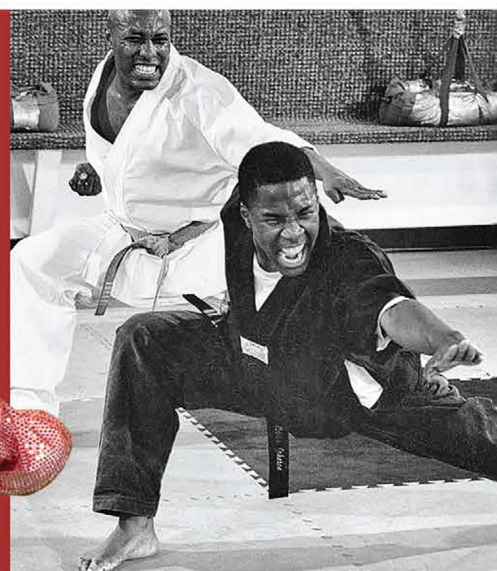


Self-Mastery
Empowering Youths

The Complete Martial Artist

Developing the Mind, Body, and Spirit of a Champion



Willie "The Bam" Johnson

What parents are saying about being a complete martial artist

"It gives [my child] discipline, a hard work ethic, and physical fitness" — Bell family

"It gives my son a sense of self-confidence and a better overall attitude" —Miller family

"It gives my boys the benefit of interaction with other kids, good friends, getting out of their comfort zones, and leadership skills" —Draper family

"It makes my daughter outgoing and happy" —Lopez family

"It gives my kids discipline and confidence to speak up for themselves" —Bui family

"It gives my child goals to work toward and helped him improve in school" —Brown family

In today's fast-paced world, young adults are subject to chronic fears of missing out, mental health issues, anxiety, and depression unlike any generation that has come before.

The martial arts have the potential to help.

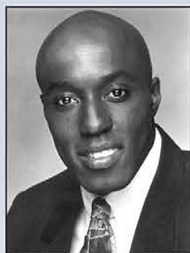
Traditional martial arts revolve around principles and core values such as honor, integrity, perseverance, patience, humility, and respect. Each manifesting in self-expression and creativity to promote individual growth and a balanced approach to living.

A complete martial artist learns how to conquer "self" through martial arts training and how to live by these traditional core values. Although there are occasions when martial arts may be used for self-defense, its primary uses are for sport, character, and spiritual fulfillment.

The author shares

- His own childhood story of hardship and redemption
- How to adopt martial arts values as a way of living
- Important universal principles to live by
- On creating a championship attitude
- Examples about martial arts forms (kata) and sparring
- How to get started and be successful in your personal martial arts journey

This book, *The Complete Martial Artist*, offers kids, young adults, parents, and twenty-somethings an opportunity to see what martial arts can do for their lives.



Willie "The Bam" Johnson is an award-winning martial arts teacher whose life mission is to help young adults and others become empowered through the martial arts in order to make good life choices. He is a seven-time sport karate and kung fu world champion, a two-time All-American champion, and a nationally ranked Triple Crown martial arts champion. He teaches at The Bams Martial Arts Academy. Willie H. Johnson resides in Laurel, Maryland.

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“Willie Johnson has penned a wonderfully-inspired book based both on his mastery of kung-fu and his rise from a street kid to prominence in the world of martial arts. This book is about much more than martial arts. Grand Master Johnson has evolved beyond physical technique into the world of personal spirituality. He presents a journey well worth reading.”

—Dr. Jerry Beasley, PhD, 8th dan, author, professor of Health and Human Performance at Radford University

“I have known Sifu Johnson for over twenty years and was an admirer of his incredible skill as a competitor in the early 90s. My first introduction to him was when I was the promoter for my father’s tournament in Washington, DC (The Jhoon Rhee Nationals). What is even more impressive about him is his incredible heart and how much he cares for the people in his community. It is common knowledge that he had a rough past, but he has owned up to it and his experience with this difficult time in his life has transformed him into an amazing human being. Sifu Johnson is one of the very few martial artists that I can confidently say “walks the talk.” He is an inspiring and motivational instructor and has a wealth of knowledge with respect to street self-defense. I highly recommend this book to all people regardless of their level of skill in the martial arts.”

—Master Chun Rhee, owner Jhoon Rhee Tae Kwon Do, Nobody Bothers Me, Inc., Falls Church, VA

“This book was a joy to read. I was intrigued by ‘The Bam’s’ most recent book as it depicts how one can use martial arts to help focus on traditional core values as well as the physical and mental benefits that also result. In addition, the fact that self-defense is also highlighted in this book makes it a book that not only challenges its readers to become health conscientious but also prepares them for whatever comes their way. This book is much more than simply a focus on martial arts. This book aims to challenge and promote the mind, body, and soul in each of us.”

—Dr. Lance Stout, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Independence, Missouri, PhD in Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Wichita State University

“This book is a gift to the world from a man who lays bare his heart and his struggles in the hope of bringing positive effect on the people it touches. His dedication as a martial artist is only matched by his dedication to do the hard work in local communities to show people a better path to a fulfilling life. Do yourself a favor and share this book and Willie ‘The Bam’ Johnson’s philosophy with those around you. We’ll all be better for it.”

—Matt Dean, film and TV Producer, Los Angeles

“Willie Bam Johnson’s extraordinary ability to share his life experiences and life lessons in compelling speeches and talks that are full of powerful insights make him a very dynamic and charismatic speaker. He has a unique ability to connect with both the youth and their parents.”

—Warrington Hudlin, film and TV Producer, New York

“Seeing the challenges that Willie ‘The Bam’ Johnson faced at every turn in life, and his overcoming of one hardship after another through the discipline of Martial Arts will make you put yourself back on the floor with renewed dedication to the path of a better life.”

—Kris Wilder, author, U.S. Martial Arts Hall of Fame member, National Board-Certified Life Coach

“Willie ‘The Bam’ Johnson shares highs and lows from his life, and how these events taught him and shaped the philosophy he shares in *The Complete Martial Artist*. The lessons learned from these significant life events are universal and they can be applied by any martial artist, regardless of style or rank. Johnson’s *wushudo* will help you along your road of self-development. With a focus on developing physical, mental, and spiritual fitness, the twelve universal principles of *wushudo* will not only help you become a better martial artist, but a better person through training in the martial arts. Many martial artists teach that martial arts provide a road toward not only self-defense, but also fitness, character development, and spirit. Willie Johnson provides you a map to do just that, develop yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually.”

—Alain Burrese, J.D., former army sniper, 5th dan Hapkido,
author of *Hard-Won Wisdom From The School Of Hard Knocks*

“*The Complete Martial Artist* by Willie ‘The Bam’ Johnson is a fantastic read! Johnson shows through his engaging life story that winning alone does not develop your strengths, your struggles also develop your strengths. His book outlines a solid and practical code of conduct that he recommends to be followed by martial artists. This book goes far beyond just physical martial arts techniques to give you a profound learning experience. Highly recommended for those who want to make martial arts a meaningful way of life!”

