



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

NEWSLETTER

What is a Black Belt?

When I first began my martial arts training, much elegance and mystique surrounded the Black Belt and all it represented. You thought of David Carradine in the Shaolin Temple lifting a boiling hot cauldron filled with water to open a door, symbolizing the start of his journey into the world. To this day, many non-martial artists think of the Black Belt as a prestigious accomplishment.

To me, the Black Belt signifies the pursuit of excellence. It reveals the true character of the people who earn it and their dedication to continue to pursue their goal of becoming great at all they do. It is not just about how well they fight, but also how well they live their lives. The Black Belt mindset is not only physical, but also the three realms of consciousness: the physical, the mental and the spiritual. A true Black Belt has mastered these three realms, and lives as a master of them daily. The physical realm is where your journey as a martial artist begins. From the very first day of moves, you are on your physical journey. This journey can last a lifetime because the true masters work on the basics until they become second nature and have complete command of all the physical moves they've been taught. It is said it takes one thousand hours of practice on one single movement to master it.



The mental realm is to the physical realm as two peas in a pod. The mental realm is often misunderstood. It can sometimes be quite tricky and elusive. Someone who has mastered the mental realm has mastered him or herself. Such a person is patient, compassionate, ego-less and empathetic. Your goal is to develop these qualities every day. A person who has mastered this realm knows he or she will make mistakes and must continually pursue his or her goals, regardless of the setbacks.

The spiritual realm is confusing to many people because the word "spiritual" is often linked with religion. When I say, spiritual, I do not mean religion, but for those who are very religious, this can be your answer. When I teach my students, I speak of the spiritual realm as the source of what drives them, the very core of their motivation, the energy on which their bodies exists: not only the life-force of who they are, but also the link between their minds and bodies.

The spiritual realm is the energy that forces you from your bed on a rainy day, that makes your smile when things look gloomy, and the driving force that gives you optimism in the face of adversity. This is the spirit of which I speak.

Training Tip:

SEVEN WAYS TO BOOST YOUR ENERGY

Black Belts know that energy is the key to successful training. Without sufficient energy, you limit your potential. Energy will enhance your development and performance both physically and mentally. There are many causes of decreased energy, including improper eating habits, improper sleeping habits and stress. Change these bad habits and unhealthy situations to ensure that your energy level is always high.

Follow these seven tips to increase your energy:

1. Eat healthful foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and limit junk foods, such as candy, chips, soda and fast food.
2. Eat regularly throughout the day. Don't skip breakfast, lunch or dinner.
3. Keep your body hydrated. Drink at least eight glasses of water throughout the day.
4. Sleep at least eight quality hours every day. Avoid late hours watching TV, playing on the computer or talking on the phone.
5. Don't eat after 8 p.m. Late-night eating will negatively affect the quality of your sleep and can increase the probability of nightmares.
6. Don't procrastinate about your training. Make sure you attend every class; don't skip a class unless you absolutely must.
7. When you attend class, leave any stress or problems at the door. A bad mental attitude lowers your energy level dramatically.

Don't allow bad habits to affect your energy level. Don't look for a special formula or medicine to increase your energy; adjust your daily habits and you will feel more energized. It will take time and effort, but the benefits of increased energy are definitely worth it.

FELLOW MARTIAL ARTIST: ROYCE GRACIE

Royce Gracie was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Helio Gracie, his father, is considered the founder of the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu style of martial arts. Royce began training and competing in tournaments at eight, and received his Blue Belt at 16. He was promoted to the rank of Black Belt in less than two years.

He later moved to the United States at 18 to live with Rorion, his brother. They began teaching Brazilian Jiu Jitsu in their garage, often for more than 10 hours a day. Rorion and Royce opened their first Gracie Jiu-Jitsu Academy 11 years ago in Torrance, California. Today, it is one of the largest martial arts schools in the country.

Royce has enjoyed an impressive career as a professional fighter. His brother Rorion wanted to showcase Brazilian Jiu Jitsu as an effective and exciting martial arts style and encouraged Royce to be involved in the Ultimate Fighting Championships.

Royce became famous for defeating three opponents in the first ever Ultimate Fighting Championship in 1993. Even though his opponents all outweighed the six-foot plus, 180-pound fighter, he easily defeated discipline after discipline in the contest. Royce won three UFC titles, and, today, is the only man in the history of no-holds-barred matches to have defeated four opponents in one night.

Royce still participates in the world of professional tournaments. His determination and success have helped to make Brazilian Jiu Jitsu one of the most exciting and requested arts in the martial arts industry today. By spreading the techniques perfected by his father, he has shone a spotlight on the importance of leverage and technique in grappling.

Throughout his busy fighting career Royce has maintained a busy schedule of seminars and classes, and a large roster of students. He has taught many celebrities, including Chuck Norris, Ed O'Neal, Guy Ritchie and Nicholas Cage. He has also been very active with the CIA, FBI, DEA, Secret Service, Army Rangers, Army Special Forces, Navy Seals and many police departments.

Royce lives in Torrance, California with his wife, Marianne and two sons, Khonry and Khor.

