

## What Karate means to me

I started at JSKD when I decided to give Karate another go. I'd tried a local club when I was about 8 years old, and honestly, I hated it. Even though it was something I'd wished I'd kept up, it wasn't until 2015 when I made the commitment. Initially, I was hoping to find a new hobby and improve my fitness levels, however, after 3 years, it's become something I won't be able to live without.

I always look forward to Karate, even after I've had a hard shift or a hard day, it's the means I use to forget about it for a few hours. My favourite aspect is Kata. Though I pick up the patterns and moves of a Kata relatively quickly, it's the concentration and technique required to obtain perfection that I like the most. While training for my black belt, practising Bunkai and Oyo, I have learnt that there are so many more possibilities for application than I realised. Even though it's sometimes been difficult to wrap my head around, I've enjoyed breaking down and learning the many meanings of the moves and techniques within the Kata.

Karate has definitely improved my confidence when meeting new people. I have made some great friends at the club, whereas before, I would have remained very quiet and shy when meeting a new group of people. Through learning Kata and combinations, my memory and concentration have improved, which has helped me in my everyday life and also at work. Becoming an instructor and helping to teach at the Hamsteels club was a huge achievement, and gave me a massive confidence boost. If someone had asked me 3 years ago if becoming an instructor was something I wanted to achieve in Karate, I probably would have said that I wouldn't have been able to do it. Karate has taught me that I can do anything if I put my mind to it, work hard and earn it. It's also a great feeling knowing that the students that I teach are learning everything I've been taught – discipline, confidence, respect – the list goes on. Training at JSKD has also made me feel more confident in myself about staying safe. I feel that in the event of an emergency where I'd need to defend myself or others, although unlikely, I'd have the strength and ability to do so.

Karate has me strength, confidence, self-belief, and most importantly for me, some amazing bonds and friendships with both instructors and students. To achieve my black belt would definitely be one of the proudest moments of my life. JSKD has become an important part of my life and has shaped who I am today, and I wouldn't be that person if it wasn't for the instructors, students, and mostly, for Steven persuading me to give it another go the first time I ever met him. I won't forget the first thing he said to me - 'Do you fancy giving it a go?'

I gave Karate a second chance, I'm so glad I did.

Charlotte Hedley

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