



QUALITY OF LIFE

By John Peponias

An 8-Part Series on some of the factors that can significantly impact the quality of your years.

PART I: MANAGING STRESS

Being stressed is the direct opposite of being relaxed. Stress is caused by how it is that we interpret and react to the different situations we are faced with in our daily lives. Interestingly enough, things don't necessarily need to be bad to be stressful. We most often associate tough times to stress, but high-points in our lives can be equally stressful.

Everyone's threshold for handling and managing stressful situations is different. There are those who thrive in high stress environments and others who eventually breakdown. The initial adrenaline released when we feel stress can be a good thing and inspires us to deal with change or whatever situation we encounter, good or bad. However, exposure to extremely stressful conditions for extended periods of time can be detrimental to your health and well-being. In the long run, managing stress is crucial to fighting illnesses and conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Try some of these useful tips and take a pro-active approach to managing stress in your life:

1. Breathe Deep – Try taking a nice, long, deep breath. Use a counting method to assist. Inhale and stretch your breath to a count of 5, hold for a count of 2, and then exhale for a count of 5. Repeat 3–10 times or more if necessary. You may be surprised at how effective it is!
2. Just Put it Down, and Walk Away – Try getting up and walking away from a stressful project, or if dealing with an intense situation or problem, even if only for a few moments. Taking this time away will allow you to shift your focus temporarily and when you return, you may look at the same issue from a different perspective.
3. It's Not Your Fault! – Stop beating yourself up! Cut yourself a break, and know that there is no such thing as perfect, and things are sometimes out of our control.





QUALITY OF LIFE (cont'd)

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Here are some other general tips to think about:

- > Stay active. Exercise, and plan some fun activities.
- > Play your favorite tunes, or watch a favorite program on TV.
- > Don't try to do too much. Plan your work, and work your plan.
- > If you're alone all the time, keep company with some friends, and share your challenges with them.
- > Take a nice warm shower. A long one...
- > Get a good night's rest.
- > Watch what you eat and try not to eat very late at night.
- > If you are around people all the time, take some time alone and enjoy some privacy.
- > Pamper yourself a bit. Get a plain ol' rub-down, Tui-Na, or a deep-tissue massage.
- > TAKE VACATION. Most often neglected and pushed aside, but extremely therapeutic and most effective. Keep it simple.
- > Try taking up Tai Chi or Yoga classes, or try adding Chi Gong to your regimen.

Finally, don't carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. If things seem unmanageable and you feel overwhelmed, don't be afraid to seek the help of a friend, colleague, or a professional. Working with a pro, you may be able to uncover, and learn how to deal with, the major causes of stress in your life. It is surprising to see the support you can get if you just ask! Simply taking that initial step toward getting support is a great way to manage stress in itself.





WORTH THE REPS*

Story and Illustrations by Luis Bonnet



Head Rolls

This is an exercise done beginning on your upper back. Make sure to keep your hips off the floor. Similar to a back bridge but you are on your head. You roll from the back of your head onto the top of your head. It can be difficult if never done before.

This exercise will help to strengthen your neck. It's a necessity for any martial artist. It will also condition the top of your head. To start use your hands to support your body so that you can get used to the pressure on your head.

Slowly roll the top of your head across the floor. Make sure to rock from the back of your head to the front. Keep the pressure on your feet and on the top of your head. You may rock from the back, top portion of your head to the top of your forehead. Do not pass these two points.

Shown below you will see the exercise with and without hands:



* For more exercises please visit our Archives at www.better-human.com/betterhuman_archive.html.





CERTIFICATIONS

By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

I'm going to switch my focus from stretching in this issue and talk about certifications.

This summer I attended my yearly ISCA Instructor Workshop in Fort Lauderdale, Fl. Presenters and instructors from all over the country came to this event to learn and get training from some of the top trainers of ISCA. Whenever I leave the event I am always energized and focused on bringing back what I've learned to my club and sharing it with my team. My company prides itself on having some of the most educated personal trainers in the business. For example, to be a master trainer you need to have either a degree in exercise physiology or exercise science and 2 secondary certifications. But what if you don't have a degree –how do you get started?

