

BENEFITS OF CHAYON-RYU MARTIAL ARTS

According to Grandmaster Kim Soo, a participant in Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts can enhance their sense of self-esteem, self-confidence, and will power, which pervades every aspect of an individual's life. An individual can become more independent and will realize their respective role as a participant in a group that revels in the accomplishments of others. Though a sense of personal self worth may be enhanced, the participant training is facilitated by a knowledgeable and caring instructor and a compassionate group of fellow students.

Many participants, instructors, and observers of the traditional martial arts have stated that training in the arts has promoted observable, positive change in the physical, sociological, spiritual, and psychological domains of life. Obviously, these benefits should be experienced for a lifetime if the effects are to be observed consistently.

Physical Effects

From a physical perspective, Chayon-Ryu training can actually assist the individual in everyday functions of the human organism. Utilizing basic techniques and principles from traditional martial arts training in movement, body shifting, and balance can afford facility in ordinary activities of life (Kim, 2005). Concomitant with the focus on improved movement and balance is concentrated, controlled, abdominal breathing. This breathing improves the physical performance of the student (Kim, 1981, 1990, 2005). Facilitating this type of deep, almost meditative process is constant focus. Combining the breathing with the progression of movement and balance helps the participant to move to new levels of health and well being (Kim, 2005). The meditative aspect of traditional martial arts training appears to involve a deliberate enhancement of some of the inhibitory mechanisms that are also basic to brain function and organizational framework of the human organism (Fromm, 1992). The Zen-like techniques that are observable in the practice and mastering of Chayon-Ryu can be seen to have a physiological basis connected to brain processes (Fromm, 1992).

Though it is only one stage of training, the physical view seems to be the most obvious aspect of development with its emphasis on movement and reflexive techniques. Moving at one's own pace allows the participant to keep in touch with the body and how it is responding to the training regimen. Ultimately, this new awareness of physical body function leads to an ability to control the physical self within the confines of existing nature.

The physical aspects of traditional martial arts that are beneficial to many have been noted. The benefits that have been attributed to continued, consistent training include coordination, flexibility, increased strength, and decreased healing time (Kim, 2005).

Social Effects

From social perspectives, Chayon-Ryu provides the participant with various and numerous opportunities for belonging to a group of participants, equally focused on similar goals. Within the closed domain of the workout area, the focus on respect, discipline, training, constant reinforcement from other participants greatly increases the meaningfulness of the classes and lessons learned (Kim, 2005). A sense of belonging is created, and so the participant feels a part of a family. Within this family, a sharing of philosophy, ideals, questions, enjoyable times, and positive training are maintained (Kim, 2005). The concentration is on training, working together, mutual help, and respect, and, when the need arises, constructive criticism, which serves as a teaching/learning method that helps to mold the participant. The family/community perspective embodied by the Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts environment can lend organization, goals, and a philosophy of being for

participants. This is perhaps opposite to the social disorganization and controlled chaos that may be extant in the real world (Kim, 1990, 2005).

Spiritual Effects

In discussing the effects of traditional martial arts on a participant's spirituality one is immediately struck with the lack of substantive studies on the topic of development of the spirit. Most of the literature is of a theoretical nature based predominantly on the idea of psychic energy (Seitz et al., 1990).

This psychic energy/spirit is an extremely hard concept for people of Western thought to comprehend (Columbus & Rice, 1998; Seitz et al., 1990). This energy is thought to be the force behind all living things and is similar to the process whereby participants in Chayon-Ryu begin and maintain their training and practice regimens (Kim, 2005). As participants in Chayon-Ryu initiate their training, the focus is on imitating and then mastering physical techniques. As they progress, there is greater emphasis on maturation of the psychic energy/spirit. This energy/spirit helps to develop more constructive, positive, intra/interpersonally effective, and socially appropriate methods for existence (Kim, 2005; Seitz et al., 1990). When energy is managed appropriately and applications for life are made, then the psychic energy/spirit may be seen as an agent of behavioral change (Kim, 2005). Participation in Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts moves individuals toward closer realization of self-fulfillment, self-actualization, self-perception of competence, increased alertness, and personal awareness of actual social and spiritual responsibilities (Kim, 2005).