—Andrew Zerling, veteran martial artist, multi-award winning author,
Sumo for Mixed Martial Arts: Winning Clinches, Takedowns, and Tactics

“Great Work Mr. Johnson. You are a blessing to many. Keep up your greatness. God Bless.”

—Robert L. Wallace, CEO, Birthgroup Technologies, author of
Let God Be God and *Black Wealth: Your Road to Small Business Success*

The Complete Martial Artist

**Developing the mind, body,
and spirit of a champion**

Willie “The Bam” Johnson

Seventh-Degree Black Belt
Seven-Time World Champion

with Nancy Musick

First-Degree Black Belt



**DIVAGRIT
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When it comes to martial arts, self-defense, and related topics, no text, no matter how well written, can substitute for professional, hands-on instruction. These materials should be used for academic study only.

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Preface

When this book was first published nearly twenty years ago, the editor and I agreed that if it weren't for the drills and techniques, the book could be marketed in the self-help/inspiration category. My greatest hope for it was that my story would inspire others to change their lives for the better.

Today, at the suggestion of publisher David Ripianzi, this book is being republished at a time when people seem more lost, and our society more violent, than when I began working on it in my jail cell in 1989. Writing it was my way of cleansing myself, learning to love myself for the first time, and to just plain man up as I struggled to become a complete human being. In the end, there turned out to be no struggle and no real incompleteness; all I had to "do" was to be in the now and manifest the truth that was already inside of me.

As I moved forward in my new life, I tried to demonstrate by my own example that being a complete martial artist is not about money in the bank, rewards, belts, or titles. It's about learning to optimize mind, body, and spirit in order to be a godly man or woman, good father or mother, good husband or wife, successful businessperson, or great community leader. A complete martial artist lives fully in the now, always mindful of what the present circumstances are calling him to do.

While I was incarcerated and hopeless, I joined a group called Who Are You. One of the group members, a man everyone knew as Brother D, broke me down so he could build me back up and show me the inner strength I didn't know I had. He taught me that real strength comes from faith and the ability to adapt and flow in harmony with the universe. While I was on that journey of transformation, a light came on from within me, and I began to live and express my true self.

So, as you read this book, remember the journey is now. Being and staying in the moment is all we have; it's our only reality.

At my martial arts academy, our focus is on changing lives everywhere, from the suburbs to the hood. Millions of people have been impacted by the complete martial artist way we teach, and the authentic truth contained within it is needed today more than at any point in my lifetime. As a martial arts teacher, I have found that teaching technique is secondary to nurturing human development, especially of young people. Many children are broken because parents, leaders, and teachers are themselves broken and incomplete. Their egos won't let them see how they are standing in their own way. Patterns of dysfunction get passed on to the children and the cycle continues over and over. In our work in the martial arts, my family and I have set out to disrupt that cycle. What we do is bigger than a martial arts practice. It's about helping others become not only complete martial artists but complete human beings.

There was a time when martial arts played a role in every area of human existence. In all parts of the world, each culture had its unique expression of the martial

arts that was based on the cultural and historical circumstances of the people. The driving force behind the structure, techniques, and applications in each martial arts system was the need to defend against an attack and survive. The martial arts were also a way of life.

Today, although there are still situations where the martial arts can save your life, their primary uses are in sports, entertainment, and spiritual transformation. More and more people, however, are discovering how aspects of the traditional martial arts can be applied to today's fast-paced, often frantic lifestyles.

The martial arts are taught under many banners (such as karate, gongfu, jujitsu, taekwondo), but they all revolve around the same basic values and principles. These principles include honesty, persistence, courage, self-expression, and creativity, all of which are meant to promote individual growth and help you create a balanced approach to living. Regardless of which martial art you practice or your level of experience, this book will show you ways to improve your physical performance and help you achieve harmony of body, mind, and spirit for success not only in the martial arts but also in life. Even if you are not a martial artist but an athlete, fitness instructor, or just someone dedicated to being the best you can be, you'll discover important tools to help you develop your individual expression. *The Complete Martial Artist* shows you how to find balance and harmony within yourself and with the universe, which is what everyone strives for in and out of the martial arts.

Chapter 1, "The Pursuit of Do," describes some of the significant events in my life as I pulled myself up from addiction and incarceration to being a seven-time world champion. By sharing what I've learned during my ups and downs, I hope you'll be able to apply the lessons I learned to your own life. You'll discover the drive within yourself to pursue your goals, meet your challenges, and reach beyond your limits. I also teach you how to use your creativity and imagination to reach your goals, face your fears, and use the negative as a stepping stone to the positive. This chapter starts you on a never-ending quest for self-improvement, which is what the pursuit of Do is about.

Chapter 2, "Universal Principles," introduces you to *wushudo*—your road map for developing physical, mental, and spiritual fitness. The twelve universal principles at the heart of *wushudo* will strengthen your martial arts performance and make your travels through life easier and more satisfying. This chapter helps you attain the highest level of martial arts training. At this level, you have the ability to perform beyond all boundaries, systems, styles, and techniques with total freedom of self-expression. You'll learn the importance of adopting a diverse training philosophy that focuses on fitness, forms, weapons, self-defense, and self-understanding.

Chapter 3, "Champion Attitude," offers you a powerful and effective weapon to add to your arsenal—the mind-set of a champion. You must learn how to use your mind as a tool for reaching your full potential. This chapter shows you how to exercise champion qualities like discipline, concentration, and determination in practice and in competition. By adopting the right attitude, you'll not only improve your martial arts skills but also learn to not let anything stand in the way of reaching your goals.

Chapter 4, "Katas and Weapons," takes what you've learned in previous chapters and applies it to katas and weapons practice. You'll go beyond executing techniques

to expressing your true nature. The drills in this chapter will improve your focus, fluidity, balance, endurance, coordination, and confidence. Your techniques will become more reflexive, improving your ability to react quickly and effectively in competition or in a self-defense situation. Furthermore, you'll be able to apply the improved dexterity and confidence you gain from kata practice to your everyday life.

Chapter 5, "Freestyle Sparring," describes how to develop the free mind, responses, and reflexes needed to outthink and outmaneuver your opponent, whether in the ring or on the street. The drills and fighting concepts in this chapter will arm you with the tools you need to be a great freestyle fighter. You'll learn how to bring together all the physical elements and natural fighting techniques with speed and fluidity. This chapter covers the principles of effective sparring, along with tips on kicking, grappling, ground fighting, and hand techniques. Each series of photos shows you the proper way to execute takedowns, sweeps, leads, and counters. In addition, you'll learn important keys to winning, such as taking your time, staying aware of your surroundings, controlling your emotions, and following your instincts.

The last chapter, "The Road to Success," reveals how to start something and see it through to a successful conclusion. Although it's always easy to start something new, the challenge is to stay dedicated. This chapter contains tips to help keep you moving toward your goals. It covers choosing a training facility; building strength, endurance, and flexibility; practicing good nutrition; having the right attitude; and expressing yourself through the martial arts. You'll learn to keep going even when there's no support or rewards—just the satisfaction of knowing you're doing the right thing for the right reasons.

