



Martial Arts Psychology: A Journey in Personal Growth and Development

By Edward John Overchuk, Ph.D.

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What is it about the martial arts that has attracted man to participate in its rituals? Do these combative practices fulfill certain needs within man's psychological makeup? Or, do these combative movements compliment the genetic programming of the masculine nature? Whatever the combat arts do, it seems likely that they have components which address both psychological needs and genetic programs within the practitioner. To gain a fuller understanding of one's developmental experiences in the martial arts, this book explores both physiological and psychological elements which may promote positive change within the practitioner.

According to the three axioms of hoplology, the paradigm which studies man's combative behavior, "the foundation of human combative behavior is rooted in our evolution (Armstrong, 2002). To gain a realistic understanding of human combative behavior, it is necessary to have a grasp of its evolutionary background." (p. 6) This evolutionary theory makes up the content of the first chapter called "The Combative Nature of Man." In this chapter, I explore the anatomical structures that are related to combative behavior and how the martial arts may effect these assemblages in a positive way.

In Chapter Two, I address the change making properties within the combative arts from a psychological perspective. By way of personal encounters, my preliminary research findings, and a literature review, I suggest that there are three experiences that propagate personal change through martial arts participation: psychosocial development, cognitive re-constructions, and emotional management.

The final chapter investigates ways to improve the martial arts experience. In this chapter, I discuss methods to increase peak experiences in the martial arts. Concepts from sports psychology are also explored to enhance performance in the combat arts. The final section in this last chapter investigates ways to improve teaching and leadership skills so students reap the fullest benefit from their martial journeys.

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Martial Arts Psychology: A Journey in Personal Growth and Development By Edward John Overchuk, Ph.D. Bibliography

- Rank: #1570216 in Books
- Published on: 2006-10-20
- Released on: 2006-11-10
- Binding: Paperback
- 142 pages



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Editorial Review

About the Author

The author currently holds a 6th Degree Black Belt in the Tracy's System of Traditional Kenpo Karate. He is also a Certified Master Instructor in Kenpo with 24 years of teaching and training experience. The author graduated from Baldwin Wallace College with a BA in Psychology. He attained a Master of Arts Degree from John Carroll University in Counseling. On June 30, 2002, the author received a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the Union Institute & University in Cincinnati, Ohio. His academic research involved the martial arts and psychology. He is presently an Assistant Professor at Kent State University in the Division of Aeronautics. The author teaches both Aviation and Self Defense class at the University. He is a former Captain for US Airways Express/PSA, holds an Airline Transport Pilots license, and Flight Instructor certificates for both airplanes and helicopters.

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