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## **How To Choose a** **Martial Arts Program**

More and more parents are looking to Martial Arts as an activity for their children. In some cases, an activity to do *with* their children, something they can do “together” in a positive atmosphere with life-enhancing qualities. Some of these qualities include balance, confidence, discipline, fitness and self-defense.

Many Pediatricians recommend Martial Arts for children with ADD and ADHD for the benefit of a structured activity and the emphasis that is placed on self-control.

So, how do you choose a Martial Arts School/Program? Truth be told, there is no shortage of Martial Arts Schools in the Vacaville Area. Simply open the phone book and you will see what I mean.

Use caution and look past all the labels and titles like “Master SoandSo”, “Champion ThisandThat” and so on. Watch out when an instructor boasts about how he or she has sooo many years of experience. Sadly, in America, there is an incredible

amount of self-promotion that goes on in the Martial Arts profession. For reasons I cannot explain, I can only speculate that these instructors may think that if they hold a higher rank or some catchy title, they will get more students. In my opinion this is superficial thinking.

That being said, how do you make the choice that will best serve you and your child’s needs?

First, you should decide what type of Martial Art to participate in. What do you or your children want to do? If kicking, punching, jumping and yelling (you know, Jackie Chan and Jean Claude VanDamme stuff) interests you, try Taekwondo or Karate. If grappling, rolling and throwing are of interest, look into Judo or Aikido (Steven Seagal stuff). If traditional weapons are of interest, some schools offer them exclusively, some incorporate them into the style they offer and some do not offer them at all.

After the type of Martial Art is narrowed, what’s next? Most people look at cost first, for obvious reasons. However, if possible, this should not be the final determining factor. The national average is \$80-\$120 per month and varies from school to school. As to what you get for your monthly tuition, the number of classes per week and days and times offered will also vary. Cheapest is not always best. Remember the saying, “You get what you pay for.”

Take a look at the classes and times offered. Do they work with your schedule? Take a close look at the facility. Is it clean and safe? Is the workout space conducive to the type of activity? A “traditional” hardwood floor or one with no padding to absorb the impact of jumping and

landing is no longer the best choice. This type of flooring is not good for the joints and can contribute to such injuries as sore knees, ankles, back and in some cases, fallen arches of the feet. It is also very unforgiving when you accidentally fall (and everyone does).

Is the facility open and inviting? Are you allowed to observe? Can you see and hear what is being shown and said by the instructor? How does the instructor interact with the students? This is very important, because minds are being shaped and character is being built.

The best advice I can give is to go and watch some classes. Some schools will let a person participate in a class or two for free. If a school or instructor says their way or style is the best or only way, steer clear. Any business can offer up any number of positive testimonials produced in-house stating how “good” they are however, only you can decide what is best for you and your child – a high-block and front-kick are going to be pretty much the same from school to school. The teaching method and philosophy of the instructor is more important than a name or style.

The content of this article is simply my opinion and is intended for use as a helpful guide. It is my sincere hope that you will find what works best for you, your child and your family.

Good Luck in your training,

Don Penny