Most books concentrate on either the skills and drills of the martial arts, or on the spiritual aspects. *The Complete Martial Artist* is about developing the whole self—physically, mentally, and spiritually. If you understand and apply its principles, you'll be on your way to reaching your goals and realizing your full potential in and out of martial arts. There are no limits to what you can do and who you can become other than the limits you impose on yourself.

Author's Note

I promise...

To be the best I can be and have a wonderful, honest life.

To rely in my faith in the creator and have the willpower to go and Let God. I will seek to set goals that complement the inner me and not ones based on worldly opinions. Most importantly, I will leave the results up to God, no matter what.

This year of 1989, I will stop being blind, open my eyes and stop the insane behavior. I will not lie, steal, use drugs or give up in the midst of struggle. I know if I don't fight those insane behaviors, I will continue to live behind these jail bars.

So I promise God and myself on June 11, 1989, that I will never lose my freedom again. I know that with true freedom comes responsibility and on this day, expressing my freedom responsibly is my quest.

I live this promise still to this day and will for the rest of my life.

—Willie “The Bam” Johnson

Introduction

I do not regret the past, nor do I wish to shut the door on it, because without it, I would not be able to make the right choices today.

By the time I was twenty-five, I had become a world champion martial artist with a reputation as a promising martial arts star in America and on the sport karate circuit. I had graduated from the prestigious Beijing Physical Culture Institute in China and had been a guest on popular television shows. During the time I was making a name for myself in the martial arts, however, I was also developing many negative habits to support a worsening drug and alcohol lifestyle. In 1989, the negative side of this double lifestyle finally caught up with me and, despite a promising martial arts career, I found myself behind bars.

The sound of the prison doors closing behind me reached a place deep inside my gut. It is one thing to spend a few days or weeks in the city jail waiting for a hearing; it is another to face an entire year in prison. During past experiences, I had managed to be rescued by my mom from any long-term consequences. This time it was different. No one was coming. My mom had died of cancer several years earlier and now, homeless, addicted to drugs and alcohol, and trying to support a lifestyle far beyond my financial means, my luck had run out. I was sentenced to one year in a minimum-security facility, but for some reason that I still don't know, I arrived at a maximum-security prison and was locked down with the most hardened criminals. My worst nightmare had come true. I always thought I would rather be dead than incarcerated.

What I would soon realize, however, is that my incarceration was a blessing in disguise. Without that year in jail, I wouldn't have had the time to get to know myself. I made myself a promise that I would never lose my freedom again. I spent the year studying and soul-searching, determined to get back on a positive path.

In prison, I left my cell for two hours every evening to participate in a group called "Who Are You?" When you shared anything about yourself in this group, the group facilitator and other group members told you if you were lying or pretending to yourself. They cut through the smokescreen of pompous, self-righteous, tough-guy attitudes and told you who you really were. In another setting, I suppose it would be much like going into group therapy, but this was what prison life offered. While I was telling people how I wanted to help them change the behaviors that support addictive lifestyles, I also faced my drug and alcohol problem. For the first time in my life, I made a conscious decision to look inside myself, feel the pain, and change those things about myself that I could. There weren't a lot of resources in prison for self-improvement; however, religious leaders made a commitment to

bring information about spirituality in the format of daily services and group meetings. I frequented these groups. Many men went because it gave them something to do outside their cells or because it looked good on their records when they went for a parole hearing. I had other motives. First, I wanted to hear the messages each carried about the universal truths of their religions. I believed that the Universal Creator was using martial arts as my window of opportunity. Second, I wanted them to read my notes about the principles and truths I felt were important, to see if they matched those universally accepted. Again, I was reaching out for more education and was not only welcomed in these groups but also recognized as a valued participant and group leader.

Before long, I began to bond with different religious leaders—those of the Nation of Islam, Muslims, Baptists, and other denominations of Christianity, to name a few. I didn't claim to be a Christian or a Muslim. My belief was in the Universal Creator, and I was open to all spiritual growth without the boundaries of a particular religion. Nevertheless, they read my notes and commented on many occasions that, yes, my ideas were exactly what they believed and taught. These principles and truths form the foundation for my martial arts curriculum and are set forth in *The Complete Martial Artist*.

It is only through embracing the concepts and skills in this book that I have been able to regain control of my life. Today, I am a seven-time world champion martial artist and founder of the Universal Martial Arts Concepts Academy, but I continue to set new goals and look for ways to improve myself. It is this constant battle for self-improvement that will enable you to discover your balance—physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The Pursuit of Do

1

The hills and valleys on the path of life are necessary for you to know how much further you have to go to grow.



There is a formula in Western civilization that many people follow, hoping for inner peace and happiness—a good education, plus a good job, plus lots of money and material possessions, plus family and friends equal inner peace and happiness. We've all heard this idea before. Yet, when you talk to those who have all this, are they happy? I mean really happy? Probably not. They will say something like, "I have it all, but something's missing. I just don't feel content. I want something else, but I don't know what." They are restless, frequently jumping from one job, hobby, activity, or relationship to another. This is a person who is driven by their unrest in response to external pressures.

On the other hand, have you ever taken the time to seek someone who is happy and content with life? Often the happiest people don't have financial wealth or many material possessions. What is their secret? They have discovered that happiness is an inside job, meaning that you must develop your inner self so you can be happy no matter what life hands you. They are driven from the inside to pursue goals and challenges they have set for themselves. Instead of thinking about what they want to do, they feel what they must do. They have learned to listen to the music of their souls and sing their own songs. Before I got locked up, I felt totally empty. I had spent my life chasing everything I thought would make me happy—new clothes, a new girlfriend, alcohol, drugs. If it meant I had to steal or hurt someone to get what I wanted, I did whatever it took. In jail, I had no idea how to be happy and feel at peace, but for the first time in my life, I had plenty of free time to contemplate. I desperately wanted to feel better about myself than I did at that moment.

While in jail, I began to reflect on my life up to that point and the lessons I had learned. After some time, with help from others around me, I realized that I had to look inside myself to be happy instead of expecting other people, places, and things to bring me happiness. The Japanese call this journey *Do*; the Chinese call it *Dao*. In the proper context, it is a journey that is universal, never ending, and constantly evolving. It recognizes only one enemy, one problem, and that is self. There is a constant battle to improve one's self, a drive to achieve balance, then a conscious effort to maintain that balance. You can only achieve this through simple improvements, constructive changes, and continual progress. When I look at the events of my past, I am now able to recognize which behaviors were destructive and which were beneficial. It is through this type of analysis that I'll avoid reliving my mistakes. Of course, as a child, I simply lived for the moment. It was an exciting time—a time when I first realized my love of martial arts and reveled in the confidence it gave me. My imagination and thirst for knowledge soared. There were times, however, when I let peer pressure take control. Today I realize that each of us holds the answer to any of life's questions—it's inside us. We just have to be open to hearing the message and willing to use it. What follows is an account of some events in my life that eventually lead me on my continual and peaceful journey of *Do*—one that I will pursue until death. My hope is that by sharing with you what I've learned during this journey, you will be able to take these lessons and apply them to your life and your pursuit of *Do*.

