



“I can teach you the way, but you must travel the path;
only you can experience and feel it for yourself;
only then will you fully understand it.”

– Moy Yat

Happy Father’s Day - Editor’s Note:

While we have many mothers and fathers in our club and family, it is rare to have a father and son training together, on the same floor. We are extremely lucky in our club to have such a situation. And surprisingly, it was the son that got the father into the club! I wanted to honour the Hodges-Whittaker family by highlighting articles from both Matt and Stephen in the Training Section. I also want to put a shout out to Stephen Hodges-Whittaker, who at 65 just earned his red sash. His commitment and continued perseverance are a model to all.



Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk with Sifu Jim Kragtwyk and Instructor Mark Watson

Message from Sifu

SENSITIVITY: The Key Attribute of Engagement

As I have discussed previously, the self-defence art of Ving Tsun Kung Fu is based on a conceptual framework (Faat Do) that includes two theories, three principles and six attributes. The attribute of sensitivity is one I would like to explore and comment on further in this article. I want to focus on this attribute in a non-martial realm that can be generalized to other areas of one’s life—namely, relationships.

In our club/family culture, relationships are key for the sustainable development of all members. It is through the sharing, mentoring and guidance of other students and instructors that this art is delivered to the individual. If you are awake and paying attention, you are very aware that relationships can be challenging. Of course, much of the etiquette that our club abides by supports healthy relating among members. To utilize and follow a prescriptive set of rules and expectations about relating can minimize the unnecessary challenges and conflict among members.

This supports our superordinate purpose of sustainably maintaining and enhancing an already high-level quality of kung fu that can be passed down through generations to come.

All of our mindful efforts should align to this higher-level value; positive relationships support high-level kung fu. Blindly following a set of prescriptive dictates also has some risks. This is where the harmonization of *sensitivity* with *etiquette* takes our relational abilities to the next level. One could even suggest that etiquette is the scaffold of stability that allows sensitivity to develop.

Eventually, we can dismantle the scaffolding and the resultant relational sensitivity will be sufficient and include the spirit and essence of the etiquette.

So, what does relational sensitivity look like, sound like and act like? From my background in counselling psychology, I can put forth some basic relational principles that come from attachment theory. Attachment theory is the most valid and predictable theory in the realm of psychology. A person's secure or insecure attachment from childhood is highly predictable of their overall health and well-being as an adult, especially in the realm of their relationships. A securely-attached relationship is based on two key criteria. Firstly, each person must be consistently committed to supporting the other person's needs and goals in life, and secondly, to do so in an attuned (sensitive) way.

The baseline qualities that one needs to participate in this kind of healthy relating are *presence* and *mindfulness*. To be able to pay attention to the other's needs is key and, even more importantly, to do so in a way that the other will positively receive the support. This means that our personal preferences and ego must be put aside so we may attune sensitively to the other person's needs and goals. While simple in principle, it is not as easy as it sounds to put into practice.

When a consistent approach to *securely-attached* relationship development is present, it cultivates a sense of deep physical and emotional safety, trust and bonding. From this platform of sensitized safety, people can expand to higher levels of accomplishment in life. In other words, they can thrive versus survive. The resultant bonding also deepens the intricate weave of relational intimacy, not only in that interpersonal relationship, but also in group, community and cultural relationships.

Five questions to self-assess your relational sensitivity:

- 1) Do you take the time to slow down and get present to *what is* versus what your thoughts, habits and patterns want?
- 2) Do you listen on deeper levels to what is being communicated through words, body language, voice tone, meaning and behavior?
- 3) Are you aware of what modes of engagement are appealing to others and which ones are not?
- 4) Are you aware of the consequences of your words, body language, voice tone and deeds on others?
- 5) Are you committed to supporting other people's needs and goals in life in harmony with your own?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you might be unaware that you are part of the problem and not part of the solution. What can one do to be more a part of the solution? The answers are in the questions.

