

TIME OUT

Karen Gately

founder Corporate Dojo

How many karate gi (uniforms) do you have?

Two. At the height of competing in tournaments, I typically had four. Training and teaching most days, along with competing on weekends, made having any fewer a washing nightmare.

What dojo (martial arts school) do you attend?

Samurai Karate, a chain of dojos my father founded in the early 1980s.

Why karate?

As a six-year-old, I thought karate would be fun and my dad loved it. For some reason, I decided I wanted to learn how to fight.

What level of proficiency have you reached?

Third dan black belt.

Tips for people wanting to become better at karate

Understand that the purpose of traditional karate is to develop not only the ability to kick or punch, but also strength of character. Self-development and realisation of our potential are central to the martial arts journey. Integrity, humility, respect, courage

and personal accountability are the true measures of a successful karateka. Train with a sensei (teacher) who can guide your development as a person through example and the investment they make in students. Push the boundaries of what you already know about yourself and your capabilities. Recognise the excuses you make and step up to the challenge of training with focus.

Landing a really good elbow or knee strike is a good feeling.

Do you practise at tournament level or work out with a sensei or friends?

For many years, I competed in karate tournaments and had the privilege of representing my state and country on numerous occasions. These days, I focus on my own training, and on maintaining strength and fitness.

Most challenging bout you have experienced

Unquestionably the finals of the 1987 Karate World Championships in Japan. As members of the first Australian junior karate team, we were all feeling immense

pressure to do well. We were fighting for the gold medal against Japan. Knowing my teammates were relying on me to win was daunting. I'm proud to say we took home gold.

Do you get into a particular mind-state or zone when you do karate?

Yes – for example, zanshin (empty mind, total awareness), kiai (expression of spirit), kime (focus of power) or kokyū (breath control). Focusing our minds, projecting our energy for maximum impact, and managing our breathing are all aspects of the way we train and are taught to fight.

Are you an aggressive attacking competitor or are you alert but flexible?

At times, attack is the best form of defence; at other times, waiting for the right moment for a defensive strike is the smartest strategy. As a tournament competitor, I was most inclined to be a defensive fighter, meaning I would pick off my opponent as they came in for an attack, typically because they left a gap in their defence.

Favourite move Landing a really good elbow or knee strike is a good feeling.

Love most about karate The people you are on the journey with. My training partners,

Karen Gately says karate allows people to develop their character.



teammates and senseis have had a profound influence on my development as a person and my success in life. Trusting the people around you is essential and the bonds of friendship you form are often for life.

Dislike about karate There are few excuses for not training and following through on your commitments. So, there have been times I have resisted and even resented the demands karate made of me. But I am now extremely grateful for the resilience and discipline those experiences have taught me.

Will you ever be too old to do karate?

No. I may not always be able to kick and punch, but I will always be able to apply the principles of the karate way of life.

Serious injuries Broken wrist, big toe and nose. I've had three knee surgeries, a torn Achilles tendon, a couple of twisted ankles and plenty of black eyes. Bizarrely, the one that hurt the most was when I broke my big toe accidentally kicking my training partner's knee. I fared a lot better, though, than the man who snapped off his big toe doing the same thing.

lifeandleisure@afrc.com