

How Tae Kwon Do Has Changed My Life

Josh Cohen

April 4, 2009

I started studying martial arts eight years ago, and the last five years have been spent here at VMAA. When I first began Tae Kwon Do, I looked at it mostly as a hobby, something to do in between soccer seasons. But as I got older, and came to this school, I realized that Tae Kwon Do isn't just another activity to pass the time. It's a commitment to a certain lifestyle. Through martial arts I have improved mentally and physically, and I believe that it has led me to become a better person.

Martial arts have greatly improved my balance, flexibility, and my overall physical condition. When I started Tae Kwon Do, I would get exhausted after one or two rounds of sparring. Doing ten pushups was a challenge, let alone ten chin-ups. Since then, my training has given me more strength and stamina, to the point where I'm no longer worried about how many rounds of sparring or how many pushups I have to do.

But Tae Kwon Do isn't just about physical skills. More important than physical ability is mental discipline. It's in this area where Tae Kwon Do has had its greatest impact on my life. I have become more focused, not just while training here, but also at school. Also, I try to apply the five tenets of Tae Kwon Do (Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control, and Indomitable Spirit) to my everyday life. Perseverance and self-control in particular have been very helpful to me. When I first studied Tae Kwon Do eight years ago, I quit after reaching senior yellow belt. But then I started training again, and the tenets of Tae Kwon Do were drilled into my head. Since then, I have encountered many challenges and obstacles, but I have persevered, and I have

learned to never give up. Self-Control has also helped me in many ways. It has helped me to not lose my temper, and to just let go the things that usually annoy me. Moreover, I always try to exhibit patience and self-control when I'm helping the younger, less experienced students with kicking or forms. In so doing, I try to follow the examples set by my instructors, who have always demonstrated great patience while teaching me.

Tae Kwon Do has also given me a sense of self-confidence. I am now surer of myself and my ability to perform under pressure. Doing forms and sparring at tournaments are no longer so terrifying. I have also learned to exhibit confidence even when I'm not feeling so confident on the inside.

My instructors have taught me many things while I've studied Tae Kwon Do. They have taught me to defend myself, and they have taught me that I need to eat more meat and potatoes. But most importantly, they have taught me how to reach my potential, and be a better person.

Lastly, I would like to thank my instructors, for helping me to get where I am today. They are all inspiring teachers who motivate me to constantly improve, and be better than I was the day before. I'd also like to thank my family, especially my parents, for always putting up with me and being supportive during my time here. Finally, I know that getting my black belt isn't the end, but rather the beginning of my journey to try to reach my full potential. Studying Tae Kwon Do has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, and I hope it's something that I can continue to pursue for the rest of my life.