

Through the Ranks

National Karate November 2016 Newsletter

EXPOSED:

Nine Martial Arts Myths

...and The Surprising Reality Behind Them!

*It's such a good feeling / A very good feeling/ The feeling you know that we're friends.
Mr. Rogers*

Myths abound when it comes to martial arts. I hear so many misconceptions and flat-out wrong ideas about martial arts that it drives me crazy. I think it's high-time somebody dispels these myths and falsehoods once and for all. As a martial arts student, it's important you recognize these myths so you're ready to counter them when you hear them. So please read carefully. Here they are: the nine biggest martial arts myths!

MYTH #1. "Martial Arts Is All About Fighting".

If you casually stroll past a martial arts school and look in the window, you might think martial arts is all about punching, kicking or grappling. I mean, that's what's being taught, right? Sure, but that's only part of the story. A small part. The reality is this: At its core, martial arts is about **learning life skills and growing as a person**. Sure, self-defense is a skill taught in our academy. *But it's only one skill.* Along the way, students also learn discipline, focus, respect, courtesy, goal-setting, perseverance, leadership and many other life skills. I view martial arts as a vehicle to help our students **become better people**. So the idea that "martial arts is all about fighting" is FALSE.

MYTH #2. "Martial Arts Makes People More Aggressive"

This one is way off the mark. In fact, scientific studies prove the **exact opposite** is true. Here's why: martial arts training **boosts self-control**. When self-control is raised, it **reduces aggressive instincts** and keeps violent impulses in check. Students learn to control their emotions and NOT respond emotionally to challenges. They learn how to **defuse confrontations** and that using self-defense technique is always the **last resort**. Martial arts also helps deal with bullies, too. Martial arts training will build a student's inner **confidence**, making him or her **less of a target**. (Just like other

predators, bullies pick on the weakest one in the herd.) Finally, a martial art provides a healthy, safe atmosphere to blow off steam and **reduce stress**. So the idea that martial arts breeds aggression is FALSE. The opposite is true.

MYTH #3. “You Need To Be In Top Shape For Martial Arts”

Why do non-martial artists continue to believe this one? Probably because they view martial artists as **elite athletes**. In the same category, as say, gymnasts or boxers when it comes to fitness. And while this IS true...very few martial artists started in top shape! ***It's the martial arts training that got these people in this top shape!*** Most students start with limited fitness, but as they train, over time their bodies adapt to the workouts and become stronger and more fit. Also, most martial arts schools **welcome people with physical limitations** such as those who are blind, disabled or even...wheelchair-bound. Anybody can do martial arts. We're **not** drill sergeants. We allow students to take things at their own pace. The idea that you have to be in “top shape” to do martial arts is FALSE.

MYTH #4: “Martial Arts Is Mainly For Kids”

As more and more adults (especially the over 40 crowd!) discover the benefits of martial arts, this myth is slowly fading away. As proof, I know of many seniors (some over 80 years old!) who compete in tournaments and win more trophies than some kids! Many adults find martial arts offers a nice alternative to the traditional gym "scene". Instead of mindless workouts, long lines and little camaraderie, martial arts **teaches something practical** (ex. self-defense), helps students form **life-long friendships** and provides escalating challenges – **all while getting in a great workout**. The idea that “martial arts is just for kids” is FALSE.

MYTH #5: “Martial Arts Is Hard On Your Body / Leads To Lots of Injuries”

This one seems logical on the surface, right? I mean, **look** at some of those moves! You would *think* lots of injuries would occur. But did you know that compared to other sports – *even many non-contact sports* - martial arts ranks **low** on the injury scale? It's true. Believe it or not, the number one sport for injuries is actually **cheerleading**. Football and soccer rank higher for injuries, too.

The reason why is simple: **Martial arts training is performed in a safe, controlled environment under expert supervision**. When we see a student with a sports-related injury, it's **almost always a result of something they did OUTSIDE our academy**: basketball, track, football, gymnastics or even riding their bike!

While we're on the subject, do you know what IS the most dangerous thing you can do with your body? The answer is “nothing”. That's right: **inactivity – being sedentary - is far harder on your body than martial arts**. A martial art gets you moving, boosts your strength, builds your cardio and keeps you flexible. So the idea that martial arts is more dangerous than other sports – or leads to lots of injuries - is FALSE.

