

## The Way

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I work hard and I play hard. This is the motto of many people and it has an attractive ring to it, especially in this world of modern age medicine and on the spot remedies. A favourite saying of mine is, 'Go hard, or go home' and when injury has occurred I have either carried on or waited for it to heal and then carried on. It was never a big concern knowing that things could easily be fixed, but if you are playing hard as well, the long-term consequences can be devastating. A terrible example can be seen with the following:

A patient was being lectured in hospital about the effects of smoking and his reply was:

"When my car breaks down I take it to the garage and get it fixed. I don't need to know anything about it as long as it drives along getting me from A to B and I don't expect my mechanic to whinge to me if it has broken down, so just do your job."

So, what is the big deal?

The big deal is this. You can buy a new car but we only have one body each and if you don't treat it properly then one day it may all catch up to you. Things might not be so simple then.

What then can we do to assist people, especially since Taekwon-Do is a martial art where people run the risk of injury? The answer is in the name and relates to the 'Do'. People who join Taekwon-Do are most likely looking for a healthier option in their lives, and going to class twice a week is a good start but the first words in the Encyclopaedia under definition of Taekwon-Do by General Choi Hong Hi are:

Taekwon-Do... a way of life.

What does this mean? The simplest description of this is found in one of the most primitive styles of Chinese writing, called the Small Seal Script. It depicts the word Tao which can be interpreted as Dao, way, road, path, course, head, principle, doctrine or to speak. The calligraphy shows a face a leg and pathway and is quite simply a person running along a path. (*Deng Ming-Dao 1996*).

For some in Taekwon-Do this is not a big deal as their lives have encompassed a pathway that has been parallel to the way of Taekwon-Do, therefore when they join Taekwon-Do they move forward without many hiccups. Their difficulties in the martial arts will be different. Others however join Taekwon-Do with differing backgrounds and are looking for a better lifestyle than they may have had previously. This is an area where the choice of a new lifestyle may cause conflict with their old lifestyle, so following a different pathway may be more difficult. A person who finds this transition difficult may work hard at training and continue to play hard outside of the Do Jang. This can be all right for a while but is not conducive to a Taekwon-Do way of life.

The Small Seal Script shows the word abandon as a palm and a hand discarding something. Deng Ming-Dao in his book *Everyday Tao* states:

"Once you gain a foothold on the path, do not hesitate to leave your old life behind."

He continues:

"We have all had bad habits and indiscreet ways of thinking: poor eating, drug use, overindulgence in wine, excessive love interests, anger, rage, jealousy, greed, cruelty, selfishness, and a thousand other sins. But coming to an understanding of Tao is to realise a wellspring of purity within yourself. When you taste of that purity there is no comparison between the goodness of the spirit and the sins of addictions. It isn't difficult to see which is better, especially when you experience both firsthand."

What real conflict is there when we decide to move forward with a lifestyle change and join Taekwon-Do? How can it matter to what we are doing? One example is how the body may heal itself after an injury. A nutritional imbalance may slow the healing process. If for example someone damages a ligament, protein is needed to rebuild it but much of this comes from the body's ability to recycle the damaged ligament. Several other micronutrients are needed as well. (*Andrew Pallas, 2002*) It therefore stands to reason that if your nutrition is not very good then you will not be able to heal yourself very well. Now we begin to see the necessity of leaving your old life behind when starting on a new pathway.

This all seems so obvious, but for many, simple changes in lifestyle are hard to do, and is it really that obvious what is healthy. If we really sit down and look at what we eat it can be quite a shock.

Packets of food these days list ingredients but many things are given numbers and we are none the wiser as to what they are. For example two packets of crackers that I would have considered a healthier option to a normal biscuit contained additives numbered, 621, 627, 631, 262, 160c, 551 E102 and E110.

The first three and last two of these are listed as having had adverse reactions reported on them, mostly in children. 551 is sourced from sand and the last one E110 is sourced from Coal Tar. (*David Coory, 2002.*)

Of course, looked at on its own, this may not be a big issue, but if someone is not nutritionally aware and they are entering an activity like Taekwon-Do, which may be harder on their body than anything they have tried before, then there may be problems down the track.

