

HSFA Insider

Texas' Martial Arts News Source



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We think of Awareness as about knowing our surroundings. The word awareness has many applications and I would like to remind you of some.

What are you doing to stay healthy fit?

Painted scenario, it's fight time, in the scramble, you take him down, and you have found a window of opportunity to get away. How fast can you sprint a 100-yard dash? Can you run one mile nonstop? If your opponent chases you and you have to stop to fight again, how quick can you recover your breath? If you want to answer these questions with assurance, add speed play with periods of fast running intermixed with periods of slower running. (two-minute jog to warm up, 20 seconds sprint, one-minute jog, for the duration of five minutes, cool down with a two-minute jog). If you hate running, keep training your art and Stand Your Ground!

Breathing:

Breathing air is an involuntary action that the subconscious mind performs in order for us to stay alive. Weightlifters will often hold their breath while performing heavy lifts. We can watch video after video of weightlifters passing out near top of the lift.

Fitness Awareness

When you flex your bicep, the body rushes blood to that muscle. Blood carries oxygen in it. Therefore, we need to breathe again in order to enrich our blood, so that we can continue to flex our strength.

The more muscle you use, the more you need to inhale. A breathing pattern can be very beneficial. Be aware of your breathing tempo. I use a four-count exhale when active, as I need to recover, I slow it down to a three count, then a two count then I'm back to a one count normal breathing pattern. The inhales will come naturally. This helps me recover my breathing a lot faster.

Flexibility:

Knowing how far you can split your legs is a good indicator of hip and leg flexibility. Most people dislike stretching. The shoulders are the hips of the upper body. Both sections of the upper and lower have a ball & socket. As you follow the arm and leg, side by side, the humerus is the femur, the elbow is the knee, the radius and ulna is nothing more than the fibia and tibia. The wrist is the ankle and at the end, we have five fingers and five toes. Yet, very few people stretch the arms and shoulders. Flexibility is a better tool to prevent injury

than being able to measure how high you can kick. The human body accepts no pain. Overuse of a tight limb can lead to a strained ligament, tendon or muscle. A good stretching routine will keep blood flow and elasticity throughout the body. Learn to listen to your body. Be aware of the language it speaks. When it says to slow down or stop, do so.

Recently, an acquaintance of mine posted on social media, that he had been competing for the past ten years while injured. He was going to take a year off from the competition scene in order to let his body heal. He warned us all to stay out of his division next year as he will be competing at 100% health. He emphasized and warned all to heed the signals that your internal warning system sends off.

Having to fight or compete with an injury is something we will all have to do at one point. A good stretching routine or yoga flow will help keep us in fighting shape.

Stretch some!

Get Some!!

- Prof Eddie Avelar, Ground Dwellers

Business Spotlight — Caraboy Apparels

Caraboy as a concept was motivated by the desire to have apparel designs that shows what Filipino culture is beyond the flag colors, Filipino Martial Arts and the name Philippines drawn in artful ways. It also pays tribute to the Carabao which is known as the living tractor of the east and the national mammal of the Philippines, that symbolizes a hardworking Filipino. Our designs are focused on the way of life in the countryside, small town and provinces where culture is still rich

and preserved. They still hold the different identities, languages and ancient stories of a culture. These are the stories we wanted to tell as people embark on a journey with our designs.

- Euan Jara, Founder

www.caraboy.com

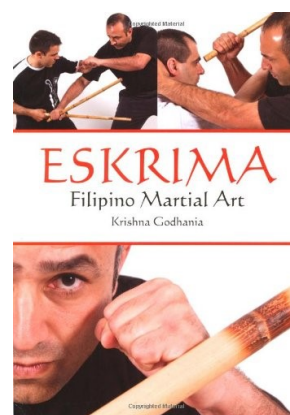


Recommended Reading — Eskrima: Filipino Martial Art, Krishna Godhania

Eskrima, also known as Arnis or Kali, is the indigenous martial art of the Philippine Islands and this fascinating book explains why Eskrima uses training weapons, such as rattan sticks and daggers, from the earliest stages, alongside unarmed techniques. Dynamic and flexible, with a wide range of training methods, the technique can be practiced by students of all ages and levels of fitness. Well-known and

respected as a highly practical weapons-based system, Eskrima is practiced worldwide by civilians, law enforcement personnel, and special units within the military. These training methods have been found particularly effective at increasing coordination and reflexes, providing a fast track to developing the qualities needed for practical self-defense. The instructional section of the book illustrates how the

Eskrima martial artist is able to succeed in a wide range of combat situations involving fighting with both weapons and open hands. Techniques, two person flow drills, self-defense applications, training with specialized equipment, and the philosophy of the art are all covered in depth.



“Classroom discipline is the main issue that any children’s instructor will encounter.”

