

ASL III Report

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Martial Arts For The Deaf

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Martial Arts for the Deaf

Members of the Deaf Community are at as much risk, if not far greater risk, for assault and molestation as those in the hearing communities. Learning Martial Arts and self-defense techniques can greatly reduce the likelihood of being singled out as a “victim” by a potential assailant, as well provide actual methods of protection if the individual is assaulted.

The members of the Deaf Community unfortunately suffer a high level of physical and sexual assaults. One study estimates that as many as 83% of women with disabilities have, or will be, sexually assaulted in their lifetime. This is further exacerbated by the lack of training for law enforcement and other support personnel in how to help deaf victims of assault with communication and the proper resources and support. In the case of the deaf, this is greatly exacerbated by the lack of communication options for reporting an assault, the primary method currently being by phone to 911. And worse yet, many in the deaf community themselves believe that the hearing community does not know how to relate to the Deaf, so a further barrier to help is created. (2005. *Obinna, Krueger, Osterbaan, Sadusky, & DeVore*).

By providing deaf and hard of hearing people with martial arts training, much can be done to reduce the risks of assault, and improve the chances of minimizing the effect of an assault. This is addressed by the many benefits of studying martial arts, regardless of hearing status or many other disabilities. The benefits of studying martial arts, beyond self-defense can include:

- Build self-confidence, this makes the subject less of an “easy target” for being victimized.
- Physical fitness benefits including strength, agility, flexibility, coordination, reflexes, respiratory and cardiovascular improvements.
- Mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits including calming and coping

mechanisms, forms of stress release and managements, self discipline and self control, as well as inner and outer awareness.

- Falling and rolling properly, useful even in everyday “slips and slides” that can happen.

In general, martial arts involve fighting techniques, mental discipline, physical exercise, and various philosophical components. Most of them embody intellectual concepts as well. The Taoist philosophy of balance, Buddhist meditation and breathing techniques, and Confucian ethics have all greatly influenced martial arts.

Many different styles of martial arts, and their pros and cons in approach. Some martial arts are more “external” and emphasize more physical aspects such as strength or flexibility or speed. Some emphasize certain actions more than others such as kicking or punching or throwing. Others are more “internal” focusing more on the mind and “spirit”. Some styles are more linear and forceful, usually referred to as “hard” style, while others are more flowing and circular, usually called “soft” style. Many martial arts use different mixtures of hard and soft. Lastly some few martial arts try to use all of the above in various degrees of balance. This variety of martial arts means that there is a style available for everyone, no matter their abilities or disabilities. My personal preference in training and teaching is Kung Fu with an even balance of both “hard” and “soft” styles, “external” and “internal” training integrated with what many consider to be T'ai Chi, as well as non-mobile meditative techniques at many levels of discipline. For those wanting a bit less holistic approach, the next best recommendation would be to consider Aikido, a more “soft” style, that is one of the few true “pacifist's martial arts” available. My approach has been to master fighting at a level so as never to have to fight. When one is confident in protecting oneself, a potential assailant is much more likely to pass you over for a much more “easy” target.

Most training of martial arts for the deaf is not radically different from training hearing people. A good portion of the training is visual motion of the body, and duplicating those motions, at least for more “external” styles. Those in the deaf and hard of hearing community who have learned sign language – instead of lip reading and speaking – will be even more likely to learn very quickly.

There are many martial arts schools available in urban and suburban areas and some in a few rural areas. Unfortunately most martial arts schools are not staffed in a way to provide instruction services for the deaf, and the costs of having an interpreter handy add considerably to the costs of instruction for any deaf person wanting to learn sign, as well as any communication problems caused by an intermediary rather than the instructor teaching directly. The best solution is to find a school that has instructors that are either deaf and/or already have reasonable proficiency in sign language, so that they can communicate directly with the deaf student(s).

There are a few deaf martial arts instructors scattered around the globe, that have made headlines. There are also a handful of international organizations dedicated to providing martial arts to the Deaf. As well as some that are now accepted as part of the Deaflympics. Two of the major organizations are I.M.A.F.D. (International Martial Arts Federation of the Deaf) and A.M.A.A.D (American Martial arts Association of the Deaf).

