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WORK/LIFE BALANCE

By John Peponias

In recent articles we discussed attributes such as work-ethic, attitude, diligence, and dedication. While these traits play important developmental roles in our lives, it is essential that along with our hard work, we dedicate time to these supplementary key elements: Rest, leisure, healing time, and personal time. An investment in a moment for one's self is not one that we often make, falling victim to the demand of ever-increasing workloads, which eventually leads to "burn-out" and fatigue, causing possible injury or illness.

Eastern philosophy and even physics sometimes, tell us that all things in the universe exist in a sort of equilibrium. For example: for a positive, there is a negative; for hard, there is soft; with love, there is hate; for war, there is peace; for an inhale, there's an exhale, etc. This relationship and harmony of energies is the essence of what the Yin Yang symbol represents in Chinese culture. In this same way, there can not be balance or harmony in your own life if your work-energy output is constantly high, and little or no time is dedicated to directing energy toward one's self. It is essential to set time aside to heal, to reflect, to appreciate accomplishments, and to allow one's spirit an opportunity to recover from its sometimes weary state.

So, where do you begin? One of the principles that myself and others on this staff share, is the belief that we must do our best to manage our time effectively every day, in order to facilitate true balance. I know, easier said than done, right? Well, think about this notion for a minute: "The Three 8's Theory." Simply, there are 24 hours in a day, and if we divide and dedicate time equally, there should be 8 hours for work, 8 hours for personal improvement or leisure, and 8 hours for rest or sleep. If you absolutely need more time for work, borrow some from leisure time, but do not sacrifice rest or sleep!

This practice was taught to us in our Chinese Martial Arts studies as part of several life-style examples to set for the purpose of achieving what we refer to as "Dar Tse Tee" or, becoming a "better person." Mastering the Three 8's model heightens awareness and makes us take notice of our daily energy output. In addition, adhering to this standard of living makes us more conscious and responsible about the way we manage personal time. Attainment of true work/life balance is an integral part of enjoying an improved quality of life and fosters a path to being a *Better-Human*.

Remember that as we push ourselves to stay at the top of our physical game, and strive to realize career ambitions and other goals, we can not overlook our basic need for personal time and rest. As the old saying goes ... "All work and no play" ... Interestingly enough, many employers also recognize the importance of proper rest and relaxation and its direct impact on their employees' productivity. Typically, they offer health and wellness seminars that discuss topics like work/life balance, and even time and stress-management. Maybe they feel guilty for over-working us in the first place..??? ; Naaah!





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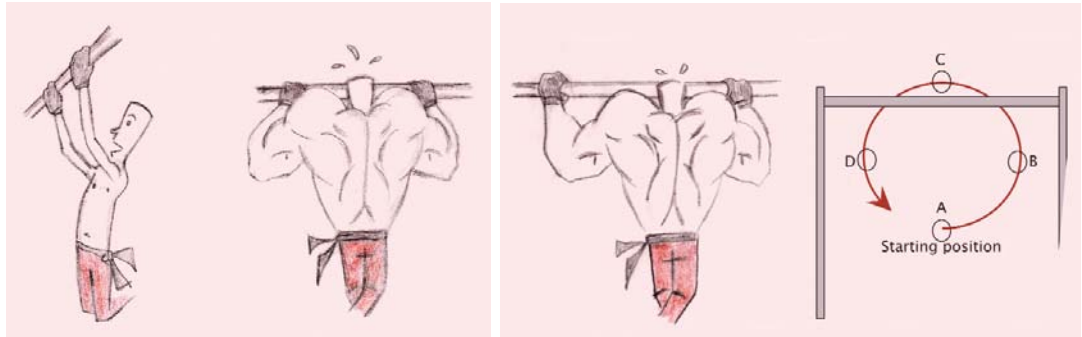
WORKOUT CORNER

Story and Illustrations by Luis Bonnet



Pull-Up Variation*

Pull-ups are great because they engage so many major muscle groups such as your back muscles, shoulders, biceps, forearms, and abdominal muscles. Pull-ups can become a little repetitive after a while. The beautiful thing about pull-ups is the many variations you could play with.