Pedagogy of Children’s Martial Arts

As long as I have been a martial artist, and, I would submit, as long as any of us has been a martial artist, members of the community have bickered back and forth about what the ultimate goal of our training should be: fighting, mastery of techniques, kata, teaching, and the list goes on. I don’t think any of them are necessarily wrong, but I would like to focus on the area that it has been one of my life’s greatest honors to pursue: teaching.

After I earned my first black belt, I was inspired by my master’s love for the art and science of sharing what he knew. The passion and skill with which he taught made me certain that, at least for me that was to be the pinnacle of my training. As I continued to train and work with him, advancing my own skills and assisting him teaching at schools across the city, I started to analyze the methods he used to teach, and breaking them down for myself in an attempt to determine what might work best for me, and what concepts I might want to add or subtract. I also began to branch out in my training, moving beyond the blend of styles that was and is my comfort zone, seeking to expand my knowledge and, most importantly, observe and experience how other people teach.

Fast forward seven years, and beyond my own achievements and continued training, the most important thing I have learned is that there is no better teacher than teaching. Where my experience may begin to differ from many who have fallen in love with teach-

ing martial arts is that my primary audience is children. Every week, multiple times a week, I work with kids ranging from 4 to 15 years of age. I have taught in the back rooms of after-school/daycares, middle school gymnasiums, community centers, even parks and parking lots. I have had students from every walk of life and cultural background I can think of, with everything from ADHD and autism to cerebral palsy. Why does that matter? Because every single one of them, whether they came for one class or one hundred, has taught me something. I tell my students every semester that I learn as much from them as they do from me, but that is not entirely accurate. I learn more.

Classroom discipline is the main issue that any children’s instructor will encounter. When it is 6pm on a Friday night and there are a dozen or more students between 4 and 10 in a beginner’s class, one with Autism Spectrum Disorder, two with ADD/ADHD, and at least three or four for who English is their second language, how do you keep control? I will be the first to admit that it is frustrating, seemingly Sisyphean task at the best of times, but patience and compassion are paramount. That 30 seconds of class time that I spend letting one of them tell me a story about their day in class leaves that little boy or girl beaming for the rest of our time together. The pride my students take in one another’s successes never ceases to amaze me, and it helps me to remember that, through all the frustration and constant course correction, every second is worth it.

Moving on from *why* I teach, let us talk next about *how* I teach. At the beginning of each class, we sit for a couple of minutes in a small half circle, and talk about an experience I had in the time since we last met, or a quote I think is particularly important. The front-missing grin of a little girl after we talked about Barbara Jordan is all the reassurance I need that the time we spend talking reaches my students. Before a single punch or kick is thrown, we talk about what I call the “Tenets of Martial Arts.” These concepts are nothing new, and anyone who has been training, teaching, or reading about martial arts for long enough will be familiar with them, but I have boiled down every code of honor and warrior ethos I have come across into five principles: respect, responsibility, discipline, integrity, and honor. Respect for ourselves, respect for our teachers, our parents, our friends, and even people we have never met; respect for life and agency. Responsibility for our actions, for how we treat one another, and for using respect above all. Discipline as the product of taking responsibility for respect; the singleness of purpose that comes from treating others as we want them to treat us above all. Integrity as the ultimate expression of discipline: doing the right thing even when no one is looking; being accountable to ourselves and to what is right, even if nobody but us will ever know. Honor as the culmination of the four preceding concepts; the point at which those tenets become not just a way of thinking, but a way of life. As we, as a class,

repeat each of those in order, we close a finger of our hand. At the end, we have taken those five building blocks, and used them to make the weapon with which we can defend ourselves and others. Every class, without fail, I ask my students to give examples of how they practiced each of those principles throughout the week, and the whole class listens quietly to their friends speak.

Now, you may be asking yourself, and who could blame you, “that’s some heady stuff for a four year old, why even bother?” The answer is simple: if I drill that every single class for a whole semester, even if all they take away is respect, or integrity, they are already miles ahead of most kids their age. Children are a lot more perceptive than we give them credit for, and they understand a lot more than we think. By taking something so conceptual and making it relatable through stories and interactive learning, it becomes accessible to the point that I’ll overhear even my most hyperactive students telling their parents about responsibility as they walk out of the building. I study psychology, and while I may still be in school, I read entirely too much for my own good, and spend most of the time I’m not teaching or training thinking about it from a variety of angles. I talk to the parents,

and I invite them to come to me with questions and concerns, about what I’m teaching, how their child is acting at home, and even problems they might be having in school. Every semester, I get half a dozen parents and students who come to me before or after class because there have been issues with bullies, or with motivation to do schoolwork, problems focusing, etc., and I try to give them tools to help overcome those challenges. Usually, those tools work, and if they don’t I spend the next week doing research and come back armed with a handful of new strategies to try. Sometimes, it’s just a matter of having someone who isn’t mom or dad tell them what they need to hear. The specifics aren’t really important, and whether you are a psychologist or not, the underpinning principles remain the same: teaching, at its most fundamental level, is about connecting with the students. This is infinitely more important when those students are kids, because they learn better when you are a leader, a role model, and someone they look up to rather than simply a stern presence wearing a black belt and barking commands. Martial arts are not just about strikes, kicks, blocks, throws, self-defense, and weapons. Sure, those are important, but teaching young students how to be good people is what really

sets an instructor apart.

