



WATERLOO KUNG-FU
ACADEMY

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Fu for You



Sifu Lloyd Fridenburg

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Editorial

by Sifu Lloyd Fridenburg

Evolving Kung Fu

One thing is certain; change is inevitable. Some things change for the better; some not so much. Some things change quickly; some over time through an evolutionary process. Kung Fu is no different; it changes and evolves to meet generational needs and expectations.

You have likely heard people use the terms “traditional Kung Fu”, “authentic Kung Fu”, or “original Kung Fu”, but what do those terms really mean? The implication is that the art is unchanged from its inception, but with Kung Fu existing for somewhere around 1,500 years that thought is as much a myth as some of the Kung Fu legends that have grown to larger than life figures. The reality is that Kung Fu has changed with each passing generation of instructors and continues to change and evolve today as it always has.

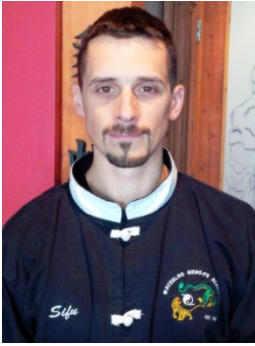
Let’s take the Tiger/Crane form for example: The Tiger/Crane is the longest, most complex form that WKFA students learn before testing for their Black Sash. It is generally believed that this form evolved near the beginning of the Qing Dynasty in the mid-1600s. Recently I actually heard someone state naively that their school still taught the original version of the form. Just query the form on Google and you will find all kinds of schools, articles, and videos related to the Tiger/Crane form; and although some versions are close, no two are the same, and some are drastically different.

The same disparity applies to how moves in a particular form are interpreted. We all know that forms are a choreographed set of moves that contain a host of strikes and self-defense techniques, however when someone tells you that a certain element in a form means a certain thing, or that there is a specific self-defense application attached to the move it is wise to remember that the information given is only their interpretation. It may be the interpretation they were taught or an interpretation that they discovered on their own, and there may be many interpretations for a single move depending on the perspective of the practitioner.

At the beginning of your Kung Fu journey you often look for a definitive and absolute explanation for every move, every technique, every stance, and every release. In time you find that the more your skills increase the more subtleties you discover and that most definitions are a matter of interpretation. Your real training and understanding of Kung Fu doesn’t really begin until you have earned your Black Sash, only then do you truly begin to understand the complexities and variety of meanings associated with our art.

We take great pains to ensure that all of our forms are taught the same way by all instructors; however ask what a specific element means, or how it is applied, and you’re very likely to get a variety of answers; none of which are wrong. The only person entitled to express a definitive explanation is the original creator of the form.

Most of our forms have changed dramatically since I first learned them but those changes were based on expert interpretation and modification. We have evolved as a school, our forms and techniques have changed to compliment that evolution, and Kung Fu continues to evolve as a martial art. Change is inevitable; you can bend like a willow, or resist like an oak, but in the end change will occur.



Sifu's Corner

Kung Fu challenges us to be mindful; this is one of its key benefits. I grin when I see newer (and sometimes veteran) students stubbornly stand with their right leg forward when asked to go to a left foot forward stance. I often joke with beginners that the first ability to leave them is their awareness of left and right. Thankfully, with practice, the skill of mindfulness develops and more complex techniques can be mastered.

Many areas of life require mindfulness, yet it is a struggle in our increasingly technological society, where various forms of media constantly compete for our attention. I've been training with a shaolin monk and we've had several interesting discussions on this topic. When he teaches, I get the most benefit when I stay focussed. I try to apply this skill to other areas of my life too.

This October, I travelled to Moab, Utah. It lived up to its reputation of being world renowned for mountain biking! The trails and landscape are as breath taking as they are challenging (and at times dangerous). We rode all day, every day, and I was constantly coaching myself to bring my attention to the moment. In the end, it kept me safe and allowed me to fully immerse in the joy of the experience. I encourage you to look for daily opportunities where you can apply mindfulness to enhance the quality of your life.



By the time you read this, the women's change room renovation will be underway. Please bear with us as we complete the final touches (mudding, sanding, painting). I'm sure you'll agree the results will be worth it.

Our annual Halloween party was another success! A huge heartfelt thanks to everyone that helped with the planning, setup and tear down.