Instead of just pulling yourself up, try going towards your right hand, then try pulling yourself towards the left, and back down. If this is still too easy, try making little circles with your body as you pull-up:

1. Start by hanging evenly from the bar
2. Pull yourself up as you head towards your right shoulder
3. Pull your body all the way up and centered
4. Slowly come down as you move towards your left hand
5. Slowly lower yourself back to your starting position

**These pull-ups may be done with an overhand grip or a neutral grip.*





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FLEXIBILITY TRAINING

By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

Part Three—Leg Stretches

In this segment you will learn some basic stretches for the muscle groups above, but first a word of caution. If you have been injured within the last 24 hours DO NOT do these stretches. The body needs at least 24 hours to repair itself, and stretching after an injury will do more damage to the muscle. If you have any questions about these stretches please consult a fitness professional or Doctor. If you have any Joint pain while performing these stretches please STOP, your body may not be in the right alignment. If you feel any numbness please STOP. This could be a blood flow issue. Pins and needles please STOP. This could be a nervous system issue. You may have sustained an injury while working out and may need medical assistance.

These stretches were designed to help — not hurt — you know your body and it's physical limitations. LISTEN to what your body tells you, don't rush the stretch. Your body will tense up and guard itself if it thinks the muscle will be damaged, this will not allow you to get a good stretch.

Final tip: Remember your breathing. Your body still needs oxygen. Deep breathing helps to release tension in the muscles while stretching.

Adductors.

- > Isolate the muscle — Lean back on a wall if you find it hard to maintain a neutral position where there is zero tension.
- > Find zero tension.
- > Find tension — bring feet your feet closer to the pelvis and place your hands on your knees. Do not push down on your legs. Your body will guard itself. You may feel more tension on one side vs the other. The side with more tension has the tighter muscle group. You will need to give both sides equal attention to make it even.
- > Listen to your body- Allow for loss of tension, then slowly release and repeat.



NO TENSION



Don't Push Down
on legs.





FLEXIBILITY TRAINING (cont'd)

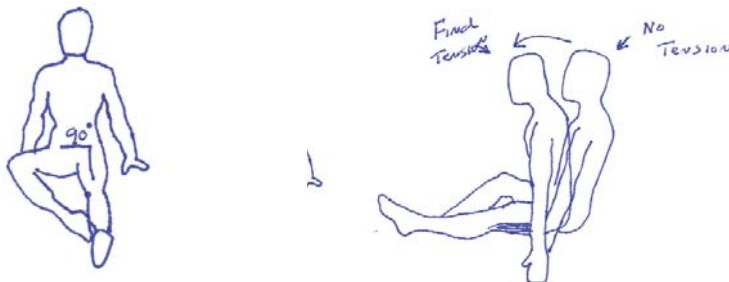
By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

Hamstrings.

- > Isolate the muscle — The stretching leg straight and the opposite leg is at a 90-degree angle.
- > Find zero tension — Lean back, use arms or a wall for back support.
- > Find tension — Lean forward bending at the hip not the spine. Back stays straight. You should feel no tension in tck of the knee. If so, you've gone too far.
- > Listen to your body- Allow for loss of tension, then slowly release and repeat on opposite leg.



Quadriceps.

- > Isolate the muscle — Knee, hip and shoulder of the stretching leg should be aligned.
- > Find zero tension — Hold on to your ankle not your foot. If your range of motion will not allow you to hold this position then take a towel place it around your ankle and hold on to it.
- > Find tension — Flex at knee by pulling back on your ankle. Slightly push hip forward and don't arch your lower back. Keep your alignment.
- > Listen to your body- Allow for loss of tension, then slowly release and repeat on opposite leg.



Please log back in next time for Calf, Gluts and Piriformis stretches.

Sean A. Archer is a Fitness Manager with Town Sports International; He is a Master Personal Trainer, PSC certified Massage Therapist, NASM and ISCA certified, a Corrective Exercise Specialist, Presenter Boxing/Certified Kickboxing and Certified 2nd degree Kung-Fu Wu-Su martial artist with over 15 years in the fitness industry.





WATER

By Blake Baxter, HHC

Simple right? Maybe not. How much water do you drink every day?

1 Pint? 1 Gallon? 1 Liter? A glass?

Before you answer, remember: Only water counts as water. It can be spring water, tap water, purified water, or mineral water, but not sports drinks or soda or coffee.

As an athlete, you need at least 1 Liter or 32 Ounces of water each day, but a better estimate is "half your weight in ounces". So, if you weigh 180, then your target intake is 90 ounces (or about 3 liters) per day (throughout the day, not all at once).

That sounds like a lot. The truth is, you probably drink that much liquid every day already, just not as water. One of the benefits of drinking water is that the water replaces other liquids that you really don't need at all, like sugary sodas and other drinks.

