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TAEKWON-DO FOR THE YOUNG BLOOD :

A JOURNEY TO BUILDING CHARACTER

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INTRODUCTION

“You train to become a warrior, not a fighter. The warrior knows [that] he can let loose, so he chooses the path of peace and respect.”

-Shi Yan You

In Martial Arts, many are called, but a few are chosen in this road less travelled by. With a quick estimation through my eyes observing my surroundings, almost everyone can go to school and earn a college degree, almost everyone can enroll in sports and have some fair share of experiences in tournaments, but not even half of the people around us can be willing to learn a Martial Art and live by the standards of it. Surely, choosing Martial Arts can be easy as several students can afford the training fee. But not everyone will stay and continue the martial artist's way. There had been some myths existing about martial arts. Some of those I have ever heard of are that “martial art is just about training to become a fighter that everyone cannot touch, that everyone shall fear”, or that “everyone who joins a martial art will have to break someone's bone, or he shall have one's bone broken”. In today's world, Martial Arts can be revered as a cool endeavor, as it is a difficult path wherein the hard trainings are something not everyone can endure. But Martial Arts is much more than that. It is much more than just the fun, or the competitions, or learning how to fight when confronted in the streets. Martial art is a path wherein there is a balance between training to have a well-conditioned body and training to have a sound mind. I added a quote I came across I the Internet from Shi Yan You that which I quoted above this page. I totally agree with this statement that there really is a contrast between training to be a warrior and training to be a fighter, and even training to be an athlete is totally different too. Training to be an athlete, which can be evident to some martial arts who had their sports-style variations (like those adopted in the Olympics), is all about becoming an excellent winner in the games. Training to be a fighter is just about using violence to stop violence or start one. Training to be a warrior, on the other hand, is about learning how to fight in order to protect and reserves that energy humbly to maintain peace and order. I've read somewhere from a social media post of another martial artist wherein his caption said something in between these lines, *“Martial Arts is not about learning how to fight but learning when not to.”* When I read this quote, I realized that it is quite true especially in the

martial art I practice which is Taekwon-Do. When you are a mature martial artist of philosophical and spiritual training, the more you'll realize that your skills are dangerous when not put to good use, hence, the wiser you are not to show off or use your skills when no grave situation calls for it.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss some of my greatest realizations as an instructor for almost 30 years now about the real importance of Taekwon-Do centered on building the proper character over the physical expertise. More importantly, I would like to review on this paper what the positive effects of this side of Taekwon-Do on child development and its impact on character-building.

At first, I thought I would go for a more technical topic for my thesis. When I was on a stage of contemplating what I would like to tackle in this academic writing, a sign was brought to me through a chance encounter at a local grocery store with my family. While I was pushing the grocery cart, someone called me from behind, "Sir Kit." He was a big young man whom I do not recognize. He bowed in respect, and when he did that, I knew he was a Taekwon-do practitioner because he did it through the *Kyong-ye* position. He said I might not recognize him because he was still young before when he trained in our dojang. Throughout our *Kumustahan* conversation, he shared that he trained in our dojang from his elementary days to early high school. He stopped due to personal reasons, and he expressed how thankful he was for the opportunity and the great experience in Taekwon-do. He is now operating a family business. His lasting comment before we parted ways really struck me in my heart. His words translated in English goes by, "If it weren't for Taekwon-Do, I would have been a drug addict or into depression. Who knows, right?"

I've never expected to hear that directly from a former student. Ever since that day, I do not only pay close attention to the physical health improvement of my students, especially the young ones, but I also try to ask them about their day or what they wanted to be in the future, and make sure I give positive affirmation and encouragement. I also try to have casual conversations with parents to check how their kids are at home and in school especially in terms of conduct. When I asked parents what their reasons were for enrolling their children in Taekwon-Do, all of them said it is for them to learn self-defense. I have always believed that Taekwon-Do is more than just any additional special classes kids can take just to pass the time or to make their kids involve in sports, or just so parents can drop their kids somewhere when they are busy like a daycare center. Taekwon-Do is a commitment, and is a journey towards building inner wellbeing.

