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“Martial Arts Can Train You to Control Your Body, Mind, and Emotions...”

To be the Best That You Can Be”

Interview with Master Mordechai Americus of Martial Arts Academy

Why learn martial arts?

Training in traditional martial arts is a proven way to learn discipline, practice respect, improve concentration (which helps with schoolwork and/or job success), become more self-confident, gain self-control, and maintain physical fitness. Practice of the martial arts can offer life-long physical, mental, and emotional benefits.

There are so many types of martial arts - what's the difference between them?

The term “martial arts” or “traditional martial arts” refers generally to systems of training that include the holistic development of an individual through the martial way. Each system is distinguished by an underlying philosophy or approach that may, for example, be described as primarily offensive or defensive. “Self-defense” is a subset of martial arts focusing on techniques to protect oneself.

Beyond the style, a genuine, experienced, and properly trained instructor is a key to successful skill acquisition and maximum training benefits. An instructor should show dedication to the individual's progress and holistic growth of each of his students.

Why not just take a quick self-defense course?

If you only have a limited amount of time and want to learn how to protect yourself, then a self-defense course could be a good option. Self-defense courses teach you to do the best with what you have now. The practice of martial arts can train you to control your body, mind, and emotions to be the best that you can be.

Our curriculum integrates practical self-defense techniques along with traditional martial arts training. For children, we focus on avoiding conflict, avoiding and prevention of bullying, as well as maintaining physical safety. We might focus on body language and how it can diffuse a potential threat, and leave a child confident as opposed to vulnerable and defensive. More experienced students and adults will also learn “hard-style” (like Krav Maga) techniques to quickly end a confrontation. Adult classes include topics such as street/community awareness and safety.

How long have you been teaching, and where did you learn?

I started training in Tae Kwon Do (TKD) about 35 years ago in the US in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at Kang's Black Belt Academy. Our school follows the traditions of the ancient Korean martial arts systems, which can be traced back about 2000 years. Our Grand



Master Instructor Shin Duk Kang learned martial arts in Korea and brought that knowledge to the USA where he trained Master DiMatteo, who trained Master Aka, who trained me. I currently hold the rank of 4th Degree Black Belt, Master Instructor, with Kang's. I later trained and achieved the rank of Black Belt in another style at the Korean Martial Arts Research Association. In addition to martial arts and several systems of self-defense, I also have studied and taught courses for special skills training in street safety, travel safety, and modern weapons.

Teaching has been an intrinsic part of my training. In recent years, I have had opportunities to focus on teaching students of varying abilities and special needs with great success. It gives me great satisfaction to get feedback about the marked improvement in students who train with me.

How long have you been teaching here in Israel?

Almost seven years ago some local residents aware of my background asked me to start classes here. With the encouragement and support of Aryeh Sonnenberg, we started our first classes for kids and adults at Jo's Club. Several of our original students still train with me. We now have Black Belts from age 11 to almost 70!

What classes do you offer?

We have ongoing classes year-round based on traditional Tae Kwon Do and self-defense for boys, teens, and men from age seven to 120. Special seminars are held throughout the year on selected topics such as knife defense, falling, and sparring based on community interest. We also offer mini-courses for teens and men in personal safety/street self-defense. We can design curricula to suit your timeframe and special needs or considerations.

Classes are held in our private, dedicated martial arts studio, located in Ramat Beit Shemesh Aleph. In addition, private classes can be held at a location of your choice. We have taught after-school classes for elementary students in a house basement, late night Krav Maga for Yeshiva students in the Kirya Hacharedit, and mid-day classes in a local RBS Yeshiva.

You have a private studio! Can other people use your studio?

Yes. The studio has a private entrance, AC, built-in sound system, separate bathroom, and waiting room. It is available for occasional or long-term rental for exercise, dance, chugim, and even meeting space.

How do kids struggling with poor coordination or low muscle tone manage in your courses?

Great question! Many parents send their children to me because they have low muscle tone, want to improve coordination, or general physical fitness. One of the many benefits of training is that even though all students may be practicing the same techniques simultaneously, each student can master them at his own pace. Small classes allow me to give personal attention and follow the progress of each student. I tailor each class to the age and skills appropriate for the specific participants.

When is the best time to start?

Now! If you, or a family member or friend, might be interested in training, contact us to attend a free trial class. ■

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