MYTH #6: “That Stuff *Looks Great*, But It Doesn't Really Work In Real Life”

I hear this one all the time. And, again, it might be tempting to watch a Kung Fu movie and walk out thinking, "Ah, that flashy stuff looks great on screen, but that won't work in real life. It's just for the movies." **Think again:** Properly executed, the self-defense moves you learn here are reality-based and **proven** to work. Don't believe me? Okay, volunteer to hold boards for somebody who, say, performs an elbow strike. **The power generated is astounding.** If you think that wouldn't work in real life, you've got another thing coming. Sure, some of the moves you see performed in movies are for the "flash appeal", but **the real-life self-defense techniques we teach students have been developed over centuries of real-life situations and are highly effective.** (We don't fly, however.)

MYTH #7: “Martial Arts Equals MMA”

Here's another popular myth. Some people think *traditional martial arts* is the same as “mixed martial arts” or MMA. Nothing could be further from the truth. MMA is a **recent** hybrid art, designed to win bouts in a very specific environment: a “cage” or “octagon”. In MMA, life skills don't get the same emphasis that they do in traditional martial arts. In the UFC, for example, fighters are **encouraged** to “trash-talk” each other before an upcoming fight. Why? Because it stirs controversy, gets people talking about the “bad blood” and sells pay-per-view tickets. MMA is a whole different world altogether. So, **no** – the idea that traditional martial arts equals MMA is FALSE. We have a very different philosophy.

MYTH #8: “Martial Arts Teaches Eastern Religions”

Every once in a while I'll hear this one. But – NO! - we do **not** teach **any** religion in our classes. I don't

The Nine Biggest Martial Arts Myths

Which of these martial arts myths have you heard?

- 1.) “Martial Arts is All About Fighting”
- 2.) “Martial Arts Makes People More Aggressive”
- 3.) “You Need to be in Top Shape To Do Martial Arts
- 4.) “Martial Arts is Mainly for Kids”
- 5.) “Martial Arts Is Hard on Your Body / Leads to Lots of Injuries”
- 6.) “That Stuff Doesn't Really Work in Real Life”
- 7.) “Martial Arts = MMA”
- 8.) “Martial Arts Teaches Eastern Religions”
- 9.) “Once You're a Black Belt, You Know It All”

know a single martial arts school – *anywhere* - that

does. We do, however, teach **traditional martial arts values** such as respect, discipline, self-control, perseverance, leadership, goal-setting, courtesy, focus...etc. And whatever your family's faith, I'm sure you'd agree, these traditional values and life skills are **universal**. I think you'll find martial arts will **not** conflict with your faith, but actually **compliment** the teachings of your faith. The idea that martial arts teaches Eastern religion is FALSE.

MYTH #9: “Once You're a Black Belt, You're an Expert. You Know It All”

While it's true that earning a black belt is a **huge** accomplishment (it's like earning a college degree in life skills), it does **not** mean you know everything. In fact, some people view black belt as a starting point; that you've mastered the **fundamentals**. No matter what your level, there is always more to learn. “Sometimes a teacher, always a student”. Take a look at the masters in our art and you'll see people who **constantly strive to learn more and improve themselves**. That's the mark of a true master: humility and a “student” attitude. So the idea that once you're a black belt “you know it all” is FALSE.

As martial artists, we **all** have an obligation to stamp out these myths and falsehoods whenever we hear them.

Student Name: _____

According to the November article:

QUESTION #1: The mark of a master is...

- _____ a.) The ability to throw an amazing front kick
- _____ b.) A neat, pressed uniform
- _____ c.) A “student” attitude
- _____ d.) Avoiding trash talking
- _____ e.) All of the above

QUESTION #2: The sport with the most injuries is...

- _____ a.) Basketball
- _____ b.) Cheerleading
- _____ c.) Martial Arts
- _____ d.) Football
- _____ e.) None of the above

QUESTION #3: At its core, a martial art is about...

- _____ a.) Stepping up to physical challenges
- _____ b.) Not becoming a target of a bully
- _____ c.) Kicking butt and taking names
- _____ d.) Life skills and personal growth

QUESTION #4: When you're a black belt it means...

- _____ a.) You've mastered the fundamentals
- _____ b.) You've reached the rank of “master”
- _____ c.) You can now stop training because you know it all
- _____ d.) You're one step closer to becoming Yoda

QUESTION #5: Most martial arts teach...

- _____ a.) Zen Buddhism
- _____ b.) Japanese Shinto
- _____ c.) Hinduism
- _____ d.) All of the above
- _____ e.) NONE of the above