watch a class, ask the hard questions, and take that introductory lesson. Whether you are a parent, a professional, a student, or a grandparent who is simply done feeling vulnerable, the safest day to begin is the one before you ever need it.

Guard. Evacuate. Avoid. Resist. Learn it before life asks you to use it.





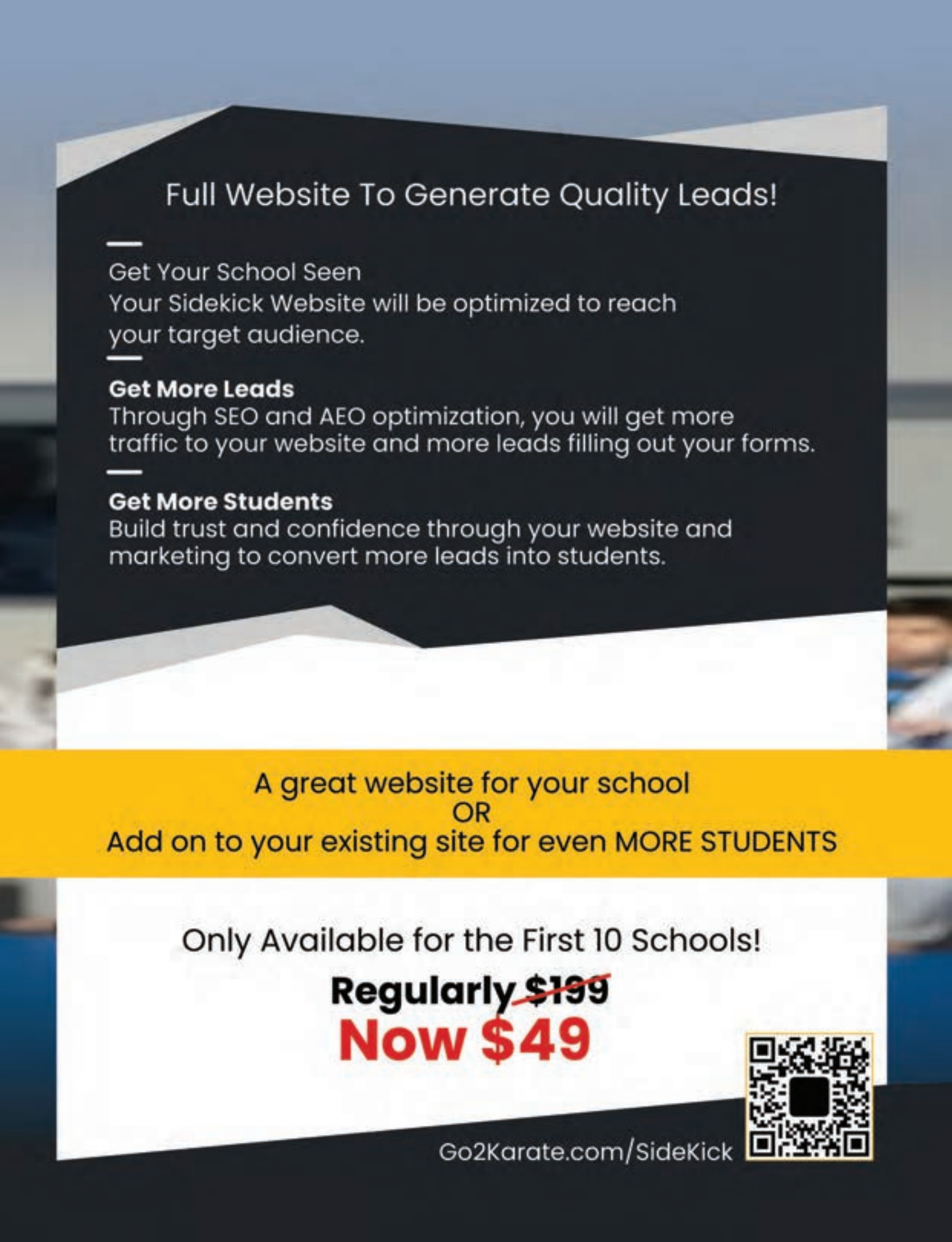
Tracy Lee Thomas is a Virginia-based author, 8th-degree black belt, and serial entrepreneur. A Gulf War veteran, he opened his first business at 17 and has since spent 40 years building companies like Rev Marketing, Go2 Karate, and Local Trust Navigator, helping entrepreneurs grow their businesses and online presence. He's also written several books on business, marketing, and martial arts. Outside of work, he enjoys motorcycling, hiking, and time at his ranch with his wife, Kelly.

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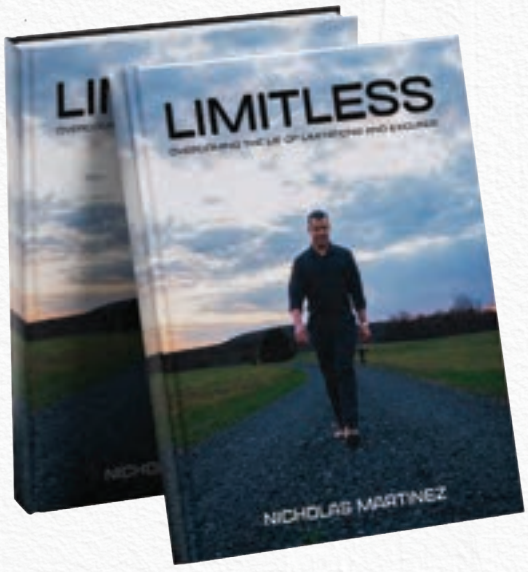
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Beyond Sight: Nicholas Martinez's Unstoppable Debut

By Rev Publish

Nicholas Martinez's debut book, Limitless: Overcoming the Lie of Limitations and Excuses, published by Rev Publish, is not really a book about blindness. It's about the stories people tell themselves when things get hard. Martinez happens to have been blind since childhood. That's part of it, but it's not the point, and he makes that clear from the first chapter.

He lost most of his sight to Leber's Congenital Amaurosis by age five. He doesn't linger on it. Instead he pulls from his own life. The piano lessons that never stuck. A guitar mentor who took payment in Dunkin Donuts coffee. A swim across the Meramec River to fetch a duck his family's dog refused to retrieve. Small stories. They add up to a bigger argument. Limitations are real. Excuses are not. Learning the difference, he writes, is the whole game.



The book runs on nine principles. Each one comes from a specific memory, not some tidy business school framework. There's a chapter on starting before you know how, built around his parents' decision to seek help at Boston Children's Hospital with no roadmap for what came next. There's one on mentorship, where Martinez argues that chasing originality is a trap. Real growth, he says, comes from finding someone worth imitating. Another chapter covers association. It centers on a memory of being the weakest musician in the room, and choosing to stay there anyway.

What keeps the book from reading like a stack of inspirational quotes is his willingness to admit where he came up short. He writes about a mentor who praised his work, then quietly cut him from a project because of his blindness. He writes about self-pity, too, as something he had to fight off actively. It wasn't something he simply grew out of. That honesty gives the principles some weight. This isn't a guy pretending the climb was easy.

Faith shows up throughout, including a chapter about a childhood hospitalization his parents still call a miracle. Martinez isn't trying to argue anyone into his worldview here. Rather, he's telling readers where his own resolve comes from. Readers can take it from there.

