

# Benefits of Growing up with Taekwon-do

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Starting Taekwon-Do at a young age is very beneficial, moulding you into a confident teenager, teaching you life skills that can be applied to your schoolwork, other sports and socially.

Martial Artists like Jackie Chan and his movies are what influences young children and like myself ten years ago my parents picked the Papatoetoe Taekwon-do club for me to join so that I could learn to do Jackie Chan moves without hurting myself. I thank Mr Raukura my Instructor for allowing me to start Taekwon-do at the age of six along with my friend Mitchell Leong. The benefits of growing up in Taekwon-do have been far more than I ever imagined when I joined. Taekwon-do has opened up so many opportunities.

A key factor in aspiring young kids today is finding an idol in Taekwon-do that they want to be like. Young children are very impressionable whether they want to be “just like their Instructor” or a “New Zealand World Championship team member” that they have set their sights on. These older members can play a big role in a child persevering and aspiring to certain goals.

For example, when training for my very first National Tournament in Orewa 2004 Auckland North, I was able to train with Jamie Reti a former Senior New Zealand Team Member and Dragons Spirit Club Member. At six years old I wanted to spar just like him. It shows what an impression Senior Members of Taekwon-do can have on young children. Most young children want to grow up and go through the ranks, achieve their black belt and be the next best thing.

As I started very young, it gave me advantages over other children my age as I was well drilled with Taekwon-do customs, which I could apply to my life, school work, other sports and socially

General Choi was quoted saying, “Anywhere under heaven is dojang” meaning that what is taught in the dojang does not just remain within the four walls, but applied and utilized in everyday life.

The list of benefits that I have either experienced personally or have seen in the ten years is:-

- School Life
- Family Aspect
- Confidence
- Respect
- Friendship
- Discipline
- Fitness
- Flexibility

- Competitiveness and Success

### **Goal Setting**

All of the benefits listed come directly or indirectly from the Tenets which we observe.

The five tenets of Taekwon-do are instilled into you when you begin as a white belt and continuously expressed as you move on through the ranks. It is these tenets and benefits that shape the character of students and can be applied to help students achieve outside of Taekwon-do:

- Courtesy
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Self Control
- Indomitable Spirit

### **School Life**

Taekwon-do can have a positive impact on your education, bringing you attributes towards the class room that can make your learning more easy to understand – being able to get up and publicly speak in front of a class of 30 students comes easy when you are able to take grading groups and instruct Taekwon-do classes.

Taekwon-do helps give you the confidence, leadership skills, discipline and time management to use thru out your school years which helps considerably when entering into your NCEA study level 1, 2 and 3. Being able to speak up, ask questions and joining in as many school activities that are on offer makes for a better Student.

### **Family Aspect**

For a child to succeed in a class of many different ages is to have a strong adult influence. This in particular can be a way of encouraging the parent of the child to join. This creates a family atmosphere at club and gets everyone involved. Even if everyone in the family does not train there are still many things that a Taekwon-do club offers for non members to help and assist with, tournaments, seminars, gradings, first aid courses and assisting in running the Club with the Instructor. This builds a good culture within its club. It is also a great way of family bonding as you all spend a lot of time together and can help each other out.

### **Confidence**

As a six year old and being in a large group of new people and trying to learn is very nervous. The way class was structured, having to stand up by group to perform the white belt basics, Saju Jirugi & Saju Maki, grading was the start of instilling confidence into ones self. The more times you stood up in either in a group or as an individual, the more your confidence grew.

Attending gradings became less stressful when getting up in front of people, though you still have nerves and feel tense, but it becomes second nature and each grading becomes easier. Even when performing in demonstrations at shopping malls, TV Shows or Christmas Parades the confidence learnt makes it much easier. This confidence also came to good use when having to

perform in front of other children at school as your teacher always likes you to do demonstrations to show other children what Taekwon-do is all about.

### **Respect and Courtesy**

The respect taught by your Parents, Grandparents, Uncles, Aunties and Cousins is expanded and used more within Taekwon-do. Even when respect should be applied all the time, Taekwon-do helps you ensure you focus or exercise the use of respect inside and also outside of the Dojang. Showing courtesy and manners teaching you how to deal with people of different ages, how you give respect, which leads to you earning respect and becoming a good leader.

### **Friendship**

The friendship that develops within Taekwon-do grows and creates another group of family members. The friendship that you make with other club members, spreads to making friends with your regional members, then widens to making friends with your national members and if you have been privileged like me, making friends with the top New Zealand competitors. I have also had the opportunity to travel to World Championships and World Cup tournaments where I have made friendships with competitors from other countries. These friendships become part of your wider Taekwon-do family.

