

# Kids kick cancer with martial arts and karate program

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Kids with cancer, their siblings, and parents learn relaxation, meditation, and breathing techniques through the non-profit martial arts program Kids Kicking Cancer ([www.powerpeacepurpose.com](http://www.powerpeacepurpose.com)).

KKC pulls the kids' focus away from their cancer and illnesses and instead helps them focus on all the things they can do and control. During the weekly classes, children learn stretching, breathing exercises, traditional karate moves, and guided imagery/meditation techniques, which can help reduce a child's anxiety, pain, and discomfort during difficult clinic and hospital procedures. KKC participants report successfully using these techniques to calm themselves, have courage, and cope with the fears and trauma associated with their medical treatments.

I think this is a great program for children with cancer because it is more than just an activity or class they attend once a week--KKC teaches the children skills they can take with them and use at home, in the hospital, or anywhere.

The KKC program aims to help pediatric cancer patients heal, while empowering them physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Most of the work with the children is aimed at resolving feelings of pain, anger, anxiety, fear, loss of control, and diminished self-esteem.

The American Cancer Society estimates that about 10,000 children under age 15 are diagnosed with cancer each year, and a recent study published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology showed that childhood cancer survivors were 1.5 times more likely than siblings to have symptoms of depression/anxiety. (You can read more about this and how children with cancer handle school during and after treatment in "[Conquering Cancer and the Classroom](#)" in the Summer 2009 issue of CURE.)

Weekly martial arts classes, uniforms, and transportation to classes are provided free of charge to all participants. General classes are open to patients and siblings age 6-22 years old and a separate "Little Heroes" program provides age and developmentally appropriate games and activities to children from 2-5 years old. The program also encourages sibling participation in all classes as it provides a "shared positive experience" for both patients and siblings.

Rabbi Goldberg (known as "Rabbi G" to his students), a clinical assistant professor in the department of pediatrics at Wayne State University Medical School, founded Kids Kicking Cancer after serving for 12 years as the director of a New York-based summer camp for children with cancer. Rabbi Goldberg also lost his first child to cancer in 1983.

By focusing on the healing themes of martial arts training, KKC teaches children to "tap into the inner light of their spiritual self--a focus that generates incredible

power, energy, and internal strength."

KKC partners with several hospitals in the Michigan and New York regional areas. You can find a full list of partner hospitals here: [www.powerpeacepurpose.com/kids](http://www.powerpeacepurpose.com/kids)  
[www.powerpeacepurpose.com/kids-kicking-cancer/hospitals](http://www.powerpeacepurpose.com/kids-kicking-cancer/hospitals)

KKC has also developed an anger management program for inner-city children in which they are introduced to KKC students with cancer and "we allow both groups to be inspired and in turn, inspire each other."