There is an nearly infinite variety of variations in martial arts available, mapping to the different needs of many individuals. There is an organization teaching a technique of using and integration of American Sign Language vocabulary signs and pressure point fighting (kyusho-jitsu) as self defense techniques calling it “Martial Signing”. This method was developed by Matt Hayat who was born hard of hearing. He began studying martial arts in 1990, and developed high ranking in Ryuku Kempo (Japanese), Ryukyu Kempo (Korean), and Isshin Ryu Karate Do (Japanese). There are

schedule seminars, and even a video available providing information on these techniques. Another unusual branch of martial arts is the Afro-Brazilian style of Capoeira, based on various dance moves combined with self-defense techniques.

An exhaustive list of all the martial arts styles available would be many pages long, however a short list of some of the more "main stream" martial arts, without listing the many sub-branches and off shoots (though many are offshoots in and of themselves) follows: Aikido, Kung Fu, T'ai Chi, Karate, Tae kwon do, Judo, Jiu Jitsu, Hapkido, Kendo.

References:

Obinna, J. (Ph.D.), Krueger, S., Osterbaan, C. (Ph.D.), Sadusky, J.M., DeVore, W. (2005). *Understanding the Needs of the Victims of Sexual Assault in the Deaf Community*. NCJRS Abstract. ID Number: NCJ 212867.
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=234353>

AMAAD: <http://www.amaad.com/front.html>
American Martial Arts Association for the Deaf.

Deaflympics: <http://www.deaflympics.com/games/calendar.asp?EventID=16>

Paper on "How Can Martial Arts Benefit The Disabled?" by Gregory Lichtenthal on the DC Taekwondo website: <http://www.dctkd.org/library/papers/benefits-of-ma-for-disabled.cfm>

I.M.A.F.D. - International Martial Arts Federation of the Deaf
<http://www.mclink.it/personal/MD4281/imafden.htm>

Deaf Culture Online website article: "Martial Arts: The Door to "I Can".
<http://www.deaf-culture-online.com/martial-arts.html>

Martial Signing: <http://www.martialsigning.com/>

"Deaf instructor arouses fresh interest in martial arts" Article from [Oakland Tribune, Jun 10, 2005](#) by [Jennifer McLain, CORRESPONDENT](#)
Found snippet at:
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4176/is_20050610/ai_n15755896

Capoeira is the Afro-Brazilian martial art that encompasses dancing and self-defense that originated in Brazil. The pictures featured in the link shows two Deaf students from the Ohio school for the Deaf. They are performing in the Campo di Fiori plaza in Rome

From site: <http://sports.webshots.com/album/220630288ptJbUo>

Deaf Aikido Blog: <http://deafaikido.blogspot.com/>

Karate Instructor Runs Gym Classes at Boston School for Deaf

<http://www.emeraldnecklacebudo.com/pr052006.htm>

These next few pages include 3 variants of pieces of Kung Fu for the Deaf that I have laid out for my Recreation Programming class. I also hope in coming months, and with contact and support from the Deaf community in the greater Spokane area, to make this available for the local Deaf community members. These pages help give a little more detail on what a martial arts for the deaf program would need to be aware of, and provide.



“Can't Touch This!” (Kung-fu self defense training): Learn the basics of self-defense techniques using Kung-fu methods, including both “hard” and “soft” styles.

“Pump It Up!” (Cardio Kung-fu): Get in shape, while having fun, and learning some Kung-fu. Participants start out with slow “soft-style” (T'ai Chi-like) forms, that slowly increase in speed until a rapid pace is attained, sustaining the heart rate for 15-20 minutes at optimal cardiovascular training level.

“Chill Out” (Meditation & breathing exercises): Stressed out? Need help taking a break or just unwinding at the end of a long day? Participants are walked through various relaxation and focusing techniques using breathing and meditative techniques from Kung-fu, Chinese, India, and Zen styles of meditation and breathing.

Appropriate Setting:

Safe, comfortable, well-lit (so that signing can easily be seen), non-distracting environment, indoor or outdoor setting. Enough space for everyone to move around easily. A soft surface to fall on (fall mats could be provided if on a hard surface). Participants will need to wear comfortable, flexible or loose fitting clothing such as martial arts uniforms, sweats or gym clothing.

Goals:

Provide self defense training through the Martial Art style of Kung Fu, to the Deaf community, in a group setting providing a social interaction while helping participants develop individually in a COOPERATIVE not competitive environment.

