

**BLOCK**

That  
Kick





*"Success is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty and persistence."*

— Colin Powell (American Army General)

**P**owell's assessment sums things up pretty well ... whether you're defending your country from a "murderous tyrant" or simply protecting yourself from an opponent's blistering kicks.

Chong S. Kim, who has been training in the arts for more than 50 years, has a line of hapkido schools in Southern California. Teaching students how to bolster their defense against kicks is a staple of their curriculum diet. Of course, it doesn't hurt that this Korean art features three principles that make it a natural for defense: water, circle and ki or power. Stephen Petermann, who runs Kim's Hapkido in San Dimas, will explain.

In hapkido, the water principle pertains to envelopment and persistence directed toward an enemy.

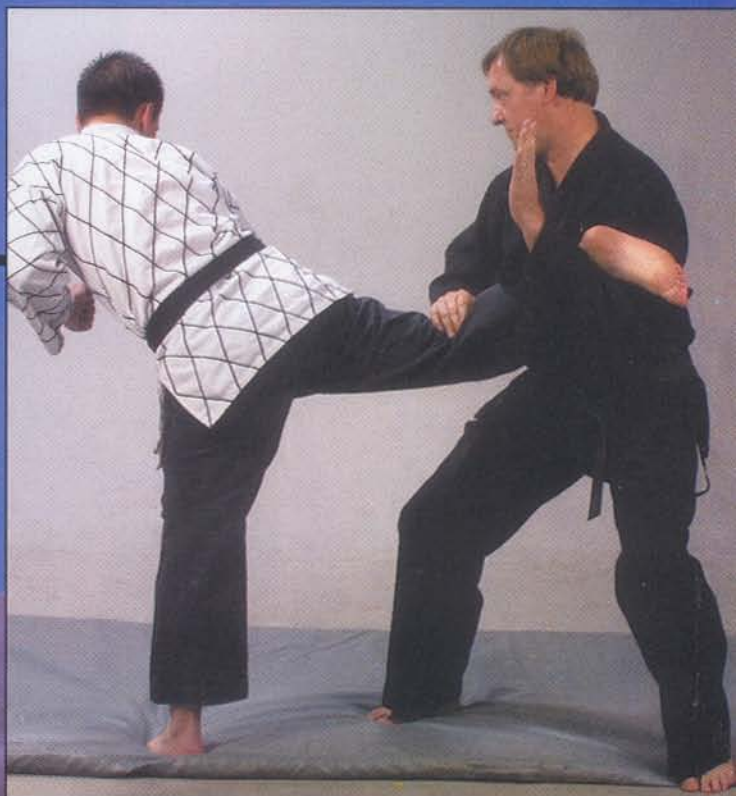
"Dripping water can bore a hole in stone," says Petermann, who has been training in the arts for more than 30 years. "That principle translates to hapkido in that you keep going and keep going [overwhelming your attacker]."

The circle principle deals with redirecting an opponent's momentum. For example, using a circular movement, a hapkido stylist can redirect an adversary's linear technique and throw him off balance.

In the final principle, the hapkido stylist capitalizes on energy to control his opponent. For example, he might pull his opponent forward so all of his

Bolstered by its water, circle and power principles, **hapkido** has strong techniques to defend against your opponent's lethal legs

BY DOUG JEFFREY





# BLOCK That Kick

weight is on the balls of his feet. Or, he might push him back so all of his weight is on his heels. Then, the attacker is at his mercy.

"For the most part, people do not understand the energy of a mountain or a river," says Petermann. "In fact, a mountain does not appear to have energy until you try to climb one. Of course, everyone will tell you that is gravity. Well, call it what you will, but you need to take advantage of that."

Thus, when confronting an adversary, capitalize on his energy. Use it to your advantage.

In addition to the three principles, there's another reason why hapkido is perfect for defense against kicks, notes Petermann.

"Hapkido has a long martial tradition for energetic kick-

ing," he says. "It only makes sense that the art has a broad selection of kicks and self-defense for those kicks."