However, in truth, not all people can see that fact. People from the outside could judge that Taekwon-Do is a place where people will be forced to painful stretching and be beaten up in sparring. I also had this memorable encounter, when my children who are assistant instructors went to school-hopping to send proposals to teach Taekwon-do in their schools. This is our way since we decided to target more the younger audience who can start early and continue a long journey with us as they grow up and develop to be better versions of themselves in the martial art. Some accepted us yet some would politely reject our offer due to their own institution's reasons yet there was this one Catholic school whose headmistress told us they wouldn't want us to teach their kids to be fighting machines who would grow to be brutally with such combat skills. There really could be people who could not see Taekwon-Do for its true essence. This stereotype can get in the way at times when we try to invite and reach out to people to join our *dojangs*. Nevertheless, this is why our federation, through its well-rounded instructors, should keep the spirit of Taekwon-Do living on, educate the laypeople of how important it can be towards self-discovery and self-improvement, and spread its good cause with the best of our ability.

In this thesis, I will start with defining what martial art and Taekwon-Do is, what the *DO* means and why it is important. Next, I will discuss the impact of Taekwon-Do on the holistic development of children through my lens as a father as well and the Benefits of Taekwon-do on the students, and some essential points taken from the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do written by General Choi Hong Hi on Moral Culture and the 5 Tenets of Taekwon-Do. After which, I will end with answering the question, "why is Taekwon-Do more than just self-defense?" As an instructor, I am well aware that Taekwon-Do is for anyone and that no one is never too old to join. Though in this paper, I will focus more on discussing the impact and benefits of the martial art to the individuals that may be vital to those who started young from 5 years old to adolescence as this is the majority of the population of my students, and I would want to touch on some important points as to the good significance there is for parents to enroll their young kids to the martial art instead of other sports and activities. I humbly write this in the perspective of an instructor, a father, and a martial artist still striving to improve holistically and keep our *dojang's* legacy living on.

THE “DO’ IN TAEKWON-DO

*“The warrior guided by the spirit serves humanity,
the warrior without, serves the ego.”*

— Soke Behzad Ahmadi

In this advancing world of technology, people are caught too much in the materialistic aspect of living. Only some can value the arts in this more scientific approach in lifestyle, be it the art of crafting, the art of meditation, fine arts or martial arts. Speaking of the martial arts, this has been a part of my life ever since I was a child. As a middle child among 7 siblings, I was the only one who practiced martial arts, namely Taekwon-do and Arnis, a Filipino martial art. I had loved ever since the person I become from it. My siblings could not fathom my dedication and passion for it, just as how I cannot understand back then how they could not build any interest in training in martial arts like I do. And as I grew as a father, I knew I wanted my kids to have that form of discipline and growth as well. I am proud and happy to see my kids grow up in the martial art that eventually is a sport. I tried encouraging my other friends who have kids as well to enroll their kids to the martial art, but mostly wanted to enroll their kids to special classes that help enhance academic skills, or other workshops or special schools that enhance talents and to name the common ones namely dancing, playing the piano or violin, and other team sports such as soccer, volleyball and basketball. Aside from the stereotype that they think enrolling their kids in Taekwon-do or any martial means introducing their kids to cruel training, or the frequency and amount of financial aspect of partaking in Taekwon-do classes, a lot may think that in this modern world, safety and security is more enhanced than the past, hence, no need for self-defense as the surroundings can be safer than ever before. Usually, what I do to convince them is that I tell them that they are not only paying or investing time for their children to be physically fit, but that as their kids learn fighting skills, equally give value and importance and time in the moral culture and mental training to build excellent character. In here, we don't only emphasize discipline to be better individuals but discipline as well in being kind and gentle to other people and defending other people with the skills that you have. These life skills learned in Taekwon-do does not only prepare the kids or help them maintain optimal performance in social and academic aspect in school, but also to be well-rounded future professionals as well.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, martial arts is defined as fighting arts that follows a firm set of rules, philosophy, and detailed training program that serves a wide variety of purposes: teaching an individual how to defend oneself, to build a healthy body through consistent exercise, to prepare oneself for military service, to prepare oneself to compete in sports tournaments, holistic development and so much more. Taekwon-Do, a martial art that originated in Korea in the early 1940s and 1950s and was founded by General Choi Hong Hi (Kang & Lee, 1999), is centered also in self-defense, and is practiced for the reasons mentioned above. Taekwon-Do is characterized by its punching, blocking and kicking. But more importantly, taekwon-do is a combination of the coordination and harmony of the body and the mind, as well as one's spirit. Martial arts are more of discipline. It is not only justified by learning how to fight, but also in the overall health of a person physically, socially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually is of utmost significance (Bu et al., 2010). It was clearly written by General Choi Hong Hi in his full academic text, Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do, that Taekwon-do is "a way of life." The martial art is defined as *Tae* meaning "Kick or the foot", *Kwon* meaning "punch or the fist", and *Do* meaning "art or way". The art here is the mastery of the body's balance and the complex detail behind every action executed, which emphasizes that a Taekwon-do practitioner does not merely kick and punch but applies both attack and defense in an artistic and accurate way that considers the philosophy and the technicalities of each movement. The "Do" here is also a marker that makes Taekwon-do different from the other forms of combat training, as this martial art focuses on developing virtues such as resilience, humility and justice, deepening foundation in morality and self-discipline as well throughout the polishing of fighting skills. The "Do" is reinforced through teaching students the following:

1. The Five Tenets of Taekwon-Do which are namely Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control, and Indomitable Spirit. This is recited by the students before the start of the training and even these words are written in the walls around the dojang so students can read them every training day, let these words sink in and have a permanent place in their minds, and let these words come to life in their cultivation of their character.
2. The Circle of Composition that consists of Fundamentals (the basics of Taekwon-Do and conditioning of the body) Patterns (the skillful and artful sequence of techniques), Dallyon (strengthening of the body parts for more effective strikes and blocks), Sparring (simulated application of combat training) and Self- Defense (putting the techniques learned into

application). Through this, students will know that every action in Taekwon-do has a purpose, rule and meaning.

3. The Training Secrets of Taekwon-Do that students need to be aware all the time.
 - a. To study the theory of power
 - b. To clearly know the movements every purpose and proper method
 - c. To combine in a singular coordinated action the eyes, hands, feet, and breath at the same time precisely
 - d. To always choose wisely the suitable attack for every vital spot in the body
 - e. To familiarize the proper angle and distance of stances, attacks and defense
 - f. To maintain appropriate bending of arms and legs while moving in motion
 - g. Beginning every move with a backward motion and not stopping the movement midway before reaching target
 - h. To do appropriate utilize the knee spring in sine wave for every movement
 - i. To exhale briefly in every blow or move
4. The Taekwon-Do ranks, patterns and knowing the different definitions behind the color of belts and patterns.

These are why the “Do” is a principal part of this martial art. The “Do” is not only present inside the dojang, but should always be observed, throughout the whole training and even outside practices. The Do is cardinal to the person as he or she brings it with him or her anytime and anywhere in everything that he or she do that must be with utmost good character and discipline.

Knowing the meaning behind the name Taekwon-Do and what it stands for in essence is a beautiful revelation. But again, not everyone will know about this and appreciate this. As a martial artist, I enjoy watching films with martial arts depiction, but I get worried seeing that most of main characters are using martial arts to beat bad guys and save a community, to get revenge on someone, or punish some bullies. This is true and pointed out by researchers and scholars that indeed, the media can use martial arts for just aesthetic or amusement purposes in films and present a negative image about martial arts (Fuller, 1988; Grady, 1998). This makes people miss that martial artists are not built to overcome a group of men through fits and kicks but to overcome an inner battle of the spirit that serves the common good of people. That is why it is a crucial reason

for me to emphasize in this paper the importance of educating people of the true essence of martial arts, especially on young ones, and the effects of the Do in their holistic development.

TAEKWONDO'S POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILD'S HOLISTIC GROWTH

“The most difficult part of traditional taekwondo is not learning the first kick or punch. It is not struggling to remember the motions of a poomsae or becoming acquainted with Korean culture. Rather, it is taking the first step across the threshold of the dojang door. This is where roads diverge, where choices are made that will resonate throughout a lifetime.”

*— Doug Cook,
Taekwondo: A Path to Excellence*

A lot of times, when I am teaching my classes, there will be some people observing our trainings, enjoying what they are seeing. Some of my students would approach them and invite them to join us, and some of them would just shy away, and some would express that they like to, but they think they are not willing to commit. For some, it may be easy to step one foot in the dojang to see what it's like inside, but would not stay for long. It requires much diligence and tenacity to be able to decide on pursuing Taekwon-Do despite the obstacles along one's journey. Only those who stayed will see the beauty and significance of how the martial art had positively shaped them and will realize it all is worth it to persevere and overcome the hardships they had experienced. As a person who had been once a student that then became an instructor, I can testify that Taekwon-Do does good to a person holistically and this is even proven from research which found out that there is betterment in the physical, cognitive, emotional and social aspect on an individual through training in this martial art, especially as early as childhood (Chang and Hwang, 2017), and vital enhancement in the moral aspect of an individual which aids self-control (Lakes and Hoyt, 2004).

