

Kids and Karate

In the Beginning...

When I first started to teach Shotokan Karate formally I “told” my Sensei that I just wanted to teach kids. I didn’t have any desire at the time to teach adults – I had dealt with adults coaching youth sports (football and baseball), and didn’t relish the idea of dealing with them in the dojo. My Sensei asked me what would happen when my young students grew up? Would I dismiss them from the dojo? I deferred to his wisdom and opened my instruction to all ages. I’m thankful for the advice... since I’ve started teaching I’ve had students who started as kids but are now young adults, and I would never think to ask them to leave – they are the heart of our dojo. I now teach anyone old enough to stand- up and follow instructions up to and including the most mature adults – I’ve come to believe that there are benefits to be had by all in our training.

Peer Pressure

However, my rationale for focusing on instructing kids was the benefits I saw that martial arts instruction could have helping kids deal with peer pressure. Training in Shotokan can improve physical fitness, coordination, and self esteem – but it can also play a positive and meaningful role in helping our kids deal with the peer pressure they face day in and day out. The need to belong is strong, and in a lot of instances kids are pressured into doing things that under normal circumstances they know are wrong, and wouldn’t even consider; things like smoking, drinking, drugs, and gangs among other things. But the desire to belong to a group can be so strong that even kids raised with a solid value system find themselves going against everything they know to be appropriate just to fit in. I believe Shotokan, and Nevada Shotokan Karate – do, offers kids a healthy alternative. Shotokan provides a positive environment for kids - where kids are surrounded by like - minded students of karate all trying to achieve the same goal, mastery of a punch, block, kick or kata, and the only price to be paid for a sense of belonging is their sincere effort.

Although students of all ages are welcome in Nevada Shotokan Karate – do my emphasis has always been, and will continue to be, providing our youth a safe, nurturing place where they can feel a sense of belonging. In this small way I hope I am able to provide kids an alternative to the negative peer pressure they face in their daily lives.