There are tons of certifications out there – some good, some not worth the paper they're printed on. How can you tell which are the good certifications and which are the bad ones?

The first thing you need to do is research the company you want to work for. Every company has a list of certifications that they accept. If you jump the gun and invest in a certification without doing this research, you could end up wasting a lot of money. Its tough telling a personal training candidate that the cert they just spent \$500 on is not accepted by my company.

The second thing you need to do is think about the type of trainer you are or want to become, and the path you want to take. Some certifying companies have a better path for personal trainers who want to get involved in corrective exercise, and some companies have a better path for those that want to work with special populations. Decide what's best for you.

The third thing is cost. Some of the larger gym chains have an education dept, which is great because you can usually get certifications from major certifying bodies for as much as half off. So a \$600 dollar cert can cost you \$300, big savings for someone just getting into the business. Beware of in-house certifications! Some large fitness chains will offer you an in-house cert, which is basically the company saying you're only certified to train with them and with no one else. The prices of these certifications are generally cheaper – \$100 to \$200 – but your cert will only be valid with that company and nowhere else.





CERTIFICATIONS (cont'd)

By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

If you can afford it, a national certification would be better. If you're completely green, then you may need to get a house cert before you get a national cert. Every gym chain has its own policy you will have to follow, so do your research.

The fourth and final thing you need to know is all certification companies (at least the good ones) require you to be CPR certified. Some go further and want you to be AED certified and certified in first aide. The American Red Cross website is a great place to find information on CPR training: www.redcross.org/index.html.

A career personal trainer with a degree or with certifications can make upwards of \$100k a year. That's a serious salary for all you gym rats.



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.





BIODIVERSITY AND THE HUMAN DIET

By Blake Baxter, HHC

Walk through your local bookstore or hop on the Internet and look for books on "Diet." You'll find an amazing array of diets and programs designed to help you lose weight, be healthy, and fight disease. Most of these diets rely on a limited set guidelines or rules for you to follow, cutting out or drastically reducing foods based on macro categories like "fat" or "carbs." Most of these diets don't work in the long run, because they overlook an essential element of healthy eating: Diversity.

The truth is that human dietary needs have developed over millions of years (it's called Evolution), and it wasn't until relatively recent times (several hundred years ago) that humans started moving around and over continents with any kind of real frequency. Over millions of years, human diet adapted to available local resources. It's pretty simple, really. If there is an abundance of fruit and meat, that's what you eat. If tubers and grains are all around, that pretty much defines your diet. So, different people from different areas developed dietary needs based on traditionally available foods.

Then, in more recent times, travel over long distances became more and more common. In the twentieth century, travel grew exponentially. The availability of refrigeration and refrigerated transport meant that, not only were humans traveling to places where they experienced foods their ancestors never tasted, but foods from other places started coming to their local markets. However, not all people can eat all foods. Lactose-intolerance is an example of a type of food intolerance that closely aligns with a specific ethnicity. It's not alone. People from northern Europe have a high tolerance for dairy. People in southeast Asia relied heavily on fish and sea vegetables for millennia. People in India thrive on spicy, vegetarian diets that would cause a red-blooded American to wither. Ethnicity and human biodiversity affect diet.

That's why one diet doesn't work for all people. The latest "low carb" fad diets are a great example. The truth is, carbs represent the overwhelming majority of calories consumed worldwide, and have so for thousands of years. The recent epidemics in obesity and diabetes simply cannot be blamed on "carbs." Specific carbs, made highly available in the 20th century, like refined sugar and high-fructose corn syrup, have highly dissimilar effects on the body than do complex carbs like brown rice. Cutting grains out of the diet goes against tens of thousands of years of human evolution.

