



Martial artist, computer buff, teacher – Edwin Padlan talks to inspirational longtime friend Michael Torres about his philosophy for balanced living

ROLE MODEL

Edwin Padlan

Martial Arts to Microsoft

ROLE MODEL

FOR the past 10 years, I have had the great privilege of calling Michael Torres an inspiration, adviser, training partner and friend. He is a proven success in the field of technology as well as in his role as fitness enthusiast, martial artist, student, teacher, writer and soon-to-be-husband. Above all, it is Michael's extreme passion for fitness, martial arts and technology that continues to inspire me, and others, to follow our own personal passions.

Upon spending time with Michael, you'll notice his never-ending interest to improve, whether it's mentally or physically. In Michael's home, there's an ample supply of books, magazines and instruction videos – all of which he's read and viewed multiple times. In the gym, you'll observe an enviable regimen of repetitions and exercises, which have helped him shape his lean physique. This constant interest to improve is not only self-fulfilling, but also very contagious. After spending time with Michael, you will feel inspired to challenge yourself in many ways – and have confidence when taking the road less travelled.

Michael describes this inner fire in his own words, "I believe that being competitive, with both yourself and with others is healthy and equally beneficial. Competition is about improvement, not about winning. Being competitive is simply the process of using an opponent as motivation to improve yourself. For example, an athlete improves not when his opponent is weaker, but when he strives to overcome his own perceived limits. Ultimately, the opponent is simply a symbol for the true conquest: your own doubts, insecurities and fears."

When seeing Michael in action, one thing you'll notice is his limitless supply of energy. This energy and commitment come not only from living a healthy lifestyle, but also

from his desire and dedication to succeed in life. In its greatest form, this energy is also a result of Michael practising a concept called 'finding flow', a term dubbed by Dr Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Experts have also coined the phrase 'in the groove' or 'in the zone' to describe this same phenomenon where a heightened

gym, at the office and across the dinner table.

"Ed, we've got to get this project done in the next hour so that we can get to the fitness centre on schedule."

"Ed, let's chat at dinner about the new training ideas that I want to incorporate into the martial

“ Learning isn't enough – we must apply. Willing isn't enough – we must do
Bruce Lee ”

sense of mental focus leads to achieving peak performance. Michael continuously strives to maintain this flow state.

He explains: "The flow state has often been associated with a feeling of complete control, peacefulness, freedom from physical restriction and a sensation of weightlessness. While experiencing flow, it is not uncommon for people to lose track of time, and even an awareness of their own action. The martial arts are just some of the avenues that can induce this intangible mental state, but they are, by nature, some of the most effective. This is due to the fact that martial artists regularly set 'stretch' goals and are determined to reach them in a labour of love, two prerequisites to attaining flow. It is theorised that an athlete (in any sport) will have a very difficult time surpassing a baseline of mediocrity without adequate knowledge to routinely induce the flow state."

On a personal note, I have experienced Michael's energy firsthand on countless occasions in the

arts curriculum."

"Ed, you have to watch these training videos – they will greatly improve your training regimen!"

"Ed, have you bought the videos yet?"

These types of statements are extremely common for Michael. But they only marginally describe the positive impact that he has had on me in pursuit of my dreams. This is also not unlike the impact that he's had on others. His fiancée, Melinda, says, "Mike has an amazing effect on the people in his life, most specifically his family and his friends. Just being around him, you feel inspired to learn more about yourself and find the passion inside – it's just an energy that he exudes."

Michael's passion for fitness started him on a long road of success at a very early age. By the age of 18, he had earned the rank of Black Belt in two styles of martial arts: tae kwon do and hapkido. He was an instructor at the Shaolin Kung Fu Association of Cornell for four years and helped develop its unique



training environment. Michael is also a certified strength and conditioning specialist and certified personal trainer with the National Strength and Conditioning Association. He has recently studied several styles of martial arts, including Muay Thai,

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, Western boxing, Krav Maga and Jeet Kune Do.

Michael's success is not unknown to the martial arts and fitness community in the United States as he has appeared in *Black Belt* magazine and has recently written volumes about

his own philosophy of balanced living, which he calls Real Strength. Michael uses the term Real Strength to "encapsulate the physical, mental and spiritual benefits" he has received from modern martial arts and fitness training. These benefits

Currently, Michael is a program manager at Microsoft's headquarter offices.



By the age of 18, Michael had earned the rank of Black Belt in two styles of martial arts: tae kwon do and hapkido. He is also a strength and conditioning specialist and has studied several other forms of martial arts, such as Muay Thai.

have helped him in all aspects of his life, whether or not he was aware of their existence.

The benefits that Michael has received from Real Strength has not only helped him achieve success in the fitness and martial arts

Michael is a program manager at Microsoft's headquarter offices and is responsible for managing the development of software that will make our lives easier every day when we use Internet products such as MSN Hotmail, MSN

“

I believe that being competitive, with yourself and others, is healthy and equally beneficial

”

arena, but also in his other passion: technology. While still a student at Cornell University where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Michael co-founded and acted as Vice President of Product Technology at a company called Jump.com, later acquired by the Microsoft Corporation.

After years of developing other early-stage technology companies and foraying into the world of martial arts teaching and writing, Michael decided to join the company that so vigorously recruited him as one of the most well-rounded technology experts at Cornell University, Microsoft Corporation. Currently,

Messenger and MSN Groups. "To me, Internet technology is really more than the numbers that make it up," Michael says. It is a way for people interested in fitness and martial arts to explore the latest research and to reach out to a worldwide support network – things that are essential for success. Just 10 years ago, getting in shape was more of an individual journey – now you can share your progress with the whole world! It is really very powerful."

In his drive to succeed in multiple facets of his life, Michael maintains

quite a full schedule every day of the week. On the weekends, he prefers to leave his schedule more flexible for focused training on areas in which he needs additional improvement, or to engage in critical rest periods. Take a look at a typical day in the life of Michael Torres:

- 6am One scoop protein powder and half a banana
- 6.45am One hour of weight training, martial arts or yoga
- 8am Light breakfast
- 9am Arrive at Microsoft. Participate in and lead three to four meetings; read, write emails and product specification documents
- 12pm 30-minute lunch break, then continue work
- 4pm Light snack (protein bar, green tea and water)
- 7.45pm Arrive home to have a relaxing dinner with fiancée Melinda
- 8.30pm Read, write or just relax
- 10pm Yet another small meal
- 11pm Sleep!

Now, don't make any assumptions based on this schedule. Michael will always take time out of his busy schedule to have dinner with friends or to engage in a philosophical discussion about life and life's challenges.

Michael is a real world example of Bruce Lee's philosophy in action. Like many other entrepreneurs, he is a doer and his story should be inspiring for us all. He recently moved to Seattle, USA, to provide a more stable life for himself and Melinda.

You can read Michael's weblog on www.strengthjournal.com
To contact Michael, email him at mike@strengthjournal.com