



KAZOKU

Longevity

By Jerry Figgiani

Upon entering my dojo, East Coast Black Belt Academy / Budokan, the words of Okinawan Karate Master Gichin Funakoshi stand out on the wall where everyone who enters my dojo can read it. Of course, if you are a student of karate, you may have heard these words already. "The ultimate aim of karate lies not in victory or defeat, but in the perfection of the character of its participants."

Reading into this statement, one can say that karate is made up of physical and mental concepts. One will not work without the other. Okinawan Karate Masters call this concept Shin Gi Tai (mind-body- technique). The great thing about training in karate is that we can approach this philosophy in our own journeys and life as well. If you think about our class structure, the first thing we do is have some type of formal bowing in ceremony. We also repeat this procedure when the class ends. This represents the concept that everything in Karate begins and ends with respect. From the time we bow in we work on conditioning, body mechanics, developing speed, power, kihon, kata, kumite, etc. These are all are the physical skill training aspects of the art we practice. The bow represents the commitment one needs to be successful in the important lessons our sensei will share with us. When we bow to each other, we are showing the same nonphysical aspect that applies in the words of Gichin Funakoshi. This in time will mold the karateka into understanding that karate develops you mentally, to give the approach to achieve the benefits from your physical training. From becoming physically fit, learning self-defense, having more self-control, more confidence, perseverance, stress relief, the list of benefits can go on and on.



Karate gives us the ability to look at ourselves. It helps us make adjustments, no matter what age or what stage we are at. It applies to both the beginner and advanced student of the art. It is so important that beginners understand this from the start.

When I look back at the amount of people who approach karate as only a physical endeavor, the one thing I find sad is that many are no longer training on their journey to both mental and physical development. They never turned the page to find out how much they are truly missing. This, I believe, comes down to ego. The ego can be controlled as well with a partnership between a mental and physical approach to training. One will find in time that the true fight in karate is within us. With the right mindset, you can continue your physical practice for life. It is so important to always remember Karate is a lifetime endeavor. Here is to your longevity in the arts! 🐢

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