

First a **BIG THANK YOU** for all the lovely messages we have received. We really appreciate them. All of us are facing unexpected changes and difficulties and it is good to hear how well and how positively people are adapting – you have told us how you are ...

- ☺ Teaching kata to family members via Whatsapp!
- ☺ Karate Kids are teaching parents their moves!
- ☺ Starting off the day doing the exercise challenge as a family!

Here is our first update – we hope there is something for everyone. Feedback and suggestions are always welcome.

Many thanks,
Chris & Barbi
28th March 2020

KARARTY KLUB ?!?

It sounds as though when the lockdown comes to an end, many people are going to be fitter than ever! If you are keeping up your karate, we would really like to hear about it. It would also be great to hear if you are getting creative with a karate theme. If you are, we may start a new club a karARTy klub! Here is some inspiration from one of our own karate mums Maybe you could create some great karate designs and posters?



BODY - MIND - SPIRIT

Karate aims to strengthen body, mind and spirit. Here are suggestions for each.

BODY

Physical activity is always important – and now more than ever because

MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE.

We derive so many benefits from physical activity: increased fitness, strength, mobility, flexibility, improved cardiovascular function, optimised lung capacity, improved circulation, lymphatic drainage, reduced insulin resistance, better glucose metabolism ... and also the release of endorphins which help combat stress, improve mood and regulate emotions.

For maximum benefit, exercise needs to be varied in intensity and also in type. Some slow exercise (warming, stretching, strengthening, posture-correcting), some moderate-paced activity (for improved circulation, lymphatic drainage etc) and some more intense exercise to boost our fitness and stamina.

As our routines have changed over the last couple of weeks, so will our ranges of movement and postures (for example with more time spent sitting in front of a screen, working from home). Here are some simple exercises to keep everything moving ...

NECK & SHOULDERS – performed standing tall, feet hip width apart

- Keeping shoulders back and down and arms by your side, turn your head to the right – hold - return to centre – turn your head to the left – hold – return to centre. Keep it steady and repeat 6 to 8 times.
- Keeping shoulders back and down and arms by your side, tilt your right ear towards your right shoulder – hold – centre – tilt left ear towards left shoulder – hold - centre. Keep it steady and repeat 6 to 8 times.
- Keeping shoulders back and down and arms by your side, look down - hold – centre – look up – hold - centre. Keep it steady and repeat 6 to 8 times.
- Shrug your shoulders up and down 8-10 times.
- Roll your shoulders in circles – first one then the other 10 times and then both together 10 times, backwards and forwards.

UPPER BODY

- Press ups – sets of 10 and build up your reps. Work towards a minute non-stop.
- Tricep dips – sets of 10 and build up your reps. Work towards a minute non-stop. (You can use a windowsill or kitchen counter).

ABS

- Sit ups – sets of 10 and build up your reps. Work towards a minute non-stop. Remember not to “pull” on the back of your head with your hands as this puts strain on your neck.
- Inners and outers – a sit up with your feet off the ground where you reach inside your knees (inners) or outside your knees (outers) - sets of 10 and build up your reps.
- Alternates – lying on your back with head and shoulders off the floor and hands by your ears, alternate bringing your left elbow to your right knee (left leg extended) then right elbow to left knee (right leg extended) – sets of 10 and build up your reps. Work towards a minute non-stop.

LOWER BODY

- Horse-stance squats – sets of 10 and build up your reps. Work towards a minute non-stop.
- Step ups – you can use a stair step or a chair but ensure it is stable – work towards a minute non-stop.

WHOLE BODY

Plank is one of the best exercises you can do. It should be part of any daily routine. People often under-estimate static postures but plank is very effective and strengthening. Hold plank position for 30 seconds – turn to side plank for 30 seconds – turn to the other side plank for 30 seconds – return to plank for a final 30 seconds. You can vary this by sometimes performing straight-arm plank and sometimes bent-arm plank when you are resting on your forearms.

MIND

Mental stimulation is very important to maintaining healthy mental functioning. Karate has built-in methods for improving mental functioning e.g. focus, concentration, memory, alertness. Kata is an obvious example as it requires us to remember complex patterns of sequential movements, maintain absolute concentration and also employ visualisation (a technique used in training Olympic and world championship athletes).

