

To AJKA-International
AJKA-I of PA
Instructor Trainee's Report #31

Subject: Karate and Personality

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People have practiced martial arts for centuries. Anthropologists have discovered murals and hieroglyphics in tombs that date back to 3500B.C., which depict the ancient style of hand-to-hand combat used by the Egyptians.¹

Today people train in the martial arts for a variety of different reasons. Some people study martial arts as a means of self-defense, but it can be argued that self-defense is not at the forefront of reasons. Others train as a form of physical exercise. Others train in the martial arts for sport. This can be observed through all the tournaments found around the country. Some practice martial arts to increase their psychological well-being

Most people are motivated to start karate in order to compensate for an inadequacy, usually based on a real or an imagined inadequacy of the mind or by some positive feature that they think karate will give them. Through karate training many people are trying to better themselves, mentally, physically and emotionally.

In education it is a combination of the home, school and environment that actually develops a person's personality. Karate training can either support or enhance certain positive attributes and/or characteristics when other positive factors are present. It can be argued that karate does not actually develop such characteristics and it may be that karate attracts certain types of individuals and those that stay actually possess these common attributes.

Martial arts can be a good form of physical exercise, and exercise has been proven to enhance mental and psychological feelings after a training session². Among people who train in the martial arts for the sport or competition aspect, the better competitors have higher self-esteem and sport confidence.³ For some, learning and mastering a new skill, such as martial arts, has psychological benefits including raised feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy.⁴

¹ Lewis, P. (1996). *The martial arts origins, philosophy, practice*. Great Britain:

² Carron, A. V., Hausenblas, H.A. & Estabrooks, P.A. (2003). *The psychology of physical activity*. New York: McGraw Hill.

³ Richman, C. L. & Rehberg, H. (1986). The development of self-esteem through the martial arts. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 17, 234-239.

⁴ Finkenber, M. E. (1990). Effect of participation in Tae Kwon Do on college women's self-concept. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 71, 891-894.

An outlet for Negative Emotions

It is commonly held that hard work and “sweat” will clean the mind as well as the body; working as an outlet for frustrations and hostilities and washing away minor irritations of the personality. A regular cleansing of the mind leaves room for clear thought, stable emotions and better adjusted personality.

Achieve Self-Awareness

Through regular training, karate-kas will find out more about themselves, their strengths, weaknesses, limits and capabilities. They have better understanding of themselves. Self-perception or the ability to face yourself objectively is the first step toward improvement.

Promotes Self Improvement and Self Confidence

Self-confidence can be defined as, “the belief that you can successfully perform a desired behavior”.⁵ Although self-confidence is mainly considered to be a global trait, a person may possess both trait and state self-confidence.⁶ Trait self-confidence is the feeling or the belief people have that they will be successful.⁷ State self-confidence is the feeling or the belief a person has about a certain situation in a particular place in time.⁸

In Shotokan, as well as other martial arts, there is a rank system; otherwise known as belt promotions. At the lower levels, students learn basic skills, and as the student progresses to higher ranks, other components are added to the basic skills in order to produce complex skills/techniques.⁹ Breaking down skills and teaching in a progression is good because it prevents the athlete from becoming overwhelmed with too much new information.¹⁰

Karate’s step by step approach to learning, adjusting, and conditioning gives the karate-ka time to learn, adjust and improve. This is always done with the idea of self-improvement so that the individual is not discouraged. Rather, the karate-ka learns to constructively work to improve themselves in a positive manner. This constructive striving leads the karate-ka to a well-balanced personality and better life.

As people advance in karate their conceptions of karate changes and they become attracted to different aspects of the art. Thus, the goals that originally drew them to karate changes with the karate-kas personality. In this way karate training can become a

⁵ Weinberg, R. S. & Daniel Gould, D. (1999). *Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

⁶ Vealey, R. S. (1986). Conceptualization of sport-confidence and competitive orientation: Preliminary investigation and instrument development. *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 8, 221-246.

⁷ Id.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Frank, M. (2003, June). Self-Efficacy: *The Key to Success in Sports*. *Behavioral Consultants*. Retrieved from <http://www.behavioralconsultants.com>

¹⁰ Frank, M. (2003, June).

life-long endeavor for the karate-kas. Many people when they achieve something they value obtain a sense of well-being and self-respect.

