**10 Ways To Help your Child Progress in Martial Arts**

We recently posted a series of articles on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MastersOfMartialArtsBlackburn> titled 10 Ways To Help your Child Progress in Martial Arts. As there is no better activity for a child or young person to be involved in than Martial Arts we’ve condensed the 10 articles and reproduced them here.

Number 1 - TAKE AN INTEREST

*Taking an interest in what your child is doing may well seem like common sense but you would be surprised at the amount of people who drop their children off at the front door and then either disappear until the training session has ended or spend the time engaging in some other activity i.e. phones, reading, doing work etc.*

*We not suggesting you need to spend every session glued to watching them train, but as long as you are not an undue distraction (some young children obviously need their parents to be elsewhere so they can concentrate), it goes a long way to helping your child if you watch the odd one from start to finish.*

*This can also mean trying to get to grips with what Ju Jitsu is all about.*

*You could consider actively training in it yourself, which would be a massive bonus if you do?*

*But watching helps to start building an understanding of the fundamentals that your child is seeking to instil or learn.*

*This interest will fuel a mutual bond which can then often pay dividends for years to come as you share experiences from training, life and competition.*

Number 2 - GET INVOLVED

*Getting involved means helping your child to practice outside of training, reaffirming the life lessons the instructor is trying to instil or being the first to join in if the club is running some kind of social, extracurricular or fund raising event.*

*If something is important then it is worth investing time into. This involvement will not only cement links between your child and the club with which they attend, it will also show them that you value/believe in the activity that they are doing and further help them and the community they now belong to grow/develop.*

*It can also mean taking part yourself if it is something you fancy having a go at.*

*Your child will be thrilled to share the same passion/activity as yourself.
Children are always more likely to take up and be consistent with positive life changes if they continuously see one of their parents regularly doing the same.*

Number 3 - SUPPORT.

*Martial Arts clubs are rarely run in the same vein as major businesses. They typically exist purely because the people coaching have a real passion for their art and want others to gain the same benefits from it that they themselves have.*

*As such they are either run for no profit (with all money being ploughed back into the club) or as a small locally owned business looking to provide as high a level facility as they can possible.*

*Whatever you can do to help support the club will not go unnoticed or unappreciated. If they have a t-shirt or equipment, buy it if/when you can afford to do so. Your child will feel a greater part of the club.*

*If they host a course or event, try to support them whenever possible. This support will go a long way. Not only will it help the club provide potentially a better training environment, newer equipment and more classes for your child, it will also help a community flourish, which in turn will offer untold positive relationship experiences for all involved.*

*Another aspect of support is that towards your child.*

*Ensuring they attend training regularly and are able to access any competitions or fights (should they feel inclined to do them) they want to do will make a massive difference with regards to how far they progress.*

Number 4 - TRUST THE COACH

*If you have gone to all the hard work of finding a great club, having your child settle in and start on the path towards Martial Arts mastery then it should go hand in hand that you should put trust into the head instructor or coach.*

*If you have done your homework then it is very likely this person has an immense level of experience within the world of Martial Arts.*

*If they offer you or your child advice in anyway with regards to training or competing, then you should take it onboard. They are the experts in this arena and can often foresee issues and problems before they have even arisen.*

*If you feel the need to tell your child not to listen to their instructor for any reason then it is very possible that you have them at the wrong club.*

*A young athlete in any sport can only achieve their full potential if they truly trust and believe in their coaches ability to get them there.*

Number 5 - DON'T BE THAT PARENT

*If you go to any football game involving children on a weekend at any point then I am sure you will have come across THAT parent. This person is often found shouting from the sidelines, harassing referees, lamenting coaches and screaming at their child what they feel should be the obvious thing to do in that situation.*

*In our Martial Arts clubs this behaviour is obviously not be tolerated.*

*But this attitude can unfortunately raise it’s head in a number of different ways. Undermining the coach in any way, excluding others from conversation i.e. being in a clique, being demanding about progressing through grades or competitions at an accelerated rate, putting down children in any way when they make mistakes etc are all not conducive to positive progress within the Martial Arts for any young student.*

*In competitions, shouting anything negative or derogatory towards your child or towards their opponent is something you should avoid at all costs.*

*It is easy to let emotion get in the way with adrenaline-fuelled events but this sort of encounter does nothing positive for anyone involved.*

Number 6 - COMMUNICATE

*Communication on a number of levels is vastly important.*

*Firstly, it is essential that certain issues be communicated directly to the instructor/coach prior to starting training.*

*Any difficulties, whether medical, physical or mental, should be privately gone through if they potentially could impact a student’s ability to access class training.*

*A coach is only able to structure training to suit specific needs if they are completely aware of what they actually are.*

*Secondly, if you as a parent know that the child is having any issues in day to day life at any point or within training itself, it is always helpful to let the instructor know when you drop them off. Losing a pet or having a hard day at school for example can have a profound impact on their training.*

*Also, a coach can be more mindful of a child if they know they are struggling getting on with another youngster in class or are finding something particularly challenging i.e. sparring.*

Number 7 -PLAY THE LONG GAME.

