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March 2023- Important upcoming dates and info

Warmer weather will soon be here...

The weather will soon be getting warmer and spring will be here. This year take some time to get outside and enjoy fresh air and sunshine. Sunshine is a great source of Vitamin D which helps the immune system fight infections and viruses. Go for a walk, play in the yard, ride a bike, play an outdoor sport, or just sit and relax taking in nature; there are many ways to enjoy the outdoors. If you can combine being outside with activity you are doubling the benefit. Staying active is an important part of staying healthy!

Sparring weeks

We try to do sparring the 2nd and 4th full week of the month each month. This month sparring weeks will be March 13th and March 27th. Please be sure to bring your sparring gear those weeks.

Our focus is more than kicking and punching

Here are our planned weekly themes for this month:

Week 1- Self Control- Having control over one's actions, words and emotions.

Week 2- Citizenship- Being a responsible and productive part of your school, community, and country.

Week 3- Compassion- Kindness, caring, and a willingness to help or comfort others.

Week 4- Tolerance- Accepting differences & the uniqueness of others, celebrating the common ground we share.

Leadership Team Training- Friday- March 10th, 4-5:30 pm

We will have a Leadership Team Meeting/Training on Friday, 3/10, 4-5:30 pm. All instructors and assistant instructors are required to attend. Please see GM Serrano if you cannot attend.

Special Multi-School Training- March 22nd, 7-8:45 pm

We will have guests from other studios on March 22nd for group training instead of our regular 6:50-7:50 pm class. If this is your regular class than you are of course invited. Purple belt and under can leave at 8 pm. Red can stay until the end, but are not required. Brown and above are required to stay until the end of class. Please see GM Serrano with any questions.

Upcoming Events and Special Classes

- **USBA/WBA Massachusetts Breaking Championships- March 11th, 2023- Chicopee, MA.** Registration is open and forms are at the studio. See GM Serrano for details. Everyone is welcome to compete or come and watch. Location: Center for Martial Arts at the Falls Polish Home, 27 Grove St. Chicopee, MA 01020.
- **Next Ladies Only session starts April 7th** - Our next 8 week session for ladies only will start April 7th. Fridays, 6-7/7:30 pm, ladies and girls over 15 only. Email GM Serrano, dserrano@ects.biz, if interested
- **Next Men Only session starts March 18th** - This class will run for 8 weeks. It is open to men 30 yrs and older. Each class includes a fitness workout, striking practice and self-defense applications. It's a workout, but fun as well. Saturdays, 10-11/11:30 am. \$99 per person. See GM Serrano if interested or email dserrano@ects.biz.

Self-Defense Basics- Awareness

When people think of “self-defense” many times their mind automatically goes to that movie scene of one person being attacked by multiple attackers and taking them all out with speedy kicks, punches, and ninja like moves. Of course in reality this is far from how physical self-defense happens. It usually does not at all unfold exactly as planned or practiced. Importantly the more practice and mental preparation someone has the more likely they will be able to defend themselves effectively.

But let’s take a step back. Self-defense begins way before the physical aspect. It begins with AWARENESS. Avoiding a situation before it happens, de-escalation, and other non-physical self-defense strategies can save you from having to use physical force, which should always be your last option.



So what is Awareness? It is using all your senses to paint a picture of your overall surroundings. This includes people, places, and things. It is sometimes called “Reading a Room”, but applies to any areas indoor or outdoor where influences beyond your control can affect an outcome. Pretty much everywhere right? Yes and no. Some areas in your life like your or a relative’s home usually present a more controlled setting than a public place. Any place that can be accessed by the general public is where the focus should be.

Here are some considerations for building your Awareness Skills:

- **Know where you are going.** Not only how to get there (very important of course), but the surroundings of your destination and the destination itself. Is it in a high crime area? Have there been recent incidents in the area? Have there been any incidents at the destination? A little research before setting out can help paint a picture and awaken your subconscious to possible scenarios. It may also change your mind about the destination and may help guide you to a safer, more enjoyable destination.
- **Time of day makes a difference.** Yes crimes and tragedy can happen at any time of the day. But research shows most “bad people” are active at night, using the darkness to their advantage. Your destination may look and feel very different at night than it does mid-day. Be aware of this when planning your route, parking, and walking paths.
- **Upon arrival scan the area.** As you are arriving at your destination take it all in. Does anyone look out of place? Are there vehicles occupied when you would think they should not be (think people sitting in a parking lot of a mall or restaurant where people go to the establishment and not to sit in their car)? Is there anyone taking particular interest in you or your group for no good reason? What do you hear? Conversations, shouting, yelling, cars running, etc. Take it all in and let it raise your awareness level even further. Even if you are in a group use your eyes and ears.
- **What type of establishment or event are you attending?** What should be the normal atmosphere? What should be the expected attire of those in attendance? As you enter your destination (outdoor party, restaurant, lounge, shopping center) scan the area and those in attendance. Does anyone look out of place? Is everyone having fun and joking except for a select few? Is someone wearing a long coat and boots when the expected attire is shorts and a t-shirt? There are many things you can pick up on, but they are not confirmation of anything. They are data points. Things that can help paint a picture and help you focus on changes in your surroundings as they unfold.

Stay aware and stay safe!