



■ Greg Devine

Apart from being a GKR karate enthusiast, Greg Devine is, and has been a powerhouse in the Australian Music Industry for years. Despite working with and producing music for names such as AC/DC, Rod Stewart, Will Smith, Richard Clapton and even the more recent Australian Idols, Greg has maintained a humble character full of integrity (a rarity in a cut-throat industry). He shares today some of his thoughts on achieving that which is most important in life.

With all the complexities of the human condition, when you break it all down, we all share one basic desire in life: we want to be happy. The pursuit of happiness is right up there with avoiding pain and suffering when it comes to the dominant motivational forces that drive us all.

If this is the case, and we put so much effort into achieving it, why is it so hard to find?

Generally speaking, our lives are charmed, yet we seem to be controlled by some invisible force that keeps steering us away from true happiness. It's like there is someone else inside our heads setting the parameters for us, constantly creating new pre-requisites and pushing happiness ever so slightly out of our reach. For example we've all experienced the – 'I'll be happy when' syndrome. There's always something just around the corner that will make us so happy, but when we get there, it changes shape and moves around the next corner, then the next and so on.

» On top of this we're pushed and pulled by all kinds of influences, inside and out. Sometimes we get so influenced by the pressure of the moment it seems natural and even acceptable to go with whatever the mind dishes out. We find ourselves sabotaging our happiness by accepting emotional states that smother any chance of being happy.

Anger, lust, hatred, sadness, fear, depression and the like, all seem to have a mind of their own and have the unfortunate knack of taking over at the most inappropriate moments.

» When we're under the control of one of these moments, it's almost impossible to comprehend that we are actually responsible for our own happiness, and how we feel is totally up to us to determine. We feel out of control, but the truth is, nothing can make us unhappy without our consent.

About The Other Person In Your Head...

Amongst other things, we need to acknowledge the fact that humans are animals, and we respond to basic animal instincts formed over millions of years of evolution. When the human race was fending for itself in the wild, a million or so years ago, survival was paramount. For example, anger would release adrenalin to make you strong in a fight for your life; fear would temper your enthusiasm around sabre toothed tigers and lust, would just keep things going. I imagine our caveman ancestors (of not that long ago) would have relied pretty heavily on their instincts and with good reason.

» Our problem is, the modern world, as we know it has been around for the blink of an



eye in the overall scheme of things, but we're still driven by instincts that reflect our hunter/gatherer ancestors. The other person in your head is simply the voice of millions of years' experience trying to keep you alive. The down side is things have changed and in most situations, these instincts are too strong or not relevant at all. Anger has no place in today's world; fear although sometimes justified, generally holds us back from achieving our best; lust just gets us into trouble. These basic instincts combined with the pressures and culture of our modern society, if left unchecked, present a scenario that doesn't naturally lead to a happy ending.

Is It Possible To Take Control?

The answer is yes. We have an ability that allows us to confront the mind's 'status quo'. We get to override the program so to speak and choose how we respond to everything around us.

» This ability to take control of our thoughts, to choose how we are going to react to every situation is the key to becoming the master of our emotions, and mastering our emotions is the key to achieving happiness.

» When we learn to control our thoughts we can control most, if not all of our feelings and actions. We create our reality through our thinking and the quality of our experience of life depends enormously on how we think. We have the ability to think ourselves into whatever emotional state we choose, and the choice to respond appropriately (or inappropriately) to every situation we encounter - it's all up to us. You can always choose your responses. They are never an inevitable result of your situation, and you always have a choice, even when it seems you don't.

PREVENTION IS FAR BETTER THAN CURE

When people think about the self-defence aspect of karate they picture a person fighting off one or more would-be attackers.

We Even Get To Shape Our Future

Controlling your thoughts also shapes your destiny or 'Karma' - all our actions have consequences, and it's all about cause and effect. Everything we think, say and do has a direct influence on our lives and no matter where we go the result of our actions will follow us.

» There is an old saying that seems perfect to illustrate this thought: "Our thoughts become words, our words become actions, our actions become habits, and gradually our habits harden into our character, which in turn creates our Karma". The circle is complete. 'What goes around comes around'.

A Requirement Of Being A Martial Artist Is To Train The Mind As Well As The Body.

As our physical skills grow we must have the capacity to control our thoughts, our responses, and ultimately our actions. Training yourself to be a thoughtful person will certainly enhance your ability as a martial artist, and allow you to achieve great happiness in your life.

