

8 PHASES OF SELF-ESTEEM



BlackBeltInstructorGroup.com

The 8 Phases of Increased Self-Esteem Through Martial Arts

The 8 Phases of Increased Self-Esteem Through Martial Arts

There are typically eight phases that anyone new to martial arts goes through during the training.

1. “I won’t do it”

Someone with low self-esteem always thinks he/she is no good. A fear of failure is the real reason why he/she is reluctant to try anything new – they have gone through several instances of humiliation in their life already, and they could do without another one.

The first step in martial arts training is entering the ‘dojo’, or place where martial arts are taught. Shoes have to be taken off before entering, and that itself has the effect of introducing the fact that this is something different from all the other activities, albeit one that has to be taken seriously. Wearing a uniform or ‘gi’ helps reinforce this further, and upon entry to the dojo, the atmosphere is anything but casual. The serene environment, filled with respect for one another and the instructor, has a calming effect, which gets one to the next step.

2. “I can’t do it”

After overcoming the first hurdle and willing to try it out, those entering the dojo see other students who might already have gone through several training sessions. Even though they may not yet be experts, it can be an intimidating experience.

“How am I ever going to fight that colored belt?”

The initial reluctance may also have caused someone with low self-esteem to be late, having been ‘dragged’ to class by a parent. So if the child enters when others are training in unison, that is enough to make him/her cringe in fear.

The 8 Phases of Increased Self-Esteem Through Martial Arts

This is where the instructor comes in. In Japanese martial arts, he/she is called *sensei*, meaning 'one who has gone before', while in Chinese martial arts, the master is called 'Shifu'. He/she will come to the child in a friendly, welcoming way that puts the latter at ease and explain that it is not hard – all the child needs to do at first is a few basic steps. Once the child realizes that these are indeed something which he/she can do without much difficulty, he/she moves on to the next step.

3. “I want to do it”

Martial arts training is a very immersive experience. Any child with low self-esteem finds his/her mood elevated when he/she is respected (not looked down) by even the most experienced and senior students – they might even bow down to him/her. And when he/she practices the same moves as the others in the group, even the ones with colored belts, there is a feeling of 'belonging' that makes the child come back for more.

He/she will also be inflamed with the desire to move beyond the white belt (this is what beginners start out with) and on to the next level, making him/her take the training more seriously and with a new dedication. This, incidentally, spills over into the classroom in the real world.

The 8 Phases of Increased Self-Esteem Through Martial Arts

4. “How do I do it?”

Wanting to get the next belt (the sequence is generally white → orange → yellow → camo → green → purple → blue → brown → red → black at most schools, although stripes within the same color may indicate sub-levels) launches the child on a journey of self-discovery. Although the moves are the same, the way each move is executed is unique for every individual. Someone who is short may have a difficult time leveraging his/her opponent, or *uke*, to the ground. But the need to earn the next belt prompts him/her to think, *How can I better use my limited body strength to floor my opponent?*

This is one of the fundamental principles of martial arts. There are no fixed techniques or choreography. Martial arts is like water – it is flexible, and just like water fills a glass to take its shape, martial arts to adapt to the environment the *tori*, or practitioner, finds himself/herself in. The true martial artist is a thinker who figures how to get out of a difficult situation.

5. “I’ll try to do it”

Now that the child has thought about how best to execute a move, he/she will try it. This line of thinking is made possible by a supportive sensei or shifu, as well as co-operative opponents, who don’t mind being thrown on the mat until the child perfects his/her technique.

This inevitably leads the child to the next phase.

6. “I can do it”

This is not arrogance, but self-confidence, and ensues after a child gets through the previous five phases. This self-belief gets stronger over time, as the student takes part in more training sessions.

The 8 Phases of Increased Self-Esteem Through Martial Arts

Even when it doesn't work out, the child will always remain motivated by others who have succeeded (*"If they can do it, so can I"*). After all, this is what makes martial arts so special. He/she won't give up, and you can be sure that this quality is something that proves to be highly beneficial in his/her adult years.

7. "I will do it"

This is otherwise called determination. Martial arts instill this quality in practitioners right from the beginning. The will to prevail, no matter how overwhelming the odds may be, is something that is found in every martial arts practitioner.

Ohio-born Kayla Harrison became the first American martial arts practitioner to win a gold medal in judo at the London Olympics in 2012. She did so in spite of having a dislocated knee and carrying the mental scars of being sexually abused even before she entered her teenage years. She contemplated suicide every morning she woke up, but no longer carries the scars – she says practicing martial arts with Ronda Rousey, the judo bronze medal winner at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, helped her deal with the trauma. Rousey also had the effect of motivating her – she wanted to do better than Rousey, and that is what helped her clinch gold at the London Olympics.

8. "Yes! I did it!"

This is a sense of accomplishment, and as the child climbs higher in the rankings to attain his/her colored belts, the greater will be the confidence that follows from the achievement.

These are not restricted to the dojo – martial arts practitioners are able to carry them over into their lives, which helps them to lead fulfilling personal and professional lives.