Our grey cells need exercise too – and just like fitness and strength – it really is a case of

USE THEM OR LOSE THEM!

A whole new field of science has evolved to investigate neuroplasticity – the ability of the brain to reorganise itself even to compensate for injury or disease by reinforcing neural pathways, removing redundant ones and constructing replacements. (See our book recommendation below!)

Your challenge is to come up with some good **BUNKAI** for your kata. As we know, there are many benefits to kata and a particular one is learning the *PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS* of the kata moves – the bunkai. **Your task is to take combinations from your kata and translate that solo movement into applied technique.** We have done this in class, so you will already have some ideas. Here are two video clips showing (brilliant Japanese) team kata followed by a demonstration of bunkai. A word of warning – these are performed for competition and therefore are quite theatrical. We perform them more formally in class. Nonetheless, there is solid technique at the heart of it and they are definitely worth a watch.

<https://safeshare.tv/x/xmfhKcNacC>



<https://safeshare.tv/x/RiXHCIEANo>



SPIRIT

As well as staying active it is important to **STAY POSITIVE.**

Just before we had to suspend classes, one of the club mums jokingly suggested that if classes had to stop and we all went into zero-contact lockdown, maybe we should teach breathing and meditation classes instead. While we may not currently be able to teach these classes, it was a good idea and - since a few more of you have suggested it now as well - we would like to share with you some stress-busting breathing practices for good physical and mental well-being.

- 🕒 Lie on your back somewhere warm and comfortable. Rest your arms by your side and allow your legs to rest so your feet are positioned at “ten to two”. Close your eyes and breathe naturally. In order to relax it is important to extend the out-breath (exhalation). Breathe in for a count of 4 and then breathe out for a count of 6 or 8. Once you have established a comfortable pattern, you can introduce a hold for a count of 2. Breathe in for 4 – count for 2 – breathe out for 6 – hold for 2 – repeat.

- ☯ Once you feel fully relaxed, you can return to more natural breathing. Keeping it nice and steady, count each exhalation on a countdown from 20. Try to ignore any internal dialogue or chatter in your head and just focus on your breathing. If you lose count, just start again. Allow 5-10 minutes for the full practice. But if you only have 2 minutes, then do that!
- ☯ This one is more challenging and involves ***alternate nostril breathing***. Sit comfortably e.g. on a chair or cross-legged on a cushion. Place your left hand in your lap or on your knee. Place the index and middle finger of your right hand in between your eyebrows. Rest your right ring finger on your left nostril and your right thumb on your right nostril. Breathe in-close your right nostril with your thumb-breathe out left - breathe in left-close left nostril with ring finger-breathe out right - breathe in right - close right - breathe out left - breathe in left - close left - breathe out right - breathe in right - close right - breathe in left ... It looks complicated on paper but essentially the pattern is to swap nostrils after breathing in. Let us know if you manage it!



MERIT AWARDS for Karate Kids and Cadets

Some of you will remember our MERIT BADGES. Each badge focuses on a particular value which is of importance both in karate and life in general such as respect, focus, patience, teamwork We use targeted activities in class to explain and practice that value but most of the focus is at home with families setting their own challenges and activities around the award and then telling us when they feel that their child has earned the award. Unfortunately we can no longer issue merit badges but we can work on **MERIT AWARDS**. Instead of receiving a badge to sew onto your gi, you will receive a merit award certificate. (We know many parents will be heaving a sigh of relief not to have to sew any more badges!) Over the coming weeks we will send out our club info sheets on old and new MERIT AWARDS. It makes sense to start with **RESPECT**. As the famous saying goes, "**Karate begins and ends with respect**". All Karate Kids and Cadets can earn these awards (even if you have earned a badge in class before). Parents, when you feel that your child understands the meaning of RESPECT and has earned their award, let us know and we will send you a certificate. Remember, there is no set activity for this – adapt it to suit your family and your needs. The RESPECT club info sheet is attached at the end of this newsletter.

