

What Karate Means to Me

When I think about why I joined Karate, I feel like I almost fell into it. I wanted to find a club for my children, someone suggested I try Junsui Karate and I never looked back. (Although, I may have stayed a spectator if it wasn't for John Malia convincing me to give it a go.) I'd tried Karate as a child and as I could exercise alongside my children it seemed like a great idea.

Karate has become much more than just exercise to me. I remember getting my membership pack and reading the dojo kun inside. I think it might be these 5 principles that had me hooked from the go. I think about them now and it really explains what karate has become in my life.

- Seek Perfection of Character

Karate has improved my confidence. When I joined I was not confident in the slightest and I had been through some big changes in my life and didn't really feel like myself. Karate helped me to overcome this. I never thought I would ever be able to get up in front of people and do a Kata never mind join in competitions for Kata and Kumite. Every belt I passed spurred me on to work harder and set my sights on my next belt and my next goal. This attitude has helped me at work and in my personal life.

- Be faithful

My hobby used to be trying new hobbies. I never thought that I would be able to commit to studying Karate for such a long time. The more I learn the more I want to know. I love karate as it really does give me a 'peaceful mind'. When I come to train I can block out any other thoughts and focus on breathing and technique. I go home with a tired body but a clear mind.

- Endeavour

At times over the last few years I have had to have time away from karate, while this may have slowed my progress, it has made me more determined to succeed. At times I've struggled but I have always found support from Senseis and fellow students. Karate makes me realise that 100% effort and perseverance will pay off in the end. I used to see a black belt as the ultimate goal. I felt frustrated when my progress was slow but eventually I realised that

the colour of your belt doesn't matter as long as you gain knowledge and keep moving forward.

- Respect Others

One of the reasons John convinced me to join in was when he reminded me how good it was for children to learn alongside their parents. I thought it would be good to show my children that I would also do the things that I expected from them. Being courteous and respectful of the people who train you, you train with and the place you train in, are all good life lessons. As my knowledge grows I love teaching the younger members of the club and sharing ideas with other students. I know I talk a lot... but sometimes it really is about karate!!! The club has grown so much over the years, I always try to be friendly and welcoming to anyone who walks through the door as that was exactly the welcome I found when I joined.

- Refrain from Violent Behaviour

I would never describe myself as violent so I loved that Karate doesn't have a 'first strike' although I appreciate its value in self-defence. Karate has empowered me to feel strong and confident but this principle comes back to karate helping me find inner calm, control and strength to be assertive.

Gaining my black belt means so much to me as it symbolises the knowledge and skills I have gained over the past few years. It is a privilege to be able to pass on my knowledge to others and hopefully pass on my enthusiasm and passion for what has become an important and integral part of my life. I would like to thank Sensei Steven for this opportunity and also as your passion for Karate is limitless and Sensei Kim who is always supportive. Katie Strangward has also been an inspiration in my Karate journey and a role model to many in the club.