Every week, when the students and parents circle up at the end of class, I recap what we went over, give everyone a technique to practice at home, but I also add a small piece of homework: saying “yes/no ma’am/sir,” clearing the table, not talking back, cleaning up their bedrooms, helping a friend/sibling. Something simple that reflects one of our five core principles. I ask their parents to write a little note to give me the next week, and I talk to any of the students who might have had trouble with their assignment. At the end of the day, which martial art you teach isn’t terribly important. That isn’t meant as an insult to anyone, if anything, it is exactly the opposite: which kata, techniques, and specifics of your art, the stuff you teach between the lesson at the beginning and the wrap-up at the end are going to be fun for the kids no matter what. Whether you give commands in English, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc., the kids are going to eat it up. My approach to teaching children isn’t style-specific, and doesn’t even really have to do with how you teach them martial arts, it centers on how you teach them to be *martial artists*, and above all, people.

- Sensei William H. Marsh, ActiveStars

Karate Houton

Hip’s Fit Corner - Plyometrics

This quarter I will not be breaking down a particular movement but rather a type of exercise. Long, long ago during my high school track career I learned of a type of movement which increased athletic ability. It reportedly hailed from the U.S.S.R or what we know today as Russia. The concept was new to the track athletes back then, but it is pretty mainstream now. Crossfitters put it in their curriculum on a weekly basis.

The concept is called Plyometrics.

Plyometrics work on the concept of loading the muscles with kinetic energy that can then be used to contract more powerfully resulting in quicker, faster movements. I was able to lower my 40 time, increase my vertical and horizontal jumps, and make my hands become quicker. Basically, I became more athletic overall and if you decide to

practice a plyometric routine so will you. I suggest much research beforehand, plyometrics can be hard on the body if not done properly. They can be very simple and easy to perform to extremely complex and potentially dangerous. Do your due diligence if you are intrigued

- Hip

10 Questions with a Martial Artist

I interviewed two martial artists from here in Houston and asked them ten questions about their opinion on different aspects of training and martial arts. The two martial artists I had the pleasure of interviewing were Andre Watson and Rick Stalons, both of whom train at Ground Dwellers in Giron Arnis Escrima.

HSFA: What brought you to martial arts?

Andre: I guess it would be the desire to be able to defend myself.

Rick: Always had a desire when I was younger, but never dove in due to other activities; sports and things of that nature. A friend of mine got held up, basically mugged and had an altercation and after that altercation called me first and explained what happened, said he wanted to learn to fight with a knife, asked if I was in and I said "yeah, lets find somebody."

HSFA: What keeps you training?

Andre: The desire of self-improvement.

Rick: Well, it keeps me out of trouble for one. If I wasn't training, I would be hanging out at bars, causing mischief. It keeps me focused on more positive outcomes in life.

HSFA: What do you feel is a good starting point for new students?

Andre: I think the starting basis of any martial art is footwork, basic striking, and body mechanics

Rick: Well for one, show up. Play, come with an open mind and listen, observe, apply whatever is given to you by whoever that instructor is that you seek out. See if it's for you or not. And, if you find it's not for you, seek something else out. Bottom line is showing up and playing.

HSFA: What concept do you wish you had learned early on in your training?

Andre: They all start at the same place; they all start at the beginning. They may all teach you a kata, footwork. Those are the concepts.

Rick: That's a tough question, concept wise. A lot of us are perfectionists, and because I think a lot of us are perfectionists we struggle so hard to make things exactly the way that they should be that we try so hard. That we listen to everything everyone says, seeking the truth but you know the truth is within ourselves. And, anyone in martial arts, the instruction that I receive, you got to look at the basic fundamentals of whatever their trying to give you and then eventually make it your own. Being open minded.

HSFA: Is there an aspect of training you feel is the most important?

Andre: I think it's always the physical side of things and then later on you learn the mental reasoning and thought pattern behind them.

Rick: Consistency. If you're not consistent in training, there's no way to improve. Life happens, everyone is in and out, but consistency is going to benefit the individual the most. That's the key.

HSFA: What advice would you give beginning students in martial arts?

Andre: train as often as you can, don't overdo it. Do what you can and practice as often as you can.

