



7 Reasons Why Your Child Should Practice Martial Arts



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“The martial arts are ultimately self-knowledge. A punch or a kick is not to knock the hell out of the guy in front, but to knock the hell out of your ego, your fear, or your hang-ups.”

- Bruce Lee

Recently on a visit back home, I met my one of my close friends at his son’s martial arts studio so I could drop in and see what young Ethan was up to. Ethan was one step away from getting his white sash in [Poekoelan](#), an Indonesian martial art. He beamed with pride as we watched him do various forms and drills. Shortly after I left town, Ethan [earned his white sash](#), upon which he got to join the big kids in the adjacent room. There the big kids practice more advanced forms, techniques, and even some sparring. He was thrilled.

Ethan’s always been a good kid, but from what I observed the martial arts gave him quite a healthy dose of self esteem and self respect - two of the many benefits one gains with participation in them. **Whether your kid is too bossy, too shy, or perhaps just a little hyper, the martial arts can help your child learn many important life lessons.** (And, of course, those same lessons apply for all of us, not just kids.)

Here are seven reasons why your child should practice martial arts:

Reason #1: They (and You) Will Get More Active

This is the obvious reason kids should do martial arts in this day and age - to get active and moving. In case you haven’t noticed, we have an epidemic when it comes to [our nation’s obesity problem](#). We’re also increasingly unfit in addition to being overweight. The problem is particularly alarming as it [relates](#)

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[to our kids](#). Youth sports and physical education programs are great, but not every kid is an athlete and many schools no longer offer PE. **The martial arts offer many benefits, but when it comes to fitness, becoming a true martial artist means becoming a supremely fit person.** When I was practicing boxing or muay Thai kickboxing on a daily basis, I was in the best shape of my life by a long shot. Martial arts can help your child get fit and healthy.



Reason #2: They'll Learn to Find Focus and Stillness

Of the many challenges that parents face today, one is that we are constantly plugged in. While there are a great many benefits to the Internet, there are many more benefits in [stillness and silence](#). Unfortunately stillness and silence seem to be rare to find. At some juncture in life, every one of us comes to learn that the greatest obstacle we face in this lifetime is ourselves. That battle is fought in the stillness of our hearts and the willingness to confront ourselves. **As Bruce Lee pointed out, behind the punches, kicks, and knees, a true martial artist learns to sit with himself and see where his weaknesses are.** In years of martial arts classes, I remember many challenges, breakthroughs, and setbacks. What I do not remember are distractions or gimmicks like you often see at your local health club. At the martial arts studios and boxing gyms where I trained, there was no loud music or flat screen TVs, just hard work and sweat equity. As a martial artist, your child will learn what it is to be still, challenged, and focused.

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Reason #3: They'll Learn to Take Hits

In the martial arts, your child will learn what it is to take a hit, **whether that hit is a literal blow or a disappointment like failing a test.**



Part of life is learning that [we all take hits](#). **The key is in learning how best to take that hit and get back up.** Unfortunately, this lesson seems to be lost on many in our every-kid-gets-a-trophy culture. In the martial arts, your kid will learn to fail - a lot. Half of martial arts is hitting, but half is also getting hit.

When people hire me to teach them boxing, they can't wait to lace up the gloves and start hitting things. Seldom does someone mention how enjoyable it is when I tap him or her upside the head with a focus mitt for dropping their hands.

The first time I got struck in the head sparring in kung fu, I immediately rushed to the mirror to see if there was a mark on my face. The students in class laughed about it for months. **While I didn't find it too funny at the time, I came to learn that accepting I would get hit enabled me to relax and better protect myself.** That acceptance led me to be able to better respond, maneuver, and anticipate. Ironically, learning how to take a hit is perhaps the best way for your kid to [learn how to avoid it](#).



Reason #4: They'll Gain Self Confidence and Self Respect

As noted in talking about my friend's son Ethan, I was able to witness firsthand the confidence he gained by participating in the martial arts. Being able to advance and play with the big kids gave Ethan a tremendous amount of confidence.



Of course, playing with the big kids also gives all of us a little reminder of humility - someone is always bigger and stronger. I remember Sifu gently threatening the two young boys in our kung fu class that if they ever used their kung fu training in the wrong way or to show off he would have their hide.

The right martial arts school will teach your child that there are no tough guys. Every martial artist ultimately learns this [sense of respect](#) and true confidence. **Your child will learn that confidence and respect for others comes from a deep sense of self-knowledge.**

Reason #5: They'll Connect Their Mind and Body

What they don't teach you at your local health club is how to really listen to your body. To listen to your body is to also see your thoughts and have heightened awareness of your emotional construct.

A martial artist is taught to see, feel, and listen - both internally and externally. Tapping into intuition, fear, and courage are examples of being able to put the [physical together with the mental](#). How often have we heard the phrase "being paralyzed with fear"? Being able to combat such a thing is what you learn in the martial arts.

Reason #6: They'll Learn Conflict Resolution

People often ask me whether I have ever used my martial arts and boxing training in a fight. Indeed I have used the skills learned from martial arts many times to resolve conflict, but thankfully, never in a physical altercation outside the ring.

One of the first lessons Sifu taught us in kung fu was that words were never grounds for a fight. That advice right there has saved me many times. In the martial arts, you learn that there is no such thing as "fighting" words. Instead, you learn to respond without reacting in the martial arts.

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Reason #7: They'll Learn to Breathe

Of the many things I have learned in the martial arts and boxing, [breathing](#) is near the top. Back in my kung fu days, Sifu told me that he could tell how someone fights just by observing how he or she breathes.



Indeed, nothing is more essential to the success of how we move our body than tapping into the life force of our essence - our breath. Ask a professional athlete, or an actor, dancer, or signer, and they will tell you that to succeed in any physical craft is to access your breath correctly.

I am shocked at times working with adults who never learned to breathe properly when under physical exertion. This skill can literally save your life. In the martial arts your kid will learn the essence of [how to breathe](#) and even relax under pressure.

The Take Home - How to Proceed

The bottom line is that almost any child can and will benefit from participation in the martial arts. As to what martial art, it's honestly not very important. For a typical six or eight year old the point is to just get them moving and focused. The key in [choosing a teacher or school](#) is to do your due diligence when

it comes to evaluating the integrity of the program. As a starting place, **I would choose a prospective instructor or coach who talks more about the needs of your child than his or her program.**

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