

HSFA Insider

Texas' Martial Arts News Source



Volume 3, Issue 3

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Kali? Karate? Kung Fu? TKD?

Over the years, I've found that most systems of martial arts have the same or similar techniques to all other systems of martial arts. When you get to the upper levels of Shotokan, 6th, 7th and 8th dan, many of the forms start to look like Northern Kung Fu forms, and when you get to the upper levels of the Kung Fu forms, they start to have a very linear and ridged look to them. You end up making a full circle. Which is, I guess, what the martial arts are all about. Ending where you began. If you look at the forms, there are knee and elbow techniques in almost everything, so the close-range combat is in the system, there are long kicks and short punches in each system, there are even throws and takedowns in each of the systems forms. Traditional Ju Jitsu has karate/hard style techniques in it. Punches, kicks, blocks, etc., and probably other than Boxing and Fencing, I can't think of another system that doesn't encompass, in some way, all the other systems out there. It all comes down to what the main instructors of the system you're studying like best and what they want to teach. Although TKD has knees, elbows, choke defenses (which means that they must teach how to choke to be able to defend against it),

and throws, they just don't practice them. BUT, they're in the system. What are the Grand Masters favorite techniques? That's what the system becomes about. With this in mind, each system should be able to blend into any other system without too much trouble. A few tweaks here, a modification there, and you're in. So, this being the case, why is it so difficult and confusing to cross train for martial artists who've been training in 1 systems for several years? I believe it's because they're so focused on their one small area, that they believe that's all they'll need. They have the best part of the concepts out there and their few techniques can beat any of the other techniques that others are practicing, but how many times have you seen someone change 1 little thing and throw a fighter's whole game off? Maybe you have 2 stick fighters and one is left handed and fights in an open stance. The Escrimador who can't modify his regular routine normally loses. The same with southpaw boxers who easily beat their opponents who aren't used to fighting against a right-hand lead. A good way to start overcoming this problem is to spar while constantly trying new techniques. Today we live in the information age. With

YouTube and other information outlets at our fingertips, it's easy to pick up a "new move" to try while sparring. Maybe you'll get creamed while trying it, but that's OK. Maybe 10 out of 10 times you'll get nailed right in the middle. Maybe the next 10 times you try it though, you get your technique through once. Maybe the next 10 times you try it, it'll work twice. Maybe the next 10, it'll get in 3 times, and in time, you'll own the new technique. Maybe not with the people you spar every night at class, but when you go to compete, you'll have a toolbox full of strange and bizarre techniques your opponent won't be ready for. Maybe you'll jump into something you'd normally bend low for or as you're attacked, instead of retreating you'll advance. You'll have a plethora of moves your opponent will have to deal with. If you can learn just 1 single "new" thing from a video or a seminar or another student you train with, it'll be worth the time to get it down. Learn from everyone and everything because it's all part of the same game.

Curt Doyle, North American Institute of Self Defense

Business Spotlight — Pyndus Acupuncture & Wellness

Pyndus Acupuncture and Wellness PLLC is a family owned and operated clinic of Oriental Medicine located in the Heights neighborhood of Houston, Texas. Jonathan Pyndus, L.Ac., Dipl. NCCAOM, LMT is a graduate of the American College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, and has also studied Japanese Acupuncture in Japan. Pyndus Acupuncture and Wellness offers Chinese and Japanese acupuncture, herbal medicine, tui na body work, and medical Qigong to patients. Every treatment is customized to the individual needs of each patient. Jonathan exclusively uses Japanese needles, which are thinner and gentler so as to minimize discomfort and promote relaxation. Jonathan

decoccts his own Dit Da Jow liniment for sports and martial arts related injuries. Pyndus Acupuncture and Wellness also offers classes in Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan, emphasizing the fundamental body mechanics, Qigong breathing methods, and Tai Chi philosophy to students so they can experience the benefits of their practice in daily life. Hours are by appointment only Tuesday through Friday, with out calls available upon request.