Some experimentation may be necessary to find the right diet for you. However, there are some good general guidelines to help you through:

- 1) Macro-nutrients are Proteins, Fat, and Carbohydrates (Carbs). A balance of these types of foods is essential. The body is designed for it.





BIODIVERSITY AND THE HUMAN DIET (cont'd)

By Blake Baxter, HHC

- 2) Anything invented in the last 100 years should be consumed in limited amounts, if at all. This includes most forms of refined sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated or partially-hydrogenated oils, artificial and "natural" flavorings (often the same chemical, derived differently), and colorings. Evolution dictates that you thrive on foods that have been around the longest – food that comes from the earth, not a factory.
- 3) Never follow a diet that cuts out or severely limits a macro-nutrient, unless advised to do so by your doctor.
- 4) Rely on locally grown and/or organic foods whenever possible.
- 5) Grass fed, humanely raised meats. There's a lot of debate here, but the simple truth is this, cattle are designed to digest grass, plain and simple, not grain. Feeding cattle grain makes them sick, and causes ranchers to rely heavily on antibiotics, which wind up in your body. So do the hormones given to cattle to make them grow faster, to increase production. You don't want those in your system either.
- 6) Naturally raised, free range poultry, and eggs from the same.
- 7) Wild caught fish. Lots of confusion here as well, due to the recent reports that a lot of fish are now unsafe for human consumption due to pollution. A little research will help but a great rule of thumb is this: the smaller the fish, the safer to eat. Start low on the food chain: sardines, for example.
- 8) Fruits and Vegetables. It's an old story folks. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables. Enough said.

With a little experimentation you should be able to find a good diet that supports your training and competition. You may want to keep a food journal for a few weeks, recording what you've eaten and how you felt afterwards. Drastic changes based on the most recent trend in dietary advice usually leave a person wanting, and often in worse shape than when they began. You don't need to be a roller coaster of different diets. Eating a balance of healthy foods, based on the general guidelines above, should provide you with a great base for your physical endeavors.

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>





FEAR

By Terry Southerland



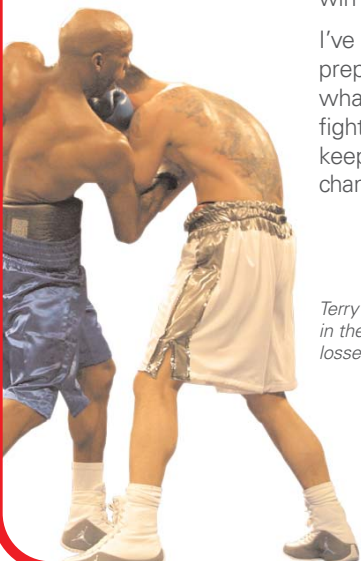
Terry Southerland

This is something we all know about. Before every match, or every fight, there is an element of fear brewing. Maybe not fear of your opponent, but maybe even fear of the element of surprise or outcome. Engulfed by this fear, I've seen a man almost urinate on himself, I've watched a future World Champion literally shake standing next to his proposed opponent, I've watched a champion vomit into a bucket before every bout, and a 15 year old boy throw a ridiculous amount of punches at an opponent in his first National Championship, all in fear that he might suffer the same fate of his previous opponents to a vicious puncher.

To be perfectly clear, only the latter was myself. 1978, Police Athletic League National Championship. I can't remember his name, but my opponent wore this huge cowboy hat, and I watched him knock out every opponent before me. Needless to say, I was a little nervous. My father, being the genius that he is, decided to reroute my thinking. He did two things: First, whenever I spoke about the tournament, I would say "if," he changed that to "When." I'd say, if I beat this kid, I'd go to the semi-finals. He'd insist on When. It was always WHEN I beat the next person. Next, at the time, I didn't have boxing shoes. He also noticed that my opponent was wearing the boxing shoes that were the ones that were popular at the time, Puma. He said that WHEN I beat my opponent in the finals, we were going shopping for my first boxing shoes. Any brand that I wanted. Now I'm not proud of it, but when we touched gloves to start the fight, I said to him "you're wearing the wrong shoes man!" I'm not proud to say that I beat a kid down over a pair of shoes either, but in a way, that's exactly what happened. Looking back on that tournament, now that I'm old enough to understand it, my father taught me two lessons: First, words are powerful. What you say to yourself can be even more powerful. "When" was an affirmation of sorts. It forced me to only focus on winning. The second lesson was to focus my mind on what it would feel like to win. I had a symbol in my mind of what winning looked like. Puma Boxing shoes. I also wanted to win so bad, that I could no longer think about losing. I wanted to win more than he wanted to lose.

