

Mental Motivation

By Dean Jenkins

Can I just say that this essay is just one man's opinion, things that I have seen – thought about and put to personal use. Reading this is not to take all I have said as fact but something that may have the strength in words. To be correct and others might take into their classes or training or tweak what they are already doing.

Sit down for a few minutes and thinkif the human race was created out of just one mould – well yes we were once all very close in size, shape and form but I mean when we are born we are all identical down to the last hair on our heads(gender aside).

For example if we all sat on our butts and did nothing all day we would all still end up the same size. But then some of us put exercise into the factor, remembering we all look the same – but each person has a different personality trait.

What creates the best?

The fastest runner

The strongest fighter

Helps the successful swimmer

Genetics has a big head start, you come from a good sporting family therefore you should have the start of a good genetic base. But what makes you better than the generation before you?? Your mind can be your best friend or your worst enemy. I have seen the fittest people just stop when others of their level continue to push on they said at the time “I just had it in my head that I couldn't go any further.” Kiwis on the world circuit in so many sports are so far out there beating everyone they compete against that people is starting to think there is something in the water. But is it that or is it more that our attitude is better than theirs and we have more to prove. This could be us as a country, stuck out here this small group of Islands away from the rest surrounded by a mass of Oceans, so rather than hiding we want to make an impression- you know “hey look at us”. We will travel so far just to get in your competition so in our minds we know we have to work soo much harder not just to win but to show that we can win big and be remembered for next time.

On that note let's look at a few things the mind can do to help us as a TKD student. Some that train are made to be good and yet some just destroy themselves and don't even know why.

Colour belts – The climbing or death of a colour belt. We all have our own ideas on why the number of white belts starting and those who Dan grade are so far apart. We have so many

different types of colour belts, ones who just rush through because they want that Black belt and others who take their time getting everything right and of course those lucky ones where it all falls into place, the kicks come easy and the gradings are something they shine in. Be it adults or kids joining I do see that ones who manage to pair up have a smoother transition between the belts than the ones who have different partners at the gradings. Relying on someone to be there or being relied on can help that push factor. Knowing you have someone who spends a lot of training time with you can make you feel more relaxed and more fluid at gradings and helps you push through to the Dan grading, when one has a bad day the other is there to back them up. After seeing so many people who fit into a lot of standout groups I have seen three formulas that I myself believe do work.

1. For kids- relax, joining in with all the things that are going on in class and if your instructor lets you grade then that is good. If not then just become better at your belt. Your instructor will let you colour belt or Dan grade when you are ready. Trust them, no one wants to be rushed or sloppy, it will happen when it's your time to shine.
2. For most people- its train from day one, pick up all that you can from each grading make a go at all classes and other clubs practice at home. Do this all the way to blue belt, fill yourself with all the knowledge and physical skill that you can and grade no further. Stay on Blue belt for a year, study other people when you sit to the side at their gradings take notes, practice your flying techniques and after that year start back on those gradings again and never worry about being past it is not the most important thing but all that you pick up in your senior colour belts will benefit so much better with a little bit of time on your side.
3. Gradings are always a step closer to your Black belt- use them as a learning tool not a glory jump that sees you pass others with the risk of not perfecting all your skills like always sit back and decide if you want to grade, to pass or just get passed. Whatever you decide I believe again you should start planning for your Black belt when you are promoted to Blue. Try this – Blue belt first grading of the year

Red stripe second grading of that year

Red belt final grading of that year

Miss the first grading of the next year but keep up that training from last year and people will believe that you should have graded showing that your skills have been polished well then midyear grading get that black stripe and look soo good that you have set yourself up for a good physical and mental push for the next few months that stops on the Sunday night after your Dan grading. This can work if the Dan grading is in mid year but can make it tough to train over Christmas holidays. If your instructor makes you wait for that six months that is written in the handbook then just put those dates back and there could be two times that you sit at a colour belt grading and then you will get there.