Follow Your Dreams

It was Bruce Lee's movie *The Chinese Connection* that motivated me to pursue the goal of becoming a martial artist and an action screen hero. I went to see *The Chinese Connection* when I was six years old, and I sat through the movie spellbound. It was love at first sight—love for Bruce Lee, love of the martial arts, and love of movies. I could hardly wait to get home and tell Mom what I had seen.

I'm not sure how many people know from the age of six what they want to do in life, but I did—I wanted to be just like Bruce Lee! I had a burning desire to follow in his footsteps, but my dad thought it was a waste of time. "Be a killer like me," he said, "and forget about being like that Chinese punk." I can't put into words how hurt I felt when he said this. For a minute, I felt like the life was being sucked right out of me, but Mom took me in her arms, comforted me, and told me I could do anything I wanted. She always believed in me, no matter what. My life in Baltimore's inner city didn't come with the advantages that many kids in the suburbs had. There wasn't extra money for anything. Even if there had been a martial arts school in my neighborhood, I couldn't have gone, but I didn't know anything about martial arts



As a kid, I loved to imitate the moves of famous martial artists such as Bruce Lee.

schools. At six years old, you just think you can do whatever you want. So I imitated the moves of the people I saw in movies, books, and magazines, and let my body flow naturally.

Six-year-olds have a wonderful gift of make-believe, and I'm sure I thought I really was Bruce Lee. There was no one to tell me I was doing a technique wrong, and I just adapted what I saw into what my body could do. This natural expression is what our martial arts ancestors displayed before there were structured systems. All true martial arts teachers hope their students won't lose their childlike expression as they travel through today's structured curriculums. It's this expression that gives you flavor.

If there is a dream or a goal you long to accomplish, you should pursue it with all your heart. Go after your dreams with the energy and enthusiasm you knew as a child, and let your curiosity help you push beyond immediate boundaries. In fact, if you are serious about wanting your goals to manifest, write them down, date them, and put them someplace you have to read them every day. For as long as I can remember, every year between Christmas and New Year's Day, I made a list of what I wanted to accomplish in the next year. I even put a date by each goal for when I wanted to achieve it. Then I taped the list to the bathroom mirror so I had to read it every morning and night. More often than not, when the time came, I had reached the goal. One year I didn't make a list, and my life started going downhill in a hurry. I heard a voice telling me to make a list, but I wouldn't listen. The voice also said that if I didn't, I would lose everything. That was in 1989, the year I was incarcerated, so it came true. Today, I wouldn't dream of entering a new year without my goals written down. I review the present strong points and weak points to find a way to continue my strengths and improve my weaknesses. This never-ending quest for self-improvement is what pursuing Do is about.

Surround Yourself with Supportive People

When going after something you love, it's important to surround yourself with people who will encourage and support you. However, if you do encounter people who are trying to influence you in a negative way or tear you down, your focus should always be on what is right for you, regardless of what others tell you.

Living in Baltimore's inner city, we often moved from one housing project to another, so I was always the new kid on the block. This meant I was constantly being picked on and beat up. I remember one bullying encounter I had with my so-called friends. We had been playing football and I had made some good plays. Well, I guess that made one guy mad because he hauled off and hit me several times in the face. When I looked up, figuring that my friends would help me out, they were all walking away, ignoring me. I was scared and wanted this guy to stop hitting me. To make matters worse, he took my shoes, and I had to walk home barefoot.

When I got home, I rushed to my bedroom and shut the door—relieved to be in a safe place. I wondered why I got beat up, and just at the moment when I felt proud and confident about myself. Why would this make someone feel threatened? Today, I know there is a choice. You don't have to be around people who tear you down, or, should I say, you can keep them at a distance. It is important to surround yourself with only those people you can trust to want the best for you. People who really love you won't treat you badly.

Surround yourself with only those people
you can trust to want the best for you.

It was my older sister, Celestine (Tiney, for short), who came to my rescue and taught me how to protect myself. Martial arts only put some polish on my fighting—my big sister taught me how to stand up for myself. At home, my dad mentally abused me instead of helping me learn how to protect myself. Everyone was afraid of my dad, including me, so when he called me a punk, a chump, or worse, it destroyed any self-esteem I had.

Today, as a parent and teacher, I try to be compassionate about my children's and students' struggles by listening, using tough love, and giving unconditional support. I feel it is a juggling act when you help others through something. You must feel when to step in or when to back up and let go. If you force a solution, you can break the natural flow and interfere with the outcome. You have to get out of the middle so others can find the solution that is right for them. You always have the answer you need—just look inside.

One unforgettable experience was when I was confronted at a neighborhood crap game by a guy who was a great wrestler and who had taken my money in the past. Everyone was afraid of him, including me. I was standing there shooting craps, and he came up, socked me in the chest, and told me to give him my money. I started kicking and punching him until he put me in a headlock. I got loose and started acting crazy—doing karate moves and screaming as I had seen in the movies. On the inside I was scared to death, but I was tired of being bullied. Believe it or not, this guy let me go and never bothered me again. This seemed to be a turning point, because others started to respect and fear me. Today I teach my kids and students to keep themselves out of negative situations and away from negative people if possible. If you can't, though, you have to be ready to stand up and fight. In the old days, adults in the housing projects made us fight it out, and afterward we were friends. Today, these encounters end in death by guns or knives, so it is important to be aware of your choices if you encounter a bully.

Life is full of challenges, and as I've gotten older, the challenges have moved away from physical confrontations to emotional and mental hurdles—someone is always trying to make you lose focus on what's right for you. This kind of person is like a snake creeping up on you and attacking you from nowhere when you least expect it. So no matter what someone tries to do to you, no one has the power to make you feel bad unless you allow it.

During your journey you will come across people who want to hurt you or see you fail. Their negative influence will hinder your quest only if you let it. Take care to surround yourself with people who are trustworthy, reliable, and respectful.

Resist External Pressures

Although you should associate with people who will be a positive influence on you, the same goes for the way you treat others. If you fail to listen to yourself—to what you know is right or wrong—and let peer pressure take over, you're letting external pressures run your life. Your journey is not your own.

One weekend on my way to the movies, I took my bicycle over to a cousin's house for repairs. While I was there, my aunt sent us to the store for some groceries. I wanted to impress everyone, so I stole some candy and gave it to my cousins. I let peer pressure take control of my actions and did something I knew was wrong. At the time, it was a cool thing to do, and for an instant I felt like a hero on center stage. This wasn't the first time I had stolen something, though. I had been taking small amounts of money from my mom to buy karate magazines, books, posters, and training equipment.

For as long as I can remember, I have been able to attract people to me who want to do whatever I'm doing—something like a magnetic personality. Then when their backs were turned, I stole from them. Bookstore owners were a favorite of mine. I would go into the store and start a conversation, then walk out with a couple books or magazines under my coat. I used to go to the same stores and sometimes I got caught, but the owners always forgave me with the admonition, "You're a good kid; just don't do it again." But of course, I always did.

One instructor told me I had charisma. People feel confident around me and trust me. Now I use this gift to help people make positive changes in their lives and to be a good role model for them, but when I was selling drugs, people followed me down that path, too.