Special thanks to Sifu Anne, who recently ran a [conditioning class](#) for our 12-18 year-old students and will be conducting a [sparring class](#) from 1:45-3pm on Dec.17th.

A used uniform/equipment sale will be held from 1:30 – 3pm on Saturday, December 3rd. Sale proceeds will be donated to the Waterloo Region Foodbank. If you would like to turn in clean, used items that are in good repair, please drop them off at the Academy and we will make them available. Some of the equipment that we use in the kwoon is also available for purchase.

Our [2017 calendar](#) is filling up. The Little Ninja/Youth/Junior awards party is 2-4pm on Jan.7th. Grading lists are posted for Jan.21st (Youth/Junior) and Feb. 4th (Adult Novice II). Our Adult Awards party is Feb.25th at St. George Hall. Also, don't forget about our Five-Animal March Break Camp and the return of WKFA's Competition Team.

Finally, to all the new families that joined over the past year, welcome to the Academy! This Fall was quite busy with new enrolments. We are very fortunate to attract respectful, hardworking students from many diverse backgrounds. I truly appreciate everyone's dedication.

On behalf of the Academy and my family, I wish you a healthy and happy 2017!



Youth Students Column

by Sifu Anne Vandrus

All about Belts

In the Youth program you earn different coloured belts as you learn more and pass gradings – and this is the same for many other martial arts schools – so here are some thoughts about where this system came from, why we use it, and what your belt means.

In Japanese martial arts (like Karate), belts were first used as a way to see how far students had progressed in their training, whereas in Chinese martial arts (like Kung Fu), belts were used firstly as a weapon and as an important part of the uniform, before they were used to represent your skill level.

But martial artists went a long time before that without even using belts! How senior you were depended on how long you had been training, so even if you felt more skillful, newer students would always respect those who had been training longer than them. Also, students would earn scrolls signed by their teachers (kind of like our grading certificates) as proof of learning a certain technique really well, or for defeating a certain number of enemies.

At our Kung Fu school, the colours of our belts follow the order: red, yellow, orange, green, blue, and brown (with stripes and solid belts for each colour). Some other martial arts schools also use white, gold, purple, and black belts. At WKFA we only have belts in the Youth program, and then start using sashes for our Junior and Adult students. Also, a fun fact: we actually used to have white belts instead of red belts as the first Youth level before it was changed to match our Junior and Adult sashes.

There's a story suggesting why most belt systems go from white to black belt: you would receive a white belt that you'd always wear when you trained and never wash it, so that after years and years of training with it on, the white would get so dirty from all your hard work that your belt eventually turned black!

So what does your belt mean? Belts are a handy way for you to set goals to achieve when you want to learn more and improve your Kung Fu, like steps along your journey, but they also mark new beginnings. Think of earning your next rank like progressing to the next grade in school. No level is the end of the line, since each one means there is more for you to learn.

Here's one way of thinking about each level: your first belt is like planting a seed in the ground, then the life cycle starts when the sun (yellow and orange belt) shines on it, and the seed sprouts into a plant (green belt), which grows up toward the sky (blue), then your plant forms new seeds (brown), and you start planting your own seeds while you keep growing and maturing (black) – and the cycle goes on.

My white belt and my black sash both mean the start of a journey for me. What does your current belt mean to you?





Junior Students Column

by Sifu Greg Weir

Flexibility Training for Junior Students

I know that a lot of you kids, especially when you first start Kung Fu, wonder why we spend so much time stretching at the beginning of class. When you're young you want to get right to the fun stuff, like kicking and punching. As with everything else at Kung Fu, there are specific reasons for stretching the way we do.

I'm sure you've already figured out some of the benefits of flexibility training. For example:

- It prevents injuries.
- It allows for quicker recovery after exercise.
- It increases balance and coordination.
- It reduces muscle tension.

In addition to all those things, being flexible also has some benefits specifically for kids your age. For one thing your bodies are growing all the time. For "non-flexible" kids, muscles and supporting connective tissues can't always keep up with bone growth, which causes those dreaded "growing pains". Having pliable muscles, tendons and ligaments should help you avoid some of that discomfort.

Furthermore, being flexible allows you to have proper posture. That means that as your body matures, it will be growing into that good posture you've already established.

