

Erin Grogan

Testing for 2nd kyu brown belt

Topic: Why do I study Karate?

If I could have a dollar for every time someone told me that it is useless for me to study karate because I would never use it, I would be rich. I have been told that learning karate could not possibly benefit *me* at all. I would never have to use it in real life, so why bother learning it? I could just as well be taking dance classes.

No, I, a teenage middle class girl who lives in a nice, Rochester Hills neighborhood, in one of the richest countries of the world will probably never have to use the karate techniques that I learn.

So, then, why exactly do I study karate?

Take a moment and rewind about 7 years ago. I was entering middle school and my parents told me that I had to do something active. I already played Softball during the spring and summer, but I needed to do something year-round. We walked through Lifetime Fitness, and there was a table of brochures for various classes and clubs run through Lifetime Fitness. We picked one up that said something about a karate class; I wanted to try it, and so I did. I soon realized that this class wasn't for me, and that it just didn't click. Don't get me wrong-I loved the sport, the kicking and punching part of the class. I loved feeling the power my body could have. However, the teacher was way too laid-back. There just was not enough structure for me. He was too easy on us and didn't push us to test for the next belt. After that class, I tried a Tae-Kwon Do class. It didn't take me very long to realize that this didn't fit either.

Finally I came to Sensei Hunt's Rochester Shotokan dojo. This class clicked with me, and it was like magic. At last, something athletic I enjoyed doing besides softball, and something that I could participate in year-round. I loved that this class had more structure than the class at Lifetime, and I just felt comfortable around the people in it.

That's why I started karate, but why do I continue? How come I didn't quit after 2, 3, or 5 years? Why did I continue despite my busy schedule? How come I wasn't defeated after getting injured in class and needing surgery?

I continue because I have fallen in love with this sport. Yes, at times the training has become overwhelmingly intense, but I love the feeling of power a simple punch can have, and I love the idea that a single move can conquer an opponent. While studying it I have learned about the history of karate and it amazes me that I can love a sport that was created so long ago. This is why I continue the sport of karate.

Throughout my years of training, karate has grown to mean more to me than it did when I first began. Instead of being just a sport, karate has become something that allowed me to grow. Because of the mind-body connection in karate I have become stronger in both my mind and body. I have been challenged physically and mentally and that has helped me to become a stronger, more confident person. This is why I continue to study the Art of karate. I continue studying karate because it has become as much a part of my life as breathing. It is a constant: something I can always count on to be here for me. Whenever something happens in my everyday life that throws me off or

something happens that upsets me, I fall back on the values instilled in me through karate. I have been taught to keep an open mind, to respect others, to seek perfection of character, to be faithful, to endeavor, and to refrain from violent behavior. I have learned to fall back on these values and they remind me how I am supposed to act. I continue karate because it is a part of me just as much as I am a part of my class. This is why I continue to study karate as a way of life.

I continue my study of karate because it has become to mean more to me than just a sport. It is a sport, an art, and a way of life. It has changed me as a person, and I truly do not know who I would be if I hadn't signed up for that first class at Lifetime Fitness.