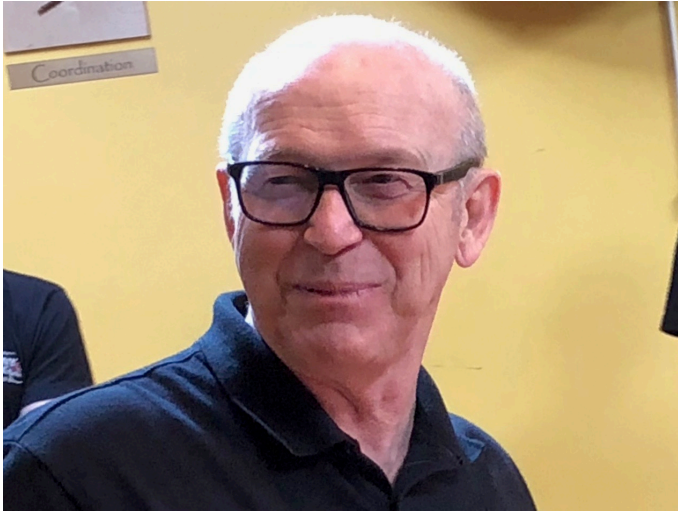
-Sifu Jim Kragtwyk



Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk and Sifu Jim Kragtwyk

Ving Tsun Intensive with Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk





Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk

The Nature of Chi Sau

Within the Ving Tsun curriculum few exercises are as important as Chi Sau. Unfortunately, it has somehow become adversarial in nature, focusing on hitting, instilling fear in the partner and proving that one is superior in skill rather than working on a cooperative skill set. Chi Sau is ideally transmitted to all members of the family—from older to younger—in a systematic process that will not only enhance your skills in a vast array but also strengthen relationships for a lifetime of friendship, trust and respect for one another. Nowhere in the system is there an attitude of “I, me and mine” more pervasive than in Chi Sau. The nature of Chi Sau is for the hands to occupy centerline, and as understanding grows then chi strengthens and the function of the technique becomes infused with intent.

This process of learning the martial skills begins with Siu Nim Tao, which outlines the framework of the system in a specific order that begins with the mind teaching the body; the mind directs chi (life energy) which then gives form to function (i.e., Tan Sau, Wu Sau, etc.). We begin with Yi Chi Kim Yeung Ma, the horse stance, which is the foundation of all footwork and without which you cannot apply your skill set with power and freedom of movement. The first section of Siu Nim Tao begins the journey of connecting mind, chi and body by stimulating the body to produce energy (chi). Section two then takes the energy and allows you to direct it in any direction you desire using Fa Jing (inch power). The third section focuses on the ability to strike in the upper, middle and lower gates. For the body to learn how to direct the chi we must be meticulous, slow and detailed in movement.

Tendons, ligaments, muscle and bone structure will align properly and naturally.

When learning, we go from the top down, when fighting we go from the bottom up!

Thus arriving at Chi Sau, the older students lead the younger students to experience the success that they themselves have experienced and now understand. Without the correctness of Poon Sau, the consistent hands required for efficiency of running to centerline will not be available; thus Jip Sau and Jao Sau will suffer, Luk Sau will suffer the same fate and Gor Sau will be a frustrating experience, leading to constant misunderstanding of the cooperative nature of the art. How did you learn Pak Sau? Without your partner feeding your hands a slow consistent punch, placed properly on centerline, you cannot learn a proper Pak Sau. This, in my opinion, is true for the entire system and especially for Chi Sau. Like I said before, it can tend to become a battle of ego rather than a process of mutual benefit, leading to a dynamic skill set based on touch.

It is of extreme benefit for each student to come to the realization that their kung fu skills depend upon their fellow students guiding them on the path to physical skills. It will inevitably deepen relationships and ultimately lead to a more profound understanding of self.

To understand your art and be able to apply it, one is said to be skilled; to apply your knowledge of the art to daily living is said to be following the Path of the Way.

Over the years I have found that I tend to get in the way of my own learning; freedom is the ability to allow the process to unfold. Stand back and allow the universe to unfold... Swim against the current and you drown.

The entire student body of Sunny Tang Ving Tsun Ottawa sends one and all our sincere best wishes to your Sifu Jim Kragtwyk and Simo Heidi Erhardt on their marriage. Congratulations and may life offer the both of you much health, happiness, peace and joy!!!

- Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk

Click or cut and paste the links below to see several videos from our recent kung fu intensive with Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk:

<https://www.facebook.com/WingChunYYJ/videos/1030343603801414/>
<https://www.facebook.com/WingChunYYJ/videos/1032165493619225/>
<https://www.facebook.com/WingChunYYJ/videos/1032156530286788/>
<https://www.facebook.com/WingChunYYJ/videos/1032229020279539/>

Training

Each newsletter features two discussions: an account from a particular new student, and an account from a senior student. These write-ups are focused on what that individual is working on with their training. This way, we can appreciate different perspectives rooted in different skill levels and experience. This month we have a special treat, in that our students are a father and son pair and share how Ving Tsun is helping them individually as well as deepening their father/son relationship.



Matt Hodges-Whittaker demonstrating with Grandmaster Walter Jakimczuk

On Being a Senior

Suddenly I am a senior. The idea still feels new and strange to me. There is still so much to learn. How can I possibly be a senior?

Among the various reasons for joining our club was my desire to have an art I could pass on to my children later on. That hasn't come to pass yet. Patience.