I've heard many argue that what you tell yourself during a match, is often more important than your preparation. I'm not sure how I feel about this, one way or another, but I do know it is very important what you tell yourself during a match. All of those negative thoughts might creep in when you're in a fight. Good fighters know that only positive thoughts keep you strong, keep you focused, and inevitably keep you winning. Listen to yourself next time you train: If you're telling yourself that you are a winner, chances are... you will win!

Terry Southerland was a 3 time National Champion, All Navy Champion, and winner of many International bouts, including participation in the first Goodwill Games representing the U.S. in 1986. Compiling an amateur record of 147 wins & 18 losses, and a professional record of 21 wins & 3 losses in his Boxing career.





MARTIAL ARTS AND SELF DEFENSE

By Neal Zephyrin

In Feudal times, being able to defend yourself meant your survival and your family's survival. Learning martial arts served more of a practical purpose, as oppose to a sports- or health-based purpose. With the advent of more modern tools of warfare, defending one's self did not necessarily require learning any discipline of martial arts. However, in various military establishments around the world such as the U.S. Marine Corps or U.S. Navy SEALs, various martial arts techniques from different disciplines are incorporated into the basic and advanced training programs. The North Korean military has an extensive martial arts program incorporated into their military training also, with many top military personnel being black belts in Korean martial arts.

However, aside from military or law enforcement purposes, the martial arts have recently taken a very mainstream and cosmetic approach, with many schools focusing on their profit margins as the litmus test of success.

Martial arts were even turned into an aerobic, fat burning attraction with videos like "Tae Bo" or "Kenpo X" promising tight six-pack abs and firm buttocks. With the mainstreaming of martial arts, can various disciplines still teach the core essence of martial arts, which is the ability to defend one's self and family when danger arises? Can martial arts still be considered systems of self-defense first and health and fitness secondary, as oppose to vice versa?

How can a martial artist determine their progression or own level of skill in their respective art? Students within individual martial arts systems often undergo periodic testing and grading in order to advance higher. Advancement is symbolized with a different belt color, a degree standing, or a title.

Various martial arts forms along with sparring are commonly used in martial arts tournaments and exhibitions to display skill level. More often times the forms are quite elaborate, with many gymnastic-like routines. The sparring is more likely to be based on a point accumulation method where the competitors (who wear head, body, and sometimes shin gear) are awarded points based on the body parts they make contact with. Hence, many martial arts systems don't train for self-defense, but rather train for what I call "fitness-martial competition."





MARTIAL ARTS AND SELF DEFENSE (cont'd)

By Neal Zephyrin

Although the flamboyance of the competition is awe inspiring and thrilling to watch, will it stand the true test in a life-or-death situation? This brings to mind an article I read in Black Belt Magazine over 26 years ago, which chronicles three black belt martial artists and their real life street encounters. One martial artist, who competed and won numerous competitions, chronicles how he was unable to subdue his assailant using his learned skills, and only when he went into "berserk mode" was he able to restrain his attacker. I can recall this martial artist writing truthfully that he was re-evaluating how he trains.

I am not taking anything away from competition at any level, however it is very possible to keep in place the traditional self-defense essence of martial arts while partaking in the numerous competitions available to the many different systems. If this basic tenet is maintained, I do believe martial arts can and will still be considered systems of self-defense first and foremost.



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.





