

## Martial Arts Students In London Tackle The Opponent Within

The spiritual and philosophical nature of the martial arts is rightly gaining more and more attention. Increasingly martial arts students in London are looking for more than a physical experience - a purely beat-up experience is no longer enough!

London Martial Arts school Chang's Hapkido Academy, teaches Hapkido, which is a Korean martial art of self-defense. The name 'Hapkido' actually combines three Korean words: Hap means the coordination of mind and body, Ki is the inner power needed to create hap, and Do refers to a disciplined life.

It is this concept of discipline that can be found throughout the martial arts, but what does that actually mean? To the new martial arts student it may be about doing what you are told, calling your instructor "Sir", or bowing as you enter the dojang (martial arts training hall). At a martial arts school in London though, the Hapkido practitioners realize that even the simple bow has much more of a profound meaning.

During a recent London Martial Arts seminar, when asked why people want to train in Hapkido, Korean Grandmaster and founder of Chang's Hapkido Academy, Gedo Chang responded, "Some want to learn self-defense techniques, some to condition mind and body, some for physical discipline. No matter what they want first, eventually they realize that Hapkido is much deeper, more profound than they ever expected. Hapkido is more than physical health or self-defense techniques. The more important part of Hapkido training is inner peace, wisdom and discipline; which is what I try to teach."

To Hapkido Master Gedo Chang, discipline means emptiness of mind. This is not a void, or empty space, but rather a place where the layers with which we distort our own reality have been set aside. It is a place where one is free of fear, hatred, anxiety, or arrogance. Our ki (chi; internal energy) flows fluently around the body; we are at peace; we see things as they are.

Master Chang continues, "As far as self-defence goes, when faced with an actual situation a very strong man can be paralysed in an instant by fear. Therefore, MAN vs. HIMSELF is the most important part of any martial artist's journey. In overcoming dangers posed by one's own anger, fear, hate, arrogance and desire one is able to achieve maturity and wisdom."

"I heard a wonderful story recently", says a Chang's Hapkido Academy Instructor. "One of my students (a white belt) was walking down a London street. A man started staring at him aggressively. My student said, 'The old me would have stared aggressively back, but since coming to Hapkido and Ki Meditation class I didn't need to. Instead, I smiled and looked away.' He then told me that when he left the shop the same guy was on the other side of the street in a fight with someone else. I think this white belt is already becoming a successful warrior."

The expert martial artist is said to achieve freedom. Freedom means freedom from, not freedom to: freedom from fear, freedom from anger, freedom from ego. We achieve freedom by making peace with our own internal enemies. Ironically it is through martial arts that we learn to stop fighting and are able to transform our enemy into a friend who no longer bothers us.

### About the Author

Tammy Parlour began studying [Hapkido in Chicago](#) under Grandmaster Gedo Chang in 1983 at the age of 12. With over 24 years of experience, she is now a 4th degree Black Belt. Since moving to the UK, she has established Hapkido schools in both Lincoln and London. She now runs the London [Chang's Hapkido Academy](#) full-time, delivering 11 classes through the week, as well as seminars and private sessions.

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