Of course, this doesn't apply to your workouts. Before, during, and after workouts, you'll want to keep with your sports drink. But that's the only time you need sports drinks. You don't need a gallon of Gatorade during lunch. It's empty sugar calories. If you aren't burning them, then causing insulin spikes and then turning into fat.

Being properly hydrated throughout the day increases stamina, enhances performance and speeds recovery times. It is also critical when recovering from an injury.

It's also important to note that Mutant Water is not water. These are the "special" waters that have been "enhanced" with caffeine, sugar, vitamins, or "natural flavorings". Well, natural flavorings are usually anything but natural. They're usually Frankenfood additives created in a factory. And again, you don't need all that sugar unless you're planning a workout. The type of sugar makes a difference too, but that's a different article for a different day.

The easiest way to increase water is to use it as your primary beverage during meals. You don't have to sit with a liter of water and just drink it by itself. In fact, you'll never absorb all that water at once.





WATER (cont'd)

By Blake Baxter, HHC

Start by having a glass of water first thing in the morning. Before your coffee or tea or juice.

You can put some lemon or lime in it. But not lemon flavoring or lemonade mix. Just lemon – the kind that grows on a tree.

Now, if you are not drinking that much water today, you may find that increasing the amount of water you drink causes you to release waste at an increased rate. Dehydration causes constipation. So, congratulations, all that waste was all being held by your body because you were dehydrated. Now it's finally being purged. This will pass (literally) after a few weeks.

You will also find that you sleep better, look better and feel better. You may also find that you're drinking less coffee or soda or iced tea, because you're not thirsty all the time.

So, go out and get a container that shows how much liquid it has in it. A nice 32-Ounce container. Fill it up in the morning with pure water. By lunch, it should be almost gone. By dinner, it should be empty.

If you've made it to bedtime and haven't finished the water, try again tomorrow. There's no point in drinking all that water before bed, because then you'll be up in the middle of the night. The best time to drink water is first thing in the morning, and then with meals throughout the day.

Blake Baxter is a Holistic Health Counselor and Kung-Fu instructor. He works with other martial artists to help them incorporate better eating practices and create awareness about the ways in which food impacts performance and recovery. Blake is the President of The Fifth Nine, Inc, an online holistic health counseling website. <http://thefifthnine.com>





MEDITATION: THE EVERY MAN'S MARTIAL ART

By Neal Zephyrin

As martial artists, we train our bodies to do amazing feats. From breaking numerous bricks with one's hand to withstanding enormous amounts of weight while lying on a bed of protruding nails, martial artists have dazzled audiences worldwide with seemingly super-human performances. Whereas these exhibitions are amazing in and of themselves, the degree of success in executing these physical disciplines is largely dependent on the training and disciplining of one's mind. The most scientifically proven way of training the mind is through meditation.

So What is Meditation?

Meditation is a discipline in which the mind is focused on a specific thought or awareness. The word meditation comes from the Latin *meditatio*, which originally indicated every type of physical or intellectual exercise, then later evolved into the more specific meaning "contemplation." Although it is a component of many religions, it is not at all a pre-requisite that one has to be a part of any religious group or belief system to meditate. Meditative disciplines encompass a wide range of spiritual and psychophysical practices which can emphasize development of a high degree of mental concentration and even an enhancement of one's natural senses. Within the past few years, western science has come to realize what non-western cultures knew for hundreds, if not thousands of years: That meditational practices offer the participant many quantifiable physical, mental, and emotional benefits.

Recent research has shown that meditation is good for the brain. It appears to increase gray matter, improve the immune system, reduce stress and promote a sense of well being. Other studies on meditation suggest that three months of consistent training lead to a profound shift in how the brain allocates attention, meaning it has been shown that respondents of this study have increased their ability to focus on a given task dramatically.

With many reported benefits of meditation, how does one learn to effectively meditate? Many martial arts disciplines have incorporated meditation into their systems of practice. Some of it is as basic as focusing on one's breath during inhalations and exhalations, to more complicated processes such as sending energy to various energy points in the body. What makes meditation such a wonderful and healthy endeavor is that an individual does not have to be a martial artist to engage in this practice. Meditation can be as simple as allocating 15–30 minutes a day to focusing one's mind on a given thought or image such as a distance sunrise on a beach. This simple practice can dramatically improve one's skill in any endeavor, from studying more effectively in school, to being a more productive and efficient manager, to being a better teacher. And the list can go on.

This is what makes meditation the every man's martial art.

