



Self-Defence Discipline as a Holistic Approach to Health and Fitness

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ABSTRACT

Self defence offers not only self protection but also it provides a comprehensive approach to physical fitness. Apart from physical fitness mental health strength our emotional, psychological and social well being. The study explores self defence as a holistic fitness and analysing the effect on on cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength, coordination, agility and flexibility. This study also highlights the psychological benefits, such as increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and improved stress management. This study focus on practicing self defence discipline “Karate” integrating physical conditioning with mental health and promoting a comprehensive approach to health and fitness. The findings support the inclusion of self-defence programs in community health, physical education, and wellness initiatives

Introduction

‘If you are fighting your self defence has not worked’. Good self defence avoids having to fight. However, it may be true that if your self defence does not work, then you will need to fight, in order to defend yourself further. Learning to fight may well improve your self defence, but fighting is not self defence and self defence is not fighting. Even though they may well compliment each other. In its purest form self defence has no attack. Although sometimes difficult -good Martial Arts and good self defence should be able to control a violent situation without attack or even injury. It is almost fighting without fighting.



Fitness

Fitness refers to your body's ability to function effectively and efficiently in work, daily activities, and recreational pursuits, while also being resilient to stress and illness. It includes multiple components, both physical and mental, that together contribute to overall health and well-being. Physical fitness include Cardiovascular Endurance, Muscular Strength, Flexibility and Mental fitness include Emotional resilience and stress management.

The Elements needed for a good Self Defence

- Speed
- Power
- Accuracy
- Determination
- Distance

- **Speed**

Speed is literally how fast you can execute a manoeuvre, punch, kick throw etc. Training and repetition improves speed, good technique allows it to travel quickly through an efficient medium - the correct use of your body. Many training regimes can improve your physical speed, skipping for footwork, speed ball for eye hand coordination, shadow boxing, fast ball games, sparring etc. Many practitioners of self defence concentrate on power and while it is important you cannot apply power if you have not first engaged with the opponent. A speedy opponent will not allow you to apply the power.

- **Power**

Self defence you need more muscle if you wish to increase your weight/mass or you need to move the mass (weight) you already have, faster. Another way is to do both, increase your speed and increase your muscle mass. This is the way to develop more power. You can also develop pushing, pulling, gripping, contracting or crushing power which is less dependent on speed this is sometimes referred to as strength. Weight training or resistance training is the way to develop muscle mass. Many Martial Artists rely on Isometrics to develop the necessary strength and power. Isometrics is one of the most efficient methods for increasing muscle mass. The other great thing about Isometrics is the short duration of the routine compared to the effects mass. So to develop power work with Isometrics, resistance training or Plyometrics.



Strength benefits come from abdominal training- Core Strength

1. Psoas

Large internal muscle has no great visual effect but is important for strength and posture - especially your back. This is conditioned by doing sit-ups. However, it is important to do sit-ups properly. Legs bent, back flat down. Fingers on temples. Do not crash back down to the floor. Curl from the floor into a vertical sitting up position. Repeat three sets of fifty for good general conditioning, but build up to this slowly. Start with your feet under a weight or firm bar to start. Later do the sit-ups without the weight or bar.

2. Frontal abs (Rectus abdominis)

This is the six pack and can be conditioned in a variety of ways. It has a good visual effect. This area is worked by bringing your chest in towards your groin. Repeat three sets of fifty for good general conditioning, but build up to this slowly.

3. Side abs (Transversus)

The deepest muscles of the abdominal muscles, the Transversus abdominis go horizontally from front to back. This is the main muscle group to tuck-in your gut. It is placed either side of your frontal abs and works like a corset. You will get more 'looks' benefit from this one muscle set than by all the others put together. It also helps provide abdominal pressure to help keep your back straight. Unlike the other abdominal muscles, the Transversus Abdominis are not postural muscles. They are very important in respiration, and are used for forced exhalation.

4. Internal & external obliques

The final set of muscles is situated near the elbows and is responsible for pulling the shoulder toward the hip and enabling twisting actions. The external obliques, which extend downward and inward, are the largest and most robust abdominal muscles, in contrast to the internal obliques. They also assist in compressing the abdomen during exhalation. However, incorrect training of these muscles can result in a thicker waist, which is often not desired in an abs workout.

Strengthening

Core strength is vital for martial artists, and a thorough session with regular core strength exercises is likely the most crucial part of any fitness regimen. To build strength, athletes should prioritize training



their bodies from the inside out, beginning with the abdominals, then the back muscles, followed by the arms, and finally the legs. Nutrition is just as important, with protein being the cornerstone for muscle development. Many athletes do not fully capitalize on their training efforts due to poor nutrition, which is vital for muscle growth both before and after workouts. Consuming high-quality protein soon after exercising is essential.

Accuracy

In terms of accuracy, speed and power are of little value if you cannot hit your target. Precise techniques require less power or make the power you have more effective. A single, well-aimed strike can swiftly resolve a conflict. Accuracy involves coordination between the eyes, brain, and body, and should be trained accordingly. To be precise, you must first identify your targets and understand which areas will yield the best results, then practice striking them accurately. The combination of speed, power, and accuracy is a formidable force.

