

Wu-Te

A Guide for Parents

**Why Train Your Children in
Traditional Martial and Healing Arts?**



Volume One

Myths vs. Benefits

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all of the parents, who like myself desire to prepare their children to face life's challenges, overcome its obstacles, and realize their dreams. And it is dedicated to all of the children and youth, who like my own children and grandchildren, can benefit from the disciplines of Traditional Martial and Healing Arts Training.

Acknowledgments

It is important to express my gratitude to all of my teachers, especially Grand Master Alan Lee, my Shaolin Kung Fu teacher, and Master Li Shixin, my Tai Chi Chu'an teacher. A master of the martial and healing arts can impart great knowledge to his or her students but it is through practice and teaching that one comes to truly understand, internalize, and master what he or she has been taught. My heart is filled with gratitude to my many students, who have encouraged me over the years, and helped me to grow as a result of their questions and struggles, and who have blossomed before my eyes as a result of my answers and their own effort. Special thanks to my senior student Seifu Andrew Barkworth for his diligence in both practice and teaching. Much thanks to my student and friend Sandra Beasley for investigating and documenting research into the therapeutic value of Traditional Martial Arts Training. Even a book's worth of words could not express my gratitude and appreciation for my executive assistance, student, and friend Alexis Thielke for her total support and her invaluable contributions in editing and formatting my writing endeavors. Only my heart knows the level of appreciation I have for my children and grandchildren who remain a constant source of wonder, motivation, and inspiration in my life.

Preface

The global phenomenon of the martial and healing arts is a part of the legacy of the creature called human. It is true that this legacy is one that during many periods and in many cultures was associated with warfare and violence. But there is a much richer inheritance imbedded in the disciplines of the martial and healing arts, and this book is written to encourage you to unlock the mysterious treasure box and claim your astonishing birthright.

What inheritance am I passing on to my children? Will money be enough? Will a good education be enough? Will baseball and soccer be enough? Will the strong moral values I've tried to instill in them be enough? Will quality-time be enough? What are the real essentials for enhancing their potential for success? How can I protect them? What else can I do? These are questions that we often ask ourselves as parents. And today, as society changes in dramatic, rapid, relentless, and far-reaching ways, we're gradually becoming aware of the fact that we can no longer predict the nature of the environment in which our children will live out their lives. So the bequest that we pass on to them must include a set of internalized tools that are functional in any and every circumstance. Traditional Martial and Healing Arts training can and does offer that kind of essential character building, and so much more!

In a society where our children are exposed to tens of thousands of acts of aggression each year through virtually every venue of entertainment (over 200,000 acts of violence by the time they're eighteen years old - from television alone), it is important for us as parents to put these manifestations of violence into context. We unfortunately live in a social order in which children have become prey (or at least are portrayed as such), potential victims of predatory adults and dysfunctional peers. Children need both security and a sense of security. Since we can't be there to watch over and protect our children all the time, we have to give them skills that they can internalize – techniques that are with them wherever they may go; confidence and disciplines that manifest in them, in whatever circumstance they may find themselves. Isn't it also our responsibility to offer our children alternative views of the world? Ways of perceiving and acting that will motivate them to make a positive difference in the world. Paradoxically, Traditional Martial and Healing Arts training offer us just such an opportunity.

Behind the good guy vs. bad guy storyline that brings dynamic martial arts scenes through our television, movie, and computer screens, there is another story. It's the story of the individual's journey toward their personal ideal, their higher self; the story of the special relationship between student and teacher as each aspires to encourage, recognize, and nurture perfection in the other. It is the story of personal accomplishment and self-actualization. It's the story of the journey to the outer reaches of human possibility. It's the story of the relationship between the individual, their mind, body, spirit, and their natural environment.

This book is not about what other sports, hobbies, and recreational activities do or don't do. What we will discuss are the amazing benefits of early and hopefully lifelong exposure to and participation in the Traditional Martial and Healing Arts.

There are plenty of books on various systems and styles of martial arts, but very few that speak to the value of the martial and healing arts as a whole. If you are a parent, guardian, or relative, with a concern for the future of your and our children, then this book is written to answer some of your questions about involving your family in Traditional Martial and Healing Arts training. *Wu-Te: A Guide To Parents* is written in a brief easy-to-read, easy-to-follow format. It avoids extensive citations and references while answering important questions with reliable information.

