



I Care About The Individual, Not The Diagnosis

According to the CDC based on statistics from 2014, in the United States the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is 1 in 68 births. Anxiety disorders affect 19.1 million, 13.3% of adults in the United States ages 18-54, in some form such as Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, etc. With numbers like these there is a very good chance that in the martial arts those who are instructing will at some point in time find themselves working with a student living with one of the conditions above or a related condition. This article is geared toward those reading it who are actively teaching and parents or individuals living with a form of ASD or Anxiety.

Over the years I have worked with students whose parents sometimes seemed to treat their child's condition like it defined the child. I also worked with students whose parents may mention the child's condition just to make me aware of it to help me understand some of their behavior but not as an excuse for their behavior. I also have first hand experience with ASD and Anxiety. My brother many years ago was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, which is an ASD, and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.

Regardless of how the parent views their child's condition, as something that defines them or just an aspect of who they are, I hold these students to the same level of expectations as any other student. This means they need to behave in a respectful appropriate manner in class and listen to instructions. For some of these students just being in class and following instructions is a challenge. Others may have a hard time interacting with their peers in an appropriate manner. Maybe just finding themselves in a group setting is a challenge for them.

Your job as an instructor is to not only teach them but help them feel welcome in class. What works for one student may not work for a student with ASD or Anxiety. Often a firm but gentle approach to guide them through class or deal with any discipline issues will work better than a militaristic approach. Any discipline issues need to be dealt with but with a certain level of flexibility in how one goes about it. Usually having a misbehaving student sit out for a minute or so for any misbehavior in class is the preferred method to get a student to refocus on what they should be doing.

I have seen this approach sometimes crush an ASD or Anxiety student in the early stages of their martial arts training because of the public humiliation involved. Sometimes a firm tone saying their name to get their attention and a hand on the shoulder is enough to get their attention so they can be told their behavior is not appropriate. If this doesn't work after a couple reminders I will have them sit out for a minute like any other student before asking them if they are ready to behave and rejoin class.

Why the slightly different approach to discipline with these students? Because the benefits they can gain from the martial arts are outweighed by a too harsh reaction to misbehavior which may cause them to quit. Over the years I have seen many students with ASD and/or Anxiety develop more self-confidence, better interpersonal skills or simply come out of their shells. Martial arts training should not just be about physical improvement but also the mental and emotional improvement of the individual. When instructing our job is to help all of the students improve not just the ones who may be easier to teach. Instructors, take the time to modify how you deal with these students to help them succeed in the martial arts and life.

Take care,

Kirby Strissel

Kwan Jang - Martial Arts For Health & Wellness, LLC
Administrator - Korea/USA Simmudo Association

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December 2025 Promotion Test Results

9th Gup White

John Stricker

Int. 9th Gup White

Malcolm Schulz
Alex Stricker
Owen Webbles

8th Gup Yellow

Arlo Petersen

7th Gup Yellow

Noah Boswell

Int. 7th Gup Yellow

Julieta Petrusek

Nov. 6th Gup Green

Ishaan Anavekar

5th Gup Green

Thomas Banda
Lucas Fontana

Adv. 5th Gup Green

Caleb Banda

Nov. 4th Gup Blue

Arthur Mielke

3rd Gup Blue

William Kopiievskyi
Ivan Petersen

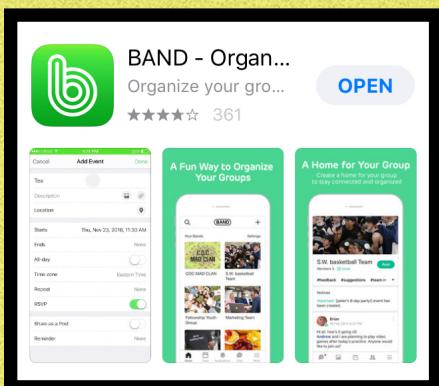
Int. 3rd Gup Blue

Dhruv Bathla
Philip Kopiievskyi
Karlee Mielke
Shane Petersen
Jessica Thach

Adv. 3rd Gup Blue

Theodore Li

Next Testing: March 12, 2026



Hey, join our 'Martial Arts For Health & Wellness, LLC' group on BAND - The app for groups and communities!
<https://band.us/n/aea5Actau5P3f>

If you have not yet please download the BAND app to your smartphone. I will be using this as another communication method for updates about last minute changes that may affect class schedules. You can join the group at the above link.

Tuition Rate Increase

Starting January 2026 the monthly tuition for RAC members and non-members will be increasing by \$5/month. There will still be a family discount for families with multiple students enrolled in the program.

This program is a separate business from the Rochester Athletic Club and occasionally tuition increases and changes are needed to cover operating expenses and make this venture with the RAC continue. If you have any questions please let me know.