On the streets, if you want respect, you and your homeboys have to do crazy things. Because my specialty was stealing, I would go into stores and steal for our gang, which got its name from a martial arts movie called *Seven Blows of the Dragon*. In the movie, there was a gang of bandits called "Mountain Brothers" who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. We were so impressed by these movie bandits that we named ourselves after them and made weapons like they used. I carried two small sticks on my back and a long stick in my hands. Finally, I didn't feel like the little kid who everyone bullied. I had earned the respect of the neighborhood cool guys, and there was no turning back. They had become my extended family, and I would do anything for them.

As all gangs, we did bad things like breaking into the bakery and warehouses, and so on. Several times we were caught, but my mom was always there to rescue me. Back then, the police just kept you in a room and talked to you until your parents showed up to take you home. I never saw the inside of a jail cell until much later. My dad always sat me down and talked to me about staying out of trouble and

not going to jail like he had. I listened, but when the peer pressure came, I got swept away and went right back to doing bad things.

Encountering a Bully

When you come across a bully, it is important to understand that there are several defensive tools you can use to escape a fight. To avoid these situations altogether, it helps to know what types of bullies there are and what weapons they will use to try to put you down.

Principles of Bullies

- Verbal bullies know how to say things that hurt you at just the time your guard is down or when you are in the presence of others.
- Practical joker bullies have the ability to crack jokes on you or play games that put you down in front of others and make you feel ridiculous.
- Athletic bullies use physical prowess to abuse you, hoping they will embarrass and hurt you.
- Authoritative bullies are in positions of power and use this position to create a double standard, putting themselves outside the rules.
- Intellectual bullies have learned to express their gifted mental talents and abuse you with them to feel superior.
- Spiritual bullies use the words of the Universal Creator to beat you down, trying to prove that they are right and you are wrong. They have no concern for your feelings.
- Chemically dependent bullies are involved with drugs and alcohol and do everything in their power to make you feel less than them because you choose not to use drugs and alcohol.
- Sexual bullies make you feel uncomfortable for not having sex or try to persuade you to have unsafe sex.
- Patriotic bullies try to force their political beliefs on you.
- Financial bullies try to make you feel less than them because they have more money and believe no one without money is of use to them.
- Whining bullies try to make you feel sorry for them so they can get what they want.
- Prejudiced bullies put you down because they feel as though their race, religion, or way is superior to all others, and they will go to any lengths to prove this.

Defensive Tools

- Conduct yourself in a positive manner, being careful that you don't respond to bullies negatively. Treat them as you would like to be treated.
- Be humble, making sure you aren't a show-off when you make new friends. Take charge of your behavior by working the first two defensive tools.
- Never underestimate anyone, because sometimes the quiet or weak-appearing person is the most dangerous.
- Try to be friends with bullies by using humor in a nonthreatening way. Walk away from bullies and talk to someone in authority the first time you feel insulted.

- Never give bullies a chance to treat you the same way twice.
- Hang out with people who strive to be of good character like you and make no exceptions.
- When feeling threatened, use trickery or be in agreement with bullies to resolve the conflict.
- Do your best to prevent conflict by working the previous steps. Even yell, scream, or become tough by acting like the experience had no effect on you. You can reason with bullies, trying to teach them in a nonthreatening way why their behavior is wrong.
- If all else fails, stand and fight to protect yourself and control the situation.

Remember, today the youngest kid has weapons, and some will come back for revenge after someone stands up to them. So be careful and do your very best to prevent fighting.

Show Respect for Others

In the projects, this was a time when everyone was close. They looked out for each other and for each other's kids. This was a good time to be growing up—we just played differently. The values and character traits that I have today came from this family village upbringing. They lived the saying, “It takes a whole village to raise a child.”

Things mellowed out between the gangs, and I got interested in playing baseball, basketball, and football in my neighborhood. I joined a Little League baseball team put together by a community not far from ours called Little Italy. These Italian Americans were reaching out to the African American community, hoping that we could come together in a spirit of peace and harmony.

Neighborhood store owners gave us free soft drinks and candy, and the coaches had cookouts for us and invited us to their homes to watch the major leagues play on television. During these times of fun and excitement, no one ever thought that someday these fun-loving kids would get into the deadly game of drugs.

In my family, my parents taught me the right way to treat adults and gave me a foundation of principles. I think what my parents taught me gave me an edge over other gang members. I talk with many people today who honestly believe that if you grew up in the projects, you had to come from a bad home. That just isn't true. My mom and dad worked hard to provide for us. They always found a way for us to have good holidays and the necessities of everyday life. I never went without food or clothes or, most importantly, love. We were a family that did everything together—even sitting down together at mealtime!

This is the way I was taught to show respect for others, and I teach the same principles to my students. Most people think I learned good manners from studying martial arts, but that only complemented what I was learning at home. My dad, regardless of his personal choices in life, was a great teacher for me in every aspect of my life. He is the toughest, yet the most honest, man I have ever been around. If he doesn't like you, he lets you know it. At the same time, he would do anything to protect his family, even if it meant dying.



Despite the struggles we faced living in the inner city, my mom made sure we never went without love.

You'll never reach a sense of peace and balance in your life if you do not show respect for others. Display trust and love to others to make a positive influence on their lives. Practice being part of the solution; otherwise you're part of the problem.

Practice being part of the solution;
otherwise you're part of the problem.

Use Your Creativity and Imagination

Regardless of the circumstances, with a little creativity and a lot of determination, you can accomplish anything. In fact, there are no limits to what you can achieve, only those you place on yourself.

Funding for Little League baseball stopped. The kids who had been taken out of the projects into a better community, one where we were united with people of all races, were back on the streets with nothing to do. Creativity kicked in, as it always does, and we began to compete with a new sport called street gymnastics. We learned this by taking old, filthy mattresses and box springs, setting them on top of each other, then practicing flips. My confidence soared, and suddenly I had heart to flip on concrete, and off rooftops, cars, fences, walls, and everything I came across. I got so interested in gymnastics that it was natural to combine it with my martial arts. I had found something to get the attention of other martial artists, and it gave me an edge.

By the time I was eleven, Tiney had moved into a place of her own, and I took advantage of her empty bedroom, turning it into a home gym. I had Bruce Lee posters all over the walls and every type of homemade training equipment you can imagine—wing chun wooden dummies, sandbags, speed bags, and several martial arts weapons. I also had an extensive library of fighting books. I spent my days training and immersing myself in martial arts. It never occurred to me that I couldn't succeed in martial arts because I didn't have the best equipment or a school to train in. I did sit-ups, push-ups, jumping jacks; went running; practiced forms and shadowboxing—anything I could think of to keep me moving toward my goal to be like Bruce Lee. Few people can have all the right equipment or a perfect training environment. It's the ones who are willing to make do with what they have and go forward who are the hard-core, self-made martial artists like our ancestors.

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Use Your Mind

While I was physically training, reading began to play an important part in my life. Because I was curious about everything, I went into bookstores and stayed for hours reading books about martial arts, boxing, wrestling, gymnastics, and everything that grabbed my attention.