DEVELOPING STRIKING SPEED

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

Many people over the years have asked me how they can develop better striking speed. There are a number of ways to develop speed and become quicker. Striking speed is influenced by your state of mind and your physical conditioning, ability and physical structure. Working with all of these elements will help you develop quicker striking speed.

Let's look at the state of mind first. One of the ways you can increase your speed is by relaxing more. When you are relaxed by definition you are not tense. If you have a tense muscle, your ability to extend and throw a technique is diminished. For example, when you are flexing your bicep, you cannot throw a punch at the same time. The flexion of the bicep is tension that is an inhibitor or antagonist to the muscle that you need to flex to throw a punch, the tricep. Though your tricep is the protagonist muscle and the bicep is the antagonist in the movement, you cannot really flex either to throw a fast punch. Try flexing your triceps and throw a punch at the same time (with care). It does not work well. Throwing a punch or a kick is more a mental exercise than a physical one, though anatomically you must engage certain muscles to create the proper movement. The key is to "mentally and physically relax and strike in an instant."¹ Practicing this mind exercise will help you increase your speed.

Bruce Lee indicated that to increase his speed and force him to relax, he would sometimes half close his eyes as if he were drowsy. This way, he used the physical to create the mental state that he needed. I contend that a better way is to be able to mentally turn this state on by practicing meditation. This way you will always be ready to achieve this state when you need it in a moment's notice without possibly impacting your vision and without possibly telegraphing your intent if a person knows to look at your eyes.

Another way to increase your speed is to increase your physical conditioning. Nothing is worse than a person who tires easily or who is out of shape trying to throw fast techniques. If this is you, you will end up hurting yourself more than your opponent. If your muscles are trained they are used to moving. They will be supple and not stiff. Again this is a relaxed state which leads to greater efficiency in movement and therefore a faster strike.





DEVELOPING STRIKING SPEED (cont'd)

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

Throwing a strike correctly increases your speed. We all know the axiom that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, though Quantum Physicists say if you fold space you can get to your destination faster, but that's another story. If you do not throw a technique properly, it may not be thrown as fast as you would like. If you want to hit someone quickly with a punch, know how to jab. The jab is a straight technique that is very direct. You cannot normally throw a hooking punch and reach your target within the same time-frame as a jab. So knowing how to throw a technique is important.

Lastly your physical make-up is a factor in throwing a fast technique. If you have arthritis, chances are you will not be a very fast kicker or puncher. You could be, but you would be in a great deal of pain trying to achieve speed. Why? Your bones grind against one another causing friction and drag that will inhibit your speed. So you must have a healthy bone structure to throw fast techniques.

Body size can be a factor in efficient muscle movement and therefore striking speed. There is always a debate about whether weight training slows you down. I contend that it in and of itself does not, but what happens to your body as a result of weight training may slow you down or more precisely may cause a decrease in the muscle's range of motion to efficiently deliver a strike quickly...

If you over train muscles your ligaments and tendons may be sore. If they are, they will tighten, which will lead to less flexibility. Less flexibility means tension and therefore slower technique. Make sure you give your muscles, tendons and ligaments adequate rest between weight lifting and Martial Arts sessions. And you will be fine.

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.





GYM RAT

Review by Shir Konas



Shir Konas

Kinesio Taping

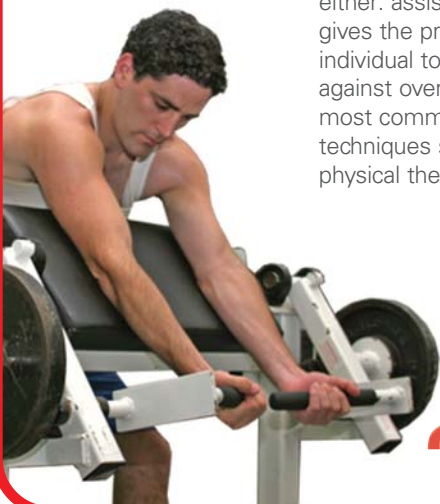
Today, there are many therapy choices to address problems involving patients and athletes. Many of the more popular choices are devices that give direct stabilization and support to the affected area. These devices do a good job of temporarily decreasing symptoms and pain, but the side effects may outweigh the advantages.

