

No Time to Spare

Everybody's saying it. No time. Everyone is working overtime. **Salaried employees are being taken for 60- and 70-hour-a-week rides and people are afraid to say "No!"** because they may lose their job to more eager (read: inexperienced) workers who think it is a saggy-eyed badge of courage not to have any life of one's own. They want their life on the hurry-up and their employer wants their productivity the same way.

Most self-improvement teachers suggest that there are at least five aspects of your life that you must balance in order to be happy and healthy: work, family/relationship, exercise/health, a hobby/pastime, and a spiritual aspect. Most everyone works; however, not everyone has a family, but most people have some sort of love relationship or close friend. Not everyone wants to run 3 miles each morning or go to the gym each evening, but everyone seems to want energy the next morning. Not everyone has a strong religious emphasis in his life, but most everyone has a sense of "getting their heads in the right place," which may be spiritual enough to balance the material and physical in one's life. Not everyone has a hobby or pastime — and that, dear reader, is the problem. This is the one aspect of the five that everyone seems to feel is unnecessary, least important, and easiest to drop. They are mistaken. **Not only is dedication to a pastime just as important as the other aspects, but it also may actually serve to link most of the other aspects.**

Martial arts, for example, provides exercise, an interesting study to distract you from workaday woes, fellow students with whom to interact, and a non-sectarian, non-religious way to become attuned to your own spirit and face yourself in the process. Traditional martial arts, admittedly, are not for everyone, but their unique methods and benefits are for many more people than just those who want self-defense or exercise or an uplifting experience. Traditional martial arts offer all three in a format that is ordered, cooperative, and very interesting.

How long do you think you can keep up 60-hour workweeks without doing something for yourself? Where are you going to get that extra energy to put in another 60 hours? Where are you going to find an activity that is interesting enough to keep you going and also efficiently combines so many other emphases you need in your life? No time to spare? That's because you are in danger of becoming someone with no *life* to spare! You are in danger of belonging not to your family or your significant other, not to your beliefs or your own physical health, but to the workplace.

Work is not only necessary, but can also be social and spiritual, fulfilling some of the balance you need — but work is neither social nor spiritual when you are burnt out, banging your head against the office divider to stay awake and make sense of it all. You may not be able to take two weeks in Aruba every few months, but you can take two hours of exercise and distraction every few days simply by following through on that glimmer of interest you had before Corporate Headquarters started expecting a week and a half's work for one week's pay.

Martial arts training can make you see and feel things differently. **Some of the busiest people in the state train at the dojo** — computer tekkies who go on 90-hour-a-week work binges to get a project done, traveling consultants who fly in to see the family, get a home cooked meal and get some training, lawyers who work from 8:00 to 6:00 on their short days and 8:00 to 10:00 on the others, engineers who camp out at work to get a project done and then fly to Europe to connect with their counterparts across the pond.

They have less time to spare than most, but they all have found time in the week to train because they know that **their life works better with their martial art than without it**. Martial arts concentrate and clarify the mind. Too busy to begin *budo*? If you want to get things done, do something for yourself first.

When the air pressure drops and the oxygen masks fall from the ceiling, you are instructed not to take care of your kids or your traveling partner first. You are instructed to take care of yourself. If you don't take care of your body and mind first, who will?