I. Child's Physical Development

Exposing one's child or oneself in Taekwon-Do leads to observable changes in one's body composition and abilities. It shows positive health benefits such as healthy oxygen uptake and use

for energy generation, sweating and slimming down excess fats, and flexible body (Fong & Ng, 2011). Before starting the classes on techniques, we make sure that we have our warming-up routines. We would have a consistent flow starting with standing exercises from head to toe, then sitting and lying down exercises, by-partner exercises, and stretching by the wall. After that will be some drills around the mats and calisthenics such as squats, push-ups, crunches, burpees, and other core exercises. Through a detailed exercises regimen, individuals will have better good blood circulation, flexibility, and cardio-respiratory fitness. Below, are some positive health benefits of training in Taekwon-Do which I personally noted from each composition of Taekwon-Do:

COMPOSITION OF TAEKWON-DO	POSITIVE CHANGES AND BENEFITS OF THE BODY
1. <u>Fundamental Movements</u>	-muscle control; preparedness for the body to do movements with more control in proper speed and snap; resistance and flexibility training
2. <u>Patterns</u>	-optimal breath control; knowing mental focus and concentration to use body well; rhythm especially through applying sine wave; healthier joints; learning reaction force; power and accuracy in movements; proper balance and knowledge on exact weight percentage given to the lower body; better body posture; outstanding upper and lower body strength
3. <u>Dallyon</u>	tolerance for pain and better management of physical pain; muscle toning; body conditioning for effective striking and blocking;
4. <u>Sparring</u>	- improve alertness and attentiveness; cardiovascular endurance, proper and advanced body coordination; increased stamina; knowing how to preserve and use energy and speed; knowing how to face and handle stress when in sparring;
5. <u>Self-Defense</u>	- good reflexes for attack and defense; more confidence and understanding on how to handle overall mobility

Through this composition, Taekwon-Do leads an individual into such process of development, and in fact, the parents of Taekwon-Do practitioners have observed that their children’s immune system and overall physical health improved and that they are more physically active in school than other students who were not into martial arts. Their children had no difficulty partaking in different engagements that involve physical skills and are even getting better advantage through excelling in events such as sport or dance contests, games, or even in their physical education classes. Though the physical aspect of Taekwon-Do is not the focus of my study as this segment deserves a separate detailed comprehensive research or writing, it is important to note this as I want to emphasize that the positive effects though physical growth in this martial art also brings forth other benefits in the health aspects in cognitive facilities (Kim et al., 2015). Furthermore, through undergoing this physical training and development, opportunities for developing social and emotional functions are enabled.

II. Child’s Cognitive and Mental Development

Through the physical activities in Taekwon-do, students can also improve their mental health and cognitive performance. The table below shows what I had personally noted during trainings, heard from my students’ feedback, and also from my personal research:

TAEKWON-DO ACTIVITY	COGNITIVE AND MENTAL BENEFIT
<u>Taekwon-Do exercises and drills</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engaging in physical fitness can lead an individual to feeling positive emotions that are caused by the production of dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine (Voss et al., 2011) - Mental health of an individual is increased and helps them handle stress effectively (Kim et al., 2012) -This is also advantageous especially when instructors also add a little fun and creative games in drills during classes to associate positive play to training and keep boredom and stiffness during practices away
<u>Memorizing patterns</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taekwon-do classes comprise of activities that increase one’s mental facilities such as familiarizing different patterns and techniques, and not only memorizing them, but even understanding the history and meaning behind them, which helps sharpen their memory

	-many of my students are also top students in their school as they are more diligent and at ease in studying or understanding informative concepts efficiently
<u>Meditation every start of the class and making stillness and silence a comfortable aspect</u>	-In meditation, students, especially kids will learn that in order to excel in what they do, they must know how to gather their energy and calm their minds through concentration or prayer; Also before they perform a pattern I give almost a minute of silence as they keep their <i>joonbi seogi</i> and also when I give some seconds for them to freeze in the last move of every pattern to make them comfortable with keeping stillness can be an important part of their daily activities so they will know that in this busy world, they need to know how to pause, breathe and keep calm.
<u>Free sparring where students apply their own combination of kicks and footwork that they think is best for the simulated combat</u>	-The good thing about free sparring is that students get to apply their autonomy and initiative when applying all that they have learned during the training into their own tactical sequence of moves when doing free sparring. They know that they should not only throw punches or kicks randomly but need to learn how to study the opponent and know which appropriate attacks they shall use and knowing when to defend themselves; when students are exposed to this in an early age, their minds are quick to think and find solutions to problems they face everyday and even have better cognitive instincts
<u>Learning patterns repetitively until they reach perfection in their movements</u>	-Kids in Taekwon-Do sometimes complain why they keep doing patterns over and over again but later on, they realize that their movements are more sharp and their muscle memory is better after repetitions; later on, as the kids will grow, they will learn the concept of life that people do not become the best overnight and that in order for us to reach our goal, we must patiently keep practicing and improving until they achieve their best.
<u>Grading Tests and Taekwon-Do rankings</u>	In Taekwon-Do, students do not easily proceed to the next level belt closer to black. They will be taught that in order to climb to the top, you need to go through a process which is undergoing different training