*Training in Martial Arts is not meant to be done with only the short term in mind.*

*This can often be a struggle for children at different points in their journey as they lack the life experience to see beyond their current situation or feelings.*

*In the initial stages, a child tends to only enjoy something they find fun i.e. games, learning something for the first time or has success can actually get to grips with it fairly easily. Anyone wishing to get better at martial arts though, needs to be able to transition from this mindset to one where they enjoy the actual activity itself and find success in perfecting what they do - even when it is difficult.*

*There are going to be countless occurrences over any length of time where a child finds something challenging within Martial Arts.*

*It could be something as simple as learning a new technique or it could be where their isn't great confidence such as sparring or competing.
It could also be when they are being encouraged to transition from being a game playing young child to becoming a more self disciplined young athlete i.e. take on more responsibility, train harder and face bigger obstacles in class.*

*Children, not knowing any better, can then look for a way out rather than have to face these difficulties. This can take the form of no longer looking like they are trying in training, getting emotional before, during or after class, saying they are “bored” and no longer being enthusiastic about going (to the point of crying and saying they don’t want to do Martial Arts any more).*

*To a parent who has not done some of the earlier things in our series i.e. not taking an interest, not communicating and not getting involved, this can suddenly seem like a shock and make them believe their child has come to the end of their Martial Arts journey.*

*A parent who has been actively doing these things will have a much better idea of just exactly what the issue is and how best to overcome it.*

*Unless there is a really urgent issue that needs to be dealt immediately i.e. bullying or some kind of abuse, there is not a lot that can’t be solved with more time in training (not less as some children may want) and clear communication.*

Number 8 - CELEBRATE

*Sometimes we miss opportunities in our children’s lives to praise them because we no longer see them as being major achievements i.e. kicking a bag well, achieving their next grad or entering a competition.*

*A child’s well-being is built on the cornerstones of achievement, success and praise.*

*As I said earlier on, take an interest and understand how the little things can be celebrated as small steps towards any major goal.*

*A stripe on a belt, 5 press ups this week instead of 4 or even just turning up and getting on the mats all contribute to the growth of any young athlete.*

*Look for anything you can to celebrate your child at every point and they will continue to grow within Martial Arts.*

*You can also use these instances to reaffirm the positive things they receive from taking part i.e. strength, fitness, health, friends etc.*

Number 9 - DON'T COMPARE

*Your child is an individual and will learn/progress at their own pace. If you have found a great club, they are happy and being challenged at the correct pace, they are moving forward. The speed is not as important as the keeping going. Someone moving 50 miles an hour for 6 months is never going to compare to someone who has moved 20 miles an hour for 20 years.*

*Just as not all children grow at the same time, they don’t all mature and develop similarly either.*

*There will always be high level, or even potentially world class, young athletes training in each club.*

*Remember to remind your child that these students are there to inspire/motivate those less experienced, not put them off by making them feel purposefully incapable.*

*If a child is slowed down to help them overcome specific difficulties, the journey is what is important and each has a different one to tread.*

Number 10 - THINKING ABOUT LEAVING? - QUITTING WITH CONDITIONS.

*There WILL come a point when every child says they want to stop training in Martial Arts. This can often be for a multitude of different reasons - a lot of which can mask the real underlying issues.*

*There are established points for children when this may occur.
• The first time they realise that being good at Martial Arts can take a lot of time
• The first time they find something difficult
• The first time they struggle with resistance or contact i.e. sparring or grappling
• Losing track of how far they have progressed and where they are going
• Fear of failure
• Wanting to spend more time at home playing out with friends or on a computer
• Transitioning to a more difficult level of training i.e. moving groups
• Losing a competition or fight
• Finding other children difficult to get along with or challenging
• Feeling they are not progressing or getting better*

*If you have been staying on top of all the things in the previous posts then you should be all over some of these problems before or at least as they arise & may find them easier to deal with.*

*If a young child quickly goes from loving training to a lack of interest/not wanting to attend, then communicating with both them and the instructor is key in order to try and work out where the true problem lies.*

*Very often these things arise when a child hits an obstacle and through a lack of life experience, they struggle to find a way past it.*

*Working in conjunction with the instructor and child, ATTENDANCE is key to getting over any blips. More is always going to be better than less in this instance. Non attendance also becomes habit forming, making it difficult to get the child back to class.*

*Parents sometimes feel the need to protect their child from difficulty but this can rob them of the ability to grow from working out the solution for themselves.*

*If all these fail, and the child still wants to quit, allow them to do so WITH CONDITIONS as both you and they will have invested a lot of time and energy into their training.*

*Ask them to give it one more month of solid, regular training. This will allow the instructors a period to try and address the issues you have identified .*

*If they still want to leave after this then I would allow it as they have given it the time necessary to see if how they feel changes.*

*I would also recommend getting any child leaving training to speak to the instructor(s) before doing so. This way they can say their goodbyes and show appreciation for all the coaching they have received - which is a great lesson for life.*

*(with thanks to the Warrior Collective for the original article)*