Having the appropriate level of confidence is vital if one is to succeed in athletics. The appropriate level of confidence may allow athletes to concentrate more diligently on the task they are performing.¹¹ When people are confident, they are also more likely to experience positive emotions, which in turn allow them to be relaxed and calm in the face of danger.¹²

Confident people are willing to take chances because they believe in themselves and believe they will make the correct response.¹³ People with low levels of confidence will act more timidly, due to not believing in themselves and doubting that they will make the correct choice.¹⁴ Appropriate levels of self-confidence may also lead to increased effort in the pursuit of victory. When people feel confident, they believe in themselves and do not quit or give-up during an event when they get tired; furthermore, confident people will put forth more effort because they know they will be successful.¹⁵

Confident people are better at over-coming adversity.¹⁶ When confident people hit walls or run into obstacles, they do not get down on themselves or lose faith in their abilities, but rather take the situation head on and double their efforts in order to succeed.¹⁷ This trait allows the confident person to shift momentum in an event, and also gives him or her the advantage of keeping the momentum when performing against a person who lacks confidence.

Since the nature of martial arts is to deal with stressful situations, the practice of martial arts will increase the coping skills necessary to handle the amount of stress the person encounters.¹⁸ By encountering more stressful situations, a person learns to control his or her negative emotions such as fear, doubt, and anger.¹⁹ It is the learned control that a person develops over time that increases self-confidence as the control mechanisms people develop through martial arts training begin to carry over into their everyday lives.²⁰

The way you learn depends on your personality type. It is important for the instructor to know the personality type of his students so he/she can adapt the class for the student to learn. The two main personality types that we always hear about are Type A and Type B.

¹¹ Weinberg & Gould (1999).

¹² Id.

¹³ Id.

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ Id.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ Howell, L. (2003, June) *Martial Arts and Confidence*. *Martial Artz UK*. Retrieved from <http://www.martial-artz.co.uk/articles/article001.htm>

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ Id.

The Type A personality generally lives at a higher stress level. This is driven by

- They enjoy achievement of goals, with greater enjoyment in achieving of more difficult goals. They are thus constantly working hard to achieve these.
- They find it difficult to stop, even when they have achieved goals.
- They feel the pressure of time, constantly working flat out.
- They are highly competitive and will, if necessary create competition.
- They hate failure and will work hard to avoid it.
- They are generally pretty fit and often well-educated (a result of their anxiety).

The Type B personality generally lives at a lower stress level and are typically:

- They work steadily, enjoying achievements but not becoming stressed when they are not achieved.
- When faced with competition, they do not mind losing and either enjoy the game or back down.
- They may be creative and enjoy exploring ideas and concepts.
- They are often reflective, thinking about the outer and inner worlds.

Below is a chart outlining the different personality types and the learning style for each type:

Personality Type ²¹	Learning Style ²²
Extravert	Active
*I like getting my energy from active involvement in events *I often understand a problem better when I can talk out loud about it and hear what others have to say	*Active learners tend to retain and understand information best by doing something active with it--discussing or applying it or explaining it to others
Introvert	Reflective
*I take time to reflect so that I have a clear idea of what I'll be doing when I decide to act *I often prefer doing things alone or with one or two people I feel comfortable with	*Reflective learners prefer to think about it quietly first *Prefer working alone
Sensing	Sensing
*I notice facts and I remember details that are important to me. *I like to see the practical use of things and learn best when I see how to use what I'm learning.	*Sensing learners tend to like learning facts and be patient with details *Sensors tend to be more practical and careful

²¹ Information taken from *MBTI basics* The Myers & Briggs Foundation. *MBTI basics*. Retrieved from <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/mbti-basics/>

²² Information taken from Soloman, B.A., & Felder, R.M. *Learning styles and strategies*. Retrieved from <http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/ILSdir/styles.htm>

Intuitive	Intuitive
*I'm interested in new things and what might be possible *I like to work with symbols or abstract theories	*Intuitive learners often prefer discovering possibilities and relationships *Often more comfortable with abstractions and mathematical formulations
Thinking	Verbal
*I like to find the basic truth or principle to be applied *I look for logical explanations	*Verbal learners get more out of words--written and spoken explanations
Feeling	Visual
*I believe I can make the best decisions by weighing what people care about and the points-of-view of persons involved in a situation	*Visual learners remember best what they see--pictures, diagrams, flow charts, time lines, films, and demonstrations
Judging	Sequential
*I seem to prefer a planned or orderly way of life and like to have things settled and organized	*Sequential learners tend to follow logical stepwise paths in finding solutions
Perceiving	Global
*I seem to prefer a flexible and spontaneous way of life, and I like to understand and adapt to the world rather than organize it	*Global learners tend to learn in large jumps, absorbing material almost randomly without seeing connections, and then suddenly "getting it."

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