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Before we delve into the physical, hard-core, nuts-and-bolts parts of defense, consider the following general tips:

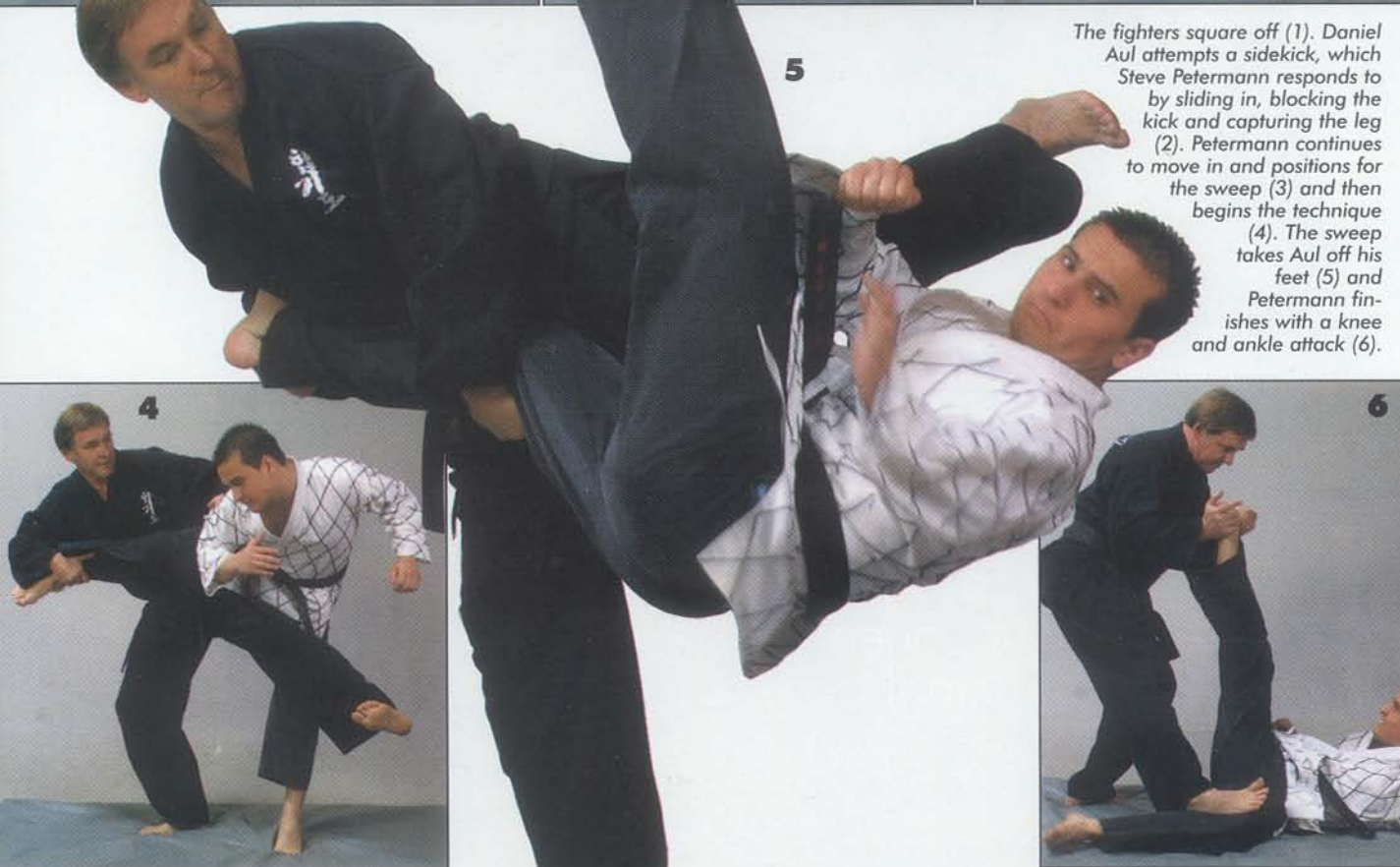
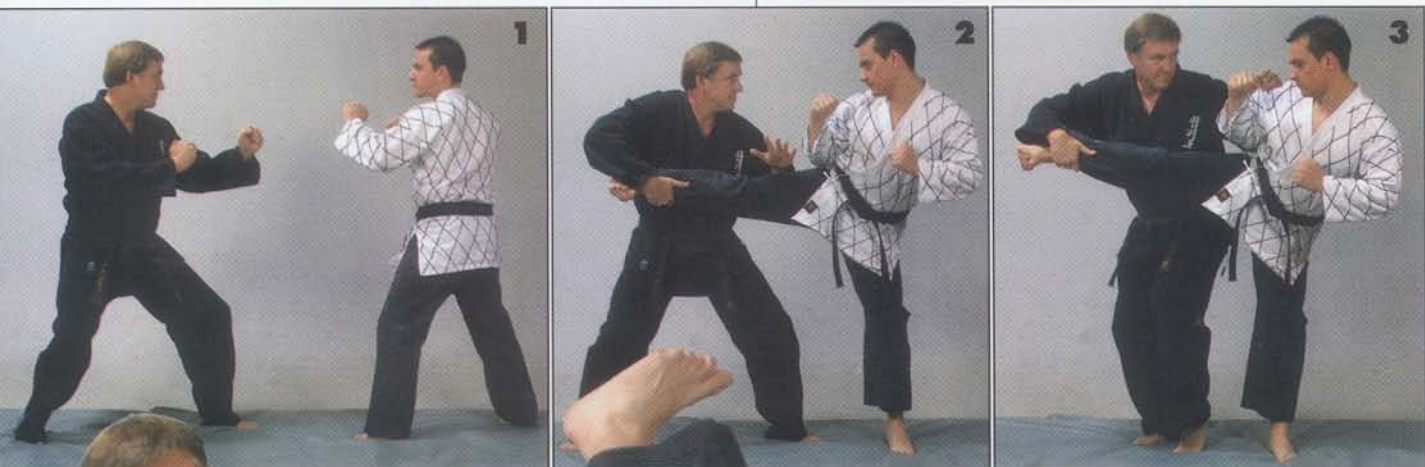
- First, remember that kicks can be surprising. If you are the type of fighter who focuses too much on your opponent's hands, his kicks may just catch you off guard.