I learned that books paint pictures of dreams in words the same way movies do, but with one difference. When you read something, it gets inside your head and makes you think. It triggered my imagination at a deep level, and I was soon reading philosophy books about Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, the yin and yang concept, and technical books by Bruce Lee, S. Henry Cho, and Master Oyama, to name a few. Of course, I didn't understand a lot of what I was reading, but the words seemed to soothe a place deep inside me, so I read as best I could.

It wasn't until I was in jail that I began to understand these things. I was reading similar books, only now I was old enough to feel and understand what they were saying. It felt like I was revisiting things of the past and remembering. I had come

Champion Attitude

Losers do what they want; winners do whatever it takes.



Most people, especially athletes, go to great lengths to improve the look and condition of their bodies. They strive to keep their bodies clean, healthy, beautiful, and strong. They realize the importance of following a healthful diet supplemented with vitamins, exercising vigorously, and getting plenty of rest. If there is an ache or a pain, they consult a doctor and take medicine. Surprisingly, though, they tend to ignore the condition of their attitude. To anyone who wants to become a champion, achieve success and happiness, and live in peace and harmony, developing and maintaining a positive attitude are crucial.

Developing a champion attitude means going through a process of natural growth, with set development stages leading to a display of superiority in whatever goal you are pursuing. As a champion, this attitude is visible on three levels—how you appear physically, your frame of mind, and your connection to something greater than yourself—in other words, your total posture. This is how disciples of martial arts differ from many other athletes and people. Our focus as martial artists is at all times on total development. It is much more than a sport, an activity, a pursuit, or an endeavor—it is a way of life!

If You Can Conceive it, You Can Achieve it

The following are some definitions of attitude: a position of the body suggesting a thought or a feeling; a behavior or conduct indicating some purpose or opinion; or a state of mind. Our attitudes are outward displays of our inner feelings about someone or something.

To develop these feelings, your powers of imagination fuel your mind, and it operates like an inner movie screen. Everything your mind projects on this screen reflects in either a positive or a negative attitude. Most important, whatever you think about, whatever your mind can conceive, you can achieve. I know this to be true firsthand. All my life I've used a mind movie screen to wander from the hardcore reality I lived in. When I saw a movie with one of my heroes like Bruce Lee, Jim Kelly, or Ron Van Clief, I saw myself playing their part, not them. When I read books and magazines, I became part of the story. I saw myself as the person I was reading about and felt the feelings.

When I shared this with teachers, my parents, or friends, they laughed and said I was just daydreaming. But I continued to project myself into anything I saw or read. When I was living a negative lifestyle, I would dream of becoming a well-known bad guy, then think I really was this bad guy. When I went out to steal something, I imagined that I was one of these bad guys and could get away with stealing anything I wanted—and I succeeded. The same was true when I went to compete. I chose someone like Bruce Lee, and I was him. There was no way anyone at that tournament could beat Bruce, and I usually did win. To this day, I still do the same thing—it's just that I use this powerful tool for positive, good things.

The power to use your mind as a positive tool is already in you. You just need to know how to bring it out. One of the great literary works of the Chinese culture is Sun

Tzu's *The Art of War*. Sun Tzu said if you make your enemy your friend, then you will know his every move. Great wars were won like this. The only difference with your mind is that this is a war within you. So, to win this war against negative thoughts and actions and let the positive shine forth, make friends with your negative impulses to understand and conquer them.

Let me give you an example of how I used my mind screen to break negative cycles. When I got a feeling or craving to get high, I wouldn't act on it. First, I played the movie in my head all the way through to the end. I saw myself buying the drugs, getting high, having fun at the party, being with girls, and feeling a false sense of power. Then I watched myself coming down from this high, feeling miserable, and not being able to stop the cycle. It would just repeat until I ended up in jail, an institution, or dead. If I could make myself get to the end of the picture, I was able to choose not to use drugs.

Unfortunately, many people don't maintain a positive attitude. They let their imaginations run away from reality, creating fears, exaggerations, dramatizations, and other scenarios of false evidence appearing real. They build castles in the air. Consequently, many negative thoughts occur, they waste a lot of energy, and these feelings eventually become personality traits.

Master Brown once told me that as long as I didn't know who was going to be competing at a tournament and who the champions were, I would go in and win. As soon as I took the focus off myself and started looking around the room and socializing with the other competitors, I would get fearful, intimidated, and lose. So I started wearing headphones and playing music that reminded me of where I had come from—where I didn't want to go back to. It made all the difference.

Champions develop a happiness and heartiness about life through their powers of imagination. They know how to adjust, how to get through obstacles, and how to turn lemons into lemonade. They develop the ability to control their destiny. What motivates them? They design their own plan, embodying an ideal they are willing to strive for no matter what the odds. They realize that they have all the tools necessary for success, and they use them to go after their goals. Champions give life everything they have and then some. To achieve success and feel happy and satisfied, both professionally and personally, we must all strive to reach 110 percent of our full potential. Take to heart the expression, "The mind is a terrible thing to waste," and use this powerful tool to your advantage.

Champions give life everything they have
and then some—110 percent.

Building a Safety Zone

Your mental attitude or posture is first reflected in your overall self-esteem. Psychologists and behavior specialists believe that we talk to ourselves at an astounding rate every waking minute of our lives, using words, pictures, and emotions in these conversations. They estimate that 50 percent of what most people tell themselves is negative. The other 50 percent is split—25 percent on unfocused talk doing

battle with positive talk and 25 percent positive. This shows in today's society. Every time you pick up a newspaper, listen to a radio, or turn on a television, that 50 percent of negativity is reinforced.

You have to build yourself a place, a zone, where all that exists is love, peace, and happiness that you will fight to protect. Until you feel safe, you can't be of service to anyone else. Sometimes your safe place is a physical location, and sometimes you have

to retreat inside yourself. My first experience doing this was when I was incarcerated. While the other guys were gambling, getting high, and doing all sorts of wild things, I stayed in my zone. It was hard not to be distracted by these guys, but I stayed focused. I had learned on the street to keep people not in my peer group at a distance. People not there to support and help you are there to bring you down. On the street this could cause your death.

Often the kids I teach today tell me about getting into a fight at school and ask me what they can do to avoid another fight. The first thing I ask is if there ever was a time when they allowed this person to play with them, instead of waiting and watching to see if he or she was friendship material. Most kids answer yes. So there's the problem—they let the person into their zone before finding out where he or she was coming from. For me, I must protect my safety zone at all costs because it's all I have. It's where I go to take care of myself, and if I don't maintain this place, I will self-destruct and not be able to help anyone else. So be careful about who you let in close to you.



I often use meditation to “get away” and regain my focus.

Katas and Weapons

You must strive to be one with the universe as you travel the path of self-expression.



From the beginning of time, when people had to fight for survival, they developed routines to defend themselves and their families. Routines are prescribed patterns or mechanical courses of action, whether long or short, that help develop confidence and belief in your ability—a comfort level—leading to developing fluid responses, then natural reflexes in any situation. Just as in school, you learn the mechanics of writing your ABCs. Then, with practice, you develop the ability to read and write words, sentences, paragraphs, even whole stories.