I have, however, tried to interest most of my friends and family in kung fu at some point, though without much success. I guess I shouldn't go into sales...

I did manage to convince my father to give it a try though. I felt that the relaxation we cultivate, in particular, would benefit him. It's been a treat to watch him learn, facing similar challenges to my own. It's hilarious being senior to him.

We're constantly facing little challenges. Sometimes the volume of them or the difficulty of one challenge can be frustrating or overwhelming. If we can relax and pay attention, those moments are when we learn. I try not to worry about the pace of my learning, as long as I am learning. After all, it took most of us a year of dedicated training just to learn to walk. In the meantime, I've somehow become a senior.

My father has just achieved his red sash. He is more relaxed and focused than I ever remember. The attentive practice of this art has real tangible mental and physical benefits, far beyond merely beating people up.

I've never been short on "problems" to work on with my kung fu. As I learn, the problems I face simply change. An endless challenge.

We are told to be patient with our training. We must also be patient with ourselves.

- Matt Hodges-Whittaker, Blue Sash



Stephen Hodges-Whittaker & Matt Hodges-Whittaker training

On Self-Discipline

A couple of years ago I flipped and rolled a truck on the highway, almost killing myself in the process. One of the first people to visit me, and one of the loudest in expressing fear for my safety, was my son Matt. Like most families, we've had difficulties in the past which can flavour our perceptions. Matt's obvious worry for my welfare was a bit of a surprise

and reminded me of where my priorities should be. So when he suggested I train Ving Tsun with him, I was quick to agree.

Once again, my kid was right. (They do that to me a lot). It helped my tension levels and gave me more tools to deal with the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress. Severe PTSD was the reason I was released from the Navy and also why I flipped the truck. Treating Siu Nim Tau as meditation through movement has lowered my heart rate and reduced my blood pressure. But the most obvious advantage, at first, was just getting to spend time with my son Matt.

In the beginning, I found that I was treating the kung fu as just another martial art, a means to an end. Lately I've been feeling more that continuing to learn and practice Ving Tsun goes beyond that. I am no longer disappointed if Matt cannot make a class. I have enough to occupy my mind, whether he's there or not.

While I have studied other martial arts, most are of fairly recent vintage. None have the history of Ving Tsun. History and traditions are important to me. The name of my trade in the Navy dates back to King Alfred the Great in the 9th century. My trade is Boatswain, loosely translated it means "lover of boats." When Alfred the Great ruled Western England, 871-899, he built longships as a defence against the Vikings. Each ship was under the command of a "Batsuen," according to the Saxon Chronicles.

It feels good to know that I'm part of something that's older than most countries. In my opinion, too many things change too quickly and it seems that we humans are always running the Red Queen's Race.

Studying any martial art, even boxing, for self-defence is a good idea for anyone. Learning a discipline that eliminates the need for self-defence is even better. Ving Tsun, as taught at our club, is one of those that eliminates the need for self-defence. A

lot of how that works is in the teaching of self-discipline.

Looking at the history of kung fu in general, it was started by monks for two purposes; self-defence was only half of it. In order to build and maintain the self-discipline required for their beliefs, they had to stay in shape physically as well as mentally and emotionally. So we are back to where I started; by staying in shape physically and by working at getting into shape emotionally and mentally, I keep my self-discipline at acceptable levels and will probably live longer. My wife, Susanna, and my kids and grandkids all seem to think that's a good idea.

I appreciate the chance to express my viewpoints. Thank You,

-Stephen Hodges-Whittaker, Red Sash



Stephen Hodges-Whittaker receiving his red sash

Congratulations to the following students on attaining their new respective sash levels during the last quarter:

**Stephen Hodges-Whittaker (Red Sash)
Ida Becksereki (Red Sash)**

Excellent work!



Ida Becskereki receiving her red sash



Special thanks to the generosity of our club and club members for co-creating such a beautiful wedding reception for Sifu and I.

Special Events

- * March 2018: Ving Tsun Intensive with Sigung Walter
- * April 2018: Sifu's Wedding Reception

UPCOMING

- * June 2018: Book Club:
 "Ip Man: Portrait of a Kung Fu Master"
- * June 2018: Club Camping Trip
- * October 2018: 6th Annual Kung Fu Sister's Retreat



We Got Married

Editor: Heidi Erhardt
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Note: We use the spelling Ving Tsun which late Grand Master Ip Man used to differentiate our Kung Fu from the various branches.

Please check out our Facebook Page (@WingChunYYJ) and website (victoriawingchun.com) for more information about Ving Tsun, Sifu Jim Kragtwyk's talks on various aspects of the system and instructional videos.