

Benefits of Martial Arts on Society

By Sensei Tom Weavers

Martial arts has many benefits on society today, some of which are quite clear, such as confidence, fitness, but we also have a lot more which I will explain through the means of this essay.

Ill start with confidence, at the studio when we see a new prospect walk through the door, especially a child, there parents will almost definitely say that they would like their child to gain more confidence. First thing we would need to do is break down the barrier that's stopping them from having confidence, this could be due to a parent breakup, from being bullied in school either physically, mentally. We also have some adults that come to the studio with no confidence, this could be because of physical abuse in a relationship, or from a traumatic event in their past, or from being bullied in younger years and they haven't been able to move past it. Once we have got through the barrier we can then work on fixing the confidence through the use of our classes and building a rapport with the individual to gain trust, and start to heal the wounds in their confidence. Doing a martial art helps them create a new skill set and with our guidance, they become confident in their knowledge and application of the martial art in order to take part in grading assessments, or even go up through the competition squad. This in turn has a benefit to society, as those children that walk through the doors to the studio with no confidence at all, could go on to be ambassadors for the club, but also out of school, as the once shy, unconfident individual, can recognize other individuals within a school setting and then try to become friends with them, boosting another individuals confidence.

Fitness is another key aspect of benefits in society. Martial arts is a great form of fitness, Karate offers flexibility, and fitness through learning kick, basics and kata, also works on muscle tone through stances, where as kickboxing is very fitness orientated, working on kicks punches and pad work, as well as sparring techniques, so there is a lot of cardiovascular fitness included. With a lot of jobs being desk jobs, driving jobs, its very easy to fall into a trap of snacking during the day in between meals, and before you know it, you can go up a size, by partaking in a regular form of activity, a couple of times a week you are conditioning your body, but also burning some of the calories. This will also boost your overall health by raising your heart rate for a couple of hours a week, there fore improving your fitness, you can be any size to take part in martial arts, and martial arts will help you lose and tone.

Friendships are another benefit of martial arts in society, some students that attend the studio may not have many friends, this could be down to being the odd one out at school, or the uncool kid (which was me) and then you may have some that are home schooled so they do not have the ability to make friendship groups. You also have a lot more adults that work from home now, so may not have the friendships they used to have before covid as the office could have closed, and they find themselves sitting at there dining table. By doing a martial art, you are in the same class with the same people 2-3 times a week, and before lessons have the opportunity to talk / play with other students same age. We also do partner work which entices discussions between individuals. You then see that as the students come into class, the same students gravitate towards each other, ad you can see the smiles and laughter on faces within seconds which is part of what being a martial arts instructor so warming. Also when we have a new student, I tend to buddy them up with individuals, and again they gravitate towards that individual each time and becomes friends, then they become

friends with their friends and so on. Students then look forward to coming to the studio to see their friends and learn a new skill.

Self Defence is one of the biggest benefits of martial arts. We teach the basic of self defence, enough to get out of the attack and to run away. Some of our new students come to the studio to specifically learn self defence. While we maintain that what we teach can only be used to protect themselves, we also inform them of the law around the use of what we teach. By teaching our students the basics, in some cases its enough to make them stand up to a bully by simply saying "No". As a child I was bullied all through my schooling in primary school and also majority of high school, I never felt accepted until I attended college. Now I have a passion for teaching self defence as if I can stop one child from going through what I went through its all worth it. Unfortunately violence in schools is on the increase, and we have a lot of students that ask advice on how couldn't they deal with someone if they "held me like this" and I go through different techniques on how to escape. With some of our older students who are in high school, unfortunately we now live in a world where knife crime is on the up, so we teach them more advanced techniques to deal with the situation, we also cover "reasonable force" to justify their actions, and to also inform them of the rights they have if being attacked. I also offer advice on lone walking, for example, walking with hands out of pockets, so if they are grabbed they can react quicker, also walking with one head phone in as opposed to two, so they are aware of what's going on around them.