Determination

Determination is crucial for overcoming challenges; without it, conflicts may be short-lived. You need a certain level of resilience physically, spiritually, and mentally, along with a strong will to succeed, known as 'determination.' Over time, the act of consistently attending training sessions and completing routines will cultivate determination.

The key lessons for developing determination include:

1. Comprehension (understanding what is required).
2. Values (the driving forces behind people's actions).
3. Visualization (the mental ability to foresee outcomes).
4. Willpower (the core of determination).

Distance

Maintaining an appropriate distance is crucial for effective self-defence. Being too close to your adversary can hinder your ability to respond promptly. Keeping a safe distance allows you space and time to think. But what constitutes a safe distance? Ideally, it should be as far as possible, but never closer



than an arm's length. Within arm's reach, even the fastest and most skilled individuals may struggle to counter a swift attack. Distance is essential.

A skilled martial artist should be able to dodge or block rapid strikes when there is a meter of space between their chests and their opponent's, though this is not guaranteed. More distance is always preferable! Your ability to evade decreases with every centimetre that this gap narrows. From both an offensive and defensive perspective, distance is crucial, so practice distance drills with your training partner. Observe the space required for your specific build and reach during sparring sessions.

Why is fitness so crucial?

Being fit is part of a healthy lifestyle, contributing to a longer, better life, which is a form of self-defence in itself. Fitness is vital for defending against physical attacks because if you are fit:

- ✓ Your reactions will be quicker.
- ✓ Your body will be stronger.
- ✓ You will be more flexible.
- ✓ Your muscles will better withstand blows.
- ✓ Your bone density will improve.
- ✓ You will have greater endurance.
- ✓ You will think more quickly.
- ✓ You will recover from injuries faster.
- ✓ If needed, you will hit harder.

The Impact of Drugs on Fitness

Fitness encompasses more than just physical activity or appearance—it includes overall health, stamina, mental well-being, and recovery ability. The use of drugs, whether recreational, performance-enhancing, or prescribed, can adversely affect these fitness aspects. While some substances might offer short-term benefits, they often harm the body and mind over time.

A. Recreational Drugs and Fitness

Recreational drugs like alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy are often used for enjoyment or stress relief. However, these substances can negatively impact physical fitness. One significant effect is a reduction in strength and endurance, as these drugs can impair both the heart and muscles, making efficient exercise more challenging. They also slow recovery, as drug use can disrupt sleep patterns and



hinder the body's ability to repair muscle tissue post-workout. Additionally, alcohol and stimulants can cause dehydration, reducing physical performance and increasing fatigue during training. Regular use of these substances may also lead to low motivation and poor focus, making it difficult to maintain consistency with workouts or training goals. Lastly, many recreational drugs impair balance, coordination, and reaction time, increasing the risk of accidents or injuries during physical activity.

B. Performance-Enhancing Drugs(PEDs)

Athletes occasionally resort to performance-enhancing drugs such as anabolic steroids, human growth hormone (HGH), or erythropoietin (EPO) to boost their physical capabilities. These substances can provide temporary benefits, including enhanced muscle development, increased strength, and improved endurance. This can result in faster training progress or superior performance in competitions. However, the long-term health risks are considerable. Consistent use of PEDs can lead to heart issues, liver damage, hormonal imbalances, and even infertility. These side effects can inflict lasting harm on the body and overall health. There are also ethical issues associated with the use of these substances. Most sports organizations prohibit PEDs, and athletes caught using them face severe repercussions, such as disqualification, suspensions, and damage to their reputation.

"Eat a good diet, learn about nutrition — this is self-defence and fitness."

"Eat a good diet"

- ❖ Consuming whole, minimally processed foods provides your body with the necessary fuel to perform optimally — both physically and mentally.
- ❖ A nutritious diet helps prevent chronic illnesses like diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and even some cancers.
- ❖ You're not just eating to survive; you're eating to thrive.

"Learn about nutrition"

- ❖ Gaining an understanding of what you consume is empowering. You become less susceptible to misinformation, trends, and marketing ploys.
- ❖ When you comprehend how food impacts your energy, mood, focus, and long-term health, you can make informed decisions
- ❖ . Nutrition knowledge is a life skill, not just for athletes or health enthusiasts — it's crucial for everyone.



"This is self-defence and fitness"

This statement redefines healthy eating and nutritional knowledge as more than just "wellness"—it's a form of self-defence:

- Against poor health,
- Against preventable disease,
- Against systems that profit from unhealthy choices.

Conclusion

Self-defence is much more than a means of physical protection—it is a comprehensive discipline that enhances the body, sharpens the mind, and builds emotional resilience. Through regular training, particularly in martial arts like Karate, individuals develop essential physical attributes such as strength, speed, flexibility, and coordination, while also improving mental focus, self-confidence, and stress management. By combining physical conditioning with mental discipline, self-defence promotes a balanced, healthy lifestyle that supports long-term well-being. Integrating self-defence into fitness and wellness programs not only empowers individuals to protect themselves but also fosters personal growth, discipline, and holistic health.

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