

Kelly Workings
3rd Kyu Test
6/1/10

Why I Study Karate

I signed up for karate for some of the same reasons that many people do: to get some exercise and learn a bit of self defense. Now, after two years of instruction and practice, why I continue to study karate is not the same as why I began to study karate. The experience has surpassed my initial expectations and enriched other areas of my life that I had not even anticipated.

I was at first surprised to find that karate is not purely a physical sport. Teaching your body to move and perform in new ways is often more mentally than physically taxing. Karate continuously trains the mind as well as the body, and this is one of its greatest appeals. Besides teaching the brain new ways to interact with the body, practicing karate is also great for reducing stressful thoughts. There is nothing better to quiet, sharpen, and humble the mind than 30 minutes of nonstop line work up and down the dojo floor. I promise you your worries will disappear, or at least be put on hold until the end of class.

In addition to the mental workout, I practice karate because it challenges my physical capabilities. In class and especially during testing I have been pushed far past what I thought were my own boundaries. I have continued to stand and persevere when I should have been passed out on the floor. It's a thrill to surprise yourself and test the limits of your own endurance. Even the smaller things, like finally touching my toes during taiso, encourage me to continue training. To see my own physical improvements is not only addicting, it makes me feel more in control of myself and my surroundings.

I also enjoy the community that is inherently a part of the study of karate. Outwardly karate seems like a very individual sport, but I have found my fellow karateka to be even more closely bonded with one another than many teammates in team sports. We challenge and

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encourage each other to do our best both in and out of the dojo. We are excited to see our peers move up in rank. We try new things together and learn from one another regardless of rank. The respect and value one feels in the dojo is part of what furthers my interest in the practice of karate.

Nothing about karate is easy, but that's why I enjoy it so much. My original goals to keep in shape and learn self defense are fulfilled but karate has given me much more than that. It challenges my mind and body during every practice. The harder I work, the more rewarding it is. My fellow karateka help push me to learn more and make karate training a worthwhile endeavor.