

# WHAT DOES KARATE MEAN TO ME?

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18 Jan 2014

Upon being given this assignment, I went through a gambit of emotions. First, my thought was that this would be easy. I will write what I know Soke wants to hear and keep on moving. Then about half of a page into writing that version of the essay, I started to wonder, does Soke make all the adults write an essay for their orange belt? I then started to get angry. Is he singling me out? Am I the only adult who has to write an essay? If so this is not right.

I then took the half page that I had typed and deleted it. I sat and thought about this for about an hour. I went over all the reasons that I started Karate in the first place. I thought about the people that I have met at the dojo and found something valuable.

The essay is neither a hazing, nor is it about recycling ideas. This essay is an affirmation of future growth. I took an internal look at my beginning goals a year ago, and made an honest evaluation of my performance within that year. Did I do my best? The honest answer is no. So why am I writing this essay?

I think the reason I was assigned this essay is to give me the opportunity to start again. Karate is a chance to look at my goals and make a plan. When I joined, I wanted to get into better shape by using Karate as exercise. I wanted to set a good example for my children by doing the Karate, training right alongside them and to share some common ground. I wanted to do Karate to turn down the volume of my daily life, in order to find some level of internal peace.

What does Karate mean to me? Karate is an ideal life and even though I will never be perfect at it, that does not mean that there is not value in trying to move forward toward perfection. In moving toward perfection I believe one can find self-actualization. I have been searching for self actualization my whole life and never found it. While writing this essay, I can see it. My future self is standing there looking at me asking me to take the step. He is smiling in the knowledge that he has fallen over and over again, but he always got back up. That self-actualized man is about 70 pounds lighter than I currently am. He is not thin but is well muscled. His children look up to and follow him, because they know he would never ask them to do anything he would not do himself. That self-actualized man is slow to anger, but quick to give honestly deserved praise.

What is Karate to me? It is a new beginning. Karate is the search for that self-actualized man and it starts today, and tomorrow, and the next day, and as many days as it take for me to find him.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to write this essay.