



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Being a Black Belt Means Being Responsible

Many of us have had classmates and friends who always make excuses and blame others for their problems. Often, these people are inconsistent, unreliable, undisciplined and lack mental toughness and determination. Worst of all, they're usually irresponsible. Being responsible for one's decisions and actions is one of the most important character traits of a Black Belt.

As a martial arts student, you must learn to be responsible for your actions. Be a problem solver, not an excuse maker. If you want to act responsibly, then look to yourself first for improvement. Don't expect others to solve your problems.

You must learn to be a reliable person who will always support and help your classmates, family and friends. Learn to accept discipline as a benefit of being a true Black Belt, and maintain self-control during all situations. If you are a responsible student, then you will be mentally tough as well as enthusiastic, confident and positive. Responsibility is a major challenge all martial arts students face during their daily training.

Other challenges include outside distractions, physical limitations and intellectual burnout. React to those challenges with a positive attitude and you'll understand that being a Black Belt and a responsible person mean the same.

Ask yourself the following questions to test your responsibility level. If you answer the questions with honest "Yes" answers, then you have the spirit of a Black Belt.

- Do you conduct yourself responsibly (at home, in school, in class; everywhere, every time)?
- Do you understand the responsibilities of leadership?
- Do you act responsibly to those you lead when you have the opportunity to be a leader?
- As a leader, are you a positive role model for responsible behavior?
- Do you ignore outside distractions and commit your entire self and attention to your class?
- Do you persevere through physical challenges, even though you want to stop?
- Do you remain calm and focused to prevent your mind from wandering?

Train your mind and your heart to make the best, most responsible decisions possible. Do not make bad decisions. Irresponsible reactions are the real obstacles to success. You won't regret your responsible decisions, but you most certainly will regret the irresponsible ones. Remember, being a Black Belt means being responsible.



TRAINING TIP:

Meditation Taking a Vacation in your Mind

Many people have attained higher planes of enlightenment through the ancient art of meditation, and have incorporated meditation into their work schedules and daily routines. The ancient monks lived longer due to the benefits they derived from meditation.

Zen sitting meditation is a period of nothingness. Doing absolutely nothing except focusing, relaxing and using proper breathing techniques helps to purify your mind and body.

Start with only five minutes per day. Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes, so you'll be able to sit on the floor, or a pillow or cushion. You may sit in yoga-style, with both legs crossed at the ankle in front of you, or sitting on both legs folded underneath you in a kneeling position. Don't sit in a position of total body relaxation. Try to keep your body upright and stable.

The first step in meditation is to try to clear your mind of what has been bothering you and of any other thoughts you may have. This is called inner chatter. Try to focus on some object, such as a piece of fruit or on the numbers one through ten, as you incorporate your breathing. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. The timing of each breath should be in eight- to ten-second intervals. Count in your head to inhale, slowly, from one to ten. As you exhale, count from ten backwards to one.

As your concentration develops, you'll find your heart rate will decrease and your state of relaxation will increase. You'll also be able to meditate sitting in an office chair, the seat in your car or even a park bench. Remember that it takes time to excel at meditation, but the benefits are endless. Keep your spirit strong.

FELLOW MARTIAL ARTIST:

Tony Jaa

Tony Jaa is a Muay Thai master whose martial arts skills have enthralled action film lovers in his movies, *Ong Bak* and *The Protector*.

Born in the Surin province of Thailand, Jaa took a cue from his Muay Thai-boxer father and began training at the age of 10. It was shortly thereafter that a Jackie Chan movie prompted young Jaa to begin a rigorous training regimen. With the permission of his father, Jaa, during the next three years, immersed himself in the film industry, while constantly practicing martial arts.

Jaa graduated from senior high school and attended the University of Physical Education in Sarakam Province. His study of Taekwondo, Bushido, Ju-Jitsu, gymnastics and fighting with stick and sword provided him with just the kind of well-rounded education he needed.

His fusion of gymnastics and Muay Thai boxing resulted in the formation of a group that performed in various high schools in the northeastern provinces of Thailand. He also formed a local sword team, which eventually provided Jaa with the opportunity to travel to China as an exchange student. Jaa was awarded multiple medals in sword, staff, gymnastic and track and field events.

In 1997, he appeared as a non-credited stunt double for Robin Shou in *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, but it wasn't until the release of *Ong Bak* six years later that Jaa would receive full credit for his unbelievable martial arts skills. The result of Jaa's four years of Muay Thai training, *Ong Bak* proved that the human body is capable of amazing feats without the aid of computer animation.

Nearly every film critic from Bangkok to Hollywood named Jaa the heir apparent to the legacies of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. In addition, Jaa has developed a whole new form of Muay Thai, dubbed "Muay Thai Cochisai."