Psychological Effects

In addition to all of the aforementioned effects of Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts training, psychological benefits are important as well. Individuals choose traditional martial arts as a means for developing self-confidence, stronger self-perceptions of competence, and self-discipline. With the acquisition of new physical skills and fitness comes the emergence of an increased sense of well being in the world (Kim, 2005).

Interestingly, this increase in self-confidence and competence in self-perception is not accompanied by a boasting inflation of self-importance and ego misdirection. Kim (1990) denoted that a lack of emphasis on the individual ego can facilitate one's progression in Chayon-Ryu. Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts are viewed less as methods of aggression and more as techniques for self-defense and strategies for developing a strong self-perception of competence, self-confidence, and self-discipline. As evidenced by numerous sources (Kim, 1990; Konzak & Boudreau, 1984; Weiser et al., 1995), the Zen-like method of instruction in the traditional martial arts can parallel particular psychotherapeutic methods, particularly with relatively healthy participants. The process is more of a self-search which provides opportunities for growth in intrapersonal well being, aggression control, problem identification, and resolution.

The traditional martial arts can enhance self-perceptions and help to build a strong sense of competence through experiencing controlled physical activity and experiencing group activities, as well as improving concentration, relaxation, assertiveness, and open communication. Using personality inventories and objective interviews of participants of varying levels and at different training sites, Konzak and Boudreau (1984) determined that participants in the traditional martial arts saw their lives enhanced by the training in the areas of mental well being and alertness. Hogan (1989) determined that people who maintain a particular level of physical fitness tend to be more psychologically resilient, self-disciplined, and self-confident. They also display a healthy sense of competition both intrapersonal and interpersonal.

Though good physical and mental fitness are by-products of traditional martial arts training programs such as Chayon-Ryu, there is still no substantive research to support a causal relationship between programs of fitness and good mental or psychological health (Hogan, 1989). Positions could be presented which connect physical exercise to healthy self-perceptions of competence, self-confidence, and feelings of resiliency. Conversely, it could be argued that participants who are self-assured, assertive, and somewhat achievement-oriented also partake in exercise to enhance an already strong self-perception (Kim, 2005).

Summary

The positive effects of training in Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts have been documented in numerous studies and articles (Graham, 1995, 2007; Kim, 1975, 1981, 1990, 2005). The effects and benefits range from physical domains to the development of psychic energy/spirit, sociological benefits, and psychological health and well being.

Over the past three decades, traditional martial arts endeavors such as Chayon-Ryu have moved into a new arena of consideration. Instead of the warring, aggressive attitude conjectured by Western thought, they are viewed in many learned circles as invitations and avenues to mental and physical health (Kim, 2005). Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts have meshed the physical and mental components of relaxation and control of the body and mind.

This aspect of harmonious balance leads to increased levels of self-perception of competence in multiple areas (even outside of the Chayon-Ryu training dojang), and overall self-confidence (Kim, 1981). It is essential to note that those receiving greatest benefits from Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts are those who practice them over a long period. Therefore, students have a better possibility of reduction of mood disturbance, tension, depression, anger, and mental confusion (Kim, 2005)

As evidenced in a multiple case study of beginning students who trained for 15 weeks (two days a week, one hour per session) with Chayon-Ryu as the intervention phase of controlled qualitative research endeavor, exposure to Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts seemed to create specific themes that were evident in the results for all participants. These themes were: (a) with participation in the Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts program the students' need for realistic order and organization seemed to be nurtured; (b) participation in the Chayon-Ryu traditional arts program seemed to support improved perceptions of competence in the area of personal and peer relationships; (c) consistent, genuine praise, attention, and realistic expectations appeared to support students' own enhanced perceptions of competence; (d) considering all of the components of the Chayon-Ryu traditional martial arts program, physical activity appeared to be an area where students were more engaged; and (e) participants valued the importance of a combined approach of mental and physical abilities for maximized success and consistency (Graham,2007).

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