

## How Much Will I Learn?

By Shihan Ken Hoggart

One of the most commonly asked questions by students is, "How much will I learn?" The question is quite legitimate and comes from both, new students considering training, and experienced students considering returning for a new session of training.

For new students, the concern is training in an environment with more experienced students. This is because of the fear of the unknown and the perception that you require private lessons first, before training within a group.

For experienced students, the question is due to a concern of training with new students that require a fresh knowledge of the basics and don't feel that they will learn anything new.

Let us think for a moment about the Dojo environment as a whole. The Dojo consists of many important elements applicable to the process of learning. We are learning Discipline when we decide that we are going to go to class vs. staying at home on the couch. We are learning Respect and Compassion when we line up, bow in and out of class, and observe from senior belts and pass on knowledge to junior belts. We are learning that as a group our combined spirits are stronger. Therefore, when our spirit is stronger together we have a stronger personal spirit that creates better self-esteem.

Now ask yourself this question. Have you ever had a bad day, gone to class, and then returned home feeling great? Most students and instructors have experienced this magical feeling. This perceived magic is the spirit of the dojo. It is an example of real teamwork to create personal gain in the form of self-esteem.

With that said (and hopefully understood) realize that, as a new student, private lessons will not be as beneficial as one may initially think. You are beginning with a group of martial artists that will help individuals grow personally. As a returning student, reviewing the basics, helping others learn, observing additional skills / techniques, and being part of the group, will provide you with many benefits that are not visible on the surface.

Keep in mind that martial arts go back for thousands of years. In that history, I wonder how many students asked, "how much will I learn?" How many students were skeptical and never bothered to start or return to the Dojo? How many other students saw the values below the surface and continued down that path to become many of our great instructors?

There are many students (and some now instructors) that have come through our system of learning. Their recognition of the values of training consistently, reviewing the basics, and learning in stages at the level that you can understand, provide the foundation for a true martial artist.

You will always accomplish more by attending classes than those that are skeptical and choose to stay home. The biggest achievement is to be there.

"How much will you learn," you ask? There is much there to learn, should you choose to dedicate yourself to the "Spirit of the Dojo."