

## **Why people should practice and train Karate (Martial Art)**

One might wonder why, in this era of rampant violence and easy access to weapons, one would train in the martial arts. My response would be that martial art, with Karate the main focus, is more than merely learning how to defend oneself in a battle. If karate was otherwise the case, then it will indeed be pointless to practice in this period of time to some extent. I say to some extent because I take into consideration that not all parties in a battle necessarily have the intention to kill. In that regard, no karate trainee is confronted with the fear of having to dodge bullets or any weapons of sort and thus, it is apparent then to see the usefulness of karate. However, the usefulness of practicing karate is much more than this. Karate is an art and a way of life. It teaches essential spiritual principle, enhances physical health, nourishes self-improvement, and benefits society as a whole.

Karate, in a spiritual aspect, teaches us how to end conflict by nonviolent means. It is more than having the confidence to avoid a fight, but more importantly, to end conflict at its source within the human mind. This paradoxical intent becomes clear when one begins to understand the nature of violence and peace. It becomes even clearer when one metaphorically understands that in order to extinguish fire; water is the best alternative rather than gasoline or even fire itself. Hence, Karate helps develop our mind and body in a spirit of humility and devotion to the cause of justice.

Practicing karate does contribute to a healthy life style just like regular sports and exercises. It strengthens the body and its defensive mechanisms in preventing sicknesses. It also gives energy and enhances breathing. Gichin Funakoshi, an advocate of karate's health benefits and a key pioneer in the development of modern karate, believes that, "Karate-do is not merely a sport that teaches how to strike and kick; it is also a defense against illness and disease." His strong conviction that karate training can enhance physical health must have been influenced by his dramatic recovery from poor health during his early youth.

As a karate trainee, I can attest that Karate teaches me discipline and self-improvement. For instance, I apply the principles of meditation outside the dojo to help me concentrate and focus on my studies by freeing my mind from temptations. Most importantly, Karate teaches me patience and the importance of practice. Practicing katas and basic techniques repeatedly, I realized through the help of my Sensei, is essential and beneficial in the long run. I use the same principles in my studies by taking my homework very seriously as it contributes to my success in exams and ultimately, the entire course.

Karate is a benefit to society because it promotes and enhances moral character and principles. According to Funakoshi, "'Karate is not only the acquisition of certain defensive skills, but also the mastering of the art of being a good and honest member of society.'" This statement indicates the importance of self-improvement and contribution to society. Karate requires good moral characters from its participants because "'Karate begins and ends with courtesy.'" – Gichin Funakoshi.