Here's a thought, our minds can really hold us back certain parts of the brain that just like to work against us, trick us and most of the time hold us back in good ways and in bad. This of course could be its way of trying to learn and grow for example a developing child's mind doesn't really recognise the idea of height as a form of fear until after the age of two, so if a baby is put on a

glass floor 20 stories above the ground they will quite casually crawl straight over it. Where as a child older than 2 would hesitate and either go around or not cross it or test the sustainability of the glass. Not to say that this is a bad thing this fear factor is a way of the mind deciding what is fun and what is outright dangerous. We see people trying crazy sports like climbing cliffs, parachuting and cliff diving having no thought of their own safety and creating a high mortality rate where a more cautious person would take into account that this is something to try once in a while but not to overdo it.(BBC Human Body 2008 Series) But on the other side of things being too cautious can sometimes hold us back from ever getting a hang of that speciality kick (more than one board / multiple kicks) that fear can really put a hold on ever really seeing your full potential so finding a medium could find a safer step to helping us to be taught on ever getting to that 100% of potential. It's just a matter of getting over that first hurdle - The fear / The knowledge sinking in or even knowing how to do it can come from learning how to teach it first e.g.: having to show others could open the door and show you how you can do it better yourself.

I'm not saying we can all jump four meters in the air and pop out seven front snap kicks or even break ten boards but if you can't shut out that little voice in your head and wake up that no care no fear child in all of us then some things will never be reached. The ability of our own minds to let us down is so frustrating sometimes that you just wish you had more control. If you want to push yourself just doing fifty pushups to train for your grading is not going to do it but if you do eighty pushups you have set your body up to go beyond what is needed and on that day when others are tired your body won't realise it because your extra training has paid off and your ready for more. **Try this**-before class go for a ride or run, not a small one; make a real meal out of it. Now have a ten to fifteen minute break before class, call down and do some dynamic stretching until you stop sweating (glowing for woman obviously), set into that nice clean do-bok and go do your normal pre-class things while the whole time convincing yourself that the earlier sweat session never happened. Now do your class, keep up with all the rest, push that body like you normally do and you will hopefully find that within the next couple of weeks that having already trained before class and then having to do a full class afterwards that you now both mentally and physically stronger than others that have just done a class and no more. We are not all fast runners, we don't all have the same output but no one ever got marked down because they couldn't keep up with the better ones. It's no all about having the same points as the others but being marked for what we put in for ourselves. No one ever got kicked out of class for trying everything that everyone else does and occasionally falling on our butts.

Helping others train – People rely on you as a trainer, a senior and of course an instructor. We believe so much around us, advertising on TV and papers and even magic tricks, you know someone makes you believe they took an elephant and made us believe it disappear right in front of us. What your eyes see and your ears hear the mind believes....Yes/No. Having the power to make a student perform well or destroying their skill levels in one class is just too easy and it's not always on purpose. Push ups, line drills can be hard for anybody after doing so many in one go and if you have a quiet and unenergised voice calling out there is less motivation and this can be detrimental to the students drive where as if the instructor has a driven tone, that student can perform for longer in a positive state. This gives a feeling of confidence and the idea that the instructor is there to help and motivate each individual student. **Try this** – take a subject, any random thing force it into your class and talk about it for ten to fifteen minutes and really get

it into the students head. Two thirds will hear it the first time and most will get it by the end of the lesson and then pick a time and date when you will want to bring it up again like a day when they could be at work or school and see how many remember at that time. At the next class ask how many it worked on. As a senior and instructor we don't just teach but have the power to manipulate how a student remembers things and the way their minds think in training. That is a lot of power to have in your hands. Being able to work out which students this applies to and how to motivate the rest at the same time can help an instructor learn the different personality levels with each student. Knowing the positive and negative personalities in one club can take out confusion when people react in different ways and often opposites complement each other (motivation).

