

# From Martial Arts to Aged Care: A Pathway to Excellence

The connection between martial arts and aged care might not be apparent at first, but both disciplines strive for the same principle: the pursuit of mastery. The same dedication a martial artist must have to improve each technique, is reflected in the commitment of aged care professionals to elevate their service. Here is how they intersect.

## **The Martial Arts Parallel:**

A martial arts novice begins with foundational techniques. Over time, these basics are honed and refined. This parallels aged care: just as a martial artist masters a specific move, an aged care facility might excel in patient care or effective communication. But, just as that martial artist may still be learning a new move or strategy, an aged care organisation could be navigating the ropes of new technologies or administrative tasks.

Martial arts thrive on a philosophy known as 'Shuhari', a Japanese concept breaking down the journey of learning: 'Shu' is the beginning phase, 'Ha' involves breaking from tradition, and 'Ri' signifies complete mastery. Aged care can mirror this journey, transitioning from foundational practices to innovation and, ultimately, mastery.

## **Why Continuous Improvement is Vital:**

The importance of aged care organisations working towards continuous improvement is paramount. According to BMJ article - Quality improvement into practice, "quality improvement can represent a valuable opportunity for individuals to be involved in leading and delivering change, from improving individual patient care to transforming services across complex health and care systems"<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, in martial arts, a student doesn't become a master overnight; it's the culmination of daily practice and the spirit of never settling for mediocrity.

## **Technology and Aged Care:**

Incorporating modern technologies can elevate the efficiency of aged care organisations. RMIT-Cisco's Health Transformation Lab report: '*Transforming aged care – towards a future in which digitisation drives respect and connection*' contends that the deep and systemic adoption of technology presents a profound opportunity to transform Australia's aged care system into a respectful, responsive, and high-quality one. The report underscores the significance of leveraging technology to simplify and automate non-care tasks. By doing so, caregivers can focus more on direct patient care, as a significant portion of their time is currently consumed by non-care activities. It's akin to a martial artist leveraging state-of-the-art training tools and methodologies. As the martial artist becomes more proficient, so does the care organisation, benefitting both staff and residents.

### **The Role of Staff:**

Behind every thriving aged care organisation is a dedicated team. Just as a martial arts dojo relies on experienced instructors and capable partners to build champions, aged care organisations depend on skilled and satisfied staff. A revealing study in the Australasian Journal on Ageing, indicated that staff satisfaction was found to have more influence on resident satisfaction than actual care hours provided, indicating the importance of having a team with high satisfaction<sup>2</sup>. The link is clear: well-trained, committed staff contribute to a harmonious environment and a higher level of performance, whether in a dojo or a care organisation.

### **Embracing the Journey, Not Just the Destination:**

While the aim might be to achieve perfection in all realms, it is essential to understand that mastery is a journey, not just a destination. Both martial artists and aged care professionals need to appreciate their progress while continually striving for improvement. Aged care organisations may not find perfection in every facet immediately. Still, the persistent drive for improvement is what truly defines excellence in service.

### **In Conclusion:**

When we view aged care through the lens of martial arts philosophy, we see a clearer picture of how dedication, continuous learning, and the pursuit of mastery intertwine. Drawing inspiration from martial arts can pave the way for aged care professionals to recognize their strengths, acknowledge areas of improvement, and take actionable steps towards excellence.

By fostering this philosophy, aged care organisations won't just provide service; they'll embark on a profound journey to enrich the lives of those in their care.

### **Footnotes**

1. Quality improvement into practice (BMJ 2020; 368 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m865> (Published 31 March 2020))
2. Assessing resident satisfaction and its relationship to staff satisfaction in residential aged care (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-6612.2004.00049.x>)