

Why Martial Arts Will Help You Raise a Healthier and Happier Child

**Excerpted from Dave Kovar's Book
"A Dad's Toolbox for Better Parenting"**

The benefits of enrolling your child in a martial arts program extend far beyond self-defense. Martial arts will help your child in nearly every aspect of her life. It will improve your child's health, fitness, athletic abilities, confidence, concentration and behavior. Does this sound too good to be true? It's not. Many experts agree that martial arts is good medicine for the escalating childhood obesity, increased violence at school and deterioration of the family structure. There is a reason why Dr. Phil, Jillian Michaels (expert from the television show *The Biggest Loser*), Tony Robbins, pediatricians, child physiologists and educators the world over all recommend martial arts as one of the most valuable activities in which your child can participate.

Self-Defense

The self-defense benefits of martial arts could be described as *practice the fight so that you don't have to*. As your child trains he will become more confident in his ability to defend himself. As this confidence increases the need to defend himself will decrease naturally because he will begin to carry himself in a more confident manner. He'll project confidence to everyone around him and will be less vulnerable to predatory behavior.

Martial arts training includes strategic or preventative self-defense as well as physical self-defense. Your child will learn how to recognize potentially dangerous situations and how to avoid confrontations.

Athletic Enhancement

There is a reason why every professional sports team in every major sport supplements their training with martial arts. Martial arts training offers several advantages. It is amazingly effective in enhancing general coordination because it uses every part of the body in a balanced way. Upper body, lower body, right side, left side, forward movement, lateral movement and rotational movement are all included in martial arts training.

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Fitness

Fitness has three components: strength, flexibility and endurance. Martial arts training demands a balance between the three. Therefore, a child who trains in martial arts will find her weakest areas greatly improved. Because of her greater balance of strength, flexibility and endurance your child will be less likely to injure herself while participating in other athletic activities.

Health

While martial arts training improves health for people of all ages, it is especially effective for children. It's great exercise and it's fun so kids don't mind doing it. And part of martial arts training includes discussing diet and lifestyle habits so children who grow up training develop healthy habits that stick with them for life.

Concentration

Very few activities engage the mind, body and spirit more than martial arts. Because of this a child's ability to concentrate is greatly enhanced by his martial arts training. He'll bring this ability to concentrate to other activities, too.

Respect and Courtesy

Martial arts techniques are, by nature, designed to injure others when applied. Because of this, martial arts instructors greatly stress the importance of respect, courtesy and restraint. It has been proven time and again that children who are skilled in martial arts tend to be extremely respectful, considerate and composed.

Confidence

Martial arts training always increases a child's confidence for two specific reasons. First, there are no bench sitters. Every child participates and competes against her own potential rather than against the other students. Second, martial arts training is built on the concept of setting your child up for success by giving her a series of realistic, short-term goals that she can attain quickly while keeping her focused on an exciting long-term goal. Each time she experiences success her confidence improves until she begins to believe that she can accomplish just about anything with hard work and dedication.