Have you ever noticed that a hard sweaty class with few breaks and many different combinations of exercise can be extremely exhausting but surprisingly enjoyable. People have no time to think of what is happening but just to keep up with the confusion and beads of sweat they see around them. Nothing better than on a cold nights training where there is a misty cloud of sweat hovering above the students. It just gives you the satisfaction as an instructor that no matter what the season your class is giving it there all under your request. At the end of this class tell them the plan for the next class, show it to be boring / monotonous and nothing like they have just done and see how many at the next class turn up and who doesn't. It's not that the others are lazy it is just most people don't like to know what's going to happen at the next class can sometimes find a way to talk it down and a surprise class can always get them coming in curious to see what's happening. The human mind likes to be told right there and then what muscle cracking, body destroying exercise it is in for.

Motivation of the mind will kill the body every time on average a person will always think too much when planning a workout making it that little bit harder to get out of the house and go to their local gym. I was surprised to learn on the radio at one time in one of the large chain of gyms that their membership numbers were based on only 20-30% actually using their membership, this is why at the beginning of this essay what made us each an individual that this is a question that is easily answered that 20-30% who go to that gym or go for that run or even turn up at all their training sessions have that head start on those others.

Sure some people are lucky enough to be the best, their bodies have been trained well but I have seen people with even average abilities put their bodies through hell and come out the other side along with the best. I can run, ride and produce hours of sparring drills and yes I get tired but I cannot find what others have in their systems to get to the next level. I have seen others push so hard that they collapse, commit to pad rounds till they throw up and then run that 2.4Km run so hard that they go through all the pain again. Do I have to get past my thoughts of how fit I am to get to this new level, I may be faster than this person but no matter how hard I run there seems to be almost a brake in my mind that says that I don't have to push it any further...why bother? These people who push themselves to collapse may be at the their 100% and behind me but they have done more work than me because I believe that I only get to 80% and if I could learn from them I could go far beyond where I am now.

Try this for size – How many of us wake up to those screaming alarm clocks deep in sleep loving that dream and all of a sudden you are awake arm swinging stressing to find that snooze button.

It can't be good for the heart beat and it's always a song you don't like. So as you go to bed at night think about this....get comfortable and block out your day, find that spot that you think you will be off to sleep soon and put a time in your head that is just before the alarm – 5 to 10 minutes before it is due to go off, an even number is easier for the brain to calculate. Say this number 5 times in your head and see it clearly and give it a try for a week. See if it wakes you up, no surprise no stress and you may even feel more awake but do not hit that snooze button. Want to feel better, do you have to take that car to work? If possible that you and your partner can work in together and have one car in a central place between each other's work and one person takes it there and then travels the rest of the way by man power / girl power and the other makes their way to work by pedal or foot (umbrella necessary in lower South Island) this gives you the advantage of you both getting home at a reasonable time and that early morning exercise is good to blow out those cobwebs. Of course if you live along distance from work trying something similar is worth a try, being single opens it up to travel in many different ways. Everyone has to experience the joy you get running past a line of cars in a traffic jam. Just think, u got some exercise in and didn't have to fit in later, the feeling u get from the first weeks walk, freeing up those sleepy muscles, well in my experience it beats coffee every time.

Speaking of running, are you a racer or a chaser? In a race there can only be the two, but which are you? Some people like to be up front, chased by the pack and others like to stay on their heels till near the end where they make their move. Both formulas work but in training we are all different. The ability to push yourself may only work in one way, in the mind you may only be able to work with one idea so how do you know which works for you. Can you be chased pushing that threshold further with the idea that someone is coming up behind you or do you do the chasing always thinking of that target ahead of you. I think in circuit racing this can work both ways if you train with someone else who may be just that little bit faster/slower than you, you can work it to your advantage in your training because either way you are either going to be chasing the faster person to catch up or running to get away from the slower person. I personally train with a racer and we do steps that do a circuit and when I do pass them I then convince myself that they are not just behind me but they are nearly a whole lap ahead of me.

In conclusion – So where has lead....I suppose I'm trying to say that the person that you stare at in the gym with the hair perfect and the labelled clothing and a towel that never looks used has probably never and will never experience that 100% level . Go hard or go home is something I hear quite a lot, tell you what you want, convince yourself that that higher board is reachable and give it a go. Be proud of every bead of sweat that you create and aim for that feeling of exhaustion or whatever you call it and keep telling yourself I want to go all the way.