Some devices reduce circulation, causing muscles not to receive the much needed blood flow and thereby negatively affecting the clinical condition. Others restrict the natural range of motion, inhibiting overall performance and comfort. These major side effects are eliminated when using the Kinesio Taping Method.

Dr. Kenzo Kase nearly 20 years ago developed the Kinesio Taping technique for sports medicine and rehabilitation clinics in Japan. Since this introduction of Kinesio Taping into the U.S., medical practitioners have recognized and embraced this effective, safe, and easy-to-use modality.

Kinesio Taping is a therapeutic taping technique, not only offering the athlete the support they are looking for, but healing the affected area as well. This technique uses a specifically designed tape that works with the body allowing full range of motion (ROM). This technique will not adversely affect the bio mechanics of the patient. This latex free product makes it hypoallergenic and safe to use from the pediatric to geriatric populations. No compression to the skin makes it "light to the feel," allowing comfortable wear over a 3 to 5 day period. The water resistant material wicks away moisture and gives the patient the ability to bathe as normal. Kinesio Taping works with the lymphatic system to increase circulation of blood and lymph in order to rehabilitate and relieve pain.

There are two methods to Kinesio Taping: they involves taping over and around muscles in order to either: assist and give muscle support, or to prevent over-contraction of the muscles. The first technique gives the practitioner the opportunity to actually give support with full range of motion that enables the individual to participate in physical activity with functional assistance. The second technique helps fight against overuse/contraction and helps provide 24 hour/day facilitation of lymphatic fluid. This technique is most commonly used in the acute state of rehabilitation. Lastly, there are many types of correctional techniques such as myofascial, lymph, and tracking). Kinesio Tape can be best used in conjunction with physical therapy treatments.





GYM RAT (cont'd)

Review by Shir Konas



Shir Konas

Physiological Effects of Kinesio Tex Taping

- > Relieves pain
- > Supports muscles in movement
- > Removes lymphatic fluid congestion
- > Corrects joint mis-alignment
- > Assists in positioning a muscle or joint into proper position for rehab
- > Assists a weak muscle by placing it in a normal position
- > Improves kinesthetic awareness of posture and alignment



Kerri Walsh (right)

Removal of the tape should be done in the direction of the hair growth. There are two different ways to remove the Kinesio Tex — by removing the tape from the skin or removing the skin from the tape. The first method is to roll the tape off using the base of the hand. The other method is pulling the skin gently from the tape with the fingers. Kinesio Tape may be removed while soaked in water, and soap, hand lotion or oil may be used to ease the removal.

Kinesio Taping in the USA has aided athletes such as Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong. At the 2004 Olympic Games, Kinesio Taping was used by the Olympic Village Physio Team to treat many athletes. Most recently, it was (very boldly) seen on Kerri Walsh's shoulder in Beijing's 2008 Olympic games (see photo above).

For more information, visit kinesiotaping.com/

Note: Kinesio Taping is a lymph correction technique that facilitates circulatory and lymphatic flow. It is recommended that only practitioners trained in treating lymphatic disorders and the application of Kinesio Tex® Tape use this technique as a treatment. The tape should only be applied under the guidance/advice of a practitioner. Patients should consult a qualified practitioner before self-application. Caution should be exercised when taping on elderly patients or individuals who have systemic illness, sensitivity or traumatised tissue. A patch test should be undertaken on new patients to test for sensitivity.

Shir Konas is a certified 2nd degree Kung-Fu instructor, IDF veteran, U.S. regional (Northeast) Kung-Fu forms gold-medalist, martial arts group fitness instructor (AFAA certified) and a total gym-rat. You can take one of Shir's classes at Crunch, Gold's Gym and Brick Haus Fitness.

