

Nothing compared to good health

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INTRODUCTION

People who practise Taekwon Do will gain many benefits. For Example, increase fitness, enhanced health, more self confidence, learn to be a powerful martial artist.

The Question this paper addresses is why and how does Taekwon Do create these attributes for a practitioner?

It is necessary to discuss whether or not physical activity alone builds a well-balanced individual. Information from various scientific studies and quotations from the International Taekwon Do Encyclopaedia Fourth Edition, about the physical activity and philosophies for life will show a clear correlation of mind, body, spirit and physical activity, leads to the benefits that enhances a persons quality of life.

It has been documented that as far back as 3500 years BC there has been some form of martial arts, through the ages more have gradually improved and systematised into various forms of martial arts. In Primitive times humans could depend on skills using their hands, feet, and body to overcome enemies and predators found in nature, just to survive.

In More recent history martial arts were developed and used by armies to protect from invasions by neighbouring countries, it is well documented the most successful armies had superior developed, martial arts skills.

In the 7th Century AD the fourth king of Silla, Chin Heung formed elite officers called Hwa Rangdo. In addition to ordinary training these officers also trained by practicing mental and physical disciplines and various forms of hand and foot fighting.

“The strength they derived from their code enabled them to attain feats of velour that became legendary”. (General Choi Hong Hi, Taekwon Do Encyclopaedia)

Now hundreds of years later, martial arts are still practised throughout the world and perhaps the most popular and most practised is Taekwon Do. History shows that in ancient times the motivation for martial arts used the practical sense of survival to defend ones country. In our day and age one could argue that the need for such martial art which we know as Taekwon Do is no match to defend a country against modern warfare. So why practise a martial art?

The physical aspect of the art is only part of the jigsaw puzzle that one has to apply to gain the full benefit of Taekwon Do. As a practitioner I believe in the beginning of my career my motivation was not unlike those before me, the thought of learning to defend oneself against an attacker or even several attackers was stimulating. This would certainly build ones confidence to face challenges, however it's not everyday that one is faced with an attacker or a threat. So in many ways practising martial arts these days for most of us has become more of a preventative

medicine. Of course Taekwon Do is practical and effective, if one really needs to apply it physically to defend oneself in real life.

I believe I use Taekwon Do every day in every way in thinking, doing, and influencing decision making. As quoted by General Choi Hong Hi in the definition of Taekwon Do. "It is the mental training that builds a strong sense of justice, fortitude, humility and resolve".

Understanding more than just the physical aspect of the Taekwon Do is becoming more important. As I study physical and mental activity and how the application of this physiological aspect plays a part in everything we are, the clearer my approach and my application to Taekwon Do is becoming. Through studying some of the foundations of physical activity I have realised some aspects as to why I believe Taekwon Do is so popular and played by millions of people throughout the world today.

If we look at the sociological aspect of physical activity we may be able to see some correlation as to why people in the 90's still opt for a physically demanding activity such as Taekwon Do.

Factors that may contribute:

- "Play" is defined in the Oxford dictionary as "to take part in, to compete in a game or recreational activity".
Man is a social animal by nature, not a solitary one
- Surplus energy, generally in the modern workplace a person has limited opportunity to satisfy the natural need for physical activity.
- Relaxation, it is thought that the relaxation may be found in the use of large muscle groups and the subsequent release of nervous tension through physical activity.
- Self expression, seeks to explain play in terms of humans as creatures of intellect and spirit, who by nature is active in forms dictated by social contact. Attitudes and habits are formed which influence one's performance for certain activities common to the immediate environment including the predominant play activities through which humans seek self expression. ("Columbia University Press", 1945 The common Denominators of Cultures.)

These provided examples of scientific theories which help form a picture as to why people might be motivated to involve themselves in physical activity or play from the four examples; Social, Energy, Relaxation, and Self Expression. A pattern can be formed as to how each factor needs the other to be functional. For example, to be able to self-express one must interact socially with another.

Physically Taekwon Do could be classed as a very individual activity, but to actually take part in the art it will become very social, an individual would find they are taking part in training with many others. Belonging to clubs or organisations which involve the human sociological aspect of physical activity is satisfied, though the practice of Taekwon Do.

The nature of Taekwon Do requires physical application, a person will start using extra energy when participating. Generally people will begin to use muscle groups of the body not usually used by normal activity. The use of the whole body in physical activity has been well documented as major release of nervous tension, which builds through everyday normal activity. Most people

would agree, after a good training session of Taekwon Do they feel relaxed and have a sense of achievement.

Dr Roger Bannister the first sub 4:00minute Miler, states “We run not because we think it is doing us good, but we enjoy and cannot help ourselves it gives a person a chance to bring out power that might otherwise remain locked away inside themselves. The urge to struggle lies in everyone the more restricted our society and work becomes, the more necessary it will be to find some outlet for this grazing for freedom”. (Bannister R , Four Minute Mile.)

Taekwon Do can offer an individual the same kind of results such as physical and mental improvement a sense of freedom, just as Dr Bannister describes in his analogy of the Sub Four Minute Mile.

What other aspects are we achieving while training? Physical exercise is a natural stress relief. We all know after a hard and demanding session we are physically drained, but mentally we are alert and relaxed. Some people call this a “Natural High”. Stress, nervous anxiety, and tension are all words that have become extremely prominent in our modern day life. Stress can be defined briefly as “any demand placed on the organism, which requires adjustment and adaptation to maintain homeostasis.”

