

Focused karate program could assist children with ADD and ADHD

Bobby Rosenberg's program 'makes miracles'

By Maayan Hoffman



A strong martial arts program with an emphasis on self-control and concentration can help youth with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), attention deficit disorder and other learning disabilities to perform and behave better in school and at home, according to certified karate instructor Bobby Rosenberg.

"Every child deserves to thrive," Bobby says, who has a third-degree black belt and has been teaching karate from a Torah-based perspective for 30 years.

Today, Bobby runs karate classes in Beit Shemesh for children with ADD, ADHD and other similar challenges.

Take Devorah and her son, Dovid (names changed)

Her 12-year-old, Dovid, started karate classes with Bobby last year. Before then, he would frequently hit his sister and be aggressive, but one of Bobby's rules is that if you want to stay in karate, you cannot hit.

"He says if you hit anyone, you are out of my dojo," Devorah says with a smile.

Dovid fell in love with karate quickly and moved up the ranks fast, and he did not want anything to get in the way of his *chug*. When he would get angry and about to throw a punch, Devorah would remind him: "Choose."

He would always choose not to hit.

Over time, Dovid learned that he could control his temper and his impulsivity and be his own master.

“Now, when people come up and threaten him, he just stands there and laughs,” she says. “He can take them down in five seconds, but he no longer has to prove it to anyone.”

Bracha has a similar story

Yosef has autism and used to experience aggressive outbursts and bouts of uncontrollable violence. He also had trouble focusing.

“Bobby worked with him a lot on breathing techniques, focus and control,” Bracha explains. “In karate, every movement is very controlled, so it helps when working on controlling one’s impulses.”

“Bobby puts his heart and soul into every child,” Bracha says.

She noted that many people assume karate teaches violence. Rather, she said, it teaches self-control.

“If your child is having an issue throwing punches or kicking, they should learn how to do it in a calm, controlled way,” Bracha says. “In karate, you learn incredible respect for your body and your opponent’s body, you learn rules about where you can and cannot touch and what you can and cannot do.”

Miracle Maker

There are countless stories of boys like Dovid and Yosef, but most unique is the story of Ephraim (name changed). The child suffered from encopresis, regular soiling his pants. The problem is most often linked to constipation, which occurs when stool becomes backed up in the intestines. It is also sometimes tied to mental health concerns.

Ephraim’s mother, Rachel (name changed) had spent three years going from specialist to specialist in search of help for her son. She would spend NIS 650 a visit to have his colon cleaned, enrolled him in expensive therapy and worked less in order to be available to bring him changes of clothes or pick him up from school on a whim.

“It was paralyzing for him,” Rachel said.

Then, one day, she was flipping through the RBS News and saw an advertisement for Bobby. She called. The rest, she said, is a miracle.

“He stopped having accidents,” Rachel said, which she equates to the breathing methods and self-control that Bobby teaches his students. There is also guided

meditation, which she says help keep her son focused. Ephraim was also challenged with ADHD and has some social issues in school. The karate has been influential in those areas as well.

“It makes him so happy,” she said of Ephraim’s one-on-one classes with Bobby, who he sees as a teacher and mentor. “I am just so thankful to Bobby.”

The parents explained that Bobby infuses every move and every lesson with Torah and “Everything is from a Torah perspective.”

Medically Advanced

Dr. Barry Dinner said his own medical experience backs up what these mothers say. He explained that ADD and ADHD have become extremely prominent disorders that are “highly overtreated with drugs.”

“This is one of the most common drugs we prescribe, and it becomes extreme,” he continues. “The teachers want more; the parents ask for higher doses.”

Dr. Dinner says that behavior modification programs, like the one that Bobby offers, where children can become empowered to take control of their behavior can be a “very, very effective method of helping kids get on their feet, building self-esteem and starting to need less intervention from drugs, which I don’t think in the end is so good.”

He said Bobby introduces certain self-discipline and self-help techniques that improve the situation in the short- and long-term.

“I have seen situations where kids have really done well with him,” said Dr. Dinner. “It is unbelievable.”

The doctor attributes the success to a combination of Bobby’s personality and his emphasis on *middos* rather than solely the art of karate. He says karate is vessel that Bobby leverages to support these children.

Bobby says the program allows students to score themselves against themselves and helps them identify personal strengths.

“Students learn that the most important muscle is the mind, and with that, they can succeed,” he says. “I want everyone, regardless of their challenges, to be empowered and to learn that there is no such thing as giving up.”

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