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

Martinez brings an odd mix of credentials to the page. He's an ordained minister. He's also a PhD candidate at Liberty University, where he teaches as an adjunct professor of music. He leads worship and plays several instruments, everything from metal to musical theater. He trains in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and that shows up more than once in the book's later chapters on responsibility and discipline. At one point he recalls his BJJ professor telling him early on, "Nobody feels bad for anybody around here. Once you step on the mat, we're all the same." That line sticks with him. You can feel it running under the whole book, not just the training chapters. He's also worked with a Boston opera company on making performances more accessible to visually impaired audiences, a cause that clearly means something to him.

Limitless started without a plan, which fits. Martinez says the idea came from his barber, who introduced him to Rev Publish. It took four phone calls to talk him out of his own excuses before he agreed to sit down and write. What came out of it reads less like a polished self-help manual and more like a conversation with someone who has actually lived this material. He still has more chapters he wants to write.

Rev Publish is proud to be his publisher. Stories like this one are exactly why we do this work.



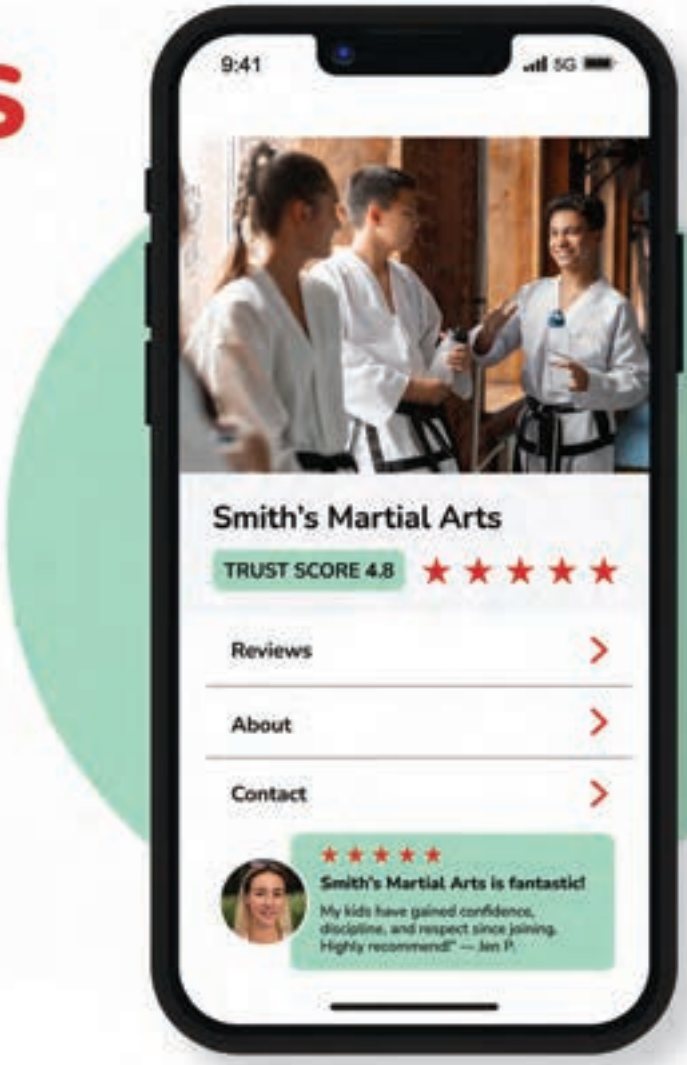


Nicholas Martinez is an author, musician, educator, and minister whose work centers on helping people move past self-imposed limitations. A PhD candidate who has spent years at the intersection of creativity, leadership, and faith, he draws on his own experience navigating life with a visual impairment to speak on adaptability and human potential. He serves as a worship leader and educator, mentoring students and supporting churches and organizations through teaching, consulting, and speaking. His debut book, Limitless: Overcoming the Lie of Limitations and Excuses, blends personal experience, faith, and leadership insight to help readers build resilience and take meaningful action.

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In Memoriam

Honoring the Martial Artists We've Lost

In 2026, we continue to 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 families, students, and the communities they touched.



CHRIS "SIFU" CHAN (KAM SHING CHAN)

1941 – JUNE 29, 2026

A San Francisco Wing Chun grandmaster who trained under Ip Man and alongside Bruce Lee in Hong Kong before immigrating to the U.S. in 1960. He founded the U.S. Wing Chun Kung Fu Academy, helping introduce the style to America and teaching for 58 years as a cornerstone of San Francisco's Chinatown community.



JOSÉ MANUEL CORTÉS GARIJO ("MANEL")

OCTOBER 23, 1957 – JUNE 2026

A top international judo referee from Spain who officiated at three Olympic Games (2008, 2012, 2016) and was named European Referee of the Year in 2013. After his refereeing career, he served as an IJF Referee Supervisor, mentoring the next generation of officials.



ALI SHAHERKANI

JULY 2026

A respected Saudi international judo referee who officiated at the 2012 London Olympics and dedicated himself to growing judo, especially women's judo, in Saudi Arabia.



HATSUO ROYAMA

MARCH 31, 1948 – AUGUST 3, 2026

A legendary figure in Kyokushin karate and one of Mas Oyama's original students, training at his dojo beginning in 1963. He later founded Kyokushin-kan and was inducted into the Black Belt Hall of Fame in 2024.



GRANDMASTER ALBERT R. CHEEKS

MARCH 3, 1952 – AUGUST 11, 2026

Founder and president of the Ki Whang Kim Traditional Martial Arts Association and a ninth-degree black belt, he was one of the top U.S. taekwondo competitors of the 1970s, frequently winning tournaments including Henry Cho's All American Open at Madison Square Garden

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 2026, 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 24, 2026. If you know of another martial artist who has passed this year and should be remembered, please let the editors at Go2 Karate Magazine know by submitting their information here. **https://wkf.ms/47lUlNp**

How I Spend My Day

By Marty Callahan

The alarm goes off around 4 a.m.
Most people are still asleep, but I'm already downstairs with a small breakfast and something to drink. Lucy, our nine-year-old mix of border collie and cattle dog, usually follows me down. She gets her early morning treat, gives me that look that says she's ready for more, then heads back upstairs to bed.

I head to my computer.
The house is quiet, and that makes it a good time to think. I review the day ahead, figure out what needs to get done, and knock out whatever preparation I can. I'll also spend some time scrolling through the internet, looking for something interesting or educational that might spark an idea.

Around 5 a.m., I go back to bed for a short nap.
By 6 or 6:30, Connie is up. We take our coffee out to the front porch, settle into our rockers, and watch the sunrise. This is one of my favorite parts of the day. We talk about what happened the day before, especially anything we didn't get a chance to discuss. Then we talk about the family, the dojo, and whatever the day might bring.

Around 7, we shower, get dressed, make the bed, and get moving.
We live in a small town of about 1,200 people. Our home is a Dutch Colonial built in 1890, tucked into a hillside surrounded by redwood forest west of Santa Rosa, California. The drive to the dojo takes about 25 minutes, winding through woods, hills, vineyards, and small towns. It's a peaceful way to start the workday.