Rick: When a person first comes to me I just try to show them the basic fundamentals, give them a little bit of history of the system that I'm involved in and also let them know that there are other systems out there, the histories, lineages, things of that nature. If you're open minded and you like it, stick with it, if you don't, seek something else out that you like. Every style, or art, or instructor is not for everybody.

HSFA: How often, outside of class, should someone train?

Andre: every individual is different, thinking about it a couple of hours a day doesn't hurt. Three hours a day. You have to think of the process then act the process and you may grab some meaning as to what you're actually trying to learn.

Rick: As much as possible. If you think about it daily, that's one thing. If you physically practice it, is another thing. I think you can attain knowledge through both. As long as you're thinking about it, playing it. You should be training three to four times a week, whether it's a class two times a week or one time a week, finding other practitioners in the same style, you should be playing. Minimum three times a week. Whether it's a class or outside a class, but minimum three times a week.

HSFA: What's your opinion on social media's influence on martial arts?

Andre: Well, I mean, there are no secrets on the internet, you see what you see and realize some things are taken out of context sometimes. I think you can gain some by watching anyone. Everybody's body type is different. Everybody's mental aspect of a technique is different. I think it shows where they are at as far as their level of training as far as footwork.

Rick: There's a lot of good stuff out there. Interesting things are out there. Social media, I think it's helped advance the arts worldwide and there are a lot of people that didn't have the capability to let their knowledge go out beyond their local jurisdictions. But, there's a lot of crap out there too. So, I mean you got to take it with a grain of salt. You look at it and see what can apply to you. Bottom line is watching something doesn't really teach you anything, doing it is how you learn. So, whatever you're watching or learning even in your own styles you gotta play it, explore it, see does it work or doesn't work, figure out how to make it work and explore on all sides.

HSFA: What is your opinion on the philosophy of "Train what is useful and discard the rest"?

Andre: I think if you're really going to immerse yourself in one particular art you should train in all aspects. You never know when you are going to discover the meaning or methodology behind it. You go to seminars and stuff, try and take what you can. Most of those things are what applies to you.

Rick: Whatever style you're training in, I'm a firm believer

that you should have, you should know the basics of that style and eth standards and go through that system 100% and then after that or during that based on your capabilities, I mean me personally I had a very difficult time learning other styles while I was practicing Giron. Even to this day I'm learning my own style and the association I'm involved with. So, but now that I'm advanced more I can go and look at things here and there and use it toward my system, our style. But, then again look at the beauty and the positive stuff from other, there's a lot of good styles out there. I don't think that any style is just crap. I think every style has something to offer.

So, I think it just depends on eth student. DO they have the capability of learning several things at once? I didn't. I had to learn one thing and slowly start exploring other styles. If you have the capability to doing that, that's great. But then again the bottom line is if you don't learn your style, your system and the basic fundamentals and have a solid foundation to stand upon, you're, I think defeating the purpose.

HSFA: What have you gotten the most out of martial arts?

Andre: I would say self-evaluation.

Rick: What I've gotten the most out of it? Well, it was first a hobby and

then you start to find they have the same interest in the same style and then from there it grows to comradery and eth familial aspects of the art and the arts I'm involved in are very familial and its an extended family. Through it, life has improved for me. The instructors that I've had have inspired me to become a better human being and the fact that it's like the capability to inspire someone else and do the same thing my instructors have one for me is basically it.

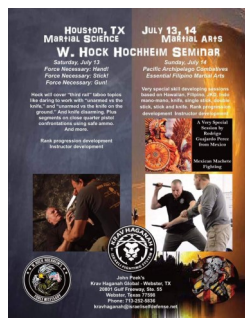
Upcoming Events



HSFA 3rd Quarter Gathering of 2019 Saturday, September TBD 12-2 pm at TBD.



Stick Fighting Tournament at the Universal Martial Arts Hall of Fame
August 10th



Hock Hochheim Force Necessary Seminar. July 13-14th at Krav Hagana Global



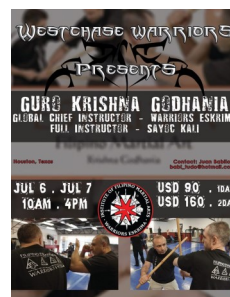
Silat & Kerambit seminar.
August 17th at Houston Martial Arts Academy



Purple Heart Open.
August 23-25th at The Zone Houston



Texas Shihan Bujinkan Seminar.
July 20-21st Eternal Martial Arts



Warriors Eskrima seminar.
July 6-7th at 3622 Golf Dr. Houston, TX

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www.houstonstickfighting.org



[Houston Stick Fighting Association](https://www.facebook.com/HoustonStickFightingAssociation)



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[htownstickfights](https://www.instagram.com/htownstickfights)



[JasonREvans](https://www.youtube.com/user/JasonREvans)

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](#)

[Arola Chiropractic](#)

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](#)

