



Your Martial Arts Resources: Improving your art and your game

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The Everyday Benefits of Martial Arts Training



Some people feel martial arts training is just for those rare moments when you or a loved one is attacked, but what if martial arts could be used every day of your life...?

Would that interest you more? Is being more aware of your surrounding, faster, stronger, better balanced, having better reflexes and the ability to think clearly under stress important to you?

Then martial arts is the perfect activity for you! Warning, always consult with a physician before engaging in any physical activities. Let me tell you about some of my personal experiences that could benefit you....

Environment Awareness:

Spend some time with surprise attack drills and multiple attack drills and see if that doesn't increase the overall awareness of your environment.

Faster:

I have good reflexes, but I've also just become plain faster. Part of my increase in speed I must credit to the Honolulu Sparring Club. A bunch of great tournament fighters who taught me how to look stupid by not letting me get away with things in which I had become accustomed to.

Training with people faster than you and doing speed drills will eventually increase your overall speed.

Stronger:

I am definitely stronger from some of the solo martial arts drills I've developed and which I practice.

The strength itself comes not only the expected places, arms, legs etc., but to unusual places as well. For example, my inverters and everters, which are the muscles which turn my ankles in and out, gained strength from executing multiple kicks while balancing on one foot. I've taken steps off unseen curbs and into unseen holes that should have sprained my ankle, but it just doesn't happen. My back is stronger too from back kicks.



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Better Balanced:

As you read earlier, executing multiple kicks is a great balance exercise. I seem to feel my center of gravity better than the average person. I also attribute this to evasive drills. Even if I do trip I catch myself.

Better Reflexes:

There's a difference between being faster and having faster reflexes. A reflex is a reaction to a stimulus. A reflex can be learned or involuntary. Pulling your hand away from heat would be an example of an involuntary reflex. A learned reflex, which is what I'm discussing here, is gained through repetitive movement such as a factory worker who screws on the same nut and bolt and passes it on. Eventually this movement, through repetition, is sent to a lower part of the brain closer to the spinal cord. A learned reflex is also referred to using a very inaccurate term "muscle memory". Muscles have electrical and chemical reactions, not memories. The proper term is learned reflex.

Although reflexes are primarily specific to the activity you're practicing, martial arts has such a wide variety of reactions trained within us, I personally find myself reacting quickly to anything from leaping out of the way of a car in which the moron is turning right while looking left at traffic or catching a pen before it hits the floor.

I find both blocking drills and evasive drills excellent drills for increasing reaction time or learned reflex speed.

Thinking Under Stress:

It's dark. I'm traveling down highway 16 in Illinois with a female friend of mine. The car ahead of me is going awful slow.

NO WAIT! IT'S STOPPED! I slam on the breaks then begin pumping them to maintain control of the car. I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE IT! I veer left and avoid the car while breaking. ANOTHER CAR STOPPED IN THE LEFT LANE! I veer right to avoid that car, finally stopping.

The emergencies over, my body was relaxed, yet ready to spring into action, my adrenaline was pumping. I made note of these physiological responses as though I were a third party looking inside myself. All these emergency functions subsided in 30 seconds to one minute after we had stopped safely. My friend on the other hand couldn't settle down for half the night.

But wait, I told you everyday uses right? I'd be a pretty bad driver if I did that everyday. The same exact training, to think clearly under stress, is used every day at work. Deadlines and sales presentations, the ability to think clearly and outside of the box are not only a part of martial arts training, they're a sign of leadership abilities!

Conclusion:

Yes, you can find other activities to give you all of these everyday benefits, but there is not one single activity that I can think of which encompasses all of these benefits into one activity AND teaches you to protect the physical and mental shape in which you're trying to stay.

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