When I arrive in Santa Rosa, I stop at the shopping center where our dojo is located. First, I pick up the mail. Then I unlock the doors and get things ready.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MASTER



Usually, I'm the first one there. Jacob, our main instructor and program director, arrives a few minutes later. We sit down at my desk and go over the previous day. What happened? Who needs a follow-up? Is there anything we need to address with a student or family?

Then we look ahead.
We review the classes, appointments, and anything else that needs our attention. Once we know where we stand, we turn our attention to marketing. That work usually carries us through until lunch.

Around 1 p.m., Tony, our newest staff member, arrives. I spend some time training him, then put him to work on marketing projects. At about 2:30, we meet again to finalize the afternoon and evening schedule.

Then the dojo comes alive.
We teach. We enroll new students. We renew memberships, conduct orientations and progress checks, and spend time talking with students and their families.

That's the real heart of the day.
We're building relationships. We're helping people grow. We're building a community one conversation, one class, and one student at a time.

By about 8 p.m., we wrap up the loose ends, lock up, and head home.

Dinner. A little time to unwind.

Then it starts all over again



Sensei Marty Callahan is an 8th Degree Black Belt and Chief Instructor of the Shotokan Karate Leadership School. Since founding the Santa Rosa academy in 1981, he has taught over 40,000 students. His path started with the rigorous Japan Karate Association Instructor Training Program. Through five decades on the mat, he has transformed traditional martial arts into a vehicle for character development, self-mastery, and unshakeable confidence.

Callahan views karate as far more than physical defense—it is a lifelong practice of mind-body harmony. His student-centered approach has earned him a reputation as Sonoma County's premier martial arts leadership mentor, inspiring generations to realize their full potential both inside the dojo and out.

Why Insight Karate Was Awarded the Go2 Karate Distinction Award

By Go2 Karate

Most local martial arts studios treat their website like a forgotten business card. A clunky homepage. A phone number. Maybe a photo of a trophy case. When we evaluate schools for the Go2 Karate Distinction Award, we look for the opposite. We want academies that use the web to actually serve their region, not just advertise to it.

That's why we picked Insight Karate and owner Nick Hurley in Conway, Arkansas.

Our panel judges three things: digital accessibility, community impact, and character-driven leadership. Insight Karate cleared all three.

He turned his website into a free resource hub; parents in Conway can pull up his guidance on childhood focus, conflict resolution, and anti-bullying strategies anytime they want, with no sign-up required. He took what he teaches on the mat and put it directly into people's hands. That's the whole point of an award like this.

We dug into the school's reputation around Conway, and the feedback from families made the decision easy. Hurley has been training for over 26 years and teaching for over 15 years, but his real strength shows up in the Character Education Program he built. He takes big, vague ideas, like respect, self-discipline, perseverance, and breaks them into habits kids can actually practice at home and carry into the classroom. It shows up in kids' schoolwork and confidence, not just their kicks and blocks.

Nick Hurley earned this award because he delivers what many school owners miss. A good martial arts studio doesn't stop at self-defense inside four walls. It builds something the whole community leans on.

Backing up over 26 years of training and 15 years of teaching experience, Hurley continues to prove that martial arts is about building confidence, discipline, and strong character in everyday life. Insight Karate is a thoroughly deserving recipient of the Go2 Karate Distinction Award.

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When Everything Is Immediate, What Does It Mean to Be Martial?

By Cesar Ozuna and Angelike Augsten

We live in an extraordinary age. Never before have we had access to so much information or so many tools to learn, communicate, and solve everyday problems. Within seconds, we can find an answer, watch a technique performed on the other side of the world, or access knowledge that, only a few decades ago, might have required years of study.

Technology has transformed the way we live, but it has also transformed our expectations.

We have become accustomed to immediacy. We want quick answers, quick results, and increasingly, processes that require as little effort as possible.

Many of the tasks that once demanded time, patience, and repetition can now be simplified, automated, or even delegated.

This does not mean that technology is negative. Quite the opposite: its possibilities are extraordinary. The challenge arises when we begin to apply the logic of immediacy to areas where human development cannot be accelerated in the same way.

Some things can be done faster, while others can only be built over time.



A LASTING TRADITION



We can find information in seconds, but experience takes years. We can watch a technique in a video, but mastering it requires practice. We can learn the theory behind a discipline, but understanding it deeply requires living it. This is precisely where martial arts acquire a particular relevance.

At their core, martial arts teach us something that our time can easily make us forget: some forms of learning cannot be rushed.

The Value of a Process

Learning a martial art means accepting, from the very beginning, a particular relationship with time. The student starts with the fundamentals, repeats movements that may initially seem simple, receives corrections, and tries again. Little by little, what once required conscious effort begins to become skill.

There are no shortcuts capable of completely replacing that process.

A person can watch an extraordinary technique online and understand its movements within seconds. Yet behind those few seconds of video may lie years of training, hundreds of mistakes, and thousands of repetitions.

Social media increasingly shows us the result, but rarely the entire process required to achieve it.

A spectacular kick may last only a few seconds. The training that made it possible may have taken years.

A medal can be placed around someone's neck in an instant. Reaching that moment may have required sacrifices, defeats, frustration, and an enormous amount of work that nobody saw.

Martial arts remind us of something fundamental: the result may be immediate; formation never is.

Martiality Is More Than Technique

It is at this point that the concept of martiality emerges.

Martiality is not simply about fighting, physical toughness, or a particular way of training. Nor does it mean idealizing the past or rejecting the evolution of martial arts. Martiality is a much broader dimension of practice.

It encompasses the way a person relates to the discipline they practice, to their teachers, training partners, opponents, and to themselves. It includes respect, responsibility, self-control, perseverance, and humility, but also something we sometimes overlook: the awareness of being part of a tradition.

A martial artist does not begin from zero. When entering a training hall, they receive something that was built long before they arrived. Techniques, knowledge, concepts, rituals, teaching methods,



symbols, codes of conduct, and experiences that have been passed from one generation to another. Techniques may change, methods may evolve, tools may be different, but behind the practice there is a memory, and understanding that memory is also part of martiality.

To Practice Is Also to Receive a Legacy

Martial arts are, in many cases, living traditions. They are preserved not only in books or museums, but when one person teaches another, when a teacher corrects a student, and when one generation passes a technique, principle, or story to the next.

Learning a martial art therefore means more than acquiring a skill. It means entering into contact with a legacy. Every technique has a context, every tradition has a history. Every system contains concepts and practices that developed within particular societies and circumstances.

Understanding their origins allows us to recognize that what we practice today did not appear spontaneously. There is a history behind every tradition and there is also a responsibility toward it.

Preserving a tradition does not mean repeating it blindly or preventing it from evolving. A tradition that remains completely unchanged risks becoming a museum piece. A living tradition, by contrast, is capable of adapting without losing what makes it recognizable.

The real challenge is to distinguish between what can change and what should not be lost.

Tradition Does Not Mean Living in the Past
Martial arts have always evolved. The training methods, spaces, equipment, and, in many cases, their purposes have changed. Some became competitive sports; others preserved stronger cultural or traditional dimensions; many found a balance between the two.

This evolution does not necessarily represent a loss. The problem begins when innovation starts to remove meaning.