"Some guys often find themselves wondering how their opponent grew a third arm," says Petermann.

It's vital that you stay alert. Be focused.

- Next, don't forget that kicks are powerful. The muscles in the legs are the longest and strongest in the body. They can do serious damage.

"That translates to muscle force, and you have to take into consideration how they contribute to the mass of an



The fighters square off (1). Daniel Aul attempts a sidekick, which Steve Petermann responds to by sliding in, blocking the kick and capturing the leg (2). Petermann continues to move in and positions for the sweep (3) and then begins the technique (4). The sweep takes Aul off his feet (5) and Petermann finishes with a knee and ankle attack (6).



attack," says Petermann.

The first two points are negatives, but there is also a positive to dealing with kicks.

- On the good side, kicks are slower than punches so you have a better chance to block or avoid the strikes, he says. At the same time, however, don't underestimate an opponent. If you let down mentally, your opponent might just light you up.

### 3 VITAL ELEMENTS

Let's now turn our attention to the physical aspect of defending against kicks. The three vital elements that comprise this are closing the gap, positioning and timing. We'll start with closing the gap.

To successfully defend against a kick, it's vital that you learn how to comfortably close the gap on your opponent. Of course, almost everyone can step back and block a kick, says Petermann ... even beginners. However, you have to be able to reverse directions and go toward the kicker.

"Moving toward an opponent while he's kicking requires an entirely different mind-set that must be acquired, and you have to train to get that," says the 47-year-old hapkido stylist.

It's important to move toward the kicker for a couple reasons. First, if you move back, you'll make yourself a target again ... in a different spot, says Petermann.

Next, to counterattack, you have to be in range.

"You can't phone in a counterattack," he says. "You have to be close enough to do it."

It's not unusual or unreasonable to have a problem with moving in. After all, the fear of getting hit or kicked can be "considerable," he says.

To develop this ability, you have to work slowly and focus on your basics. Get those blocks down. Slowly, this will bolster your confidence.

Finally, you need to know how to get in the proper position, and this can be one of the most "difficult aspects," he says. Following are some key points:

- After you move in, you want to use your center of gravity against his and you need to be lower than him.
- The most desirable position is to get behind him and have your leading hip against his leading hip. This gives you the opportunity to bend him over backward or throw him.
- If you're in front of him, it's more difficult and dangerous because you're in line with four or five of his weapons.