The Deaf community unfortunately has a high level of being victims of assault crimes including both violent and sexual assaults. self-defense can help a participant improve self awareness and self confidence which will reduce the likelihood of being singled out as a potential victim, while also providing the very tangible benefits of making the participant able to ward off an assailant, so as to be able to escape unscathed. This also provides plenty of health benefits including muscle tone, strength, flexibility, balance, speed, coordination, calm, and self discipline.

Population:

Kung fu can be taught to most populations from age 4 (depending on maturity) on up. For this variant, any deaf or hard of hearing may participate. Injuries or other disabilities can usually be worked around by adjusting how the participant undertakes some of the tasks.

Explanation of activity:

- Participants are directed by a “Sifu” (teacher), first in the correct etiquette of Kung Fu, respect, trying one's best, working hard, not showing off, following directions, never starting a fight, and general consideration of others.
- Participants will start out in a group following the direction of the instructor through an initial warm up and stretching series of exercises. Some familiar to westerners, others uniquely Asian in origin/influence.
- While the warm-up is under way, the instructor, or else a signing assistant or interpreter, will provide some information on the history and origins of Kung fu from thousands of years ago up to present day.
- Participants will then be lead through a basic slow “soft” “form”, which is a series of motions that when sped up are actually usable as defense techniques.
- Participants will then be paired up, and shown how each segment of that form can be applied in defense. The instructor will demonstrate several times with an assistant or another participant, and then the participants will repeat the activities.
- Participants will then be taught how to fall and roll correctly (assuming ground surface is appropriately soft such as soft grass, or mats are provided).
- After learning and practicing falling, participants will then be shown self-defense throwing techniques, and then participants will practice those repeatedly.
- Participants will be shown knife-defense techniques, some of which involve throwing the assailant, this is a combination of earlier information, plus the falling/throwing instruction, and new techniques.
- Participants will be taught two sticks, and/or staff fighting techniques
- Participants will be taught how to punch and kick correctly using punching bags, padded shields, and padded gloves as targets.
- Participants will then don padding to protect their forearms and shins, pair up with another participant and practice medium speed blocks, punches, kicks, etc. as directed step by step by the instructor.

Activity costs:

The activity can be no-cost in the case of practicing at a public park or other free facility, or due to sponsorship providing all the facilities and equipment. Costs can increase as extra equipment is needed if sponsorship not available in those areas. Instructor fees will vary by the hour or by prepaid package bundles of classes.

Leadership necessary:

There must be at least one “Sifu” (instructor) skilled in Kung fu AND teaching Kung fu to untrained individuals who ALSO knows how to sign fairly proficiently, otherwise an interpreter will need to be provided. The Sifu does not need to be fluent in signing, since this is a very visual activity, much can be demonstrated without knowing sign, but the instructor must be proficient enough to understand questions from the participants and respond in kind, as well as be able to explain the values and philosophies and history of Kung fu. An assistant can also be helpful as well, especially with larger groups. This assistant must be reasonably skilled in the same style of Kung

fu as the instructor as well as able to sign fairly proficiently.

Equipment:

Other than a well-lit facility (indoor or outdoor), no equipment is usually necessary for basic training. Optional equipment that might be provided if necessary could include but not be limited to:

- Mat(s) to fall on when practicing falling, rolls, and throwing.
- Rubber knives to practice knife self defense techniques
- Staves or two sticks for staff/stick fighting practice
- Punching bags of various types and sizes
- Punching gloves (less padding than boxing gloves) for use on punching bags
- Shin and forearm padding for protection from stronger contact blocking with arms and legs
- Padded "shield" for kicking a moving target.
- Padded gloves (for practicing punching target in different and moving locations)

Evaluation procedures:

Students are tested on their proficiency with each of the techniques taught. A detailed checklist covering each technique (forms, types of punches, types of kicks, types of blocks, types of rolls, falls, and throws, etc.) provides a fairly objective means of measuring progress of the participants. The instructor or assistant instructor directs a participant to perform an action, and observes how well the participant performs it, then rates it on a scale of 1 to 10 for accuracy, with 10 being exactly correct, and 1 being the least correct. Additionally the participants get to fill out a questionnaire on how well the training was provided, directions, assistance, communication (though signing), facilities, equipment, and general sense of how much they benefited from the activities.

Suggested sponsors:*Kung Fu For Life*

- Provide facilities
- Provide instructors
- Provide equipment

EWDHHC (Eastern Washington Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center)

- Provide endorsement & advertising
- Provide interpreter
- Provide donated prizes