We can use technology to analyze movement, digital platforms to teach, scientific tools to improve performance, and new educational methods to make learning more effective. All of these can enrich practice, but none of these tools should

make us forget that we are receiving something that others built before us.

Modernization can transform the way we transmit a tradition. It should not force us to forget why that tradition exists.

Discipline in the Age of Instant Gratification
Perhaps this is why martial discipline is particularly relevant today.

Discipline is often confused with obedience, but discipline is something deeper: the ability to remain committed even when motivation disappears.



In a society accustomed to instant gratification, learning to persevere toward a goal for years represents a powerful exercise in character.

Martial arts students learn that they cannot simply skip certain stages because they want to progress faster. First, they must build a foundation. Only then can they develop more complex skills, and each new level brings new responsibilities.

The belt may change color, but the process continues. Discipline teaches a lesson that extends far beyond training: not everything valuable can be obtained quickly.

Respect in a Time of Confrontation
We also live in a time when differences seem to be constantly amplified. Social media allows us to express opinions instantly and, often, from behind a screen it becomes easy to turn someone who thinks differently into an enemy.

Martial arts offer a different experience. The opponent is standing in front of us. They have a name, effort, history, and dignity. They may defeat us or we may defeat them, but neither situation eliminates respect.

Learning to confront without hatred is one of the great lessons a properly guided martial practice can offer.

Respect does not mean the absence of conflict. It means learning to move through conflict without losing our humanity.

Self-Control in an Age of Immediate Reaction
The same applies to self-control. We live surrounded by stimuli and exposed to an enormous amount of information. Immediate reaction has become an everyday behavior: we respond to messages, opinions, and events almost as soon as they appear.

Martiality proposes something different. It does not seek to eliminate emotions, but to learn how to govern them. It does not seek to prevent conflict, but to develop the ability to face it without losing control.

Training teaches us that having strength does not mean that we must constantly use it. Having an ability does not mean that we are obligated to demonstrate it. True maturity appears when we are capable of deciding when to act—and when not to.

Perseverance When Quitting Seems Easier
Another characteristic of our time is the constant possibility of change. We can change activities,

applications, entertainment, or even goals with a level of ease previous generations did not have. This freedom is valuable, but it can also make us forget the value of staying the course.

Martial arts teach something different.

There are moments when a technique simply does not work. Days when the body is tired. Competitions that end in defeat. Periods when progress seems to have stopped, and yet, we continue. Not because quitting is always wrong, but because some difficulties are not signs that we should stop. They are part of the process through which we grow.

Perseverance does not mean never falling. It means understanding that a fall does not necessarily determine the end of the journey.

Humility in an Age of Constant Exposure
We also live in an age of constant exposure. Every achievement can become a post, and every experience can become content. Martial arts can offer a different perspective.

Not every lesson needs to be displayed, not every achievement needs recognition, and not every piece of knowledge needs to become a demonstration.

A martial artist can reach a high rank and remain a student. They can win a competition and still have much to learn. They can teach others while continuing to listen.

Humility does not mean thinking less of oneself. It means understanding that knowledge never ends and that there is always someone from whom we can learn.

What Does Society Need from Martial Arts?
Perhaps this is where we find the most important question. The goal is not to claim that martial arts were better in the past, nor to portray technology as a threat. Nor is it about rejecting competition, professionalization, or new training methods.

The question is different: What can martial arts contribute to a society that is changing so rapidly?

Perhaps they can offer something that is becoming increasingly difficult to find: a space where progress is not instantaneous, an activity in which effort remains essential, a practice where discipline has meaning, a place to learn how to live with frustration, a tradition that reminds us that we did not begin from zero, a community where knowledge is passed from one generation to the next.

Above all, an opportunity to understand that our abilities acquire true value when they are accompanied by responsibility.

The Future of Martiality
The future of martial arts should not be a choice between tradition and modernity.

We do not need to abandon technology to preserve their essence, nor reject evolution in order to maintain identity. The challenge is much more interesting: learning how to evolve without forgetting.

We can use artificial intelligence to study. We can analyze our movements through cameras. We can use new tools to measure performance and develop more effective teaching methods, but we still need to train, we still need to repeat, we still need to listen to corrections, we still need to confront our own limitations, and we still need time.

There are things no technology can do for us. Character cannot be downloaded, Discipline cannot be installed, Experience cannot be automated. Tradition cannot be inherited simply by wearing a uniform: it must be understood, practiced, and transmitted.

Asking Ourselves Why We Train
Perhaps martiality is not a relic of the past that we need to recover out of nostalgia. Perhaps it is precisely a response for the future.

A LASTING TRADITION

In an age of immediacy, it reminds us of the value of process. In an age of constant stimulation, it teaches concentration. In an age of impulsive reactions, it teaches self-control. In an age of constant recognition, it reminds us of humility. In an age of individualism, it reminds us that we learn because of others, and in an age where everything seems capable of becoming faster, it reminds us that some of the most important things in life require time.

So perhaps the question is not whether martial arts are losing their essence. The question may be much deeper: What part of that essence are we willing to carry with us into the future?

A tradition remains alive not simply because we repeat its movements. It remains alive when we understand its meaning and are capable of passing it on to those who come after us.

Martial arts can continue to evolve. They should.

But as long as there is someone willing to train with discipline, respect the person standing in front of them, learn from those who came before, persevere when things become difficult, and use their strength responsibly, martiality will continue to have a place.

Technology can accelerate learning, but it cannot replace experience. It can show us the movement, but it cannot walk the path for us, and it can bring us closer to knowledge, but it cannot build our character.

Technique can shape athletes.

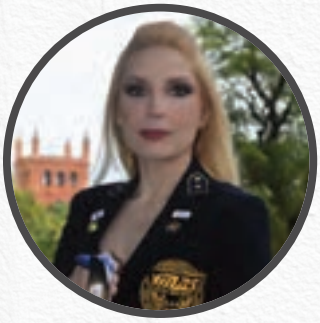
Tradition reminds us where what we practice comes from.

Martiality teaches us what to do with everything we have learned.

And ultimately, practice can help us become better human beings.

