

# GOLDEN AGE KARATE

This 5-minute film directed by Sindha Agha highlights the work of Ohio teenager Jeff Wall, Jr., who is Tang Soo Do black belt and champion. Inspired by his close relationship with his grandmother, Wall founded Golden Age Karate, a nonprofit dojo that teaches karate to senior citizens, improving their health and spirit while helping them battle loneliness and social isolation.

**Driving Questions:** What does it mean to be a superhero?  
What is the impact of helpfulness on communities?



## Context

Social isolation and loneliness are significant risk factors for many physical and mental health issues among the elderly. Jeffery began Golden Age Karate after recognizing that his grandmother suffered from loneliness. Students will benefit from a discussion on this topic with an invitation to consider the senior citizens in their own lives.

## Discussion Questions:

1. The film focuses on how ordinary people perform small acts of kindness to make the world a better place. Who are the people in your community doing this? Is there a way that you do small acts that help your community?

2. The film opens with Jeff saying, "When I am in a match, time slows down." Is there an activity that you participate in where time slows down for you?

Name

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## Useful terms

Name

**Karate** - a martial art developed in Okinawa (while under Chinese rule) hundreds of years ago.

**Helpfulness** - to be of help to improve another's situation

**Superhero** - a fictional hero who has supernatural powers that are used against evil or villains

**Elders** - a person of an advanced age or older than someone else, often revered for their wisdom and experience

**Dojo** - a place for immersive learning, specifically for martial arts

3. When Jeff feels called to teach karate, he asks himself, where can I go to help? That leads him to think about his grandma and her loneliness, and then he expands his view to consider other seniors. Can you brainstorm troubling issues in your life that could be expanded similarly?

4. What are the benefits of karate training for the senior citizens in Jeffery's classes?

5. The most important value of Golden Age Karate is "respect your elders." What are other important values to cultivate when doing helpful work?

6. Jeff says, "Making other people feel better makes me feel thirty times better." What do you think he means by this? Have you ever felt the same way?

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## Extended Learning activities

- Golden Age Karate was made during COVID, and much of it was directed remotely. Artistic constraints limited the way the production team could work. Because of the limited ability to be in person, the director chose to utilize photographs, illustrations, and collages. The live footage was filmed with a limited crew, and even Valerie, Jeff's mom, was called to shoot footage on her phone! Using this as inspiration, make a short presentation about yourself and something good you do in the world. Try to use photos, collages, and footage shot on your phone.
- Take a karate class with a local dojo.
- Interview seniors in your life about loneliness. Ask them if they have felt lonely or if they have friends who have suffered. Research the activities and resources available to the elderly in your town. Consider supporting or volunteering with a local organization.
- Brainstorm with your learning community to find ways you can share your skills and talents in a helpful project.
- Organize a learner's expo where each student teaches a skill, micro-subject, or life hack to the rest of the class.

## Additional Resources

- Follow Golden Age Karate on Instagram for more reels of Jeff and his students. (You can even take a virtual class with him!): 🌟 Golden Age Karate (@goldenagekarate) • Instagram photos and videos
- A useful article from the NIH on the differences and negative effects between social isolation and loneliness on the elderly. Social isolation, loneliness in older people pose health risks | National Institute on Aging (nih.gov)
- Zendesk, the producer of this film, is a software company with a robust social impact program. Older students might be interested in researching the company, its various films, and philanthropic projects. Zendesk: Customer Service Software & Sales CRM | Best in 2022
- Learn more about the director, Sindha Agha, and her work. (Some of it deals with sexual issues that might not be appropriate for younger children). SINDHA AGHA
- Nieman Lab article on the importance of stories of kindness:  
<https://www.niemanlab.org/2023/05/seeing-stories-of-kindness-may-counteract-the-negative-effects-of-consuming-bad-news/>