Therefore, if Taekwon-Do is a way of life then we need to follow it properly. It is a Martial Art and for those who have followed a different path in the past the battle will be with themselves. The word Martial itself in part depicts a man standing with a weapon and Deng Ming-Dao mentions it is not to slay others but to subdue the self. As in the tenets of Taekwon-Do under Self Control, General Choi Hong Hi quotes Lao Tzu "The term stronger is the person who wins over oneself rather than someone else."

I wonder how many people drop out of Taekwon-Do because of the difficulties encountered in moving from one pathway to another. One instance I know of from our own club was a young lad who gave up a particular fast food between gradings in an effort to improve his image. There was a constant struggle with fitness and he looked forward to his fast food when he graded. He attempted a new pathway but could not discard the old one so soon fell short and left Taekwon-Do. For some the transition will not happen overnight and that is where the tenet perseverance comes in to play.

An interesting point here is what can we do to assist people especially children with their move to Taekwon-Do. We recently had two children from an American Taekwon-Do organisation at our club, and their Do-bok had badges and stars on it for various things they had done relevant to requirements. One badge was for doing the splits. If this was a procedure adopted by ITFNZ then there could be a badge for children relevant to health and wellbeing along with many other types. This brings to mind what the Scouts do where you have to earn badges for doing things including good deeds for people and community work. For adults the contributions credit list takes care of this but there could still be a prerequisite contribution needed relevant to community work or something similar.

So far, the discussion has been on health and well-being and I believe this to be probably the most important thing in your whole life. This is emphasised in many areas, for example those who work in the emergency services know that when they attend a scene their first priority is to ascertain that an area is safe before they go in so they can render the assistance needed without becoming victims themselves. In life that may simply mean showing the way by living it.

This is just common sense and should be relative to our lives in general. The better we look after ourselves the better we can look after others and the better the input we can have in society on many levels.

There are of course many aspects to 'Do' and there is a lot of written matter to assist with learning these aspects. There is the techniques handbook, which contains rules for various situations. One example is addressing each other courteously inside the Do Jang, (*Technical Committee, 2006*). There are differing opinions on these matters and one that comes up regularly is calling people by their first name inside the Do Jang rather than what the rules state. I believe that each Do Jang has its own persona and this is good, as people who like a particular style will gravitate towards it. However, if we teach that in the 'Tae' and 'Kwon' we practice movement in the extreme but it is not necessarily the way it would be performed in reality then what is the difference with the 'Do'. Should we then also practice our tenets to the extreme so that in general our moral culture can be seen in reality? Food for thought anyway.

There are also the five Tenets that we all know off by heart and there is the moral culture section in the encyclopaedia as well as the Moral Guide Book translated by General Choi Hong Hi. There are even pattern meanings that offer guidance on 'Do'.

The pattern meaning Juche for example, talks about man being the master of his own destiny. This means to me that everything in life is a choice. We choose what we put into our mouths and we choose what words come out of it. We choose our 'Do' and every one of us can follow our

pathway, as we want. We can be courteous in the Do Jang, respect the seniors when they are around, and then be rude and impolite outside. We can recite the Student Oath just as primary school kids recite the times tables or we can think about what we are saying and practice it. We can drink water during training, then go home, and have a fizzy or we can become the Martial Artists that we are supposed to and have a way of life.

This way of Life is also important to our Self Defence. Everyone must have heard that communication is one of the first things to employ in a Self Defence situation. There is more to this than just trying to talk someone out of hitting us. The way people communicate themselves to the world in general has a great impact on how people react to them. A basic example is if someone cuts another person off whilst driving down the road, how do you react. Do you get abusive or remain calm and give a wave. The first reaction can escalate the situation and may lead to violence, thus requiring the 'Tae' and 'Kwon' in Self Defence. The second is utilising 'Do' and is more likely to keep things calm, therefore preventing any trouble at all, the ultimate goal of self-defence for any martial artist.

This aspect of how people portray themselves is very important even for those who may be victims of bullies at school. Some people come to Taekwon-Do as a direct result of bullying and so we teach them how to defend themselves, but giving them insight into the 'Do' and how they portray themselves or react to situations is also very important. This is not to say that it is their fault for being bullied, but there will always be bullies and the ability to deal with them is not just with Taekwon.

Remember, the journey we travel is important because we all have the same destination.

## References

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