Appointments can be made online at www.pyndusacupuncture.com or by phone at (234) 770 – 0884. Pyndus Acupuncture and Wellness is located at 748 East 12th Street, Houston, TX,

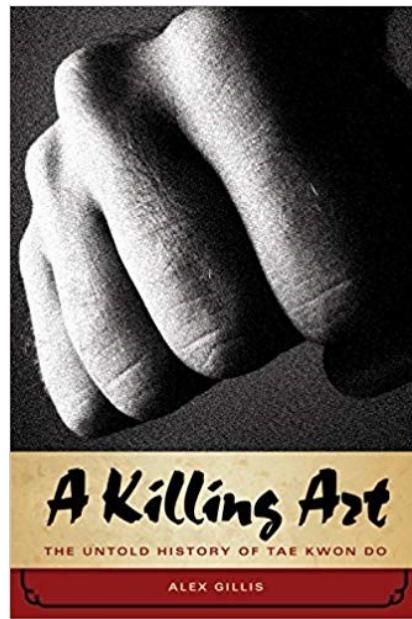


PYNDUS
ACUPUNCTURE
& WELLNESS

Recommended Reading — A Killing Art (The Untold History Of Tae Kwon Do), Alex Gillis

Obscure documents, Korean-language books, and in-depth interviews with tae kwon do pioneers tell the tale of the origin of the most popular martial art. In 1938, tae kwon do began at the end of a poker game in a tiny village in a remote corner of what is now North Korea by Choi Hong -Hi, who began the martial art, and his nemesis, Kim Un-Yong, who developed the Olympic style and became one of the most powerful, controversial men in sports. The story follows Choi from the 1938 poker game where he fought for his life, through high-class

geisha houses where the art was named, and into the Vietnam War where the martial art evolved into a killing art. The techniques cut across all realms—from the late 1960s when tae kwon do-trained Korean CIA agents kidnapped people in the U.S. and Europe, to the 1970s when Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris, and other Hollywood stars master the art's new kicks. Tae kwon do is also a martial art for the 21st century, one of merciless techniques, indomitable men, and justice pumped on steroids.



"So, with all of this in mind, how can a contemporary martial artist here in the United States use the martial arts as a vehicle for health and longevity?"

Martial Arts as Medicine

One of the big selling points for martial arts in the United States is their supposed ability to transform a sick or physical unfit person into a healthy, vibrant athlete. Many styles have the apocryphal story of a founder or past master who was frail as a child and found their physical constitution transformed once they began the study of martial arts: Funakoshi Gichin of Shotokan, Kano Jigoro of Judo, etc. The legend of Damo/Bodhidharma teaching exercise to the infirm monks of the Shaolin temple and creating Kung Fu can be seen as the root of this popular archetype and links the martial arts to Oriental Medicine.

In fact, the movements in many styles like Karate, Tae Kwon Do, and the myriad Kung Fu forms can be traced back to ancient Chinese Dao Yin/Qigong exercise, wherein the movements, postures, and breathing techniques were designed to stimulate the organs, tissues, and acupuncture meridians in order to maintain homeostasis and promote longevity. Xingyiquan, for example, has five core movements each named for one of the five elements used in Chinese culture to organize the phenomena of the universe, including human physiology. Therefore, practicing these movements not only means the martial artist is learning to fight, but is also healing his or her body. Some martial arts, like Tai Chi Chuan, are often marketed more for their alleged health benefits than for their use for self-defense. In Tai Chi Chuan's case, there is a strong connection to Traditional Chinese Medicine practices like acupuncture and massage.

The association of martial arts with the traditional medicine

practices of Asia is fairly well known, even to the general public, because of movies. Who remembers in The Karate Kid when Mr. Miyagi rubs his hands together and miraculously gives Daniel enough relief from his injured knee to return to the tournament and beat the Cobra Kai dojo? Or perhaps if you are a more knowledgeable martial arts film fan, you think of the character of Wong Fei Hung, the Chinese folk hero who was both Kung Fu master and acupuncturist.

Yet even for Joe Public who does not think of acupuncture or Qi at all, the martial arts are still often associated with exercise. Many people join martial arts schools with a desire to get fit and lose weight. Certainly, many martial arts classes include physical training intense enough that students develop healthy cardiovascular systems and impressive looking muscles. But how many martial artists also have chronic knee, shoulder, or back pain from training injuries? I personally know two Open Karate world champions who have joints that had to be surgically repaired, limiting their ability to train at the level they once did despite still being fairly young.