Introduction

The youth sat quietly and hopefully, waiting for the old master to acknowledge their presence. They had come to this same spot every day for three weeks and spent 12 hours each day, waiting. There was a voice in each child's head that encouraged them to be patient. The voice urged them on in their stillness reminding them that they were there for a reason. As their hearts beat out rhythms ranging from anxiety to calm, they each silently chanted, "I will stand at the peak of the mountain of challenges to be overcome; and I will witness the height and breath of my potential. From that vantage point I will see the beauty and unity of all things and learn the wisdom of life." After each recitation they would say silently, "Let me into the Temple of Possibilities!" On the third day of the fifth week the old master stood before the group of youth and speaking in a resonating, yet calming voice, arms stretched out, he said, "Come, enter this place and you will remember who you are and why you came into the world!"

The earliest records of martial arts training identify wrestling as the first martial activity. This is based on icons like a copper stand, dating back to the ancient African Babylonian civilization around the third millennium, BC. So ancient is this legacy that it remains coded in our genes to this very day. Early childhood play (wrestling) predates our current concerns about the relationship between television violence and violent behavior in children. Nor is ours the only species of life in which martial play is a primary basis for establishing social bonds. Historically, there has been a difference between *Martial and Healing Arts training which was part of the intra-cultural relations of the people*, and *Military or Warfare training which was based on inter-cultural relations between various competing groups of people*. The ultimate consequences of warfare were neither the goal nor tolerated aspects of Traditional Martial and Healing Arts training, exhibition, or demonstration.



It is well known that the Nubian, Egyptian, Sumerian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Greek, and Roman civilizations all enjoyed the martial arts as part of their intra-cultural traditions.

Wu-Te is a Chinese word that is tied to the East Indian Buddhist Monk and Patriarch of Shaolin Kung Fu, *Bodhidharma* (Bo-dhi-dhar-ma). Legend states that sometime during the 6th Century AD, Bodhidharma arrived from India at the Songshan Shaolin Temple in the Chinese Kingdom of Wei. After many years in private meditation he began teaching the monks of the temple his special meditation, martial, exercise, and healing techniques. It was Bodhidharma (also called Da Mo) who introduced the notion of **Wu-te** (martial virtue) into the traditional Chinese martial arts vocabulary. By it he meant – *we practice the martial arts to develop the qualities of discipline, restraint, humility, respect for human life, and the principle of Do No Harm*. In other words, the goals of the martial and healing arts are not the same as those of the combat warrior, although both will become highly skilled.

When your children are involved in a Traditional Martial and Healing Arts program, they will be involved in a process to promote mental, physical, social, and spiritual health and well-being. We

could say that their self-defense skills develop as a natural by-product of their training. Where the combat warrior must learn to attack and destroy his or her enemy, with offense and aggression as the focus of attention, the *Wu-Te* practitioner must learn to defend against and mitigate the aggression, achieving a peaceful resolution if at all possible. Where the intention of the combat warrior must be to unleash his or her rage, the intention of the *Wu-Te* practitioner must be to defeat their own rage within, so that they can act with wisdom and compassion without.

There are literally thousands of martial arts systems and styles stretching across all of the inhabited continents. These include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Brazilian, African, Filipino, Middle Eastern, East Indian, and Hawaiian traditions, as well as a host of European styles. Each System opens doors to cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. And fortunately for you and your family, there are probably a few martial arts programs right there in your neighborhood, or located at your local community college or community center. So there are plenty of opportunities to check things out and get started once you meet some of the wonderful individuals in your neighborhood who have made Traditional Martial and Healing Arts training a part of their lives.

Wu-Te: A Guide For Parents is written in an easy Question & Answer format with information that the author believes you will find useful. Chapter One will dispel some of the myths about martial arts training. In Chapter Two we'll discuss some of the many benefits to be gained from the martial and healing arts. In Chapter Three we'll try to anticipate some of your personal questions and provide the answers. And in Chapter Four, you'll learn about the non-profit National Teacher Training Institute, Inc. and *Wu-Te* Performance Troupes, A Leadership Development Program for At-risk and Disadvantaged Youth. The Appendix will provide you with some research references, links to our web sites and online library, and contact information. A bibliography of books is available in our online library.

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