



# 10 REASONS WHY KIDZ SHOULD LEARN SELF DEFENCE?

by David Wattie

With the right instructor, kids flourish in self-defence and martial arts training:

## 1. Improves physical fitness and coordination

In a self-defence program, kids are active. The locomotor, nonlocomotor and manipulative movements develop gross and fine motor skills and therefore result in a holistic improvement in fitness and physicality. Kids benefit from improved coordination, strength, agility, balance, flexibility, cardio, speed, and reactive and bursting power. And this physical development makes a life-long difference: children who are physically capable and confident grow in to adults who are physically capable and confident.

## 2. Teaches concentration, discipline and respect

Martial arts and self-defence are widely acknowledged for their ability to cultivate concentration, discipline and respect in their students. The students need to listen to their instructor, sit still, stand straight, stand in a line, wait patiently, take turns, and possibly use terms of respect such as 'sensei' or 'shifu' and bow to their instructor and their opponents as a show of respect.

## 3. Develops confidence

In a self-defence program, children are constantly learning new skills, and each one is a little more challenging than the one before. Not everything is easy and developing these skills can take practice. But developing new skills leads to confidence and pride in one's abilities. A good instructor is also praising children for their effort and good work which builds confidence.

## 4. Develops assertiveness, tenacity and determination

Mastering new skills, such as physical abilities and self-defence techniques, requires assertiveness, tenacity and determination. Kids have to be prepared to give it a go, keep trying, work through failure, try harder, see others succeed, make small improvements, until they experience success. A good self-defence program will also help children develop determination through drills that push them to succeed past the point of their preconceived limitations and assumptions. And self-defence training and martial arts usually outline a process for achievement through their ranks such as coloured belts or patches, with the long-term objective of expert level or black belt. Self-defence training helps kids realise that they can accomplish anything they put their mind to.

## 5. Develops communication, listening and social skills

Listening and following instructions are fundamental aspects of a self-defence program, and a good self-defence program is going to place a lot of emphasis on teaching children to 'speak up for themselves'. In addition, even though self-defence and martial arts are 'individual' activities, they are delivered in a structured group environment, which means, interacting with others, developing friendships and learning group behaviour such as turn taking, supporting each other, being kind, respect for each other etc.

## 6. Teaches nutrition, anatomy and hygiene

In a physical program that encourages movement, it is easy to reinforce why we need to eat well to give our bodies fuel for playing. And a good self-defence program is also an opportunity to teach anatomy (left, right, body parts etc) and hygiene (cut your fingernails, wash your hands etc).

## 7. Teaches spatial concepts

For small children, a self-defence program is also a fantastic

vehicle for teaching spatial concepts which are essential for children as they take their first big steps into the world. (Spatial awareness means an understanding of the child compared to their surroundings, such as up, down, forward, backward, in, out, stop, go etc.)

## 8. Teaches awareness of danger

A good self-defence program will teach awareness of danger, and in particular, that it is much better to avoid a problem than to have to solve one. In Krav Maga, we call this the timeline. In self-defence for kids, the children learn to use their eyes and their ears to be aware of their situation, for instance, aware of the road and cars, or keeping close to mummy and daddy. This is the most important aspect of self-defence for kids. If they are aware of themselves and aware of things that could mean danger, they have the best chance of staying safe.

## 9. Teaches gentle solutions to bullying and rough play

Sometimes an 'attack' is rough play, like siblings wrestling or getting too rowdy; and sometimes an attack is bullying or fighting which can really hurt. Either way, when we're talking about kids at home or in the childcare centre or in the playground, the last thing we want is any child getting hurt. So a good self-defence program teaches gentle solutions for when the child is being 'attacked' by another child. A good program emphasises using voice and non-violent ways to protect their personal space. And at the end of the day, this means we're teaching non-violent conflict resolution skills – and that's handy for life!

## 10. Helps kids to stay safe and avoid accidents

And finally, a good self-defence program will be holistic. After all, there is not much point teaching a child self-defence if they don't know to stay off the road. Through self-defence, we can develop a child's awareness across a broad range of safety topics, including road safety, water safety, sun safety, electricity, burns, etc and of course, stranger danger and concepts of personal body protection (eg from my top to my toes, I say what goes).

**That's 10 amazing benefits from teaching kids self-defence. Find a good instructor and get started today!**



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Sr. Class: 6.45 pm – 8.00 pm

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