

THE DRAGONFIRE



HOT News from the Studio

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Seek the Benefits, Remember the Responsibilities

The martial arts, regardless of the style studied, have always been known for providing a variety of benefits to the practitioner. Focus and concentration, memory, balance, flexibility, and strength have all increased for those who work their material regularly. But that's not all. Many find leadership qualities they didn't realize they possessed, and others find an ability to tap into an inner peace and patience that seemed to previously elude them. The secret is....that there *is* no secret! Anyone and everyone can benefit in some way by studying the martial arts.

But this study also comes with responsibilities. The various techniques that are taught can seriously injure another, even when there wasn't real intent to do so. That's why students are always cautioned to watch their control, and learn to use *all* aspects of the technique, not just the "muscle" part of it when they practice with fellow students. It's also why students (particularly our younger ones) are reminded that what they learn in training is not to be used against brothers, sisters, or parents in the home, and also not to be used against others in playground, academic, or neighborhood activities.

Additionally, the skills should never be used in anger or frustration. In fact, the *only* time such skills should be used, other than in the controlled setting of the training environment, is in a situation where life is threatened, including either the student's or another's. The level of the threat determines the level of martial arts skills to be used. In most instances, a judicious retreat is the best option. But in those rare times when retreat is not a viable first option, only the necessary amount of force should be used to create that needed opportunity to escape. Because another *benefit* of learning the martial arts is the deeper understanding that, while the physical skills possessed may be enough to severely injure someone who threatens the student's or another's safety, those physical skills do not always have to be the first option the student resorts to.

No-Contact Sparring

What's the Point?

Yeah! Sparring! It's time to put the gear on and actually have permission to beat the ever-lovin' stuffing out of your opponent, right?

Nope.

Wait. What? Isn't that what sparring is all about?

It could be. But here in the studio, it isn't. Sure. Occasionally there's contact. Sometimes very light, sometimes a little less than light. And usually it's the result of missing a block or stepping into a punch or kick. It happens. Gotta roll with it. But intentional contact is discouraged to the point of pulling someone from the rink for repeated violations.

Why? Because sparring in class is reserved for other lessons.

First Lesson. **Respect.** You will always be up against people with better skills, and others with less skills than you have. Respect your opponent. If their skills are less than yours, push them enough to help them develop better skills as opposed to being terminally discouraged. Know when to back off and not overwhelm. If their skills are stronger than yours, be grateful for, and respectful of, the chance to improve. Make each encounter an opportunity to learn.

Second Lesson. **Timing.** Sparring is real-time movements. Not the measured, controlled punch-ins used for practicing techniques. Understanding the obvious need to move, deflect, strategize—all are combined into the lesson of timing. You can't just stand there. And you can't hold your arm or leg out in a pose after throwing that punch or kick. If you do, you'll quickly learn the consequences. And they're usually not good. (!). Oh, and charging your opponent? That strategy often resolves in a way you're not going to like. So—don't do it!

Third Lesson. **Accuracy.** It's one thing to toss a punch or kick out there into the air. It's another to have a moving target and aim your effort to a particular place. Accuracy works both ways. If your defense move isn't accurate, you'll experience contact. If your offense isn't accurate, you've wasted effort, and possibly put yourself into a vulnerable position. Offensively, look for openings. Defensively, be aware of potential openings and move quickly to close them.

To be sure, there are other lessons one can learn from no-contact sparring. Knowing when to close, when to avoid, how to get extremely close with your punches and kicks without making actual contact, and doing this without literally fearing for your life develops muscle memory, internalizes the ability to see and take advantage of openings, and reinforces the consequences of distractions and ill-timed movements.

The point? No-contact sparring is an exercise designed to improve your overall skills in a safe setting.

MARCH Birthdays....

Emmett R-I. March 4th

Gwen D. March 16th

Elio H. March 25th



Just Another Reminder.....

Please wear outside shoes TO the studio and change into INSIDE shoes AT the studio.

The wet and salt from the parking lot, along with whatever else one might step into doesn't need to be tracked onto our training room rug.

It's a courtesy to all!

Thank you!



THERE'S STILL TIME!

REGISTER TODAY!

What: Shaolin Five Animals Boxing Form

When: Saturday, March 14th

Time: 1:00pm – 3:00pm

Where: The Concord SDSS Studio
124 Hall Street

Cost: \$90/person;
\$199 (3-4 family members)

Sign-Up Sheet in the Front Room

Visit/Follow our Facebook Page: Steve DeMasco's Shaolin Studios of Portsmouth NH
Webstore: <https://ShaolinStudiospa.secure-decoration.com>

CALENDAR UPDATES:

March 14th Martial Arts Clinic – Concord Studio

April 11th Portsmouth Belt Advancement

May 9th BLACK BELT / BLACK SASH TEST w/ G.M. DeMasco
Keene Studio **PORTSMOUTH STUDIO CLOSED THIS DAY!**

May 22-25th **STUDIO CLOSED – Friday – Monday** Memorial Day weekend

June 13th Portsmouth Belt Advancement

July 4th **STUDIO CLOSED** Independence Day

August 8th Portsmouth Belt Advancement

