

# What Are the Challenges of Teaching the “Do” in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and How Do we address them?

The continuing decay of morality and values in modern day society, would seem to have a compounding effect. Every generation seem to point out a ‘decline’ in values through the years. The severity of the consequences of the decline in morality is demonstrated by the ever increasing level of violence of crimes that are being committed.

With the advent of modernization and technology, society is now evolving much more rapidly than before. People are now being exposed to a lot of varied information. Societies have to contend with foreign cultures and new influences.

We hear the terms “sexual revolution”, “women’s rights”, “political correctness”, “commercialism” in a negative way. These were originally meant to be a good thing; however, they were carried off in excesses that have contributed to a lot of misinterpreted attitudes in today’s world.

This essay will focus on A FEW of these challenges that people face today.

The teaching of the Do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is fraught with difficulties.

Apparently having values and morals is no longer in fashion. Young people are acting tough and joining gangs to get a sense of belonging. These people are products of dysfunctional families, who were brought up in societies that are already experiencing moral decay. It’s now ‘cool’ or ‘gangsta’ to do something which rebels from social standards.

Young people tend to be more cynical of anything that is old fashioned, and more prone to posturing, resorting to violence to sort out conflict with their peers.

Therefore any attempt to talk about morality or values to younger people is looked down upon, and treated with suspicion and contempt.

Fashion advertisements have promoted vanity and all the negative aspects that come with it. This in turn leads to low self-image and self-esteem. Young people are worried of what their peers will think of them.

Political correctness has led to increased selfishness and disregard of others. Clichés such as it’s my choice’ and ‘I will do what I want’ abounds.

Mass media, movies, and television expose young people and society to violence, and ‘normalises’ some things that would be shocking only a few years ago.

The world-wide web, and computer games have taken over physical activity, which leads to health problems such as obesity. It also encourages laziness and inactivity. Certain video games desensitize people to violence and conflict, alienating people from their own family, culture, and society as a whole. The fast pace and ‘exciting’ nature of these video games gives these young people a false sense of adventurism without having to go out into the real world. They are forever looking for something new to stimulate the senses.

The increased pace of life, means that people have less time for exercise, recreation, or to reflect on some key values and principles.

Transport challenges in a modern city with traffic jams also means that they have less time to exercise, or join clubs.

General Choi Hong Hi had long recognized this moral decay in society, it is the main reason why he has designed Taekwon-Do as a complete martial art. Incorporating martial aspects, as well as an in depth structure of teachings of moral culture, he has provided us with a tool to help instill moral values to our young people, and society in general.

Through the conscious study of moral principles as well as physical exercises, the practice of Taekwon-Do is designed to temper the spirit and the body which leads to the subconscious instilment of the certain desirable values such as perseverance, tenacity, appreciation of physical fitness, a healthy lifestyle, as well as an appreciation of artistic beauty and grace while striving for perfection of technique.

So how do we spread the “DO”, and teach people about “Do”?

The easiest answer is by encouraging people to join Taekwon-Do. Once training commences the student will be exposed to “Do” whether it’s directly as a formal study of moral culture, or indirectly just by performing the physical exercises. This would depend entirely on the instructor, and the students themselves.

All beginning students have different reasons for joining a club. Some of them do it just for exercise, some self defence, some as a social outlet. No matter what the reason, they will be exposed to the DO in some way when they commence training earnest. The key is keeping people interested in TKD and in practicing the Do.

Instructors need to find out what type of people the students are, what their interests are, and what sort of things they find fun to keep them interested.

In the beginning some people may only be interested in physical exercise, or the fighting aspects. Allow them to still join the club, because sooner or later they will be exposed to the Do in some way or another.

Just the action of coming to club is already a form of Do, where they have to make the commitment to get off the sofa, get stuck in traffic jams to get to training. All the time, already practicing patience, perseverance, and dedication (be it subconsciously).

Then, before they start training, they all line up. Even this simple action teaches them discipline, as well as respecting authority. The act of repeating the oath, bowing, and addressing each other as “sir” or “ma’am” teaches them social skills and courtesy.

Practicing free-sparring, develops indomitable spirit. In a class all students gets a chance to spar people of various age and size. Smaller students who are pitted against an older/bigger/taller/ and more skillful opponent need to develop their self confidence and indomitable spirit. Those bigger and more senior need to practice self control, and take care when sparring junior or smaller opponents.

By sitting for their gradings they learn how to handle success/failure. They will also develop perseverance (if at first you don’t succeed, try again). All this is done in a supportive environment.

Slowly those people who had no interest in the learning the DO initially, would ultimately turn their thinking around. After which, the instructor may then pursue a more in depth intellectual discussion with these individuals about “DO”.

The formal teaching of Do must always be done in such a way that the students can relate it into their modern day to day life. It has to be made real and applicable, so that they can readily assimilate it into their daily behaviour.

An example of an experience of one of the students can be used as a discussion item in class, and shared with the whole class.

This can be done at the end of class, as part of the talk after the physical training. The instructor can prepare a story from TKD, take a section of the encyclopedia, a quote by Gen Choi, or simply refer to the Tenet and Oath of Taekwon-Do. Discuss it a little bit and then invite somebody to share a real experience that they have relating to the particular topic.

A suggestion to ITKD to aid in the teaching and learning of the Do is possibly to have a “kids” section on the webpage where students can have an interactive activity, not unlike “club penguin”, where they can sign on and play a game on line, with the objective revolving around the “Do”. This would appeal to all the would-be couch potato students, who likes and relates to computer/video games.

The following are the things I keep in mind when teaching the DO:

Always provide a comfortable and supportive surrounding to promote a feeling of safety, acceptance, and belonging.

Don't throw them a pile of philosophical literature.

Don't introduce a new value, without discussing it, and relating it to real life experiences.

Do provide physical challenges, promoting exercise and fitness.

Do recognize and celebrate success and good behaviour.

Do introduce the tenets, and talk about it, analyse, discuss and reflect.

Do encourage students to step out of comfort zone, try something they haven't done before, whether it's a new technique, free sparring, or some interclub competition.

Do talk about philosophy the way General Choi does, and quote the numerous pearls of wisdom that he included in the encyclopedia, this would train those people who are in the beginning quite cynical about these things to be more familiar with it, and ultimately break down some barriers.

Do talk about outstanding figures in history, and their contribution. Tell stories and examples of our own experiences, and if we haven't got our own stories, we can relay others' stories.

Discuss day-to-day challenges that they may face in their lives outside of the Dojang. Talk about how they handle certain issues, and maybe reflect how they could have handled it better.

By spreading Taekwon-Do we are also spreading “Do” and thus spreading moral values into the community.

In summary, we can be sure that there will be continual changes within society, not all for the better. We as TKD practitioners and teachers, have a responsibility to promote moral culture in society, strive to adapt ourselves to the changing times, continue to look for ways to deliver the DO. Thus ultimately “build a more peaceful world”.