



MARTIAL ARTS

Based on the presentation "Teaching Karate to Special Populations" by Kathy Olevsky and Kathy Thompson

Getting Started

Anyone can participate in martial arts. Modifications in instruction and/or movements can be made to accommodate most disabilities. To locate a martial arts school in your community, look in the phone book, newspapers, or ask around. Here are a few preliminary steps that can help ensure a positive start:

- ? Observe a class or two to make sure you have chosen a supportive and fun environment to learn martial arts.
- ? Talk to the instructor about your personal goals and any concerns or questions you have about the class.
- ? Share any necessary information with the instructor about your abilities and limitations.
- ? Discuss any adaptations needed to fully participate in classes with the instructor.

Adaptation Ideas

Visual or Hearing Impairments

Adaptations for persons with visual or hearing impairments are often related to the method of instruction.

- ? An instructor should provide "hands on" training with visual cues for someone with a hearing impairment.
- ? An instructor should use descriptive terminology in addition to "hands on" instruction for someone with a visual impairment.

Benefits of Martial Arts

- Great form of exercise
- Increases self confidence
- Increases strength and endurance
- Reduces stress
- Enhances coordination
- Improves balance and flexibility
- Increases concentration
- Increases ability to defend self

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Mobility Impairments

Alternative body positions or movements can be substituted for “traditional” martial arts movements depending on individual abilities and limitations.

- ? Determine if mobility aids need to be incorporated into the movements or if movements can be done without this equipment.
- ? Be aware of how movements can be affected by inadequate balance, flexibility, and muscle control.

Learning and Cognitive Impairments

- ? A limited attention span can be addressed by involving the individual in counting and having them repeat movements and techniques. Repetition is also important for those who have difficulty learning.
- ? Limiting group size and minimizing time lapses between activities can also improve learning and attention.

Helpful Hints to Increase Success

Hint #1: Both the instructor and the participant must be willing to learn and explore new techniques.

Hint #2: If transportation is a barrier, seek alternatives such as carpooling with other martial arts students or locating a class near accessible public transportation.

Hint #3: Don't assume specialized or individual instruction is needed because of a disability. In most cases, people with disabilities can be included in “regular” classes.

Resources

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Karate International
4720 Hargrove Road
Suite 140
Raleigh, NC 27616
919-876-8898
www.karateinternational.net

**International Disabled Self
Defense Association**
22-C New Leicester Hwy.
#259
Asheville, NC 28806
828-683-5528
www.defenseability.com

*Article on Judo for individuals
with visual impairments*

www.judoinfo.com/blind.htm