So, with all of this in mind, how can a contemporary martial artist here in the United States use the martial arts as a vehicle for health and longevity? Can martial arts really be used as a "medicine"?

The martial arts are a unique human cultural institution. They can be practiced competitively as a sport, yet for many people they are more than a game. The martial arts can be practiced purely to impart survival skills in violent situations, yet they almost universally include ethical codes admonishing students to avoid conflict. Many martial arts are connected to philosophy or religion like

Zen Buddhism, Shinto, or Daoism, yet the martial arts are not religions themselves. So likewise, the martial arts can be associated with physical fitness, yet more than just the body is trained during martial arts practice.

Taken as a whole, the martial arts are ideally a lifestyle. If you look at the origins of many of the martial arts, you find a warrior organization or caste trying to produce the best individuals it can. To do so meant not only developing and refining the best possible fighting techniques but also making sure that the people learning these skills were themselves healthy in body, mind, and spirit. The samurai are often cited as the most famous, albeit romanticized, example of this.

Using the martial arts as a keystone for your lifestyle involves more than just obvious things like a regular sleep schedule, a healthy diet, and consistent training. There are a few other less obvious steps that can help transform not just your martial arts skill but also your quality of life.

Body Mechanics:
First, you need to learn correct body mechanics. This refers to studying your body's physical structure and understanding the way it is meant to move. All real martial arts teach students correct body mechanics not just so that they can have maximum efficiency in their movement, but also to prevent injury from unnatural movement. Different styles may have their own views on how to best generate and receive force, but there tend to be some universal principles.

Skeletal alignment:
Your skeleton is the frame that holds up your body and gives it shape. Your bones are

"For example, your knee should always line up with your toes. This allows your knee joint to naturally hinge forwards and backwards and your skeleton to distribute your weight the way it is meant to."

meant to hold weight and handle tremendous forces. If you align your skeleton correctly in your stances and techniques, you will find that your posture improves, you tire less quickly, and your movement is more powerful.

Natural Joint Movement: This is the natural progression from your skeletal alignment. If you understand how your joints are meant to articulate, you are less likely to strain them by applying force in a direction they are not meant to handle. For example, your knee should always line up with your toes. This allows your knee joint to naturally hinge forwards and backwards and your skeleton to distribute your weight the way it is meant to. Lateral movements and twisting of the knee commonly cause martial arts injuries that can be avoided with good body mechanics.

Avoid Unnecessary Muscle Tension: Different styles emphasize different levels of muscular involvement or force, but whether you are studying a hard-striking art or a softer, more fluid system, a good instructor will tell you when and how much you should tighten muscles in order to produce the ideal force of your style. Excess tension inhibits fluid motion because antagonistic muscles resist each other and if there is an imbalance can lead to injury. Moreover, unnecessary tension constricts blood flow, which will tire the muscles out faster as their oxygen and glucose needs will not be met.

Traditional Conditioning: All martial arts styles have exercises in their curriculum that are meant to produce a body ideal for the way that system moves. Regular practice prepares the body for the study of fighting techniques

and is key to injury prevention. In the United States we tend to associate these supplementary practices with warm ups and either rush through or even ignore them. However, these exercises were created to teach students the body mechanics of a particular style and give the student the physical capabilities to move according to the style's strategies. Pencak Silat, for example, requires tremendous flexibility, highly developed fast twitch muscle fibers, and explosive reflexes to perform its techniques as they were intended. Traditionally Pencak Silat has its own Yoga-like system of stretching, a special set of muscle and tendon conditioning exercises to create speed and power, and its own breathing methods to calm the mind and teach the student breath efficiency during combat. But how many Pencak Silat students know these exercises or what they are for?