KATA

Sometimes we need a bit of inspiration. As if the team kata video clips above are not enough, Rika Usami is a world-champion kata practitioner. There are already links to her incredible world championship win on our website (<http://www.themkd.co.uk/practice-videos.html>) Here she is performing a kata with a young and now well-known protégé. They demonstrate what can be achieved with dedication and perfect practice. *Could this be you one day?* <https://safeshare.tv/x/Kvqj9VNc II#>



HEIAN KATA

Here are some links to HEIAN kata tutorials.

They are produced by one of our fellow clubs in the Shitoryu Shukokai Karatedo World Union. There are very slight differences to how we perform the kata but nevertheless the videos are very good for learning purposes.

- ↪ **Heian Nidan** - <https://safeshare.tv/x/mu42HeWVhpE#>
- ↪ **Heian Shodan** - <https://safeshare.tv/x/ZS0vsVsGYJ4#>
- ↪ **Heian Sandan** - <https://safeshare.tv/x/z7FwMrRWzfg#>
- ↪ **Heian Yondan** - <https://safeshare.tv/x/rlfQAIIM4c4#>
- ↪ **Heian Godan** - <https://safeshare.tv/x/oDoWh0E0uGo#>

And finally

We thought you might like some film or book suggestions - ?

Surely the obvious initial film choice has to be **THE KARATE KID!** You can't beat the original version with Pat Morita and Ralph Macchio. It is (surprisingly) well researched. For those with a lot of time spare there is of course Part 2, Part 3 and The Next Karate Kid! No doubt some will prefer the 2010 Jackie Chan version with Jaden Smith (*although really they should have called it Kung Fu Kid!!*).



As for a book suggestion, how about either or both books on neuroplasticity by Norman Doidge; *'The Brain that Changes Itself'* and *'The Brain's Way of Healing'*.

‘RESPECT’ Merit Award

The golden rule of respect is to treat other people the way you would like to be treated.

Our actions affect everyone around us and how we behave towards other people often affects how they treat us in return. If you are kind and considerate, it is likely that people will be kind and considerate to you. Equally, if you are rude and moody you are likely to get a grumpy reply back. So life is better and happier when we are respectful to each other. By treating people well you are more likely to get along with them and to be able to ask and receive help. You are also less likely to cause bad feelings and conflicts.

RESPECT = TREATING OTHER PEOPLE AS YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED

Before saying or doing something, imagine how it will make the other person feel. Ask yourself, “Would I like it if it were said or done to me?”. If the answer is, “No”, then you probably shouldn’t do it!

?? WOULD I LIKE IT IF THAT WAS DONE TO ME ??

Even when you disagree with someone, you can do it in a respectful way. There is no need to shout or be rude or aggressive. Remember, you are more likely to be listened to if you behave calmly and politely.

Respect is of fundamental importance in karate. In karate we call it *rei*. It is often demonstrated with a bow (which is why we bow when we enter the *dojo* or when we work with a partner). However it should be the way we behave all the time and it should be heartfelt – that means not simply *acting* politely just because you should but rather being respectful because in your heart you really want to. **Karate begins and ends with respect.**

Real ‘rei’ is the outward expression of a respectful heart.

Combat methods that do not emphasise the importance of *rei*/respect and do not encourage it in students can unfortunately teach aggression instead of self-control and can lead to more conflict, not less. That is why, at our karate club, we teach the importance of respect above all else – and the skills we learn in the dojo apply in our everyday lives. So we practice being respectful in the karate class and we don’t stop there – we use that skill in everything we do!

Show your parents respect by doing as they ask right away and with a good attitude. Show your brothers/sisters/friends respect by sharing, being kind to them and getting along. Find sensible ways of resolving differences. Show your teachers respect by paying attention, doing as you are asked with the right attitude and by trying your best at all times. Show respect for the community you live in by keeping it clean and tidy (even your bedroom!), showing consideration for others and helping where you can.

*Remember – you have to **earn** your merit award. Find ways of showing respect for those around you - even people you do not know e.g. someone walking through a door behind you.*

***Parents/Guardians** – when you feel that your child has earned their merit award, please let us know and we will award the certificate. Thank you.*