

Why People Join Taekwon-Do

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One of the questions I get asked the most from people who don't do Tae Kwon-Do is "Why do you do Tae Kwon-Do, what is the point?" My friends often say, "What a waste of time," so I decided to analyse my reasons for doing Tae Kwon-Do and find out what I have learnt. This is a collection of my experience and thoughts on Tae Kwon-Do.

I started when I was seven years old, because I heard about it through some of my parent's friends and decided to give it a go. I went along to the class thinking I would learn how to break wood and bricks then impress my friends with all the cool moves I could do.

After doing a survey on a number of Tae Kwon-Do students I found that there was no set pattern as to why people initially joined, although fitness was one of the most common reasons. What I did find however, was that all a beginner expected was to meet new people, learn to fight and learn to defend themselves, this was all I had expected.

But as I gradually went through the ranks from white belt to blue belt I began to realize that there was a bit more to Tae Kwon-Do than I had first anticipated.

As a white belt I learnt about innocence and I was introduced to what Tae Kwon-Do expected from me. For instance the tenets of Tae Kwon-Do and the student oath that I was expected to learn and abide by. Gradually I began to improve. I passed my grading and went on to yellow belt, this is when the true meaning of Tae Kwon-Do began to sprout and take root like a plant in my mind. This was the basis of all the training I would ever do.

When I went on to green belt my growth and fitness in Tae Kwon-Do began to develop, my training became slightly more intense as I not only learnt the physical part of Tae Kwon-Do but also the theoretical. I was beginning to learn how to conduct myself properly in and outside the do-jang. I was also starting to understand some Korean terminology. For my blue stripe I was expected to understand exactly what Tae Kwon-Do is.

When I reached my blue belt my training was progressing well so I set myself a goal that had once, not long ago, seemed practically impossible. My goal was to obtain 1st degree Black Belt.

Before attempting Black Belt I had to reach Red Belt. To gain this I had to learn the explanation of each of the tenets. The tenets have taught and helped me a lot during all my time as a student at Tae Kwon-Do. They are a great set of values for anyone to learn, even people outside of Tae Kwon-Do, I have applied them to everyday life and have found that they have disciplined me and helped me to always do the right thing. The tenets are something you could learn nowhere else.

By now I knew quite a bit of Korean terminology which is very helpful for understanding what your instructor is telling you to do during a class.

As I graded for my Red Belt I realised how lucky we are in I.T.F.N.Z to have a lot of excellent instructors and senior belts who encourage and support us in everything that we decide to do. This is just another reason why people continue to do Tae Kwon-Do, we meet a lot of great, friendly people.

I also realised that I had gained a lot of confidence, I no longer felt uncomfortable being in front of large groups of people. I think this was because of all the grading I had done. At grading we had to perform in front of large groups of people and a panel of examiners, this helped me to build my confidence.

By red belt I had been in a number of tournaments where I met a lot of great people and learnt about sportsmanship and teamwork. I think that being in a team, feeling a sense of belonging, working together and cheering each other on is one of the greatest feelings you can get.

Tae Kwon-Do tournaments are heaps of fun but they are also where I learnt about team spirit and co-operation, which are important assets during one's life. But overall I think one of my greatest lessons was learnt while training for my black belt grading. It was months of extremely hard work as the grading consisted of fitness, power, theory and technical ability. I had to run every day practice pad work, go through each of my patterns a couple of times a day, go to training four nights a week, all this and I was still expected to do my school work. Sometimes I couldn't be bothered, this is when the tenets helped me out.

I also learnt that the more you put in, for example time and effort, the more you get back at the end. I figured this out because after all the agonising training, it couldn't compare to the sense of achievement I felt when I finally attained my Black Belt. When I acquired my Black belt I thought, "This is it, I've reached the top", only to discover that this was just the beginning. There are nine degrees of black belt and within each there is a huge amount of knowledge waiting to be uncovered and this is the reason why people do Tae Kwon-Do.

I reflected on everything I had been through in Tae Kwon-Do and realised that I had learnt a lot of valuable lessons that I'm sure I could not have learnt anywhere else. Anyone who joins Tae Kwon-Do will learn discipline, respect and etiquette and like me the tenets, Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self Control and Indomitable Spirit will become a part of their lives.