Daily Practice: For something to be a lifestyle means that it plays a role in everyday existence. Many contemporary martial artists have busy lives balancing work, family, and social responsibilities. If they are lucky they attend their martial arts classes once or twice a week for an hour. However, to truly gain the most from the martial arts as a health practice, let alone a method for fighting, the student needs to spend some time every day in practice. This does not mean that the student has to find some way to squeeze hours or grueling conditioning into every day. It can be as simple as setting the morning alarm 10 minutes earlier and devoting that little bit of time to the basic conditioning exercises of your style. Take the aforementioned Pencak Silat example; the student can awaken 10 minutes earlier and perform a few key yoga postures, breathing exercises, and one or two of the muscle/tendon exercises for a few repetitions. In doing so the

body is not just kick started for the day, but the student is constantly refining the specific skills they are hoping to develop in their regular classes. Over time, even this small amount of daily practice will yield big changes in physical ability. Moreover, the discipline required to get up and train creates mental fortitude, so that challenges encountered in everyday life can be more easily managed.

Apply Principles and Strategy to Daily Life:

Every martial art is based around a core strategy with tactics designed to implement that strategy in conflict. Most of us luckily will never be physically attacked outside the controlled violence of a class or tournament; however, we will face stress and emotional conflict in our jobs and social lives. The Pencak Silat student can use the style's trademark evasiveness when arguing with a spouse, choosing not to return anger with anger but to avoid and return with understanding and calm. Many martial arts include a non-religious meditative component, and regular practice helps keep emotions in check during high stress situations like a sword fight or Houston traffic. Even sparring becomes a benefit to daily life; when you get used to someone trying to hit you, you gain perspective on having to wait in line a few extra minutes at the grocery store.

By following these guidelines, a martial art practice can become an outstanding way to gain and maintain a high quality of life. Not everyone will face a physical opponent in our lifetime, but each of us will face exposure to illness and aging. By practicing our martial arts as they were intended, self-defense can be the best medicine.

- Jonathan Pyndus

Instructor Spotlight — Jonathan Pyndus

How did you get started in martial arts (what drew you to it)?

My exposure to martial arts came relatively young. I can remember watching the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Batman the Animated Series as a toddler, so the concepts of "karate" and "ninja" were a part of my vernacular from the beginning. My mom put me in generic karate classes twice as a kid, and while I always had this feeling that martial arts was something I was meant to do, I lacked a strong enough discipline to stick with training either time. Around age 13, I started watching Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee movies en masse, and a fire was lit inside me. As I had not shown interest in conventional sports, my parents were happy to put me in a physical activity and enrolled me in Tae Kwon Do at Houston Karate Academy. I was hooked and never looked back.

How long have you been training in martial arts?

I started with my first instructor, Master Luis Garcia, on September 10, 2001.

How many arts do you train in & have rankings? What are they?

I've been blessed with the chance to try out several different martial arts as almost all of my instructors have been men and women who cross trained themselves. My attitude is that if someone offers to show you something new, let them.

You may decide to not follow up and pursue that person's system, but now you have a better idea of what is out there and probably a better perspective on what style you already study.

In terms of formal study with ranking, my first martial art was "American" Tae Kwon Do, which has lineage through Grandmaster J. Pat Burleson, Grandmaster Jhoon Rhee, and all the way back to the Chung Do Kwan of Grandmaster Won Kuk Lee, who started teaching his version of Shotokan Karate in Korea after WW2. I currently am ranked fourth Dan in this system.

The second martial art I pursued in depth is Judo, which I took up in college. I am ranked shodan.

My main pursuit in martial arts is the Bujinkan Budo Taijutsu system of Hatsumi Masaaki Soke from Noda City, Japan. Hatsumi Soke is the grandmaster of nine classical Japanese martial arts dating back in written history to the Warring States Period of Japan and in oral tradition even further. The Bujinkan organization is how Hatsumi Sensei has chosen to transmit the practical essence of these traditions in the modern world. I travel to Japan as often as possible to study with my personal teacher there, who is one of the senior Japanese Shihan. I have been licensed as an instructor since 2011.

One of my Bujinkan Sensei is also a high level instructor in several other martial arts, and he told me to seek out Indonesian Silat and Chinese in-

ternal martial arts. Following this edict I earned the rank of Guru Muda or young teacher in Malabar Kuntao Silat.

Literally a week after that, I met my now friend and teacher Kang Kai Lewis of Central Motion Martial Arts. Under Kai, I have earned instructor certification in Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan and am studying Pencak Silat Panglipur. Kai has also exposed me to Yiquan, Xingyiquan, and Baguazhang. But the best thing Kai has done for me is introduce me to my fiancée!

