

Once again, **THANK YOU** to everyone who has been keeping in touch and keeping us up to date with your new exercise regimes. And it is good to hear that some of our younger members have been exploring the theme of the **RESPECT** merit award and trying to earn their certificate. Remember, there is no set activity for this. Parents you can utilise it as you think best and then let us know when you think your child deserves their award.

We appreciate all the comments, feedback and suggestions you have been sending us. We will work on putting together the resources you have asked for.

With best wishes,

*Chris & Barbi*

4<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## KARARTY KLUB

 <p>BBC NEWS</p>	<p>IN CASE ANY OF YOU HAVE NOT COME ACROSS THIS YET .. IF YOU ARE KEEP ARTISTS THIS MIGHT BE SOMETHING YOU ENJOY - DRAWING WITH AN ARTIST FROM MARVEL STUDIOS. WILL SLINEY HAS BEEN SETTING A DAILY DRAWING CHALLENGE ... CHECKOUT <b>#WEWILLDRAW</b></p>
<p>We also have a challenge for you .... Who can design and make <b>an agility ladder</b>?</p> <p>Send us your photos ....</p> <p>In this newsletter there is a link to some great agility exercises for you to try.</p>	

# BODY - MIND - SPIRIT

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

## BODY & MIND & SPIRIT

As we explained last week, **MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE.**

Whether you are practising something slow and sustained like yoga or tai chi, something faster paced like cycling or jogging or something with intense bursts like interval training, it is all beneficial in multiple ways. **The important thing is to vary the way you exercise to get ALL of the benefits.** It is easy to underestimate the value of kata training and to think of it simply as a sequence of basic moves but it is so much more .... Kata training has been used successfully to rehabilitate people who have lost physical capabilities (standing, walking, dressing, feeding themselves) as a result of damage to their nervous system e.g as a result of strokes. Through varying your kata practice you get all of the benefits of movement. For example:

- ★ Performing kata slowly can be an excellent meditation and improves mental focus and also breath control.
- ★ Performing kata at medium pace several times is an excellent all-over warm up, exercising all of the joints and main muscle groups, improving joint mobility as you transition through countless positions.
- ★ Performing kata with your eyes closed improves your proprioception (your body's ability to sense its own position and location in space) and this improves your balance and stability. The importance of this is often overlooked but without proprioception we would always be falling over, we would be unable to go in the direction we want, to pick things up or even put food into our mouths.
- ★ Performing kata quickly is an excellent cardiovascular workout.
- ★ Performing kata smoothly but with a sustained fixation at the end of each technique builds strength (as well as helping our cerebellum to develop the muscle memory required for coordinating voluntary movement resulting in smooth and balanced muscular activity.
- ★ Performing kata with a focus on the transitions between stances builds stability, coordination and balance.

And all these benefits are in addition to the fact that good kata practice will improve your technique and also teach you self-defence applications (bunkai) as we talked about last week.

*So, if you don't get time or have the inclination to do any other form of exercise, practice kata (in any or all of the ways described above) at least once a day.*

## BODY

We know that a number of you have been using the exercise challenge to keep up your fitness.

For those who do not remember the sequence it is:

- ☺ Horse stance (20 seconds/20 mississippi)
- ☺ Star jumps x10
- ☺ Squat thrusts x10
- ☺ Burpees x10
- ☺ Press ups x10
- ☺ Sit ups x 10
- ☺ Straight leg raises x10
- ☺ Tummy table (20 seconds/20 mississippi)
- ☺ Stomach stars x10
- ☺ Dynamic plank x10

Normally we jog to the other end of the dojo between each exercise – you can adapt this. Once you start finding this too comfortable to complete, you can

- ↪ increase to 15 of each exercise (and hold horse stance and tummy table for 30 seconds) – or
- ↪ do the 'exercise challenge with a twist' by adding a set of exercises between each exercise e.g. 10 jumping jacks or 10 press ups or 10 alternates ...
- finally
- ↪ if you really want to challenge yourself more, give yourself a set time to complete the exercises. How long it takes will depend on what you are doing between each exercise. Time yourself once at a reasonable pace and then aim to whittle the time down. But remember that you still have to perform each of the exercises properly or you lose a lot of the benefit!

