

"CAN YOUR CHILD SAY NO TO DRUGS?"

Like you, I have recently been dismayed to hear of drug suspensions for our star athletes in baseball, football and other sports. Most of us have probably assumed that the pursuit of athletics gives one a wholesomeness and ability to resist temptations such as drugs. We have often heard that sports are character building and I still believe there's a lot of substance to that claim. Through my experience in teaching karate, not as a sport but rather as a way of attitude, I believe that students learn to resist falling victim to these harmful influences and can recognize the damage to their athletic wellbeing; these students are better equipped mentally to say "NO!"

Traditional karate training is not a panacea for all our character ills but it does direct its philosophy towards positive growth. Students grow in alertness and self-discipline. That's no guarantee but its better insurance than not trying at all.

I personally enjoy a measure of competitive sports, but competition has to be kept in perspective. In traditional karate, the student trains and strives for self-growth. Competition is with oneself. The continual advocacy of respect for others leads to respect for oneself. It is difficult if not impossible for a person to train regularly in karate and espouse the philosophy of good conduct, ethics, healthy body and other positive characteristics while taking drugs. Perhaps competitive sports, be they in schools or professional, have lost their original values of sportsmanship and joy of competing to be replaced by only the need to win. It could be that this shift in emphasis has led to the highly publicized crisis in sports we are now reading and hearing about.

Mean while, I will continue my karate training and to share it with others while believing that verbalizing and motivating ourselves to strive for more will lead to more in an effort to improve ourselves.

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