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Benefits of Martial Arts Training For Kids

By John Phung

Admit it. When the going gets tough at home, we've all plopped the kids in front of the television and breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, we can get started on dinner, maybe check email or sort that massive pile of laundry.

But when your five-year old yells at you "Mom, Kids Rule!" or your ten-year old horrifies you with language that would make a sailor blush, you realize there must be something amiss with what these "family programs" really teach our kids. And sadly, its happening all over the media today, from sports to cartoons, and our children are learning things that we, as parents, vowed we would never teach them. Old fashioned values like respect and self-discipline, seems to have been forgotten, replaced by the dreaded "bling bling" pop culture of today.

Just the thought of your angelic three-year old morphing into a designer-clad, smart-mouthed, money-worshipping, me-obsessed, lay-about is enough to make any parent consider that threatening military school brochure, but there is a solution out there to consider.

Martial Arts training.

From Ninja Turtles to The Karate Kid

You and your kids have all seen the flying kicks, battle cries and mighty chops of their favorite TV characters, as they beat the bad guys to submission - but, you may ask, how on earth can these acts of violence teach my child anything worthwhile?

First, know that what you see on television (save perhaps the Karate Kid) is a far cry from what real martial arts are all about. The fact is, martial arts training is based on non-violence.

Originating in Asia (mainly Japan, China and Korea, although Thailand and Vietnam have their own practices as well), martial arts range from a variety of types and styles, all of which are based on well-rounded, moral teachings. The beauty of learning martial arts is that it encompasses not just the physical aspect of the "sport", but mental and emotional lessons as well.

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Comparing that to other kid's activities and sports, where fierce competitiveness and "winning at all costs" seems to be the order of the day, it's not surprising that many children grapple with issues of self-esteem and misplaced aggression.

Now imagine your child actually learning valuable life lessons, skills that he will take throughout life, laying the foundation for a happy, well-adjusted and fulfilled adult life. If only karate for kids was popular in the 70's, when I was growing up!

The Advantages

- Karate, and other martial arts for kids, builds confidence and self-esteem as well as self-discipline, respect, concentration and courtesy.
- Many martial arts schools also offer leadership courses for kids, in conjunction with their karate for kids programs, or similar lessons.
- Martial Arts is ideal for children who do not do well in team sports, giving them the ability to flourish this activity, while combining physical and mental practices.
- Many do not realize this, but it is a fact that martial arts training are safer than most school sports.
- Children with special needs, such as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), learning difficulties and hyperactivity are often recommended to participate in martial arts for kids because of the clear benefits in its structured training techniques.

Kung-Fu Master or Ninja Warrior?

Before you sign up Junior for the first martial arts class you see, take some time to check out the different methods available, and match it with what you know would suit your child best. This is a good way to avoid any problems that may sprout from a conflict of your child's personality and the training techniques.

Is your little Zach a sensitive soul? Then maybe a class that doesn't center on sparring (full-on kicks and punches training) but rather, slower, defensive maneuvers would fare better for him. Kids with an aggressive streak, however, may prefer the more forceful moves and thrive in competitive sparring.

Here's a quick primer on the kid-friendly martial arts training you're likely to find:

Martial Arts From Japan

Karate

- Uses defensive and aggressive moves
- Centers on building strength and endurance

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- Involves chops, punches, kicks, strikes, blocking and sparring
- May use weapons

Jujitsu

- Uses defensive and aggressive moves
- Involves lots of sparring
- Teaches a fair amount of weapons training

Aikido

- Uses a more "spiritual" and harmonious style in redirecting the aggression of the attacker as the form of defense, using throws, pins, rolls etc.
- Taught on the premise of disabling an aggressor without attacking, through your individual inner energy
- Does not involve sparring or competitions

Judo · Uses gentle, "wrestling-like" movements

- Considered one of the safest methods of martial arts
- Emphasizes physical control as well as mental development
- Engages in competitions

Martial Arts From China

Kung-Fu

- The generic term referring to Chinese martial arts with a variety of styles
- Involves attack movements as well as defensive techniques
- Teaches kicks, punches, chops, throws, falls, grappling, katas, leg sweeps and blows among others.
- Engages in sparring competitions

Martial Arts From Korea

Taekwondo

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- Competitive in nature, involves techniques using elaborate footwork and unique high kicks.
- Emphasizes strength, force and attack methods.
- Engages in lots of sparring and competitions.

Choosing The Right Instruction

If you have an idea of the type of martial arts class you'd like your child to participate in, the next step would be to find the right school. Finding the right class that not only matches your child's and your needs, in terms of teachers you feel comfortable with, the price, facilities and so on, are all important factors.

Say you've found a local place that specializes in Karate for Kids. What are the things you should look for?

1. Good Instructors: Check out their qualifications, teaching methods and watch carefully how they interact with the other children. It should be a fun learning experience!

2. Space and Safety: Obviously you would want to entrust your child in an establishment that is safe,

well-maintained, and clean with ample space as well as decent facilities and equipment.

3. School Values: Different martial arts schools inevitably go by different values, for instance, one kid's karate class may handle aggression in one way, while a judo class would have a different approach. Take some time to observe which school's ideals match your family's principles.

4. Prices and Schedules: Prices for martial arts training can vary according to school and location, so make sure you the instruction you choose represents fair value. Finding the most effective way to fit martial arts training into your family's lifestyle is also essential, knowing what works best with your schedule and other activities.

Baby Blackbelts

Starting your child young in karate training is ideal (children as young as the age of four are usually accepted, as it is also a good way to hone fine motor skills), and lots of parents have found that in as little as a year, their children who were involved in martial arts had noticeably gained positive traits such as increased self-esteem, respect and overall physical fitness.

Many parents also opt to join a martial arts training program themselves, making it a great bonding experience for the entire family.

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Martial Arts

By John Gibb

Martial arts are currently studied worldwide from a variety of cultures. Martial arts can improve your fitness levels and muscular condition immensely. Depending on the martial art you choose to do, you may even learn some effective self-defense techniques.

There is a major debate as to whether martial arts are effective as self-defense. My personal experience has taught me it is best to study as many styles as you can and question what works.

What I have done is take techniques, which I find work from a few styles and then design a fighting system and practice based on me.

To simplify the above choose the best techniques from each style and use them in your own practice. This probably goes against the culture of martial arts, however for self-defense you cannot possibly expect to be held down to a set form. That is like a brick in water. Think if you are on the street, do you honestly think you are going to have time to pull off a full-blown technique and fancy kicks? I don't think so. That's why it is best to be open to all techniques and styles.

Studying martial arts for me is not even about self-defense. If I wanted self defense I would learn to be a street fighter. It is more about developing my body to its full potential. By this I mean getting as physically fit as I can. Not only is there the fitness aspect, there is very deep meaning to the martial arts. It is a way to express your self through movements. This is why I personally see it as an art. The martial arts are an honest form of exercise and discipline. They can help you in your weight lifting, as after a while you become more aware and feel a strong spirit within. This can help in any exercise program.

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for more self improvement guides.

John Gibb is the webmaster of several websites.

<http://www.weight-lifting-4u.com>

is his latest addition.

Martial Arts

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