I also teach situational awareness so make them aware of what's going on around the, so they can spot potential risks, to move away from them by crossing the road. In order to make self defence realistic to society, I will switch the lights off and grab the students, in order to see how they react. This is as realistic as I can make it in order to try and help them, as they will never know who's grabbing them, or how they are going to be grabbed.

In my opinion Self defence is one of the most important benefits to society.

There are emotional advantages of practicing a martial art, as some students struggle managing stress and anger, and by doing martial arts it helps students channel how they feel. By doing martial arts the discipline and the structure of a martial arts schools helps channel energy in a positive way, and this in turn can help reduce anxiety, and helping and improving their mental health and wellbeing. It also enforces self-discipline, self-control and also awareness.

Martial arts is not for any particular type of person, and within society now, we have a lot more groups, around the LGBTQI +. As well as more recognized conditions such as ADHD, autism, Within the studio we pride ourselves in accepting everyone regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or condition, we will always give everyone a trial and see how we get on. A lot of parents don't give us the full picture when signing up their children through fear that they will be rejected by us, this isn't the case as we believe everyone deserves a chance, and actually children displaying signs of ADHD and autism, actually benefit from a martial art. For the purpose of ADHD its gives them something to focus their energy while learning a new skill. And for autism, doing regular patterns and repetitive moves can help with their condition. We have one student, who struggle if their was an instructor change, but by informing them before hand, calms them and they know to expect a different person. Also with LGBTQI+ now being more focused in society, we have some of our students who identify as the opposite gender, and again we reinforce that at the studio we are inclusive of everyone, and we will teach you regardless. All the staff also under went gender awareness training, so we can use the

correct pronouns and terms, as well as more simple changes like toilet signs and the logo colors on signage, and advertising. This makes all students feel welcome and part of the Sesma Family.

Family time, can be so hard to achieve in today's society, as now the cost of living has increased so much, parents sometimes have to work two jobs just to make ends meet, and then miss out on spending time together and seeing their children grow up, we now have a lot of parents that train with their children when they can, this enables them to spend time together, and creating a bond while partaking in a physical activity, and having fun. It also gives the family a focus point to go through the grading process together while learning new skills that they can practice at home. We also hear of the children teaching the adults at home which is amazing to see. It boosts the child's confidence teaching a parent and makes them feel proud, especially when the parent picks up the moves.

Martial arts is for everyone in society, regardless of shape, size, sexual orientation, religion, or background, I think having a focus point can help any individual. For someone with low confidence to someone that's coming back into society from an institution such as prison. For a former prisoner, it could form a base of a new start, give them a focus and develop a passion while also getting back in to society forming friendships, and rebuilding confidence in the outside world. From individuals who have had a bad past from traumatic events, to physically, mentally abusive relationships, it can form the base of a new start, and a new them, rebuilding their confidence, and making them believe in themselves again. Also forms of conditions such as Asthma, Diabetes, even stoma bags, don't stop us from encouraging individuals to join in, all these conditions are managed and are very common within today's society, we have had students have heart attacks, but welcome them back in to be part of our martial arts society, where they feel part of something. In my opinion, every individual is important in society and everyone has something that they can offer in their local communities, for me its teaching and being a pillar in a successful martial arts school, where we are more like a family than a business, caring about all our students and building them up to be the best that they can be so they go on to achieve blackbelts, and good employees for future employers. Martial arts doesn't only affect what's happening now, it can set you up with a skill set for life, through fitness, discipline, self believe, and self-control. As well as core skills you may not even think about such as balance, focus and teamwork, focusing on a task at hand in the work place and being a small part of a team to achieve a bigger goal.

Martial arts in my opinion has many many more benefits in society, I have just gone through some of the main ones. I believe that we create some outstanding individuals through the work we do with our students and the schools in the local area, and that the area we operate in is a better place because of us and our students. If only more people took an interest in martial arts, society as a whole would benefit a lot more, from the skill set and life lessons that we teach.

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