**AGILITY** - At the club we have recently been using agility ladders to improve and speed up our footwork. Good, fast footwork is essential in all fighting disciplines which is why we skip, do footwork drills and place so much emphasis on correct footwork in kihon (basics) and in kata – so that it is instinctive when we do kumite. At the club we started with basic agility drills and have been introducing more advanced ones. Here is a link to some great variations that you can practice at home in readiness for when we resume at the club! Agility ladders can be purchased online or you can design your own ones at home. Please ensure you exercise in a safe (level, non-slippery, obstacle-free) environment where you won't injure yourself or damage anything.

<https://safeshare.tv/x/ss5e88465508038#>

## MIND

We hope you tried and enjoyed last week's breathing exercises. Don't give up on the alternate nostril breathing if you are finding it difficult. It is excellent for de-cluttering the mind and removing the constant internal chatter.

Here is another breathing exercise you can use to calm the mind. It uses one of the forms of breath control that we use in karate – pulsed diaphragmatic exhalations ... which is a fancy way of describing how we breathe out when we perform a technique. Using our abdominal muscles we perform small exhalations with each technique. Sometimes we have a single exhalation and sometimes we perform two, three or four, depending on the combination. (Just think of some of your kata sequences and how you control your breathing depending on the sequence).

Here is the exercise. Do it sitting comfortably and with your eyes closed.

- ☯ *Inhale for a count of 8*
- ☯ *Hold for a count of 8*
- ☯ *Exhale in 8 short pulses*
- ☯ *Hold for a count of 8*
- ☯ *Repeat*

Counts of 8 can be tricky to begin with. Start with a number you find comfortable e.g. 4 or 5 and then build up to 8. Try and maintain the practice for 2-5 minutes.

## SPIRIT

This week we will look at a different type of spirit. At the club we have a motto:

### **SPIRIT FIRST, TECHNIQUE SECOND**

What does it mean? Well, karate is about self-defence. It is about defending yourself against an aggressor, someone who is trying to overpower and hurt you. In the non-threatening atmosphere of the dojo, you can train and develop good, fast, strong techniques but they are no good to you if you cannot remain calm and courageous enough to use them to protect yourself when someone is really going to attack you.

All aspects of karate training aim to develop spirit. An example of when practitioners have to show spirit is in *IPPON KUMITE*. This is our single-attack fighting practice. Our opponent performs a single attack (oi zuki, mae geri ...) and we have to evade and counter that attack effectively. Our counter-attacks must be performed with speed and accuracy *and spirit*.

"Avoid – Quick - Hard" is our memory-jogger for effective techniques.

This link provides an excellent demonstration of how ippon kumite should be performed. The demo is by *shorinji kempo* practitioners who use heavier contact than in karate training and therefore need head and body armour. Our *ippon kumite* is performed with more control – but it should have the same *spirit*. Notice the speed, rapid-fire flow of techniques, spirit and *zanchin* (remaining concentration).

[https://safeshare.tv/x/4yHV3dOt\\_jE](https://safeshare.tv/x/4yHV3dOt_jE)



## KATA - MATSUKAZE

We hope you enjoyed last week's kata links – Rika Usami for inspiration, the incredible team kata and bunkai and of course the HEIAN katas.

This week the focus is **MATSUKAZE** kata.

Matsukaze translates as 'pines trees in the wind' and refers to the signature combinations in this kata which show the effectiveness of fluid, flexible movement when combined with a strong, rooted base.

<https://safeshare.tv/x/vFOoIKzB6-4#>

This is a link to a video of Matsuzake kata. It is performed by Masatake Ohshita Sensei. He is the technical director of SSWU (the Shitoryu Shukokai Karatedo World Union) which is the worldwide union of which Shukokai England (and therefore our club) forms part. Being members of this Union allows us to collaborate and train with highly-respected senior instructors from Japan, Europe and the rest of the world.



## MERIT AWARDS *for Karate Kids and Cadets*

You already have last week's challenge of working towards your **RESPECT** merit award.

This week we are introducing the **SPIRIT** merit award.

### SPIRIT MERIT AWARD

Your spirit is your **driving force**. It takes you forward when the going gets tough and enables you to overcome difficulties and fears. Having a strong spirit allows you to **make the best of any given situation** using your positive qualities - determination, courage, perseverance, resilience, resourcefulness. These qualities give you your **strength of character** – your spirit.

