

**Harnessing the Power of Peace:  
A Balanced Approach to the Art of Combat**

**Presented by:**

Helene Finizio

MAPP.2

April 21, 2007

**Presented to:**

Professor Debbie Swick

MAPP 709

Positive Psychology and Institutions

University of Pennsylvania

## *The Story- What is Balance Studios*

Phil Migliarese has dedicated his life to mastering the arts of Jui Jitsu and Yoga. He began yoga at the age of 6, martial arts at 8 and moved into Jui Jitsu training at the age of twelve, discovering a natural proclivity for the practice. At the age of 16 Phil endured a terrible car accident, breaking his knees, hips, ribs, spine and shoulders. Even this tragic accident could not keep him from training. During the six grueling months he was rendered immobile he studied videos and writings that would deepen his knowledge. He used yoga techniques in breathing to aid in his recovery and pain endurance. The doctors told Phil he would never train again. Pushed by this dour forecasting, Phil created his personal mantra.

“I refuse to lose.” The now second degree Gracie Jiu Jitsu Black Belt went on to train with the best of the best, the Gracie Brothers who developed this particular style of Jiu Jitsu. His Mentor, Relson Gracie, asked Phil to move in with him during his training in both Brazil and Hawaii. Phil traveled the world in his education under the Gracie brothers in attaining mastery of the practice.

Today Phil is a living reminder that anything one puts their mind to can be achieved. He and his brother Rick opened Balance Studios, the premier Jiu Jitsu and Ashtanga Yoga training studio in North America. They have opened their doors to professional fighters and novices alike, women, children, little old ladies who need help sitting down and men without teeth the same.

The innovation of this organization is simple. Follow your passions, do not let anything get in your way, and then share this passion with those who would join you. It is Phil's passion, drive and utter determination that has made the Balance Team what it is today.

### *The Impact*

It is almost impossible to cover the breadth of the impact Phil's pursuit of passion has created. He has helped to shape the lives of his family, friends and even those who merely know him through the media. He has become a pioneer in human ability, helping people tap into their natural strength and peace. He believes in three pillars of a peaceful life: positivity, impermanence and uncertainty. He explains that if someone is able to see all of life as transient, yet is still able to remain positive and optimistic all the while, a harmony can be actualized between the individual's psyche and the interaction of that person within the world at large.

“The biggest thing is to be truthful. Truthful to yourself. There is no such thing as independence, there is only interdependence.” (Phil Migliarese, April 10, 2007)

And interdependence he has created. Students of his who have become teachers under his guidance have shared with me their total love of the Balance lifestyle. Josh, a young man who was mopping up after teaching a class for the studio, remarked on how the entire group treated him like family the minute he walked in the doors. Ed, another student who had progressed to teacher status, told me a heartfelt story of self-actualization, giving credit to Phil and brother Rick for pushing him to do all the things

he wanted with his life. Ed pronounced that he would not be who he was if not for these men. He is even thinking of opening his own studio with Phil's help and sharing the vision and passion of Jiu Jitsu living to others still.

### *The Motivation*

When asked why he had done all of this, what the motivation and vision were, Phil simply replied, "I had no vision. I just wanted to train Jiu Jitsu because I love it and want to share it with others." This is simplicity at its apex. The art of Jiu Jitsu is based on a peaceful approach to life. One is to first walk away from a conflict if possible. If the altercation is unavoidable, Jiu Jitsu teaches the practitioner how to disarm the opponent with humanity and grace. This approach harnesses the power of peace. Were more people able to walk away from conflicts, or to go into a conflict with the intention of deflating the situation, the art of combat would be redefined, more properly in alignment with the wisdom of ancient warriors. There is no honor in terrorism. There is no glory in vulgar aggression. Phil Migliarese both teaches and lives a life of tranquility and peace, balancing necessary invasion with a dangerously calm strength. He is grounded in the way of harmony. This is more than a purpose; this is a piece of a paradigm shift in our view of the man beyond the fight.

### *Interviewer Experience*

It is not often that one encounters a man with such a rich history of personal growth and fiery devotion. Phil redefined the rules of the world when he would not take the words of the doctors as intransigent. He established his own playing field, creating

the body, mind and lifestyle that he *decided was right for him*. Such an effort takes tremendous autonomy, perseverance, creativity, zest and vigor.

In speaking with Phil I realized how seldom I speak with people who break the mold. He would not settle for anything other than his own ideals. He spent his life working tirelessly in an effort to realize his dreams. He is a trailblazer and natural leader.

I have been inspired by the opportunity to speak with such a figurehead. Coming from a similar mentality, I found resonance with much of the messages Phil articulated. As a result of this interview, I have been keenly aware of the level of passion and dedication expressed by those with whom I work. There are some who are of a similar ilk, yet the majority is far from this way of life. It is time for certain messages to ring louder in the public ear. We are all responsible for our own happiness. No one else is responsible for the path of another's life. Molds are made to be broken. Challenges are there to be met and surmounted. Passion is only alive when it is lived. There is strength in the truth of what one really loves.

*Interview conducted 8:30pm, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2007*

*Location:*

*Balance Studios*

*108-114 Bonsall St.*

*Philadelphia, Pa 19103*

*Balance Philly.com*