The third factor is timing. Just as you can't catch a wave if you stand up too late or too soon on a surfboard, you can't block a kick if you react too early or late. Your timing has to be sharp. You gotta be right on the money. As your timing improves, you'll make the progression from getting nailed to getting better to getting good.

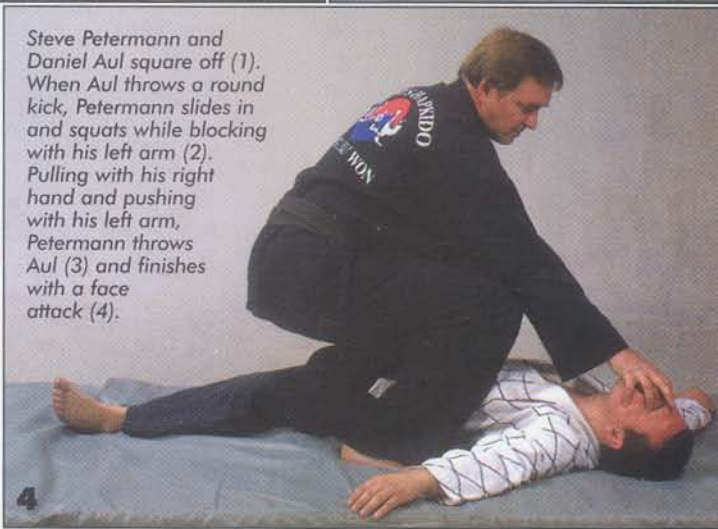
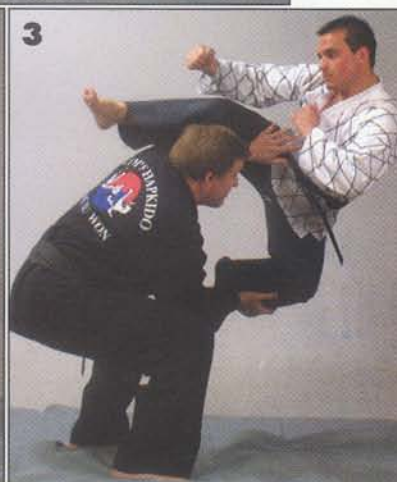
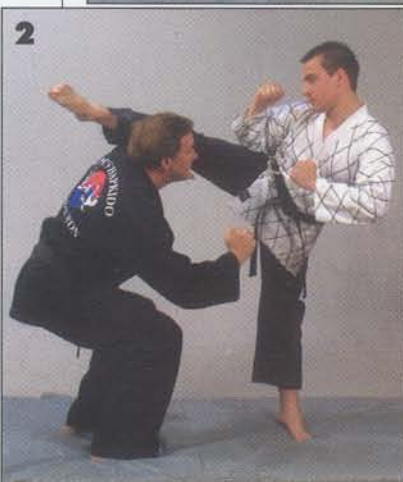
"Initially, you'll probably get kicked," says Petermann. "Next, you'll learn how to jam the kick, which is a successful defense. Then, you'll learn to deflect or evade the kick. That gives you the opportunity to then throw a counter."

### TIPS FOR KICK DEFENSE

Provided you do them with regularity, the following tips will help you round out your skills.

- To begin, kick. Plain and simple. Throw some kicks. And then throw some more.

"The more kicks you throw, the better you will understand the dynamics of kicking," says Petermann. "There-



Steve Petermann and Daniel Aul square off (1). When Aul throws a round kick, Petermann slides in and squats while blocking with his left arm (2). Pulling with his right hand and pushing with his left arm, Petermann throws Aul (3) and finishes with a face attack (4).

## Meet the Principles

When an opponent throws a kick in your direction, he will be coming toward you to add some power to his kick, his balance will be static or he'll lean back slightly. You can employ the principles of the art (water, circle and power) in any of these scenarios. Here's how they work:

**WATER:** Any time you move in and envelope your opponent and simply overwhelm him, you've utilized the water principle.

**CIRCLE:** Let's say that your opponent is moving toward you, and you're going to employ the circle principle. First, and always, block any technique he shoots your way. Then, slide forward, grab his kicking leg, twist your hip and sweep him with your trailing leg. This will enhance his momentum and knock him to the ground.

