

The Gift of Karate

Karate is the missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle of my life. I am a twenty-three year old university student who has both cerebral palsy and epilepsy. When I started karate eight years ago I never imagined just how much karate would change my life.

You might be wondering how a person with cerebral palsy can even do karate. It takes a lot of practice, good listening, and focus on my part; as well as patience and adaptations made by my Sensei. He takes the time to patiently adapt any moves or stances that I am unable to do. I still do everything that everyone else does, but just in my own way.

Karate has helped me immensely both physically and mentally. It has improved my strength, reaction time, and balance. I am now able to do physical movements that I never thought I would be able to do. When I started I had great trouble even standing on one foot and now I can do leg swings and kicks! Mentally, karate has helped me to increase my focus and my memory, gaining confidence both in and out of the dojo. It has also made me fall in love with sports and competition. I can hardly wait for the next karate tournament!



I think one of the biggest benefits of being involved in karate is the social aspect of it. Making friends has never come easy to me and now I have a whole new community of support and friendship. My new connections have helped me to expand my interests and it has opened doors to new experiences that I wouldn't have been part of otherwise. As well, my leadership opportunities in the dojo have allowed me to practice valuable

skills that will be useful in fulfilling my dream of working in the field of special education one day. I will carry this knowledge with me as I start my Master of Special Education in the coming year.

Karate has given me so much - I want to continue with it and go as far as I can. I am fortunate enough to have earned a blue belt so far. This has already exceeded my expectations and it gives me the confidence to keep going. I am a strong believer that if I continue to have appropriate adaptations and a good attitude, I can achieve my dreams in all areas of my life.

~ Melissa Lyon *Westcoast Wado Kai, Victoria BC*