As an added bonus, the flexibility you get when you're young should stay with you throughout your life. Well, you'll lose some of it as you grow older and muscles stiffen (especially if you don't continue stretching), but trust me, you'll be way more flexible than someone starting fresh. I know that from experience. A friend of mine was a hockey goalie from the time he was a kid until his late teens. To this day he can still drop down into a pretty good version of the Center Splits without much effort. I, on other hand, had never worked on my flexibility before I started at the WKFA in my mid-30s—and nearly 14 years later, my Center Splits still aren't that great (something about those adductor muscles just won't loosen up). Though I am pleased to say I've made a lot of progress in my Side Splits, so there is hope.

Sifu Rebecca wrote a great column a couple newsletters back about the different types of stretching. Check that out if you'd like more information. For our purposes, I'll separate stretches into two categories:

- Static Stretches are ones in which you stretch a specific body part and hold the position. Centre Splits are a good example.
- Dynamic Stretches are ones in which you put a muscle through a range of motion, hoping to get it a bit further each time. Leg Raises, for example.

Remember that you don't have to be at WKFA to work on your flexibility. Do a mix of Static and Dynamic stretching while you're watching TV or when you wake up in the morning and you should definitely feel the benefits—if not now, at least when you're in your 30s.

Keep up the good work!





Adult Students Column

by Sifu Cory Williams

Setting Your 2017 Kung Fu Goals

The fact that the weather is getting colder is a sure sign that the year is coming to a close. At this time, it's important to reflect and identify how successful you were in your 2016 Kung Fu journey based on the goals you set for yourself. Were you successful? Did you struggle to meet them? Either way, did you ask yourself why?

Goal setting takes some thought and planning. There are three steps that will help you set realistic goals you can achieve.

1. Identify the high level objective. This is a statement that articulates your desired strategic direction
2. Identify the goal. This is a statement that identifies the "what" you would like to achieve. Do not focus on the "how" in this step of goal setting
3. Identify the action plans(s) and associated measurement(s). This is a set of specific actions and corresponding measurement points that will help you stay on track and meet your identified goal. There are two types of measurements. The first is called a 'lagging indicator' and ultimately represents the end state. The more important measure is called a 'leading indicator' and acts as a predictor of the end state. Both are important but the leading indicator helps you identify if you're on track with your plan.

Let's look at an example:

1. Objective: I would like to improve the skill and proficiency of my Kung Fu
2. Goal: I would like to achieve my green sash by next October
3. Action Plan and Associated Measurements:
 - Attend class regularly
 - Practice and train outside of class
 - Successfully complete green sash grading
 - Leading indicators: Attend 3 classes per week, practice 2 times per week at home and 1 cross training activity (like running or swimming) once per week
 - Lagging indicator: Achieve green belt



As stated, leading indicators are a predictor of your lagging indicator. If you identify good leading indicators, you will know if you are on track to meet your goal or your lagging indicator. Through this approach, you can identify if you are falling behind. If you recognize you are behind, you can adjust your action plan in order to get yourself back on track (course correct). If we use the example above, if you fall behind on your practice outside of class, you could review and update your action plan to make up for the short fall. It could result in an adjusted action plan to practice 3 times per week instead of 2 until the actual grading date.

In addition to setting your primary 2017 Kung Fu goal, take some time to reflect on your success and challenges this year. Leverage those successes to keep the momentum going in 2017. Identify those challenges and develop some realistic goals and action plans to turn those opportunities into successes that you can be proud of next year when you reflect and set your 2018 goals.



Parents Column

by Sifu Patti Fievoli

Tying The Belt!

Receiving a belt or a sash is a joyous milestone! Several Sifus have a story, a phrase, or a piece of folklore that accompanies belt-tying. The story and thoughts I share has developed over the years and concepts were first taught to me by our Sigung and Sifu Laina Campbell.

Sigung taught me that the three bumps that appear in the knot represent “the past, the present and the future”. These bumps encourage students to: “remember and practice the Kung Fu they learned yesterday, practice the Kung Fu learned today, and set goals for the Kung Fu to be learned tomorrow”. Sigung shared that the ends of the belt were to be of ‘even’ length symbolizing balance. I have fun with the Little Ninjas when I have them stand in a crane stance and then pull on either side of their belt to test for “physical balance”, it always encourages moments of giggles.