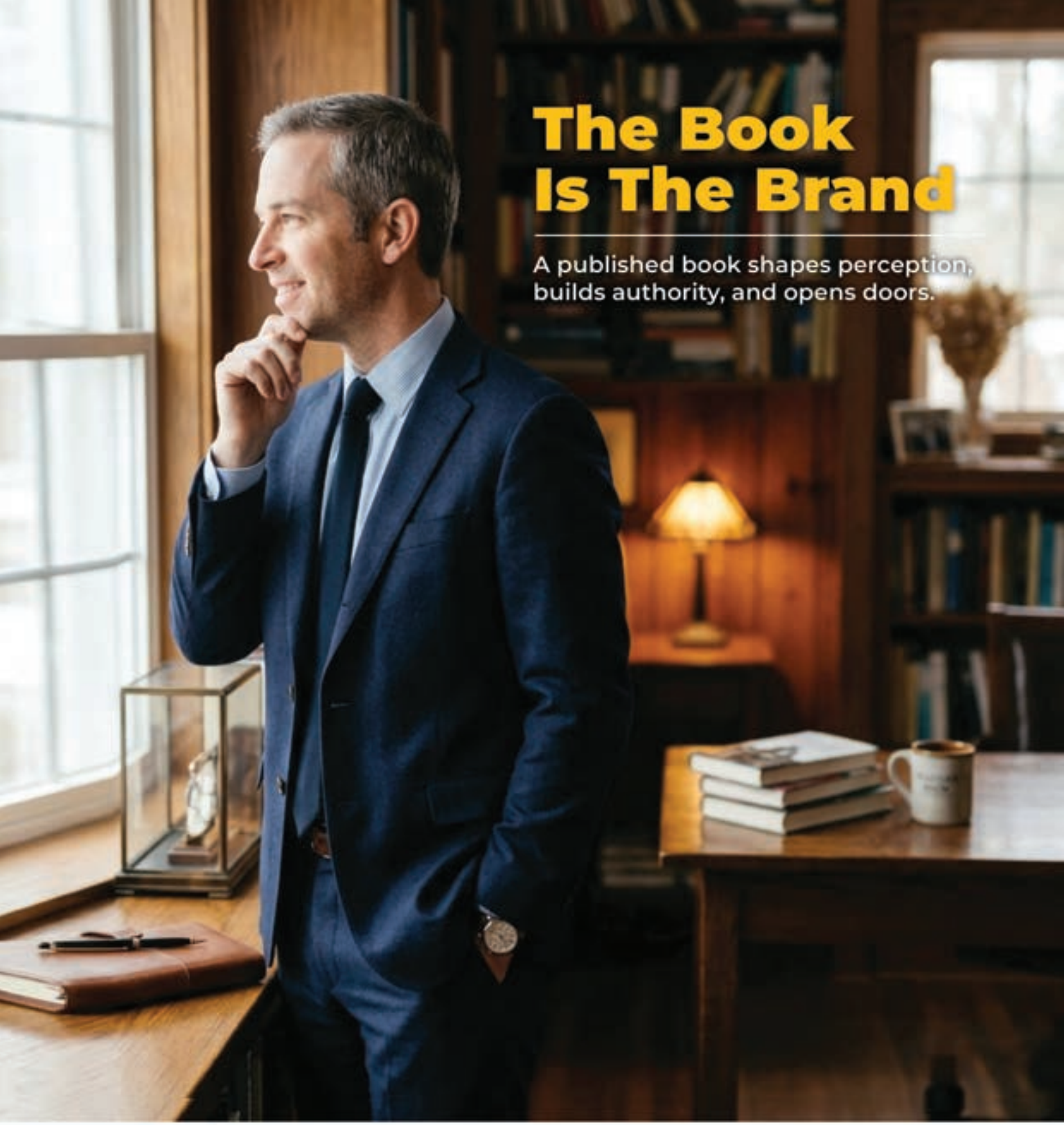


Grand Master Ozuna, born in San Pedro, Paraguay, in 1958, is a distinguished martial artist and founder of the Songahm Taekwondo Federation (STF), which unites over 200 schools across ten South American countries. With a career spanning over four decades, he has significantly influenced martial arts 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.



Angelike Augsten is 6th Degree in Haedong Gumdo, with over ten years of experience in Korean sword practice. She currently serves as International Director of the Chosun Haedong Gumdo Association, based in Masan, South Korea, a role she has held for the past seven years.

She has earned titles in World and Pan American championships. She is part of Martial Arts System, a platform through which she promotes innovation in martial arts, integrating technical training, culture, and identity, while actively contributing to the international projection of Korean martial arts.



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Technique Is King... But Fitness Is the Force Multiplier

By Travis Tooke

One of the greatest truths in martial arts is that technique defeats athleticism. Whether you practice Jiu-Jitsu, Judo, Wrestling, Karate, Taekwondo, Muay Thai, or MMA, proper technique allows a smaller, less powerful person to overcome someone who is bigger and stronger. This principle is what makes martial arts so fascinating and so effective.

But there is another truth that also deserves respect and attention...The Physical Element.

Once you've developed solid technique, improving your physical abilities can dramatically elevate your martial arts. Fitness doesn't replace technique; it amplifies it. A stronger, healthier, more mobile body gives your technique more opportunities to shine.



In Jiu-Jitsu, we often say that "technique is king," and I believe that wholeheartedly. If there is a large technical gap between two practitioners, the more skilled athlete will almost always win regardless of size or strength. However, when two people possess similar technical ability, physical preparation often becomes the deciding factor. The stronger athlete will control positions more effectively. The better-conditioned athlete will make better decisions late in the match. The more mobile athlete will find escapes, transitions, and submissions that others simply cannot.

Your body is the vehicle that delivers your technique.

Think about how many techniques require physical qualities beyond simply knowing the movement. Guard retention demands hip mobility. Wrestling exchanges require explosive power and balance. Maintaining strong posture inside someone's guard takes strength and endurance. Escaping bad positions often requires flexibility, coordination, and cardiovascular fitness when you're already exhausted.

The better your body functions, the more techniques become available to you.

This is one of the biggest reasons every martial artist should invest time outside of regular class.

Strength training builds resilient muscles, stronger grips, better posture, and greater control.

Cardiovascular conditioning allows you to maintain composure under pressure and execute techniques deep into a hard training session or competition. Mobility and flexibility improve movement quality while allowing you to access positions that would otherwise be unavailable.

Perhaps the most underrated benefit of physical preparation is injury prevention.

Every injury means time away from training. Every week spent recovering is a week that you're not learning, drilling, or sparring. While injuries can never be completely eliminated in a contact sport, a strong, mobile, well-conditioned body is significantly more resilient. Healthy joints, balanced movement patterns, and adequate strength reduce unnecessary stress placed on the body during training.

Ultimately, the greatest advantage isn't simply becoming stronger; it's being able to train consistently.

Consistency is where technical mastery is built. The martial artist who trains three to four or more days a week for ten years will almost always surpass the athlete whose progress is constantly interrupted by preventable injuries. Physical preparation allows you to spend more time on the mats, and more quality time on the mats always leads to better technique.

These habits become even more valuable as we age. Youth is temporary, but intelligent training can preserve athleticism for decades. Strength training helps maintain muscle and bone density. Mobility keeps joints healthy and movement efficient. Aerobic conditioning supports recovery both on and off the mats. Combined with proper nutrition, quality sleep, and recovery, these habits allow martial artists to continue training at a high level long after many of their peers have stopped.

The benefits extend far beyond martial arts. The same habits that improve your performance on the mats improve your health, energy, confidence, and longevity in everyday life. They help you become a better athlete, a healthier parent, a more productive professional, and someone who can continue doing the activities they love well into later life.

Technique will always be the foundation of martial arts. No amount of strength can replace years of technical study and experience. But if technique is the engine, physical fitness is the fuel that allows it to perform at its highest level.

Train your skills relentlessly. Then build a body that allows those skills to reach their full potential. The result won't just be better Jiu-Jitsu—it will be a healthier, more resilient, and longer-lasting martial arts journey.

