

Simon Lee



The preoccupation with looking good and feeling fit in our culture has been around for years. Increasingly, however, there is now a greater interest in mindfulness, meditation and other holistic health practices (including yoga) as people search for more purpose and meaning in their lives. However, for the most part, these two pursuits still seem largely separate from one another.

One fitness and mental health guru wants to challenge this. Simon Lee teaches a unique mind, body, spirit programme called 'On the Warrior's Path' to give participants personal insight and courage, combined with physical fitness, to help sort out health issues in every area of their lives.

His programme draws on various Eastern philosophies, including yoga-style breath work, to improve physical performance, self-belief, mental focus, and a sense of purpose.

The idea originates from when he realised he was working with people who initially came to him to get physically fit but uncovered the reason for their training was to overcome mental health issues like stress, workplace bullying, depression or an addiction.

Emotional bridges

Lee believes that breathing is one of the first ways we can start to understand and relieve our stressful emotional states. "Emotions are the bridge between the mind and the body and the ability to remain calm in one of life's storms or stressful situations means we can remain connected to our innate wisdom that we all have," he says.

"When most people exercise, the breathing is usually led by what the body is doing whether this is gym work, running or walking to work. But if we deliberately switch this around and focus on slow deliberate breathing regardless of what we're doing, movement is forced to slow, synchronise and follow the breath."

He says people are often amazed at how

much energy they save, and at how they start to feel every movement of their body, after doing this for just a few weeks or even days.

"Breathing is also a stepping stone to creating mindfulness in a more dynamic environment rather than one that is reliant on a relaxed, catered for setting of relaxation." He adds: "Once this is experienced, we can introduce greater speed of movement with stronger energy output but remaining synchronised with the breath. For weight loss, this is a highly effective method because it keeps you in the fat burning zone by not exceeding the breath and heart rate which leads to using sugar as a primary fuel."

"Emotions are the bridge between the mind and the body and the ability to remain calm in one of life's storms"

All about depression

One of the more common emotional states he encounters with clients is depression. This can be caused by a number of factors, but treating it in conventional healthcare is typically done through the use of antidepressants and psychological therapies.

On The Warrior's Path focuses on a

combination of physical, spiritual and mental fitness to focus the mind, and identify any root causes. "Depression in adulthood can often be caused by abuse, neglect or being an unfavoured child," says Lee. "This is usually accompanied by poor self confidence and low self esteem."

Lee believes that to really improve physical fitness, and to develop confidence simultaneously, the goal should not be to find a couple of hours a week to relax in a class, or to compare our biceps against others, but to recognise why constant practice, including mindful breathing, gives us strength. "The goal is to practice this philosophy throughout our day-to-day life to find real inner peace and mental strength. The training takes people on a journey that stretches them mentally, physically and spiritually."

Great athletes and warriors perform thousands of repetitions of a movement in order to master it and it is this that makes them the best, he adds. They do it regardless of emotional state because they know physical exercise is a gradual process of transformation that, in time, uncovers who we are and what we are capable of. It remains a potent means of learning how to act and live – regardless of our thoughts. ☸

Find out more about Simon Lee and his On The Warrior's Path course at Unlimited Courage (unlimitedcourage.com)



INNER STRENGTH

Having suffered bouts of depression throughout his life, Lewis Beazleigh (left), 33, turned to On The Warriors Path initially to get fit. In the end, he found out so much more about himself.

"I found myself searching for some meaning in life but could not find any answers. These feelings became worse with age and the usual route of working with a counsellor did

nothing to help my depression and self-esteem. My way of not facing up to how I felt was to become addicted to work. I worked long hours, seven days a week, which started to affect my health and mental state through exhaustion. I needed a physical outlet." It has been a transformation. After setting up his own plumbing business, Beazleigh is now studying to become one of the first physical training instructors for the 'Warriors' course. "It made me realise how powerful the combination of philosophy, nutrition, fitness and meditation can be. It taught me how to attain personal freedom through a better understanding of myself; it has helped me recognise what I am capable of."

Simon Lee on Lewis Beazleigh: "When I first met Lewis I could tell right away he was sitting on a mountain of potential. Like many young men in modern life, self-esteem issues are seen as entirely negative but it is actually an incredible launch pad for personal growth. Lewis is the hardest training individual I have met and certainly the most physically talented. In addition, he already had integrity, honesty and courage, so the course really made these qualities shine. What he has demonstrated is that rather than trying to become someone or something else, he is actually becoming the best version of himself."