So you could say martial arts have literally taken me around the world and introduced me to the people I love most.

Why do you enjoy sharing and teaching martial arts?

The mischievous answer is that fighting with my friends is fun. But beyond that, I feel like the martial arts lead to freedom of being, and the moments where the mind becomes empty and the body moves without effort makes the strain worthwhile.

What is it you hope students get out of training with you?

I hope I can convey to students that the only real limits they have in achieving their goals are the ones they set for themselves. The martial arts are an intensely personal practice that forces you to come to terms with who you really are and how you relate to the world around you. In overcoming the challenges that occur in training I want my students to develop a refined spirit that allows them

to face adversity as well as appreciate life's possibilities.

What motivates you to continue sharing the arts?

I feel endless gratitude to my teachers for the quality of life I enjoy due to being a martial artist. I want to pay that forward and help other people discover their inner potential as well as develop an appreciation for what a joy it is to be alive.

What do you feel is the key to being successful in martial arts & teaching martial arts?

Consistent discipline is the key to martial arts in my experience. Master Garcia told me as a teenager that the days you don't feel like training are the days you need to train most. By continuing your practice in some capacity every day, you discover that a disciplined mind is really a liberated one: it's easier to handle life's ups and downs because you have willingly faced fear, pain, defeat, and hardship, and the inner strength that comes from that cannot be bought, only earned and maintained.

Anything else you want to let people know about you as a martial artist and instructor?

I am often told that I look serious because of my bald head. But honestly, I'm a goofball with nerdy interests and have a terrible love of bad puns.

Upcoming Events



Alamo City Stick Fighting Championships will be Feb 23rd, 2019 in San Antonio, TX



Children's Silat Seminar
Friday, Oct. 12th at Deer Park Community Center



Silat Seminar Oct, 13-14th
American Institute of Martial Arts



BJJ seminar Oct 21st 2018 at Ground Dwellers in Spring, TX



Lightning Scientific Arnis Seminar Oct, 7th at Rinker's Black Belt Academy



HSFA 4th Quarter Gathering Saturday, Dec. 1st at Combat Nation in North Shore, TX

Hip's Fit Corner - Using A Commercial Gym to Train Martial Arts

Developing skill in a specific martial art requires a lot of time and energy. Anyone wanting to master a martial art will invest in the effort and time required to be functional. However, as you put the time in to become successful there are cheat codes to make your skill set have a greater impact. A lot of these cheat codes can be found in the gym in the form of certain equipment and movements.

The following is a generic list of equipment that can be utilized to enhance your skill training.

1. Kettlebells
2. Ab wheel
3. Medicine ball
4. Dumbbells
5. Cables
6. Plyometric boxes
7. Group fitness room (work on forms)

Keep in mind each gym has certain equipment unique to it also, so the martial artist has to figure out what the potential of each piece has to make him/her a better player.

- Hip



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The Houston Stick Fighting Association ("HSFA") founded in 2006 is an association for like-minded martial artists that engage in simulated combat to test and improve their skills in the blade-based and stick-based fighting arts. Membership in HSFA is open to martial artists of all styles, all systems, of all ages, from beginner to advanced levels. Members of the HSFA are striving to develop and improve their skills through simulated combat to see what works and what does not with a resisting opponent. Along the way, we build friendships and camaraderie with our sparring partners and share our respective arts with each other.

- Jason Evans, Director

Recommended Businesses

[Bunal Brand](#)

[Caraboy Apparels](#)

[F3 Cross Training](#)

[FMA Supply](#)

[Headhunter Blades](#)

[Prometheus Design Werx](#)

[Purpleheart Armoury](#)

[Pyndus Acupuncture & Wellness](#)

[Street Forge Armoury](#)

Recommended Schools

[Houston Martial Arts Academy](#)

[Ground Dwellers BJJ](#)

[DAMAG-INC Kali Combatives](#)

[Combat Nation](#)

Southeast Texas Escrimadors

Westchase Warriors GB Westchase

[TX 3rd Coast MMA](#)

North American Self Defense Institute

[SwordtoSword](#)

[Davis Martial Arts](#)

[Central Motion Martial Arts](#)