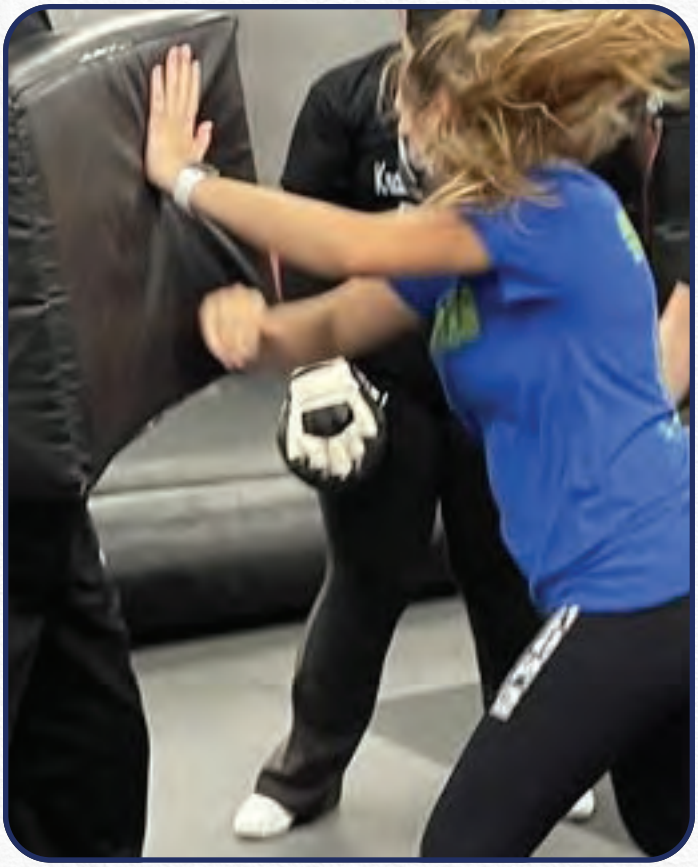


For over 20 years, Travis Tooke has dedicated himself to mastering and teaching the art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. He is a passionate martial artist committed to serving his students and his community. He is the author of *Jiu Jitsu and Life: Lessons Learned On* and *Off the Mat and Warrior Crucible.* As the head instructor and CEO of Team Tooke Mixed Martial Arts, Professor Tooke has created a program that molds students into athletic martial artists and confident leaders.

Women's Self Defense is the Same and Not the Same.

By Sue Gartski

When thinking about the difference between women's self-defense and "regular" self-defense, meaning self-defense for everyone, it's really the same thing. Awareness, reaction, response to threats, and self-defense techniques. Most defenses against a choke, for instance, have the same steps and principles for a man as for a woman. The difference is mindset. In all of the women I have trained, I have found that what holds them back from progressing, or even stepping into a training facility is their mindset.



Women are nurturers; we take care of people. It's out of our character to think of hurting someone so badly that they stop in their tracks. Most women will only think of going so far. They will poke the eyes, but don't want to poke them enough to really cause damage. This is a great example of thinking, "Ewww I could never do that," or "I'm too small," or "I'm too weak". It can be a give-up, or I-can't-do-it, mentality. Well, I say this, if women are really too small and too weak, then why would we even try to defend ourselves. Heck, just forget it, just let yourself be attacked if you think there is nothing you can do.

We have to get out of this mindset, and changing this mindset is number one in women's self-defense. You have to "do whatever it takes to survive" and believe you can do it. Instructors must understand this and help female students to find this mindset. It's not one size fits all; there's more to it. It's what's in your head. Of course, there are some women who have no problem attacking the attack right off the bat, but this short article is for those whose beast needs to be nudged out.

Once you finally break through this mindset and make women believe that they can defend themselves, they can hit hard, they can get home

safe, then the training begins. But how do you do that? Getting to this mindset takes very realistic visualization and time. You must put on your visualization cap as part of the training. Especially when you think you're one thing and someone is telling you to be something else. There is a beast inside of you, one that can and will protect you and your family. You just have to find it. You do that through training and visualization. Even a tiny mouse backed into a corner will still fight to survive. Survival is in everything.

Ladies, turn on your "bitch switch" . I heard a friend of mine use this term and I think it sums it up. Flip that switch, it's there inside all of us. It's another way of taking care of yourself and your family. You have no choice; it is the thing between you getting home safely and not getting home at all. You can still be a loving mom, wife, person, but when the rubber hits the road you know you can do it.

You are six feet tall and a powerhouse! Women are capable of anything and when it comes to the safety of ourselves and those around us, we are more than equipped. We just have to know how to flip the switch.

Next article, how to be six feet tall when you are four foot eleven.

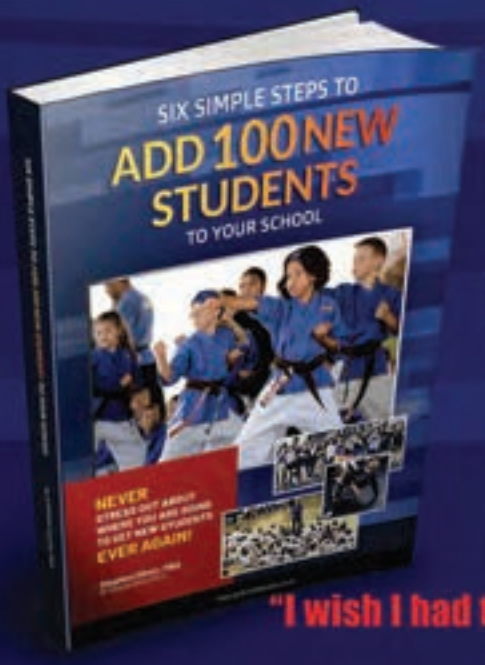




Sue Garstki is a certified Expert Level Krav Maga Worldwide Instructor and one of the Midwest's most accomplished female reality self-defense instructors. With more than 40 years of teaching experience, she has trained extensively in Krav Maga, Haganah/F.I.G.H.T., Commando Krav Maga, Raven Method Close Quarter Defensive Tactics, boxing, karate, Muay Thai, Jiu Jitsu, and numerous other martial arts systems.

Sue holds a 2nd-degree black belt in Shorei Goju Karate, is an Official USA Boxing Coach, and is a certified personal trainer specializing in self-defense, strength, stamina, endurance, and fight preparation. She has worked with the Chicago Police Department, schools, organizations, and the Chicago Guardian Angels to promote self-defense and awareness, including women's self-defense and domestic violence prevention.

A multiple inductee into the U.S.A. Martial Arts Hall of Fame, Sue was named Krav Maga Expert of the Year in 2017. She is also the founder of the Women's Martial Arts Alliance.



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Training the Mind: Discipline as Martial Arts' Greatest Skill

By Mark Shirley, MD

Most people walk into a dojang looking for stronger techniques, better sparring, or practical self-defense. Those goals matter, yet the deepest transformation rarely comes from a single perfect kick or a hard-won sparring exchange. It comes from the quieter skill that makes every other improvement possible: discipline. In martial arts, discipline isn't rigid obedience or punishment. It's the trained ability to show up, focus, and choose the harder correct action even when motivation is low, the body is tired, or life feels crowded. Over time, that capacity becomes martial arts' greatest skill, the one that turns occasional effort into lasting progress and carries benefits far beyond the mat.