The starting point is a **positive mental attitude**.

An attitude that says: I can do this. I will do my best. I will not give up.  
I will find a way.

Have you noticed how some people always try their best, even if they are not 'the' best and how they never give up and instead keep practising until they get something right? These people have a strong and positive mental attitude. Their spirit helps them overcome set backs and challenges and helps them persevere in finding a way to accomplish their objective. They will do well at whatever they choose to do.

Developing a strong spirit is important - it will help you in all aspects of your life. There are things we can do to make our spirit stronger. They involve taking ourselves out of our 'comfort zone' by doing things that we find challenging and even daunting. It is called '**gaining strength through adversity**'.

Our spirit is not often tested in daily life and it is easy to hide away from challenges. Don't! See challenges as an opportunity to become stronger. **It is precisely when we are 'out of our depth' that our spirit is so important: it is what gets us through those difficult moments.** The more spirit we develop, the more situations and problems we can tackle. Having a strong spirit will help you to achieve the goals you set yourself and make a success of whatever you set out to do.

**Karate teaches self-defence so, by its nature, it teaches us how to handle difficult situations (like standing up to a bully).** But there are lots of other situations that can be challenging or nerve-wracking (e.g. giving a presentation, taking part in a competition, taking an exam, being interviewed etc). Our karate training prepares us for these too because **a fundamental part of karate is the development a strong spirit.** To be able truly to defend yourself you need to know more than just the physical moves - you have to have a positive mental attitude and lots of spirit.

### **Spirit first, technique second.**

This is a traditional saying in karate. The point is that developing a strong spirit is the most important objective. No matter how good your techniques are, if you don't have a strong spirit you will find it difficult to stand up for yourself in a real situation. Developing a strong spirit is essential because **although we learn in the dojo, karate training prepares us for life outside the dojo.** In the dojo we train respectfully and we don't hit or hurt each other - but real bullies do try to frighten and hurt people. Being really good at techniques in the dojo is important – but to have the resilience, courage and determination to stand up for yourself in a scary situation is essential. That is why developing a strong spirit is at the heart of karate.

The kumite challenge is one of the exercises we do at the club to build spirit. It is hard and tiring and you have to be brave, determined and resilient.

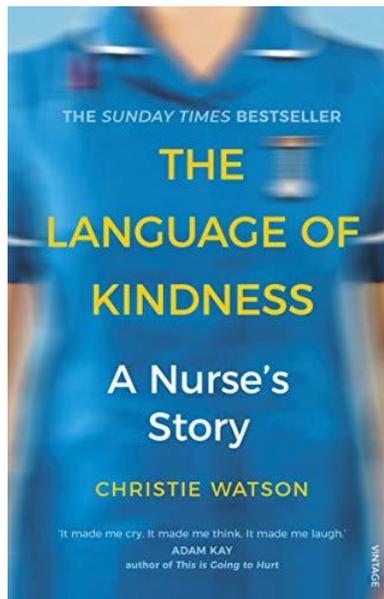
In reality **every aspect of karate improves spirit**; performing kata in front of the class; sparring with others; taking part in a competition; taking a grading. They all require and enhance a positive mental attitude, determination, courage, resilience, resourcefulness, the ability to keep calm under pressure, the ability to withstand set-backs and keep going forward, the ability to face up to a challenge and not run away from it. **Effective karate requires spirit; the objective of karate training is to develop it.**

*CHALLENGE: You need to earn your 'SPIRIT' award so think of a way of proving to your family that you deserve it. Do something outside your 'comfort zone' with a positive mental attitude.*

*And finally* . . . . our book and film recommendations:



While obviously not about karate, this great story tells us a lot about Japanese culture and their martial heritage which influence many of the traditions and values of modern karate, for example the emphasis on respect (which is not found in most other fighting systems). Look out also for the reference to “too many minds” – how good self-defence needs to be instinctive.



This is a brilliantly written autobiography of a nurse. It is very accessible and easy to read and it will open your eyes to the life of a hospital nurse – the challenges and the triumphs. We all think we know how amazing nurses are but this book will (in an uplifting way) make you understand that we don't see the half of it. Now, more than ever we are beginning to appreciate the incredible job that our nurses (and all those working in the NHS) do – but this was always the case, even before coronavirus.