**POWER:** When an opponent throws his kick and leans back, which usually means he's less experienced than others, use the power principle to knock him off balance. You simply add your power to his power to increase his backward momentum. He's moving backward so you simply help him out.



# BLOCK That Kick

fore, it will be easier for you to defend against your opponent's kicks."

- Until you're really skilled, adopt a stance in which your elbows are glued to your hips and stomach and keep your fingers lightly curled. This offers you the most protection.

Don't hold your fingers too tight, because you'll probably be slow. If your fingers are open, they'll get jammed. Therefore, keep them slightly open and curled.

You also need to keep your stomach tight and practice moving in. Go slowly at first and then gradually increase your speed. Eventually, when your opponent lifts his knee to kick, you will be next to him, says Petermann. To get to this point, you might need to have a student stand behind you and tell you when to move forward.

- Be observant.

"Some people change their stances when they are about

to kick," he says. "You will often see a dead giveaway for a back kick or heel kick or spin kick."

For example, many martial artists will turn their head before they throw a back kick. That can be a signal to move, he says. Most, however, will move back. Not so in hapkido.

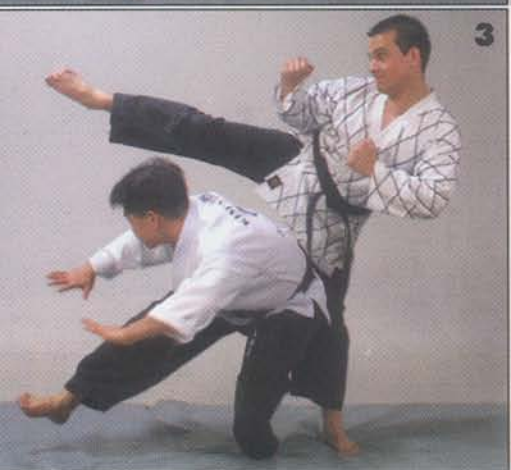
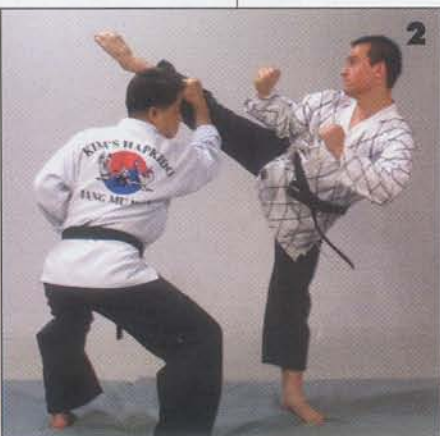
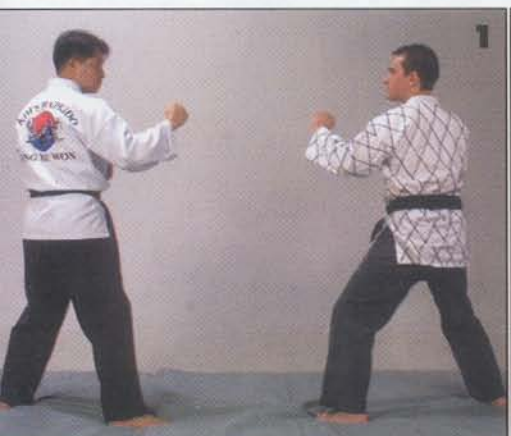
"That is a signal to move in," he says.

## FACTORING IN VARIABLES

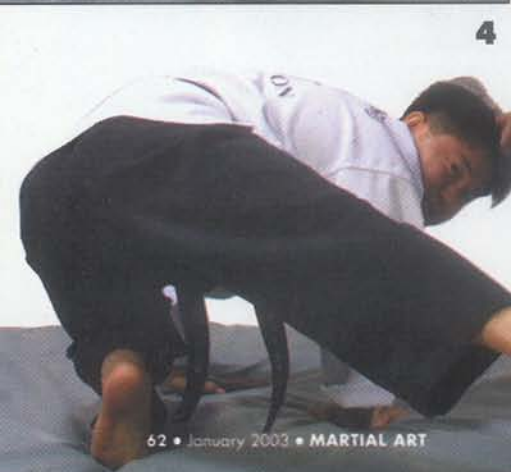
In a perfect world, you'd never get into a confrontation. In a not-so-perfect world, you'd get into a confrontation under ideal conditions. In an imperfect world, you'd meet the largest opponent imaginable in the worst conditions possible. Following are a few pointers for those less-than-desirable circumstances:

- First, if you're going up against a mammoth-sized opponent, you might want to defend with twists, unbalances or strikes rather than throws. If you have any doubts about how much difficulty size presents, think back to how much

*Continued on page 94*



The fighters square off (1). Daniel Aul throws a round kick that Han Woong Kim slides in and blocks (2). Kim then steps forward and begins a low spin kick (3) and sweeps his opponent (4).



## The Scoop

- Name: Chong S. Kim
- Born: Seoul, South Korea in 1931
- Experience: Trained for more than 50 years
- Proficiency: Ninth-degree black belt
- Quick Fact: In Seoul, he was one of 12 practitioners who toured Asia, giving demonstrations and lessons in such places as Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Vietnam.



# THE ART OF BREATHING

hands and feet working together with the internal power that comes from breathing. Concentrate on all the muscles. The whole being moves together: oneness and unity.

## BREATHING IS THE KEY

Karate is not only for winning against an opponent, but it's also for developing yourself. Kata is the way to this goal, and breathing is the way to the kata. This develops mental abilities. When you are alone in an empty dojo (martial arts school), just do tanden breathing movements. You come up against your greatest opponent: yourself. When you become tired, continue to push yourself, not with the goal of defeating other people, but with the goal of self-achievement.

We train not to win, but to master ourselves. This is the mental side of the martial arts. Higaonna clarified that self-defense is important—accomplished martial artists should be able to defend themselves, and tournaments can be useful because they excite and inspire young people. But don't lose sight of the ultimate goal. Ultimately, you become what you practice.

Breathing is the key. With each breath you make yourself perform better and better. This is the way to develop mastery. ☯

*About the writers: The Simpkins are martial arts instructors and authors of numerous books in the areas of Eastern philosophy and hypnosis. Their works include Principles of Meditation, Living Meditation, Meditation from Thought to Action, Zen Around the World, Simple Zen, Simple Taoism, Simple Buddhism and Effective Self-Hypnosis.*

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# BLOCK That Kick

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trouble Shaquille O'Neal gave the Portland Trail Blazers in the first round of the NBA playoffs.

- If the surface is slippery, don't lose any sleep. If the surface is bad for one, it's bad for both.

"If it's slippery for him, it's slippery for me," he says. "That's a moot point."

- If you go up against someone during the evening, you might expect your opponent to throw a kick because he may be trying to capitalize on the element of surprise.

## GET DEFENSIVE

To block kicks successfully—regardless of where you are—there are several important tips to keep in mind. First, you have to strive for perfection. Next, you have to work hard and be persistent. Finally, it won't hurt you to learn from your mistakes. If you do these things, you'll be successful more often than not. Just ask Colin Powell. ☺

## Where To Find Them

Chong S. Kim owns six schools in Southern California. They are located in Alhambra, San Dimas, Monrovia, South Pasadena, Yuciapa and Fontana. For more information, call (626) 284-4440 or go to [www.kims\\_hapkido.com/grandhtm](http://www.kims_hapkido.com/grandhtm).

# HOMELAND SECURITY

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truck, or in the house making a fort out of the sofa cushions or banging on pots and pans. With a little creativity, your home base can be transformed into an entertaining and safe play area for your child.

## LOCK UP TIGHT

- When you are home, get in the habit of locking all of your doors.

- It's also wise to make a last-minute check at bedtime of all your doors and the windows in your child's room. Don't rule out the use of monitors, either. This enables you to listen for any abnormal activity. The ultimate precaution is a home security system.

## DUTY TO PROTECT

In conclusion, our children don't have to be victims. As parents, we have a duty to protect our young as the African elephants do, and arm our children with the weapons they need in a fight if we aren't with them. ☺

*About the writer: Mandy Sayah is a freelance writer, mother (Charles is eight months old) and martial artist.*