

My thoughts on Aging and Kenpo

By Andrea Peterson

I always was intrigued by the martial arts. When I was young, I was watching a Kickboxing fight on TV when others in the room watching with me kept exclaiming it was horrible and un-sportsman like to use your legs and feet in a fight. I thought it was so cool! When expressing that I would like to do that, I was told don't be ridiculous and anyway it was for boys.

Two years after recovering from a scuba diving accident from which I suffered a broken leg, messed up knee, two surgeries and lots of physical therapy, I fulfilled a dream and signed up for lessons in 1988. I was 35 years old.

When being interviewed by my first instructor, I told him about my injury and the limitations it left me with and that I thought my age was a disadvantage. He said no worries, Kenpo will work around all that.

Injury aside, I discovered that at the great age of 35 I was no longer my 20-year-old self. I was no longer as flexible or had much strength. I would see upper belts way younger than me thumping each other and wondered if I could do that. I never mentioned my age, all I said to my workout partners was don't kick out my knee. I kept persevering, did the best I could.

As I get older, I find a few things challenging

The Past few years I have had to ask my fellow workout partners to not to crash me too hard on the mats as I do not want any more broken bones due to Karate. It takes longer to recuperate. I am told I do have, osteopenia in my left hip. I am taking the meds/supplements etc. I am scheduled for another test next month.

I am stiffer than I used to be. Some days are good, but there are days when I wake up and am stiff all day. Because of stiffness, posture and balance is sometimes a challenge, flexibility is reduced, speed is slower. Each morning I do stretching and balancing exercises to help alleviate these issues.

The Benefits of doing karate all these years are:

I have the confidence that although I may be limited physically, what I can do, I know I do well. And I know that if I am attacked or must defend someone, I will do my dammed best.

I am more aware of my body; I listen to the aches and pains. I adjust/slow down/increase physical activity as needed.

The constant physical activity has increased my stamina. I believe that if I wasn't active, I would be way more limited than I am. And learning new things keep the brain active. It is not just the physical but the mental that make a person a better martial artist.

I believe that Karate helps me to keep a youthful outlook, ready to try new things

I have made lifelong friends because of Karate.

Having my daughters brag about how Mom doesn't look or act like an old lady.

In conclusion:

I am 68 years old now. I don't ever want to stop Karate. I will keep going until I drop. I sometimes fear a bad injury, but I have chosen not to let that fear stop me from Karate.

Don't let your body limitations stop you from doing something you love. However, be cautious listen to your body, do not overextend yourself and end up with injuries. Your mind may say you are 25 but the body tells another story.

Discuss with your instructor how to modify techniques and forms that you are unable to perform. Be open with your workout partners.

I believe in practicing all what you know, if you don't use it, you lose it.

Don't worry about keeping up with the younger crowd. Do the best you can.

It doesn't matter what your age is but what is in your heart. And that grey hair, you earned it. It's a badge of honor.