

Satisfying Six Needs

Often when I read a book, listen to an educational recording, or watch a video, I relate what I learn to the martial arts. I am interested in many subjects and find that either there is an aspect of the martial arts that overlaps with the subject, or I can apply what I am learning to the martial arts. This method of concentrating on one subject while supporting it with other subjects allows me to broaden my knowledge without dissipating my emphasis on my main field.

I recently heard master success coach Tony Robbins talk about six human needs. Interestingly enough, these needs seem to relate positively to both Dr. Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Dr. John Gray's "Tanks" of Emotional Needs. Robbins says that we all need a basic amount of **Certainty**. We need to know that the car will start in the morning, we have a home to come home to, the sky is not going to fall, etc. We spend a lot of effort solidifying that basic need so we can take action with a certain amount of predictability. Ironically according to Robbins, we also need a measure of **Uncertainty**. As soon as we get things to be predictable, we want variety, adventure, surprise, and even unpredictability. **We want a balance of Certainty and Uncertainty.**

Next, human beings need to feel that they are to some extent **Unique**. Most of us don't want to be just like everybody else. Even aspects of societies that force conformity, whether totalitarian regimes or those with heavy social expectations, must have some way that people can distinguish themselves. Ironically, again, people also want to connect with other people. What **Connects** people together is similarity. You like those who are like yourself. In order to connect with others, you must have similarities that at least dovetail. Thus, **we want a balance of Uniqueness and Connection** that requires some uniformity.

We also need to experience personal **Growth**. If we stay the same, we fall behind. Growth is the true spice of life. It both makes us interested in things and makes us interesting. Growth is self-contribution. Finally, we cannot attain full happiness unless we make a **Contribution** not just to ourselves but also to others, to the society, or to something larger than us. Therefore, **we need to benefit ourselves through personal Growth and benefit others through Contribution.**

What exactly satisfies each need may differ from person to person just as the emphasis on one need over another may differ. We can probably rest assured that we will start with the need for basics (Robbins's "Certainty") and end with "Contribution," but what fills the needs between can come in any order and combination.

What does all this have to do with martial arts? Consider why martial arts are popular. The stated reasons of Self-defense, Exercise, Spiritual Growth may all be valid, but are they not really manifestations of satisfying Robbins's six deeper needs? In a martial arts dojo, **Certainty is represented by the curriculum.** You know what you need to learn in order to advance. At the same time the certainty of the curriculum helps one successfully experience the **Uncertainty of application**, whether in dojo sparring exercises or in an actual street

confrontation. **Uniqueness is conferred by being a martial artist** (martial artists comprise only 1% of the population and adult martial artists less than 1/2 per cent), and also by **attaining a rank**. Ranks are how martial artists express their uniqueness in a subculture where conformity is otherwise valued. **Connection** is achieved by participating in the dojo community that is often like a large family. The dojo often serves as substitute home, safe harbor, a place to socially interact and to network with others.

Growth, beyond the simply acquisition of rank, happens when we apply martial arts to daily life. This occurs in so many different ways, it is difficult to list them all, but much of this article series has been about growth through martial arts. Indeed, my book *Tales of the Dojo: Life Lessons from the Martial Arts* and *The Dojo Files: Martial Arts Lessons from Life* are comprised of stories about martial arts related self-development.

We **Contribute** through martial arts teaching. Teaching can take the form of actually instructing those less experienced, writing articles, making videos, or presenting seminars. Anything that allows the martial artist to help others Grow can be a Contribution.

This hierarchy of needs conforms to the development of a martial artist. Traditional martial arts create an environment in which those needs can be met; but, just as the average human being is not conscious of his/her six needs, so too is the martial artist not conscious of how the martial arts can fulfill them.

Often, martial arts schools concentrate on a special aspect a teacher wishes to emphasize. Specializing is fine, of course, but if one is looking for full self-development, I would suggest a well-balanced traditional martial arts school, one in which the teacher is aware of benefits the martial arts can bring and students are aware of the valuable mechanisms the martial arts offer them to satisfy their six human needs.