Practicing katas and weapons routines brings about these feelings of confidence and instinctiveness. So when you're involved in a confrontation, either in class or on the street, your responses will be second nature. You'll be able to go with the flow and respond in a natural, effective manner that's right for you and the situation at hand.

Today's martial artists, however, are in favor of techniques; they spend so much time trying to remember every technique they have seen, heard of, or read about that they become entrenched in memorization, thinking that mastering these techniques will assure them success in tournaments and street fights.

Here's the problem. They are doing exactly the same things you're doing, so when you meet them in competition, you just exchange one technique for another, blow for blow. Both of you know the moves and the counters. Although one of you wins, the competition has all been on a technical level where you have been trading physical and mental skills.

Now, let's talk about taking these techniques to the street. What do you think your chances are of defeating an average street attacker with a prearranged set of movements? Scary, isn't it? Your attackers not only don't know your moves but also don't care. They have one goal in mind and that is to beat you down, steal from you, or whatever. They are goal oriented and have the mind-set to do whatever it takes. Your benefit from having taken the time to learn katas is that this repeated practice has developed your confidence in being able to deliver fluid, instinctual responses. You have trained your body, mind, and spirit to act as a unit, and under pressure a natural, spontaneous flow of movements will take place to whatever your attacker tries to deliver.

I'm not saying that technique isn't important. You must choose from all the techniques available, finding those that are an expression of your nature and those that you can physically execute. After all, technique won't do you any good if you can't deliver it effectively!

It's great to think that if someone comes up to you on the street and tries to grab a package from you, you'll drop to the ground and sweep him or her, or better yet, see it coming and do a fabulous jump kick that will knock your attacker off his or her feet. But if you're caught by surprise, and that's the street attacker's best weapon, what do you think your mind will have time to tell your body to do? "Nothing" is the answer. You will be left with what we call a natural response to an immediate action. There's no way you know what you're going to do. It will happen too fast. The attack will be over in a second, and you'll be lying there wondering what happened.

Basic Truths versus Learned Techniques

Knowing the difference between basic truths (natural responses applicable in any situation) and learned techniques (prearranged series of movements) can be the deciding factor in a real-life confrontation. Today, particularly in Western cultures, people are learning new techniques rather than concentrating on the basic truths these techniques stem from. People with no martial arts training who are attacked on the street will operate from a base of honest fear, and however they respond will be exactly right. The terror of the moment will put them in an instinctual, almost animal survival mode. Those trained in martial arts may pause for a second to think of what punch or kick to use. That split second could cost them their lives. Failure to know the basic attributes (in this case, honest fear) prevents them from expressing whatever technique they are using in a manner that's appropriate to their physical, mental, and spiritual ability. In a word, they are trying to work a technique instead of being one with the technique.

For example, the ABCs are the principles of most forms of communication, but we must express them in different spelling configurations and voice tonalities to be effective for the listener. If you want to be heard and understood, you must speak the listener's language. Failure to do this will not get you what you want, but when you can adapt to the moment and respond in kind to whatever is coming at you, you are going with the flow and are in harmony with the universe.

In the beginning of my martial arts training, I was so struck by every new technique I saw that my whole purpose for being was to learn the next new thing. Only years later did I realize that for all the hundreds and thousands of techniques I had in my arsenal, they all stemmed from a core of basics. For example, if you want to break someone's finger, just bend it in the opposite direction it's supposed to go!

We have to study the basics from beginning to end and not be distracted. As martial artists, the techniques we practice come into play, but only to complement our instinctual feeling for what is coming at us and responding effectively in the moment. This cannot be preplanned. It has to just happen. This is the ultimate goal I'm talking about—striving to go with the flow and be as one with the moment. When you can achieve this state, you maximize your chances of winning.

Effectiveness of Katas

People choose to study martial arts for a variety of reasons, including self-defense, physical fitness, or a desire to be a tournament champion and bring home trophies. For me, the goal was personal. I was motivated by a desire to change from the inner-city kid who made negative choices because I thought these were the only choices I had. I perceived a life as a martial artist as possibly opening the door to get out of the

ghetto and into movies. Never was it my wish to be the world's deadliest fighter or the top world's forms champion; I simply wanted to feel happy and be at peace.

In my early days of training, I thought katas were for the weak guy and fighting for the warrior. I didn't get hooked on practicing katas until I was at a tournament and, just for the fun of it, I made up a kata on the spot and won third place.

Then it occurred to me that every time I struck out at the air and repeated the movement over and over, it was a form of kata. This constant repetition felt comfortable, and I got lost in the feeling of safety that came with the sameness of a movement. I also began to realize that everyone can fight, but not many people can do good kata, so I made a vow to become someone who could.

Katas combine kicks, blocks, punches, sweeps, aerial techniques, and tumbling; vary in length; and are extremely effective. They are the backbone of every successful system and have been around since our ancestors had to fight for survival.

In addition, they bring about coordination of the body, mind, and spirit. These prearranged routines develop power, grace, endurance, balance, coordination,



When performing a kata, strive to bring it alive using your own personal expression.

Freestyle Sparring

AKA, Point MMA

Use every means possible to avoid a fight, but if it's inevitable, fight to win.



During the nighttime finals at the Baltimore Karate Tournament in 1981, one of the largest tournaments on the East Coast, it was time for the super lightweight fighting division. I had trained hard for this moment and watched my opponent out of the corner of my eye. He seemed pumped up and ready to go—it was going to be a good fight. I began easy, feeling him out, and within seconds he attacked me with a jumping hand technique to the face. My body countered, as if on cue, with a perfectly timed side kick between one of his jumping techniques. At the end of the three minutes, the match was tied four to four. My competitor had earned my respect, and I knew I was contending with a tough opponent. In the tiebreaking round, I emerged victorious, having defeated my most worthy opponent with ground fighting techniques.

The unique thing about this fight was that my opponent had no legs! Yet his skills as a martial artist weren't compromised. It was my training in universal fighting techniques that allowed me to move into his comfort zone and fight from the ground. I simply flowed in harmony with the situation, gained control, and won. This is one of life's most valuable lessons!

If your goal is to be a universal fighter, you must train in a manner that encourages all the physical elements and natural fighting techniques to come together with speed and fluidity—it's a total package. You must be able to effectively use stances, punches, blocks, kicks, sweeps, footwork, and grappling; develop them into offensive and defensive techniques; and exhibit them in freestyle sparring, in which you should also practice sweeps, takedowns, and ground fighting. Keep in mind that, although sparring partners can use all these techniques in practice and street fighting, not all are allowed in competitive sparring. This approach brings the basics you have been learning from the training floor into controlled, real-life fighting situations and gives you a chance to see what you will do under pressure. If you expect to grow as a martial artist, you must embrace all of martial arts, including sparring.

My theory of effective sparring is to understand the gates of attack (high, middle, and low), high being the head, middle being the body, and low being the legs. By becoming familiar with these gates, it will help you to execute practical, offensive moves, such as kicks to the head, punches to the body, and sweeps to the legs. When it comes to your defensive skills, watch the shoulders and hips of your opponents dip up and down. This telegraphs which hand or leg they are about to use. Control such joints as your elbows and knees with efficient angular and circular stepping to further complement your defensive techniques. Above all, your personal, instinctual ability to master and deliver offensive and defensive techniques as a natural response in any situation is what will make you an effective fighter.