Technique without consistency plateaus. Physical attributes fade without disciplined recovery and progressive training. Mental gains such as focus, emotional control, and quiet confidence only appear through repeated deliberate practice. Psychologists Angela Duckworth and colleagues describe a closely related quality as grit: the perseverance to keep working toward long-term goals despite setbacks and plateaus (Duckworth et al., 2007).





The tenacity to endure these known and expected obstacles. Martial arts is one of the best real-world training grounds for it. Belt ranks, formalized pattern requirements, and years of fundamentals demand exactly this kind of sustained effort. The student who can reliably direct attention and effort, session after session, ultimately outpaces the more talented but inconsistent practitioner.

A well-run martial arts class is deliberately designed to build that capacity. Decades of research on expertise show that high-level performance grows through deliberate practice—focused, feedback-driven repetition of specific skills (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993). That's exactly what good instruction demands every session: clean basics when flashy techniques feel more appealing, controlled intensity when the ego wants to swing harder, proper form when fatigue sets in. Research has also shown that traditional martial arts training strengthens self-regulation, the ability to control impulses and stay on task even when it is hard (Lakes & Hoyt, 2004). The structure of the dojang supplies the necessary ingredients: clear standards, immediate feedback from instructors and partners, measurable progress markers, and a culture that treats consistency as a virtue. Rituals such as bowing, lining up, and following a familiar class format further reduce decision fatigue and make disciplined behavior the path of least resistance.

These same mechanisms explain why the benefits transfer so readily outside the training hall. The habit of arriving on time, finishing what you start, and regulating emotion under pressure shows up at work, in relationships, and in health choices. These habits carry over into everyday life. Disciplined training supports the recovery practices, progressive loading, and injury-prevention habits that keep martial artists training into later decades. Motivation may get someone through the door the first month; discipline is what keeps them training when the novelty fades and life gets in the way. In that sense, the highest rank is not a belt color. It is the person who has learned to direct their own effort reliably.

Obstacles are predictable. Motivation fluctuates. Perfectionism and ego pull attention toward looking skilled rather than drilling fundamentals. Work, family, and fatigue interrupt the ideal schedule. The practical response is to treat discipline itself as a trainable skill. Protect a minimum effective dose of training for a set period. Movement is medicine. Bottom line. Keep moving. Keep a simple process log—attendance, focus on basics, completion of warm-up and cool-down—rather than tracking only outcomes. Deliberately choose the harder correct option in class: slower and cleaner technique, controlled sparring when frustration rises, full attention during the parts of class that feel repetitive. These "discipline reps" compound. Over weeks and months they rewire both movement patterns and the mental habits that sustain them.

Martial arts has always understood this. The dojang functions as a laboratory for self-mastery. Repetition, standards, etiquette, and progressive challenge are not obstacles to real training; they are the training. Students who embrace that reality discover that discipline is not a personality trait some people are born with. It's a skill that improves with practice, exactly like a front stance or a proper hip rotation. Shift the question from "How good is my technique today?" to "How disciplined was my training this week?" Protect one non-negotiable habit for the next month. The techniques will follow.



More importantly, the person who can keep that promise to themselves will keep improving long after the initial excitement has settled into steady, quiet progress, the kind that lasts.

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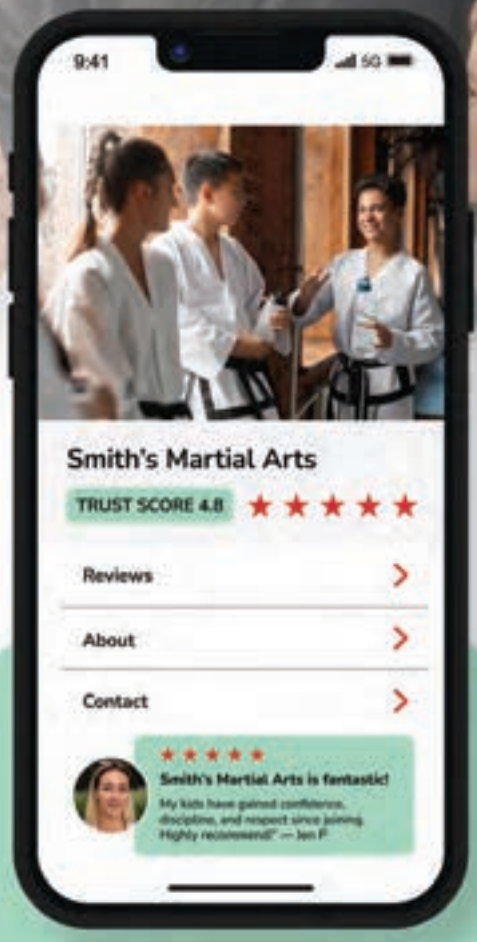
Dr. Mark E. Shirley is an Emergency Medicine physician at Memorial Community Hospital in Blair, Nebraska, with subspecialty board certification in Sports Medicine. He retired as a U.S. Air Force Colonel, Flight Surgeon, and State Air Surgeon after 35 years, serving as Chief Medical Officer and overseeing medical readiness for over 1,000 personnel. His honors include the Legion of Merit and the Meritorious Service Medal. A 6th Degree Black Belt and Master of G-Shim Taekwondo, he serves as Sports Medicine Physician and Director of Fitness & Nutrition for GTMA. With 48 years in martial arts, he advances athlete performance, mentors future providers, and supports community health.

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Teaching Martial Arts in a World of TikTok Attention Spans

By Greg Moody, Ph.D.

Two students in your 5:30 class are paying attention to the wall (or the mirror, or the noise when the door opened, or....) during class. Both need redirections. From where you're standing, they look like the same problem.

They aren't, and getting it wrong might cost you one of them. Which one is which?

One of them may have ADHD. The other one has attention that's been conditioned to be short by everything outside your school. Both of them need something from you, but not the same thing. With one you get more specific and more structured. With the other you change how often they hear from you.

Two Different Problems

About one in nine U.S. children aged 3 to 17 has been diagnosed with ADHD at some point, roughly 7.1 million kids (Danielson et al., 2024). We've addressed ADHD a lot before. It's a neurodevelopmental condition (longer conversation about where that comes from). The effort is usually there, and the brakes don't hold. It shows up early,





it shows up everywhere, and by the time that child reaches your floor another adult has probably already said something to the parents if they haven't noticed.

The second student is a different animal. Their attention works fine. What's changed is the expectation about the attention.

Be careful how you say that in a parent conference, as there may be controversy, because the research as usual, doesn't match the headlines in the news. A longitudinal study of 2,587 Los Angeles high school students found that teens frequently using seven digital media activities later reported ADHD symptoms at 9.5%, vs. 4.9% for teens using none (Ra et al., 2018) – a real difference, and a modest one the authors themselves declined to call causal (but good for you to know as it's a conversation point).

A 2025 survey of 528 Thai families found short-form video use associated with greater inattentive symptoms, and being cross-sectional it can't tell you which way the arrow runs (Chiencharoenthanakij et al., 2025). Children who already struggle to regulate attention are drawn to media that does the regulating for them.

Social media doesn't give a child ADHD. What it does is train an expectation about how fast attention gets rewarded, and that expectation is in your school at 5:30 wearing a white belt.

