

8 Reasons Why Children Should Take Karate

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Self-defense is often the first reason parents enroll their children. In Karate, it should be their last. Martial Arts training is more than a course in kicking and punching. It promotes self-confidence, assertiveness, goal orientation, calmness, and concentration. Yes, it can bully-proof a child, but it will teach the child a responsibility for his newfound skills.

Ernest Hemingway said “That courage is grace under pressure”. Martial Arts teach such grace. The format is simple: apply a small amount of pressure, teach the student how to handle it, and then apply a little more and so on.

Most beginners as taut as bow strings. They flinch at each yell, and close their eyes or turn away at each punch. As the weeks pass, they learn to face such things calmly. This new grace benefits students in ways that extend the Karate School. Parents often notice changes in their children. Martial Arts is a practical course in assertive training. Standing up to an artificial display of aggression makes other encounters seem easy by comparison.

Parents will find that karate promotes achievement orientation. A good Martial Arts studio is full of positive role models. You find kids who have memorized hundreds of moves. Martial Arts studios are places where extraordinary people are ordinary people who display extraordinary determination. Children exposed to this type of determination have a greater chance of incorporating this attitude into their own personality.

A distinct advantage of Karate over team sports is that every child can participate. Unlike team sports where a youngster may not make the cut or ends up on the bench, Karate lets everyone perform to his or her highest level. It can satisfy a child’s need to belong. Close relationships are formed. A student develops a special attachment to the class that gives the feeling of being unique and part of something out of the ordinary. The feeling of belonging is added insurance against children becoming involved in negative activities.

Children in Karate classes are often leaders in their peer group because of their assertive training. They have an investment in their value system which is essential.

Karate lessons may help children study. Concentration is definitely a by-product of karate training. Movements against an imaginary opponent are a lesson in self-control. Just keeping a 6 year olds’ attention for one hour is a class in concentration.

Karate is goal orientated. Karate offers clear bench marks of progress that are not found in many modern day activities.

The Martial Arts Ranking System bestows a different color belt for each step up the ladder. It gives the child a constant sense of achievement. Each child sees the result of his or her effort. A by-product of these tests is learning poise in front of judges and an audience.

Karate has physical demands that work on the child's motor coordination. Both upper and lower body must perform intricate, coordinated movements. In a child, neurological development is occurring at a rapid pace. Karate training develops this coordination as no other sports. Children lacking coordination find the Martial Arts to be one of the best activities to develop balance and fluid movement.

Flexibility is a standard part of the Martial Arts training. A sport that promotes flexibility makes a young athlete less prone to injury and more flexible in later life.

Contrary to what parents might believe, Martial Arts training does not prepare children for a showdown with a bully. A bully usually has low self-esteem, and a need to feel powerful causes them to seek out others weaker than themselves. Martial Artists learn to look their opponent in the eyes. Sparring teaches control of breathing. Stances are an integral part of balance, power and rapid movement. Students learn to respond to questions in a firm voice. In the most cases, the bully is defeated not by combat, but by the martial Artist's calm and confident demeanor.

Some parents harbor a concern that Karate promotes violence in a child. I believe this is a valid cause for concern. Look at the bad guys in the Karate Kid movies. There are instructors like that out there and it is very important that parents choose the proper instructor. Observe the classes before you enroll your child.

According to recent psychiatric studies, just the opposite occurs. University of Miami Professor Richard Carrera, a clinical psychologist who conducted a study of Martial Artists, found that in comparison to children not trained in the Martial Arts, the Martial Artists were quiet, conscientious, industrious, and able to inhibit aggression and hostility. Carrera claims a Martial Artist actually has better control of his violent impulses because he knows he has this capacity, and may therefore be able to control it and dispense violence only when necessary. Karate training gives the student a secure identity.

Gichin Funakoshi, who originated Japanese Karate said "The ultimate goal of the Martial Arts did not lie in victory or defeat, but in the improvement of the student's character." This is what the Martial Arts are all about.

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