Sifu Laina (a founder of the WKFA Little Ninja program) first taught me the evolving story of the ‘belt-tying snake’ who journeys through a bunny hole, wraps a tree branch, and ends up gently bopping the tip of the young martial artist’s nose -- of course ending with a moment of smiles. This story has evolved and I continue to share it to this day along with others.

The moment of achievement and independence when receiving the first belt can be captured and nurtured into positive traits. Young martial artists can create their own sense of responsibility and independence tying their own belt. Please visit the Waterloo Kung-Fu Academy website:

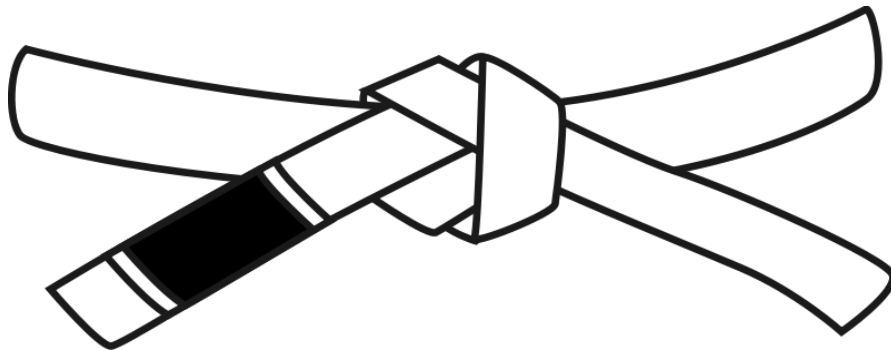
Belt Tying Video: <https://vimeo.com/139216662>

Sash Tying Video: <https://vimeo.com/139218083>

Depending upon how your child learns, try standing beside them while they have their new belt and have your own piece of cloth symbolizing a belt and together, step-by-step, practice tying. Or learn the tying from the video and instruct your child through the steps, repeating the process until they have developed proficiency in tying their belt independently.

It is a proud moment at the end of a youth grading when the newest of students take off their old belt, fold and place it on the floor, and proceed to tie on their new belt by themselves.

Sashes and belts can be stored and represent milestones in a martial artist’s journey. I have seen many ideas from belt racks and glass cylinders filled with belts. At my home, we have neatly tucked our older sashes away in keepsake boxes.





Guest Column

by Lee Deline

Finding Time to Practice

When Jack first joined the kwoon, I didn't think I'd be able to help my son with Kung Fu outside of the school. I'm sure many parents feel this way as well, but I eventually came to appreciate there are a number of ways I can support and prepare him for class so he can make the best of each learning opportunity.

One of the most important is in helping find the time for your young student to practice. Practice is essential to learning Kung Fu, reinforcing what's been taught so it's not forgotten between classes and by making sure through repetition it's a part of muscle memory.

We can and should expect kids to practice but what we can't do is assume they'll make the time for it. I consider helping Jack find the time to practice my responsibility because I'm already largely deciding how he spends his day – when he eats, when he sleeps, when he goes to other activities and so on. What free time he does have he'd like to use playing with friends and having fun.

As he's gotten older, Jack understands the need to practice and enjoys it but it's still my job to help him plan his time. We started by scheduling only 15-20 minutes on days when he doesn't have class. That felt like a simple and realistic goal and, since we had other activities and things to do, it made sure Jack wouldn't be tired or feel rushed. That still added up to well over an hour each week and if we missed a day that was okay because we could make it up somewhere else.

Another thing we can all help our kids is to create a practice plan. It's one thing to say "Go practice." it's also another for the student to decide what to practice and that decision can be overwhelming or they might simply opt for what's the easiest. A plan can make sure they not only practice current requirements but their older forms and skills as well. You can spread it out over the course of the week and separate everything by belt level, by type or just randomly to mix it up.



The weekly practice plan also helps us know what to make up for if we miss a day, which happens all the time! There's a lot going on in life, but being organized with a plan means we can miss a practice but not skip what needs to be practiced. We are also forgiving of how long we practice if time is pressing. As Sifu Lloyd once told me, ten minutes of practice is better than none at all.

As a football coach and as a parent, I can guarantee that supporting your child to practice at home becomes its own reward, paying off on the investment you've not only made in Kung Fu, but in your child as well.

Food for Thought

“And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.” ~ Dr Seuss



Nothing like a conditioning class to get the blood flowing.