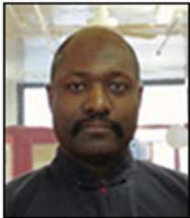
Neal Zephyrin is a 3rd Degree Instructor at Alan Lee's Chinese Kung-Fu, Wu-Su Association. He has been studying martial arts for over 18 years. He is currently an AVP at an Investment Bank.





WHEN THE STUDENT IS READY WILL THE MASTER APPEAR, OR DO YOU HAVE TO FIND HIM?

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

How does a person find the right instructor? This is a question I have been asked many times. In the following paragraphs, I will tell you how.

The answer is similar to those presented in my previous articles. Do research to find out something about the person you want to study with. Learn about that person's style of teaching ahead of time if you can. Determine your learning style. Try to match the two.

What should the teaching style matter, you may say?! There is a good reason to examine the teaching style of an instructor, because for you to be successful you should make sure his or her style matches your style of learning. Think about how a school teacher can affect your ability to learn. When you were in elementary school, did you have a teacher that did not pay as much attention to you as she or he did to the other kid? When you were in high school was there a teacher that you just did not get along with? In college did you drop a course because the professor and you were not on the same wavelength? At work is there a manager that you do not see eye to eye with? If you answered no to any of these questions you are more fortunate than many. If you answered yes or if a friend has related this type of situation to you regarding their own circumstances, then you know what I mean.

First, let's take a look at some teaching styles:

The Drill Instructor — This person will drill you in your basics, they will demand strict attention and expect you to be disciplined. You will definitely get a good workout studying with the Drill Instructor. The Drill Instructor will often times show you the techniques and then push you to perform them as well or better than they can. Their approach may be considered by some to be harsh. This teacher's approach is not for the faint of heart, someone who is very emotional or would give up easily.

The Trainer or Coach — This instructor desires continuous feedback. Teaching is a collaborative effort. There may be quite a bit of start and stop during the training session while this instructor evaluates what is being taught and your responses. In this style there is more give and take. The instructor tries to maintain a balance between drilling and issuing commands and listening and being aware of responses indicated by non-verbal queues.





WHEN THE STUDENT IS READY WILL THE MASTER APPEAR, OR DO YOU HAVE TO FIND HIM? (cont'd)

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

The Professor — The Professor will give a lesson, mostly through lectures or demonstrations and leave you to your own devices. They will not normally train with you but give you the information you need to basically help yourself. This person is very knowledgeable, but may not be as athletic or proficient in the techniques taught or may be older and not desire physical rigors anymore. They point you in the right direction and let you find your way. (Do not confuse this professor with a Master, like Professor Moses Powell of *Vee Jitsu* — his is an earned title. The Professor here is a style of teaching.)

Ideally a good instructor will exhibit all of these styles at one time or another or blend them for full effect. Certain teaching styles are better for you in different stages of training. The Drill instructor may be good for beginners, the Coach or Trainer for mid-level students and the Professor for more advanced practitioners.

Second, let's examine your learning style:

What is your learning style? Are you a visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner?

Visual: If you are visual, you need to see someone perform a technique a few times before you get it. You may have to look at yourself in a mirror as well.

Auditory: If you are auditory you derive a great benefit from having the instructor explain things to you. You of course learn from watching as well, but the explanation is what breeds understanding.

Kinesthetic: You need to perform the techniques over and over again yourself. Seeing techniques performed and listening to the explanations are secondary. You require the other two ways of learning, but excel after you try and try again. You may benefit from having a tactile instructor who will move you into the correct positions when practicing forms.

Once you know what to look for and have examined yourself, begin your Quest:

Ask around. Poll your friends to see if they can recommend someone. Visit schools where you live or along your commutation route. Determine the style of martial arts desired, visit the school you think may fit and ask if you can sit in on classes. If you are granted permission to sit in, do so and evaluate the instruction. Is the instructor a good speaker, demonstrator or coach? Do the instructor's actions and words meet your requirements? How does he or she relate to the class, before during and after the class? Look at the students' responses.





WHEN THE STUDENT IS READY WILL THE MASTER APPEAR, OR DO YOU HAVE TO FIND HIM? (cont'd)

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

Do the students look motivated during the class and energetic or do they seem bored? After class are they talking to each other about what just transpired? Are they sticking around to practice what was just taught? Seeing and hearing the students' reaction is a good way to assist you in making a decision. Remember — each person is different. Though the students may enjoy the class and instructions, you still may not, unless your requirements are met. I say requirements because requirements and desires are two different things. What we desire is not always good for us. What we require and obtain will usually help us grow and succeed.