Freestyle sparring is the ability to fight outside of all rules and regulations, and at different levels of impact—light, medium, and hard. It brings us close to the reality of the streets, so you will be prepared to deal with whatever comes your way. Real fighting can never be staged. It is triggered by your emotions and those of your opponent. When you are facing each other, you should become as one—just the two of you flowing back and forth—going with whatever comes with no thought process. It's strictly action and response. In combat, styles, systems, concepts, and techniques don't matter—just self-expression. Of course, if you are sparring at a tournament, the techniques executed must follow the guidelines of the sanctioned

sport karate association governing that event, such as the Olympics, the North American Sport Karate Association, the National Blackbelt League, and so on.

Through freestyle sparring you develop the free mind, responses, and reflexes needed to flow in harmony with your opponent, whether in the ring or on the street. Mentally you are using everything you've learned before. Your mind is free to flow; it is in a state of not-being. It is the process of emptying your cup in order to grow, because your focus is response without thinking. When you put two people together who are responding to each other's movements, there is no time to think—just harmonious flow.

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The ability to freestyle spar is the result of good foundation training. However, I do not recommend it for beginning or intermediate students who are still developing and perfecting their basics and learning to respond spontaneously in a fighting situation. I have my beginning students start with one-step, two-step, and three-step sparring. They also learn how to execute properly delivered jabs, crosses, back fists, reverse punches, front kicks, side kicks, round kicks, angle steps, and side steps. Once you are proficient with the basics, you must be able to put together natural, basic techniques that keep you out of your opponent's range of attack. You must also be familiar enough with them to instinctively counter an opponent's move with an opposite and effective reaction—whatever the situation calls for—as in street fighting. At this point, you become a technician instead of a brawler.

When you can successfully respond with your natural techniques, light-contact, freestyle sparring begins, and you are classified at the intermediate level. The ability to focus on developing your strong points to a higher level and overcoming your weak areas is what identifies you as an advanced student. Now you are more relaxed and inclined to try different strategies and techniques, hence developing your universal fighting style.

A key factor in students' success in freestyle sparring is developing their self-control and determination. With good supervision, freestyle sparring teaches fighters to control the situation, not let the situation control them.

The science of fighting is the ability to outthink and outmaneuver your opponent—to hit without getting hit. In fighting, a good offense is a good defense. Fighters have to beat their opponents to the punch with lightning-fast techniques and quick footwork. You must attack with deception by faking to create openings so you can deliver your well-focused techniques, and you must deliver proper techniques instinctively, so your mind is free for strategy. Anyone, even national champions, can freeze in fighting situations, so use the classroom to work on overcoming this potential handicap. Remember, if you freeze in practice, you will freeze in a real fight. So beware!

The science of fighting is the ability to outthink and outmaneuver your opponent—to hit without getting hit.

Universal Sparring Concepts

I emphasize the same combat orientation that was practiced three hundred or more years ago in my curriculum. I have simply taken the best, most effective techniques from all the disciplines to form the base of my curriculum, because it allows us to adapt and flow with any situation that may occur. Although training methods have changed considerably, it is presumed that anyone at an advanced fighting level has mastered individual punches, blocks, footwork, and kicks. The focus of the universal sparring concepts is fluidly combining these techniques and using them to execute eye gouges, foot sweeps, grabs, locks, takedowns, ground fighting, and submission holds.

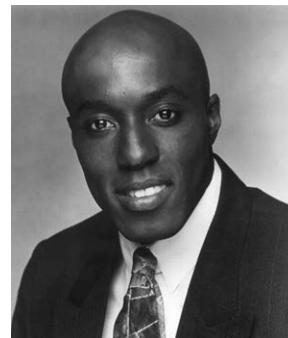
I don't strive to produce point fighters, full-contact fighters, or street fighters. The goal is to bring about universal fighters—those individuals who can use all



One of my favorite wushudo combinations is: (a) lead-hand back fist to the face, followed by (b) a spinning back kick to the body, then (c) a lead-leg foot sweep.

About the Authors

A seven-time Karate and Kung Fu world champion and two-time All-American champion, **Willie “The BAM” Johnson** is a true hero in the world of martial arts. As the creator of Wushudo Universal Martial Arts, Johnson is known for his dynamic, universal approach to developing physical, mental, and spiritual fitness. He is the co-owner and president of The BAMS Martial Arts Academy with his wife Kimberly Johnson in Laurel, Maryland, open for twenty-five years. In 1991, Johnson made history as America’s first nationally ranked Triple Crown martial arts champion. Only three years later, he had the distinction of being



the first African-American to be ranked number one in Kung Fu forms and weapons.

In addition to these accomplishments, he has earned fifth- and seventh-degree black belts in Karate and Kung Fu and studied several other arts such as Jujitsu, Thai boxing, boxing, wrestling, Tai Chi and kickboxing. Johnson received the title of Grand Master in 1995 and is a member of the Martial Arts Hall of Fame. He starred as himself on the WMAC Masters television show and the Wesley Snipes *Masters of the Martial Arts* show. He is also the creator of the Predator’s Self-Defense Concepts, which teaches all participants how to deal with the deadly predators that stalk individuals within society. In 2000, he was named Kung Fu Instructor of the Year by *Black Belt Magazine*, and appeared on the cover of that magazine in 2018.

A graduate of the Beijing Physical Culture Institute of China, Johnson has nearly thirty years of training in the martial arts. He has appeared in four films, including *Super Fighters* and *Major League II*, sixteen stage plays, eleven television shows, and two videos. He has also had more than thirty articles published in leading martial arts magazines and been featured on the cover of *Karate/Kung Fu Illustrated* and *Martial Arts Training*.

Named Instructor of the Year by the Educational Funding Corporation, Johnson is the founder and national spokesperson for the Stronger Than Drugs Foundation. He is a regional representative of the U.S. Shuai Chiao Association and the Federation of United Martial Artist Crusade Against Crime. In addition to these contributions, he serves as national spokesperson for Champions Against Drugs and grand master of the World Head of Family Sokeship Council. He is a member of the Educational Funding Corporation and the National Professional Association of Martial Artists. Johnson is also the founder and coach of the leading sport karate team known as the Better Attitude Makers, and founder of the Cardio Defense Kickboxing program. Mr. Johnson, his family and his academy participate in an annual food drive, toy drive, and provide blessing bags for the homeless each year among other community service activities. Johnson resides in Columbia, Maryland.

Nancy Holt Musick, program review coordinator for the American Council on Education, has a lifetime commitment to growing physically, mentally, and spiritually. Musick has earned a first-degree black belt under Johnson and served as a student instructor at the Universal Martial Arts Concepts school. A member of the Special Winning Attitude Team at “The BAMS”, she has had more than thirty articles published in leading martial arts magazines. Musick resides in Centerville, Virginia and is an avid writer and fitness buff.