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PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S KARATE TRAINING

The most effective form of parent involvement is for the parents to enroll in karate themselves and engage in working directly with their children. Those children who see their parents on the mat and working through their challenges gain a higher level of respect for them. It gives them a feeling of support and enjoyment and that they are able to share in an activity with their parents.

It is crucial that parents believe in the training program and respect the decisions and teachings of the instructors. In the dojo, the sensei and not the parent would do the teaching and thus, parents must not correct their children's behavior unless instructed to do so.

Karate is not only a sport. Parental behavior can be a detriment to the success of their children's progress. In many sports, violent, abusive and controlling behavior from parents towards coaches, athletes, officials and spectators are on the rise. They lack self control and lack the understanding of sportsmanship. Karate is much more than a sport and one of the ultimate goals is to win over oneself rather than winning a trophy. Surely it is a great accomplishment to win a gold medal, but it is equally an accomplishment to feel good about being able to enjoy the competition even if no medal is won.

In the karate arena, some parents become over-involved and constantly challenge the decisions of the instructor that may negatively affect their children's present and future experiences in martial arts. There should be no hurry to have their children advance from a Beginner's or Intermediate class. Expecting their child to become a black belt as quickly as possible should not be the goal. A student may be talented in learning techniques, but may require more training in learning patience, motivation, respect and willingness to help their fellow students before being allowed to attend an advanced class. Some parents compare their children to others and without understanding the instructor's thoughts, are quick to judge the decision as unfair when their children are not invited to participate in such a class.

Even though most parents do not know how to help their children with their karate training, guidance and support from the instructors are always available. Taking the time to quiz them on their terms or watching them practice their kata is an essential model for guiding their children towards success. As an example, one of our student's mom, who is a school teacher, made terminology cards to assist her son in learning the Japanese words used in class. The result of him passing his terminology quiz was very positive.

We encourage students to practice their katas and kihons at home. Children whose parents encourage and make sure they practice at home make significant gains in their overall achievement compared to those that only practice at the dojo. Parents who also participate in taking an active role at promotion ceremonies, pot-luck dinners, fund raisers, and tournaments greatly add to their children's achievement and success.

However, students who do not have actively participating parents are not left in the dark to fend for themselves. Rather, they are supported by instructors and students who understand the need for encouragement, support and mentoring. Parents who understand the need for support of children other than their own can also provide encouragement for those who have little or no parent involvement.

Our dojo is likened to a family where we encourage students to help one another and not engage only with their own family members or friends.

The results of students succeeding in the dojo will manifest to positive behavior that will even extend into the community. There will be a decrease in drug and alcohol use, fewer instances of violent behavior and more successful attendance in school.

In conclusion, I encourage parents to be as committed to our karate program as their children are, and have trust in our decisions and teaching methods that are geared for their children's well-being and success. Communicate with us, be more proactive, and be involved with all members of our family.