Three Questions That Separate Them

It's important to understand you are not diagnosing anybody (you're not a doctor or mental health clinician, and that's not our role). This is a teaching decision for you on the mat. Okay, you ask, how do you tell these apart and what do you do? Three tests:

Does attention change with interest? Let's say you're sparring. The short-attention-conditioned student locks in instantly, because sparring requires fast attention. The student with ADHD often struggles to sustain even on the thing they love most.

How long does the correction hold? After a calm redirection the short attention conditioned student usually gives you eight or ten minutes. The ADHD student gives you ninety seconds, and they give you



ninety seconds whether you were warm about it or stern about it. Your delivery style barely moves the number.

When did it start? Conditioned impatience tends to show up around the age their phone did. ADHD was there (often) at four, at school, at home, at grandma's house, and in every activity the family has tried.

If you notice these differences, you can figure out what to do.

You're Competing on "Payout Interval"
You're not competing with the phone for attention. You're competing on payout intervals.

A social feed is a variable reward machine that pays out every few seconds. A great movie to reference and watch is The Social Dilemma (not the Jesse Eisenberg Facebook movie, The Social Network). It talks about how social media companies build their systems to hold people's attention and the methods they use. I'm not knocking these companies (at least not here); it's just an explanation for what your students may be conditioned around, a "payout interval" which provides reward or stimulus frequently.

What's different in class? I mean, you're getting their attention too, right? Yes, but the frequency is not as high. For example, your belt system is maybe set to reward in sixty days. In classes, you may want them to punch more than six times before changing activities. We ask for attention, but a nine-year-old can't feel it like they are used to.

Out-stimulating the phone is a losing fight and not something to try to change. Changing your payout interval is something you can adjust. You're probably doing a lot of this, but to be thorough, are you rewarding (at least verbally) students in class a lot or do they do 100 side kicks before they hear some feedback? Stripes can be for specific behaviors, not just curriculum. A highlight in front of the class every round. Immediate, specific praise

("that's the third rep in a row with your hands up" beats "good job" by a mile). This is progress the student can SEE or hear without asking anyone.

One technique I learned from Grand Master Bill Clark (way before social media) was "interjections." I train my staff to say something very short every count. They either say a correction, a praise, or a direction. It may seem like a lot but it works great! Let's say we're counting punches, it may look like:

"One!" They punch and yell...
"Fantastic!"
"Two" They punch and yell...
"Louder!"
"Three" They punch and yell...
"Keep your fists tight."
"Four" They punch and yell...
"Perfect!"
"Five" They punch and yell...
"That was strong, Jordan!"
"Six" They punch and yell...
"Rotate your hands."
"Seven" They punch and yell...
"This is my favorite move!"
"Eight" They punch and yell...
"Focus your eyes!"
"Nine" They punch and yell...
"Looking good!"
"Ten" They punch and yell...
"Excellent!"

It becomes easy if you train to do it and push yourself to pay attention to what they're doing. Before this I found my staff would think they were doing their job just counting one to ten with some feedback at the end. If you get used to interjecting, you're maximizing the feedback they get (and that will improve their skills) as well as maximizing the input they get (which helps them stay focused).

The Fix Most Owners Reach For Makes It Worse

That all being said, the above addresses things that are just good instruction skills anyway. We DO want to improve attention span (whether that's conditioned or ADHD). That's what we were hired to build! When attention gets hard the reaction sometimes is to shorten everything. Faster rotations, more activities, louder music, three-minute segments because that's all they can handle.

Every time you shorten the interval to match what the phone conditioned, you train the very tolerance we want to improve.

The research says the same thing. A randomized controlled trial found judo training increased visuospatial working memory capacity in children with ADHD, with the brain activity to match (Ludyga et al., 2022). A separate randomized trial of a 26-session mixed martial arts program found higher social skills and fewer problem behaviors in children on the autism spectrum (Phung & Goldberg, 2021).

Neither study tested movement in general. Both tested STRUCTURED training with sequenced skills and earned advancement. Run correctly, your curriculum is the intervention those studies keep pointing at, and saying so in an enrollment conference makes you the only program in town with evidence behind the claim.

It's not only a martial arts finding, and that matters when a parent asks you why classes would help. A cluster randomized trial across twenty-nine schools and 759 kindergarteners tested a classroom curriculum built around self-regulation and found gains in executive function and in the control of attention, with the biggest effects in the highest-poverty schools (Blair & Raver, 2014). Another randomized trial put 213 preschoolers through structured rhythm and movement sessions and improved self-regulation and school readiness (Bentley et al., 2023).

Diamond and Lee reviewed the field instead of testing one program. They went across computerized training, classroom curricula, aerobics, yoga, mindfulness and martial arts, and

reported that every program that worked shared the same two ingredients: repeated practice, and challenge that goes up as the child gets better (Diamond & Lee, 2011). They also found the children with the weakest attention gained the most. You already sell both of those – that's a belt system! The only question is whether your classes are actually running it.

Vagueness Is the Enemy, Not Structure

This spring an owner I talked to asked me how his part-time instructors should hold a discipline structure without breaking his growing number of students with ADHD and on the spectrum. Half his staff had gone soft on those kids. Half had gone stern. Neither worked.

These students do better with clear, consistent, specific expectations and a calm consequence than with an instructor improvising sternness in the moment. You don't lower the standard. You simply make it more specific and structured.

"Focus" is not specific, but "Feet on the spot, hands at your sides" is clear to any child in your room, measured by any instructor on your floor, and corrected the same way by all of them. Put the exact correction language on one page and hand it to every instructor you employ (including the black belt who has been there six years and is sure they don't need it). We have the staff go through this in detail during instructor training.

We all say the exact same things and define them exactly the same way.

I've taught over 18,000 students and my Ph.D. specialization is in special education and psychology. What I tell my own instructors hasn't changed in thirty years: these students are not harder to teach, they're less forgiving of sloppy teaching.



What You Say to the Parent
For ADHD or conditioned attention conversations with parents, they are short and don't include a diagnosis.

With the conditioned student you discuss the mismatch, not the child. They're used to things changing in about eight seconds. A semester at the school (we call testing cycles semesters) is eight weeks of getting better at the same things. Our job is moving them from one to the other, and the first month is the hard part.

With the student who may have ADHD you never discuss the label unless they identify with it. Describe what you see, ask what school says, and let the parent connect it. "They give me about ninety seconds after a reminder no matter how I give it, and I see the same thing in every drill. Does their teacher describe anything like that?" If the family already works with a clinician, ask about medication timing relative to your class schedule (when they take their medication may affect attention during class or school). It's okay as a professional to ask these questions.

For the diagnostic detail and the full parent-partnership scripts, there is a great Go2 Karate ADHD webinar Seminar Link that covers a lot more.

What It's Worth
Retention is where you see this the most, where the student who never got a clear standard finally stops coming. Incoming calls that open with "My kid has a lot of energy," which is the most common way a parent tells you about ADHD without saying it. Do this well and referrals will grow, because a parent whose child has been asked to leave a soccer team or a gymnastics class who does great in your program may evangelize you!

Check out students this week and think about the three questions on each one. My guess is that at least two of the three are conditioned attention and not ADHD. Identification helps part way and improving instruction skills does the rest of it.

In the end, these students and families can be incredible and fun rather than frustrating and stressful. I hope this article helped, and you can always reach out to us at Go2 Karate!



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