Private Instruction:

After looking at all of the above, if you are interested in private instructions consider it, but ask yourself a few questions about this as well;

- Am I more or less comfortable training without an audience?
- Can I focus on one individual for an hour or more?
- Do I want and can I accept an emotional bond?
- Can I work one on one with an individual?
- Can I stand up to continuous scrutiny?
- Am I willing to do more homework?
- Am I flexible in terms of time?
- Can I afford it?

Test yourself with these questions. If you answer the majority of these in the affirmative, consider private instruction. If you cannot answer in the affirmative, find a good instructor who is teaching a regularly scheduled class. You will then be on your way to fulfilling your Martial Destiny.

Choosing the right instructor will take some effort, but if you do it right it will save you time and save you money in the long run. Follow these basic guidelines and find the right instructor for you.

Master Robert Thomas has been a member of the Chinese Kung-Fu Wu-Su Association since 1974, where he currently holds the position of Kung-Fu Wu-Su Master Instructor and Co-Director. He has also served as an expert on the allexperts.com website for six years, February 2002 to February 2008, answering various questions concerning Chinese martial arts. Most recently Master Thomas was profiled in a documentary entitled "Natural Mystery," that aired on The Learning Channel (TLC) and was distributed worldwide. You can contact Master Thomas directly concerning martial arts issues at kungfuwusu@aol.com.





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GYM RAT

Review by Shir "Terror" Konas



The Xercuff

Spri's Martial Arts Xercuff

As a martial arts practitioner and instructor, I am always on the lookout for ways to push my training to the next level. On the training floor at the "Temple" – my grandmaster's Kung-Fu School, we keep reinventing and revisiting our endless training methods, with the objective of perfecting our techniques, developing better strength, power, speed and flexibility, and becoming better fighters overall.

At the gym, I lift weights to complement my martial arts training, again, with the objective of becoming a better fighter. But wouldn't it be great if somehow, all of these components of our training could be combined and enhanced while enabling us to move freely on the training floor, shadow-fight or even spar with a partner while further developing our bodies and pushing our limits?

Well, there's one little toy that actually does all of this... it's called the Martial Arts Xercuff.

A tube in the shape of a circle, with two attachments that can be wrapped (and safely secured with a Velcro closure) around the ankles (or the wrists if you want to work your arms/shoulders), the Xercuff can be used to add strength and balance training to your footwork while stepping and shifting, develop power and speed when performing kicks, and also used for added resistance in just about every leg exercise you can think of. For more information, check out www.spriproducts.com.

The FITSTRAP

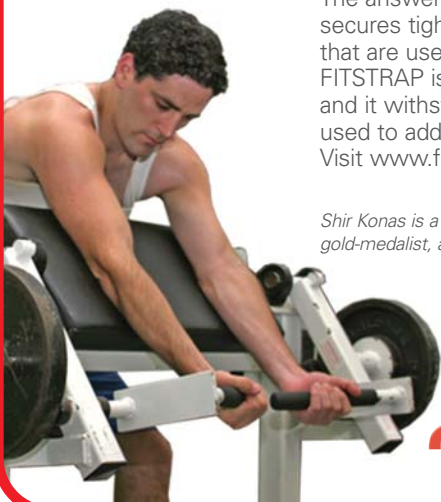
I don't get to take time off very often, but when I do, I like to travel far — and that usually takes at least a couple of weeks. Two days into my vacation or business trip, my body starts giving me all sorts of signs, protesting that it hasn't been given proper exercise.

But alas — not every hotel has a gym, and sometimes the weather or the location isn't conducive for outdoor exercise either... what to do?

The answer is in this little strap that rolls into an easily, storable size: The FITSTRAP secures tightly around any door using a plastic clip, and has multiple loops built into it that are used to hold rubber tubing (your own) that are slipped through each loop. The FITSTRAP is a great portable replacement for my favorite cable machines at the gym, and it withstands my heaviest tubing (and my own weight...). Bonus: it can also be used to add resistance to your punching and blocking combos! Visit www.fitstrap.com for more information.



The FITSTRAP



Shir Konas is a certified 2nd degree Kung-Fu instructor, an Israeli Defence Forces veteran, a U.S. regional (Northeast) Kung-Fu forms gold-medalist, a martial arts group fitness instructor with Crunch Fitness and Brick Haus Fitness, and a total gym-rat.

