

The Psychology of Success

A lesson in motivation for the Apathetic

Mr Sean Carver

How does one become successful at Taekwon-Do?

How does one become successful at any Martial Art?

What is it that sets apart the successful martial arts practitioner from those of us who try, but just don't seem able to achieve much?

We can certainly recognise gifted individuals who seem to possess qualities that the rest of us are lacking. Are these individuals gifted from the start, or is there some process which they followed which allowed them to achieve their success? Is success something that some people have, and others don't, or is it something that can be gained through a process of learning?

In pondering all of the above questions, I am reminded of a simple ancient saying.

When embarking on a long journey, you must start by taking the first step. You must then continue by taking the next step, and then the step after that, and so on. If you sit and worry about the entire Journey and what it entails, then you will become discouraged, however if you just focus on each step and the one afterwards, then eventually you will arrive at your goal.

If there is one quality which sets modern Western civilisation apart from the ancient times when Martial Arts originated, it would have to be apathy. Apathy is the bane of the modern world. This is the main reason why each of us fails to reach our potential. We cannot be bothered, and so we fail.

If you recognise your own apathetic habits and cure them, then you remove one of the biggest barriers to your own success.

The Legendary Bruce Lee once wrote the following passage about mental discipline :

Buddhism's Eight Fold Path:

Right Views (understanding): You must see clearly what is wrong.

Right Purpose (aspiration): You must decide to be cured.

Right Speech: Speak so as to aim at being cured.

Right Conduct: You must act.

Right Vocation: Your livelihood must not conflict with your therapy.

Right Effort: The therapy must go forward at the "staying speed", the critical velocity that can be sustained.

Right Awareness (mind control): You must feel it and think about it incessantly.

Right Concentration (meditation): Learn how to contemplate with the deep mind. This means that you should first be honest with yourself and acknowledge your weaknesses. You must recognise where you are not currently successful. You must make the decision to cure yourself.

Occasionally at Taekwon Do club nights, we ask the question to juniors, "Why did you start training at Taekwon Do?"

The answer is invariably something along the lines of, "I want to get a black belt", or "I want to be just like Bruce Lee," or, "I want to be as good as those guys I saw giving a demonstration last week."

Then when we ask what people are currently doing to achieve this goal, they usually don't have an answer, short of coming to training each night.

This shows that we are often quite successful at setting our major goals, however when it comes to breaking our major goals down into more manageable sub goals, we often fail.

You must set some goals, and some strategies for reaching them. You must create a plan for yourself, which is achievable. What is the use of starting a journey if you don't know where you are going? You will just wonder aimlessly and never achieve your goals. Put together a training plan, and stick to it. The training plan should consist of iterative goals spaced evenly along the way, so that you can measure your progress. It is a real motivation booster if you can point at physical achievements regularly each week or so, rather than training endlessly for no apparent gain.

OK, you now are in fairly good shape, you have put together your plan, you know exactly what you must do to achieve your goals.

You should now start using positive language about your goals. If you decide that they are achievable, then the goals become achievable. If you decide that your goals are unattainable, then you are sowing your own subconscious seeds of defeat. To succeed you must believe in your own potential to reach your goals.

You must decide to become successful.

You must then begin to become successful. You must start taking the first steps on your journey towards success.

The next great stumbling block on the road to success, is your livelihood. How many times have you heard the excuse that someone cannot attend training because they had to work late, or had to travel on some work assignment. What is required is a subtle change of point of view. To become successful, training must become something that you love to do. It must become a way of life. If there is a conflict between your livelihood and your martial art, then you will never be fully successful at either. You must develop a conflict free training schedule, and stick to it.

Having started on your journey towards success, you must stick to it. There will be obstacles thrown in your path, however you must not allow any of them to sway you from your ultimate goal. This is perseverance. One of the reasons that we fail to reach our goals, is that we give up. If you never give up, and you keep moving in the right direction, then you must by definition achieve your goal. It is that simple.

“Taekwon-Do is a version of unarmed combat designed for the purpose of self defence. It is more than that, however.

It is the scientific use of the body in the method of self defence, a body that has gained the ultimate use of its faculties through intensive physical and mental training.

Many people fail because they miss the last part of this statement. The body is the physical tool that allows us to train. The brain and will commands this tool. On the positive side, it is our will and mind that decides to act. However, unfortunately it is also our mind, and lack of will that allows us to decide to give up. Most of us spend too much time developing the body, and forget about developing our minds.

You must become tough mentally before your body will condition itself to follow. Your body is just an implement crafted in the image of your own will. If you work at becoming undefeatable mentally, or indomitable, then your body will physically start becoming more conditioned.

At the start of class we resight the Taekwon Do oath and tenets each training night. However, how many of us practice the tenets, or in particular the last three?

Perseverance – The ability to see something through to its conclusion.

Self Control - The ability to maintain self discipline, mentally and physically, and emotionally at all times.

Indomitable Spirit – The ability to not allow defeat mentally, ever.

If you accept the tenets as a code for living life, and treat Taekwon Do as a way of life, then you are sowing the right mental seeds that will bring success in the future.

So in answer to the questions at the start of this paper.

How does one become successful at Taekwon Do, or any martial art?

Easy:

Decide to become successful.

Decide how to become successful in manageable steps.

Live the dream and start becoming successful in manageable steps, and most importantly

Don't give up!!!!