

KEY PEOPLE

**Mark Luckey**

A 3rd Dan in Battistello, Shukokai Martial Arts, Mark is a member of the Victorian Kumite Team and in the Australian squad since August 2019. A specialist in IT consulting, conceptual design, nearshore software development, online travel, hotels, mawashi geri, and cutting line – Mark is the CIO of Stuba, an accommodation wholesaler for travel agents, and the MD of Storyboard Multimedia.

**Paul Taylor**

A former British Royal Navy Aircrew Officer, Paul is a Neuroscientist, Exercise Physiologist, and Nutritionist. In addition to an extensive background in health and fitness, Paul has a proven track record in leadership, management and dealing in high-pressure situations, through his former roles as an Airborne Anti-submarine Warfare Officer and a Helicopter Search-And-Rescue Crew Member with the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm and has undergone rigorous Combat Survival and Resistance-to-Interrogation Training.

Grounded In Hawthorn

ABOUT



Conceived through an exploration of karate and yoga, [Grounded In](#) is a journey through martial arts, ancient philosophy, and cutting-edge neuroscience to develop physical strength and mental resilience. Beginning in Jan 2021, it will be a school holiday, accelerated beginners program, based around the Shukokai basics, run by Mark, at a premium boutique space at his converted office in Hawthorn, Australia.

Focused, integrated, structured learning that addresses physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development – the program incorporates a 'resilient mind quest' to bolster students' resilience, self-confidence, as well as mental and emotional wellbeing. It also combines the Stoic and Japanese Philosophy, built into a class format, to give a further unique angle that amplifies the benefits of martial arts training and the mindfulness quest.

BACKGROUND

The early days of the 2020 lockdown due to COVID-19 were devastating as the business damage became apparent. Mark, however, decided to keep a positive outlook and make COVID a silver lining and a growth experience. In this process, he reached out to some colleagues around the world which resulted in a group of 4 people from different walks of life getting together – Mark a sensei, Paul Taylor, a Neuroscientist, Exercise Physiologist, and Nutritionist, Umeed Kothavala, the CEO of Extentia, an IT firm in India, and Stuart Evans, a local real estate agent from Australia. They met over Zoom calls every fortnight – discussing topics relevant to opportunities during the lockdown. This is where Paul's app, '[the resilient mind quest](#)' came up, which, the group happily became a part of, along with several others from their respective companies. This was then followed by introducing the app to elite Martial artists across Victoria and Australia and 1600 travel agents and their families in the Australian travel industry at a heavily reduced rate.

With a great reception and positive feedback of the app, Mark then decided to collaborate with Paul and materialize his idea of creating a program that combines the ying and the yang of karate and yoga. Mark and Sasha, his wife, a qualified yoga teacher discussed a way to pivot and survive out of the current COVID situation which gave birth to their first actionable, agile project-oriented rollout idea 'Grounded in Hawthorn', a critical aspect of which is 'the resilient mind quest'.

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH MARK LUCKEY!

Q. The most basic yet intriguing question first – what’s the vision behind Grounded In?

A. My wife Sasha and I always had a desire to do something around karate and yoga – both being opposite in nature making it a fascinating idea. Though it was our idea, I feel it’s fair to say that it was brought to life because of the zoom meetings I had, every fortnight with Paul, Umeed, and Stuart. I would say that if the group had not met, and had not done the first resilient mind quests, that this would not have come about!

Q. We know that Grounded In combines your martial arts skill with Paul’s neuroscience expertise, how has the experience been so far?

A. I met Paul just before the world was completely hit by COVID in February. It was a training camp for the Australian karate Federation to pick the national team that year, and we both were training in the same group. I had been doing a lot of reading and studying in trying to find how to get the most out of myself, my team, as a dad, a karate teacher, a member of the Australian team, and just in general life. For me, meeting Paul was amazing as not only did he know so much more about every one of the topics that I’ve been studying, but he had done stuff with it. The biggest challenge was that Paul and I only saw each other in the flesh in late November 2020. But we spoke every fortnight, we zoomed, and literally, a key approach in this initial rollout is to use as much of what we have as possible and make it as easy as possible to test the MVP. For me it’s been really interesting and very exciting to have a positive focus as frankly, work has been extremely challenging in 2020, let’s face it, everything has!



Q. If you were to bring out the best aspect of the program, what would that be?

A. It is literally that notion of the overlap – taking karate which is physical, self-defense oriented, and simultaneously linking it to a mobile app which by and large is based on the psychology written by emperors, slaves, and students in ancient Greece and Italy. Let’s see what our students say the best element! Hopefully, they think training with me is pretty good

Q. We see there are podcasts available to the enthused audience, tell us more about those?

A. Paul produces an astounding array of podcasts and they continually overlap with my reading as well as his own pracademic research which, if I try and summarize could be ‘learn something and see if we can apply it’. Find all the [podcasts here!](#)



Q. The Grounded In studio looks amazing, any back story behind the design and launch?

A. It's not a massive space, given the density restrictions resulting from lockdown. We have put in a full vertical garden which is now maturing nicely. To work on technique it makes sense to have a mirror that gives you an amazing reflection of the plants. The space combines fresh air, natural light, and some very cool lighting. There's a seagrass wallpaper that's designed to remove hard edges, and create an optimum environment for learning and feeling special. We chose karate mats with woodgrain as they just looked a little bit softer. We wanted parents to feel like they were not just booking their kids into a school holiday program, but investing in something and feeling good about their investment. Apart from the wallpapering and the mirror, I did everything myself! It took about five hours to disassemble and pack away the existing furniture, laying the mats took another three hours to trim them to shape. Given the fact that I have a full-time job, in addition to being a dad and a husband – the lighting and layout often took place late at night or on weekends. None of those could be sacrificed, so it was squeezing it in.

Q. Who is this program meant for and what one should expect from the range of classes it offers, encompassing karate and philosophy?

A. The classes are primarily for three groups – grade 5 and 6 (for primary school kids, building their confidence in their last couple of years of primary school), year 7 and 8 (for kids in the first two years of high school who tend to be physically bigger, stronger, and have different goals), and parents training with kids (for an incredible bonding experience between parents and kids). Seeing parents who train with their kids has been inspiring. Not only does it give us something to share individually with our kids, but it has created this wonderful community which is an amazing testament to Mark Castaldi, who is my teacher. From a karate perspective, it's all about learning the basics of the first couple of belts. The fundamentals of the stance, how to generate power, understanding distance, punching, kicking, and blocking. At the end of each class, we will spend time discussing some simple fundamentals of philosophy that are consistent across karate, the Stoic philosophers and, Japanese philosophy. We will also be giving our students, copies of two books with some out of class content that will be tracked through the mind-body brain app, which will involve dropping a bit of stoic philosophy at the dinner table and coming and reporting back the next day. It's all about re-enforcing the learning, making it really enjoyable and very real.



Grounded In is all set for launch in January 2021, and is driven by multiple factors including:

- The importance of mental health especially during the COVID-19 pandemic
- The need to address the issue of falling enrolment numbers in regular karate classes with increased skill and integrated training
- The potential in the opportunity to explore an idea with the right knowledge, facilities, and timing
- The ability to combine karate, the resilient mind quest app, the Stoic and Japanese philosophy

‘Ikigai’ is a way of finding one's true purpose, true meaning, and comes from the Japanese philosophy. Ikigai is achieved when these parameters intersect and with Grounded In, both Mark and Sasha feel they have found it!





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GROUNDING IN

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