### **Discipline & Self Control**

The discipline from your home life along with the discipline teachings within Taekwon-do is applied to all aspects of how you behave on a daily basis. The influence of the military background which is applied to us at training through forming up in rank, saying yes sir and to control yourself thru out your training whether at Club or in competition.

### **Fitness**

The fitness level at six years old was not even something a young child thinks about. It is so easy for a young child to move with ease never having to worry about how their body will feel the next day. Taekwon-do can appeal to many ages because it is made for all types of people and can be adapted to suit all levels of fitness. The many routines and exercises that we have done each year since starting have got bigger and harder. As the fitness level gets better, the better we perform in our Taekwon-do and also our other chosen sports, not to mention in our normal daily lives. The fitness required to compete at world championships is very high if you want the results.

We have also had new ideas, techniques and more science applied to how we can improve our fitness to cope with the demands of Taekwon-do and also grading requirements. Our instructor has started interval training and also certain other fitness ideas that he needs for his 6th Dan grading, so that the entire club can experience the same as him.

For the young child starting, walking stances, L stances, bending ready stances test your ability to balance, which can come easy to a young child. This installs basic skills that can cross over to other sports giving: Coordination, Balance, Strengthening of muscles and Healthy Living

### **Flexibility**

When you begin as a small white belt the fundamental techniques and stances installed into you

become second nature and establish your foundation in Taekwon-do. This is fine until the student has a growth spurt.

Flexibility does not mean much to a young child as you have no problems when you are young. You can either bend or you can not. Naturally as a child ages, their bodies grow, but when you start growing faster than your body can cope with Taekwon-do movements all change for the growing teenager.

As your body changes as you are growing up, you notice the major change in your patterns and flexibility. I myself have been through this and know that many things become very difficult. From being able to do real high kicks with ease when I was younger to now, I am struggling to go past my own hip height.

This is when you start listening and start to do your stretching exercises that were taken for granted growing up. The stretching exercises and warming up become a very important part of your training, not warming up your muscles and joints, may risk the chance of injury.

### **Competitiveness and Success**

Mr Raukura and Mr Ormsby Jnr were the ones that pushed us to compete at the Epson Under 18 Tournaments. This was the start of developing a competitive attitude to do better and to win a medal. The best part of competition in the early stages was to meet up with the same students in your rank and division from outside your region and compete in a hard but fair match.

The competitiveness also taught you to be humble in success and graceful in defeat. To show your opponent the respect once the match was over and to always ensure they were ok afterwards, win or lose. One can only treat your opponent how you would like to be treated.

### **Goal Setting**

#### Medals and Trophies

Children love rewards and prizes, that's what drove me to do tournaments as a kid because I loved receiving trophies. This makes children interested and teaches them to create goals, which gives them a sense of accomplishment. It also teaches them that you have to work hard to achieve great results. Medals and trophies are what children love to take away at the end of the day whether it is for first, second or third it is such a reward.

Indomitable spirit, goal setting, perseverance, all the club trainings, Epson Under 18s, Star Series, Regional and National tournaments, World Cup tournament gave me the confidence, the drive and has taught me to make goals, trialling for the New Zealand team to compete at the 2011 World Championships. This is also important in life as it gives us a sense of direction and purpose. It is this commitment that should be applied to schoolwork and achieving NCEA, and to make the top grade team in school rugby

Success for me was passing all my gup gradings, receiving or not receiving medals at tournaments, making new friends at tournaments, seeing friends and students doing well where I may have helped them along their way.

Success at attaining my 1st Dan Black belt at the age of 10, my 2nd Dan Black Belt at the age of 12 and helping my Club and Region grow.

My biggest achievement at 14 years old was when I won a Bronze medal at the 2011 World Championships for the Junior Boys Individual middleweight sparring division, a 1st in ITKD New Zealand history.

### **Conclusion**

There are many benefits gained when a child grows up in Taekwon-do. These benefits have been touched on in this essay. Growing up in Taekwon-do leads to building confidence, discipline, having respect, fitness and flexibility which leads to a healthy life, a competitive edge, a focus for goal setting, friendships and a great school life which has all helped come from inside and outside the do jang.

Taekwon-do is a sport you can continue to do for your whole life, there is no limit or time line.

These foundations provide a basis that will stay with you for the rest of your life.