It's not an easy exercise, and like everything worthwhile, you'll really have to work at it. The next time you feel your dark side kicking in try some of the following:

- *Pause and consider the moment. Remember that you have the power to choose how you will respond to absolutely every situation.*
- *Take a close look at your body sensations, accept that emotions come and go. Don't let the vagaries of a passing emotional state cause you to make mountains out of molehills.*
- *Try to imagine the outcome (short and long term) of your actions before you put them into place.*
- *Explore the good side of every situation. Have your thoughts come from a positive point of view. Remember, it's usually a bad response that starts a fight.*
- *Don't attach your happiness to future events. Explore the richness of what you have every minute of every day.*
- *Smile, it's catching.*

Thinking is one of the hardest things to do, but the rewards are vast.

Don't get pushed around by untrained thoughts. If you're not happy, work on changing your mind. 🧘

The reality is however, that statistics on martial artists ever engaging in some sort of real life combat is astonishingly low. There is an old martial arts adage "the sign of a master is where there is conflict, the master is not". This implies that most martial artists develop an awareness enabling them to avoid dangerous situations or environments. So in terms of actually learning karate from a self-defence perspective, while numerous punches and kicks are thrown each class, you are also subconsciously learning the 'prevention is better than cure' approach.

» The more I learn about martial arts the more I realise that this principle is not bound solely to tangible forms of self-defence. Recently I read about the benefits that martial arts have on breast cancer prevention.

» Breast cancer has most likely touched all of our lives in some way or another. As karateka, we try to have a holistic (mind and body) approach to wellness. We all know that eating right and exercise are the cornerstones of a healthy body. Yet this focus is often cast upon our physical exterior, such as our losing weight, gaining muscle, healthier skin etc. Not long ago I tried to get a good friend (who is now over weight) involved in training. His response was "I'm not looking too bad just yet!". What he

failed to realise is that his body on the inside is most likely looking a lot worse for wear than his outside.

» It should come as no surprise that maintaining appropriate weight and exercising regularly has been proven to decrease one's risk of developing breast cancer. What is interesting is that Cornell University's (CU) study has specified a particular type of exercise is best to aid in the prevention of breast cancer - an exercise form that uses both the mind and the body.

» A recent article published in CU's Weill Medical College advocates that martial arts are exercise forms that reduce stress. And according to the article, stress suppresses the immune system. New research is showing that stress may increase your susceptibility to developing breast cancer. And while this study has targeted breast cancer, it makes you wonder what other types of cancer may be preventable with reduced stress.

» Breast cancer prevention is yet another potential benefit from martial arts training. And who couldn't benefit from being healthier, even if breast cancer was not a risk. Eat healthier, train regularly and reduce stress. That is a winning combination for a healthier body for any martial artist.

ARE LOW CARB DIETS SAFE FOR CHILDREN?

It seems wherever we turn nowadays we are faced with the latest alarming statistics on the percentage of overweight people in western cultures. And these statistics are not solely focused on adults, as young children appear to be equally sharing in the negative limelight.

All this exposure has led to the fad of low carbohydrate diets. Everywhere we turn we are hearing about "cutting the carbs" and "counting calories". These catch phrases are so popularised that they become the first thought that pops into the mind of any adult endeavouring to lose or maintain weight. And in many ways there is nothing wrong with this.

» The potential hurdle however is that children more-or-less eat what adults choose for them. So in today's age of intellectual eaters, parents of overweight children are often choosing the low-carb diet in an effort to help their child lose weight. The question is, are these diets safe for children?

» To answer this question one must first consider the fundamental differences between children and adults. Firstly, children are still growing and therefore have vastly different nutritional needs. They require more nutrient-dense foods to meet their vitamin and mineral needs. In addition, they require much higher calories per body weight. And finally, because of their metabolisms they are much more sensitive to diet composition than adults: basically, their bodies are much less tolerant to the high protein, low carb diet.

» When children follow a low carb diet plan they risk failing to obtain adequate nutrients, especially if they eliminate entire food groups. Also by following a low carb diet a child may experience low energy levels due to low blood glucose levels, not to mention the stress on their bodies/organs caused by having to obtain energy predominantly from protein sources.

So how do you help an overweight child? Statistically overweight children become overweight adults, with all the associated health risks (so the issue should be addressed immediately). For children, the goal is usually for them to grow into their weight. In many cases however, a more significant weight "rearrangement" is needed. The best and safest way for a child to lose weight is to insist on daily activity. Having a sport they do once a week is nowhere near enough for a child. They need to be involved in sport at least twice per week PLUS daily activity at home or school. Secondly a better choice in foods is needed (as opposed to an actual diet). Eliminating fried and junk foods or sugary drinks is also a great start.