Certain good health habits will alleviate stress disorders. Taekwon Do can offer a dedicated student some of the following examples.

Learn to relax – Like closing the eyes to shut out light. For example, meditation is used frequently for relaxation, also for focusing on improvement.

- Spill your troubles – Sharing one’s joys doubles them, sharing one’s sorrow’s halves them.
- Find an escape – Taekwon Do is very much a reality in a practitioner’s life, it can also be classed as a type of escapism. For example, while a person is training they can only concentrate about what they are doing, therefore at training time a person can leave other aspects of their life.
- Count your many blessings – Remember there is no switch to turn off darkness but there is a switch to turn on light. Taekwon Do practices an important component that serious students will adopt and continue to develop throughout life, that being the moral culture which will help and encourage a student to build a more ideal society in which to live in. “An ideal society, according to LAO-TZU, is one in which the ruler is of such a high moral character that he can rule naturally, not by interference or fear but by appealing to the good nature of the people who by merely doing their duty can live freely in peace without fear and anxiety”. (General Choi Hong Hi, Taekwon Do Foundation Encyclopaedia.)
- Get a philosophy of life – Take stock of yourself and those around you and decide how you wish to live. It is better that we borrow anothers philosophy than go to pieces without one. “The utmost purpose of Taekwon Do is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the stronger’s oppression of the weaker with power that must be based on humanity, justice, mentality, wisdom, and faith. Thus helping build a more peaceful world”. (General Choi Hong Hi, Taekwon Do Foundation Encyclopaedia.)

Total fitness.

Why be physically fit? What is fitness? Does Taekwon Do offer an individual the opportunity to become totally fit?

Those who maintain activity have better performance records have less degenerate diseases and can expect a longer life expectancy than an individual that leads a more sedentary life style.

Longevity:

Research clearly demonstrates that light to moderate physical activity (performed regularly) has a most profound effect on your health. A study of nearly 17,000 Harvard Alumni who were followed over 16 years, showed that those individuals who expended at least 2,000 calories on a weekly basis extended their life one to two years.

Another recent study from the Cooper Institute for Aerobics, traced over 13,000 people for more than 8 years. Results showed that sedentary men died at a rate 3.5 times higher than their moderately active counterpart and sedentary women at a rate 4.5 times higher. Heart disease has declined over the last 20 years, yet it is still the leading causes of death in New Zealand. A review of more than 40 studies indicated that sedentary individuals have almost twice the risk of developing coronary heart disease as physically active individuals. It also appears that individuals with hypertension a significant risk factor of CHD, can moderately reduce their arterial blood pressure through physical activity. Being physically active can help increase good cholesterol, while at the same time lowering the blood concentration of harmful cholesterol levels.

Obesity:

Physical activity is not the sole answer to the very complex issue of maintaining lean body mass, while encouraging the loss of fat weight. Someone who regularly challenge his or her cardio-respiratory system through exercise becomes considerably more capable of mobilising and metabolising fat. He or she can also break down and utilise carbohydrates more efficiently than a sedentary person.

Taekwon Do can improve ones health just by taking part in the physical aspect, "a typical training regime involves extensive movements of the entire body, raises the pulse rate and oxygen characteristics of the heart and lungs over an extended period. This is termed an aerobic effect". (Taekwon Do Encyclopaedia)

Physiologists who have studied people who have retired physically and hygienically at twenty or thirty years of age, show that the thirty and up age group as a whole exercise little, unless strenuous activity is demanded by their work. Habits are formed where they tend to over-eat, intake too much alcohol, and at times tend to sleep to little.

Many sports played. For example, rugby, netball, or cricket, have a finite time. Normally by the mid 20-30's people opt out of the physical aspect of the games and end up looking for substitutes, most of which find themselves taking more sedentary roles in their sport. For example, coach, manager, or support, unlike Taekwon Do where an individual can have a lifetime of physical involvement. Taekwon Do can be started at almost any stage of your physical active life. A person can receive the same benefits whether young or old. The best example is

General Choi Hong Hi, at the age of 80 he still travels the world teaching and keeping up with his personal training regime.

The use of proper exercise and maintenance of physical fitness for preventing and delaying several common degenerate disorders has been very well documented. Regular exercise acts as a preventative medicine.

The following graph shows a systematic study, which compared active older people with non-active older people. The graph represents the length of time from birth to 80 years. On ordinal is represented the fullness of vigour and vitality people who live bodily as to hygiene and exercise follow the bottom line they are professional invalids by fifty five or sixty years of age.

The top line represents the condition for which we should strive and which could in a large majority of people be achieved. Such people are strong vital and keep active almost up to the end of their life.

CONCLUSION

Martial arts have spread throughout the world, Taekwon Do perhaps being one of the most popular as millions of people take part at some point in their lives. Techniques have been developed that can be devastating and lethal to a potential attacker. To demonstrate such techniques in our modern society most martial arts have opted for a sporting aspect such as, sparring, destruction, and pattern competitions. This approach has obviously been favourable, as a great deal of interest has been shown in this aspect of martial arts.

Physical activity involved in participating can become addictive, which builds a persons enthusiasm and compulsion to continue training. The more time spent training Taekwon Do the more one understands. The art encourages a way of life that it is not just an ongoing self defence course.

Taekwon Do will offer all the elements to become totally fit, an individual will enhance self confidence, social interaction, purpose, and most of all balance in life. The physical and mental effect on the body through continuous training can only increase ones quality of life, health and vitality.

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