

# The Key Perfo

By Tammy Parlour

**I**t is another students' first Hapkido class. He reluctantly sits, awkwardly twitching when told to first be still and breathe.

"Think of a reel of cotton. You don't breathe it in all at once, but breathe it slowly - as if inhaling only the thin and fragile thread."

This isn't quite punching and kicking, is it?

When they start, few students recognise the benefits of abdominal breathing exercises and meditation to their Martial Arts practice. By the time they have become experts

though, a deeper understanding of the link between mind and body has been developed.

I was reminded of this last week visiting Chang's Hapkido Club in Lincoln. It was a young students second class. She was nervously shy and self-conscious. When asked to punch she raised her arm,

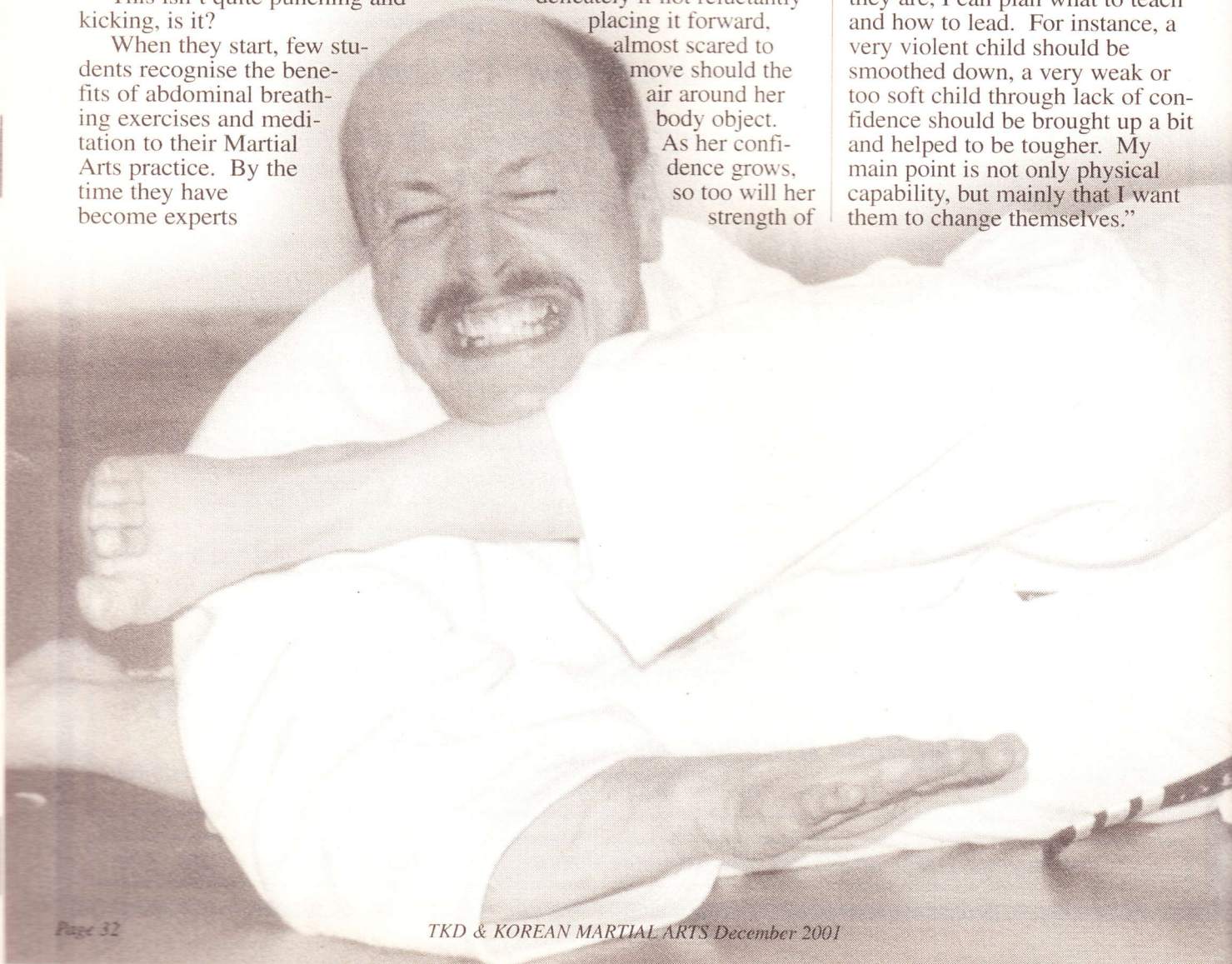
delicately if not reluctantly placing it forward,

almost scared to move should the air around her body object.

As her confidence grows, so too will her strength of

technique. And when she is able to forget that people are watching her through an open doorway, her progress will be astonishing.

On instructing, Grandmaster Gedo Chang (8th dan) said "I must analyse the student, understand his personality and physical capability. Once I understand who they are, I can plan what to teach and how to lead. For instance, a very violent child should be smoothed down, a very weak or too soft child through lack of confidence should be brought up a bit and helped to be tougher. My main point is not only physical capability, but mainly that I want them to change themselves."





# to Remaining Expertly

So as instructors we try to positively impact our students, enabling them to realise their own unlimited potential. Both cocky students and those that timidly cower away, clutch on to what is happening around them, those same external conditions control and limit their potential. As true confidence increases, the influence of this false reality diminishes, and naturally their techniques improve.

It is this attachment to external circumstances that breathing exercise and meditation aims to transcend. Meditation removes the need to be something and allows one to be. When we simply "are" we become more self-aware, we act spontaneous-

ly and more positively - anxiety disappears - we become healthier. Not only does our Hapkido improve, but every aspect of our life too.

Breathing itself is a mirror to our mind; it reveals our inner state. When we are angry our breathing is shallow; when we are relaxed it is long and deep; when we are afraid our breathing speeds up. There is a definite link between our emotionally state and the oxygen we take into to our body.

Five or ten minutes deep breathing meditation before class, places us into the right mental state to act expertly. Of course we must practice until techniques become habit, but when the mind is calm our

ability to learn increases and what might ordinarily take years to perfect could be learned in an instant.

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