

2nd Dan Submission What karate means to me

Sarah-Jayne Sams

I have never been good with words especially essays as I tend to babble a lot. When I was told that part of my 2nd Dan was to write an essay on what karate means to me I was totally caught by surprise. I've always been a one to keep my feelings to myself rather than share them so opening I up and writing this is going to be different. I am definitely more of a doing person than a writing person. Preforming a kata not a problem punching someone in the face not a problem but writing OH boy!!!

Well here it goes karate means a lot to me it has helped me through many parts of my life. I was always a quiet, shy girl at school and was always the smallest. This meant I got bullied all the way through primary school. It was the worst experience that probably will never leave me. I started Karate at the age of 11 after I had seen a poster in school advertising a new class starting.

I was always a Tomboy I loved football, hockey, rugby, swimming but when I went home and said I wanted to started Karate my dad wasn't too keen. It was my mam that took me to my first lesson and from then on I fell in love with the sport. I used to train 3 times a week at 2 hour sessions. I found that karate was my release, I could leave a session and feel completely relaxed. In the class I could be myself and my confidence grew when I started to progress through the grades.

I started to grow more confident in myself at school I started taking part in group discussions which I never used to do and my grades started to pick up in school. A lot of the teachers had mentioned in parents evening how disciplined I had become and how respectful I was, this again were down to skills I had developed through karate. I also started to believe in myself as the gradings and competitions got harder I started working harder and the same happened in my school work. As the years went on I started to become a more confident person and started to grow as an individual.

In secondary school Karate actually saved my life!! A lot of the kids knew I did karate and I was 1st Kyu at the time so some of the bullies had backed down. There was one group that didn't stop, it always seemed to be in woodwork class where the teacher would leave us to our own devices. We were in class on this day there was 3 girls and the rest were boys (the boys were the worst).

It was coming to the end of the class and we were tidying up our equipment. I was putting my hammer away when the hairs on the back of my neck started to tingle. During karate we are taught to open our senses and that day I am glad I knew how to do it.

A group of lads had semi circled around me and one was heading towards me with a hammer, as he swung the hammer towards my head I blocked grabbed his wrist and side kicked (yoko-Geri) him threw the single paneled glass door. It all happened so fast we both ended up in hospital luckily mine was just a badly bruised wrist and forearm where the hammer had caught me. The lad on the other hand ended up with 2 broken ribs plus cuts to his head where he had gone through the door. He got expelled as when asked why he had done it he replied I just wanted to see her bleed!! If I didn't know Karate I wouldn't have known what to do and it could have been a lot different. After this incident I never got bullied again.

I passed my 1st Dan in 1996 with Sensei Enoda it was the best feeling ever a big achievement for me and this was the start of learning more exciting techniques and kata's. I started applying for jobs when I left school and wanted to continue training but when I got my dream job I had to take time out of karate as I couldn't attend any of the sessions.

My first Sensei was firm but fair everyone had respect for him. This has stayed with me throughout the years as now during my working career I am known as firm but fair. I have a lot of respect from the kids that I teach. I do believe that it is karate that has helped me in this part of my life as well. My first Sensei always said to us to earn respect you have to show respect and this is what I strive to do on a daily basis.

In July 2017 I lost a very important/ close family member and this affected me massively I stopped eating I didn't want to go to work I found it hard to leave the house depression is horrid. The last words my Grandpa said to me was 'don't give up on something you love get back to training I know you can do it'. I always wanted to get back into karate but I didn't know if I could do it again I thought I would have forgotten everything. I started training again last year when my son and daughter showed an interest in taking part in a class, I again ended up falling in love with the sport all over again and to my surprise I remembered quite a lot. During training sessions I would think I hope you are watching Grandpa and every training session my mental health started to improve I managed to keep feel better about myself. The people I train with

don't know how much they have helped me at all (well I guess some will after reading this). My knew Sensei's are fantastic, they are also firm but fair and they believe in all their students. They are dedicated to the club and helps their students anyway they can. Both Sensei's are very knowledgeable on what they are teaching us and they are very approachable everything great instructor's should be.

The club is like one big happy family we all have respect for each other and we help support each other. I was at a very low point in my life when I started karate last year and I have found that coming back to karate has helped me a lot. My mind has become stronger as well as my body. Our club spirit is above and beyond any other club I know from young ones right up to adults. When I walked through the Dojo doors last year I never thought I would be walking into so a caring place. I am very lucky and very proud to be part of this club and I wouldn't want to take my 2nd Dan grade anywhere else. We have recently attended a competition where we all pulled together and showed everyone what **JSKD** can do when you support each other.

Our knowledge comes from Sensei Steven and Sensei Kim all students aim to please and try their hardest and it is so good to see. Sensei Steven puts a lot of hard work into the club he is definitely an inspiration to us all especially me. I am forever learning even though I have my 1st Dan and that is what I love about karate you never stop learning. I am extremely proud of my karate achievements over the years especially over the last year I never thought within a year of been at the club I would be taking my 2nd Dan.

So in a nutshell karate means family no-one gets left behind we are all for one and one for all. It means believing in yourself dusting yourself off and continuing on pushing yourself to be stronger than the last training session. It means been respectful and disciplined. It means friendship and not been frightened to stand up for yourself. Karate means never give up