	<p>for each belt. They need to train hard and improve until their skills are proficient enough for them to proceed to the next rank. Through this, young martial artists will learn at a young age that life can happen in different stages, that anything that they dream of can only be achieved if they work hard for it one step at a time. This will coincide in their understanding in school wherein every year, they proceed to each grade level from elementary to high school and eventually college before they reach their highest potential. This will also improve their goal setting skills.</p>
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As Taekwon-Do involves mental training which can indirectly help martial artists also get to be more comfortable and equipped in the realm of academics. This had been positively reported by the parents of my students as well. And I myself have seen this in my own children. I am the type of parent who does not spoon feed my kids in their assignments or homework but I observed that my children in the young age developed their own study habits and learning management and excelled in their classes, bagging honor medals and co-curricular awards, and this positive effect persisted even in their young adulthood in the present. A particular study tackled about how increased physical activity such as those engaged in sports, positively influence the brain functions such as the ability to plan better (Van der Niet et al., 2015), and attention (Alesi et al., 2016), and memory (Chaddock-Heyman et al., 2013). These effects from sports are also evident in martial arts which boost the cognitive capacity of Taekwon-do practitioners especially those who started at a young age, helping them to thrive in school setting and even in the workplace in the future.

III. Child’s Social and Emotional Development

It is obvious that in Taekwon-Do, students are gathered together with other people of different ages, and as they train together, strong bonds form. Martial arts pave way more for individual growth and spiritual discovery, but this is achieved through team effort and learning not only from a single instructor, but from a group of fellow martial artists. The following are the different social and emotional milestones facilitated by training in Taekwon-Do:

1. Good manners and right conduct

Taekwon-Do is about self-discipline and obedience to a certain set of rules and regulations. Kids learn how to respect one another through bowing to each other, learn neatness by always wearing a complete and clean uniform, learn how to behave and not playing or laughing or making distracting noises inside the mats, learn politeness to each other and avoiding vulgar and offensive words, and many more. In the dojang, students are trained to maintain socially desirable and right behaviors with these established rules and be obedient students in school who follows certain school protocols consistently.

2. Concept of Respect

For some young children, they may think that the world revolves around them and that everything should be about them. As they are placed in a dojang wherein they share one space with others, they will learn how to acknowledge others. In Taekwon-do, we practice bowing to the dojang before entering and leaving the dojang. Also, before dismissal time, we pay respect to the country by bowing to the Philippine flag, bowing to the chief instructor and to other assistant instructors. Seniority teaches them that they must learn how to be humble and acknowledge those with higher ranks, just as how they shall respect the elderly or to authority figures such as teachers. However, they must be taught that this does not mean they treat others differently depending on ranks. They are shall equally treat each other and respect not only people, but also the things around such as handling training equipment with care and not throwing them (such as kick pads, and gears) anywhere.

3. Prosocial behaviors

In the dojang, I encourage students to care for one another (e.g. helping their teammates in putting up their gears during study sparring, helping someone stand up who had fallen out of balance from kicking) sharing with each other (e.g. if someone did not have a snack during break time and the others are willing to share their food; before the pandemic, our team would do some community service such as giving of relief goods to typhoon victims), cooperating as a team and volunteering to help (e.g. everyone cleans up the dojang together, helping put on the mats or taking them out during general cleaning day). These young martial artists will learn growing up how to always be open to helping others and feeling concern of others.

4. Increased Emotional Intelligence

In relation to prosocial behaviors, students learn how to think of others and not just one's own benefit. They know how to understand and manage their own emotions and consider other people's emotions and feelings. Once this is achieved, a young student will learn emotional regulation.

5. Teamwork and people-oriented attitude

Emotional intelligence is fortified through learning how to work with others. Trainings can be highly reliant in a group, and working as a team is very important in their growth. They have various routines such as by-partner exercises and or drills they need to do by group and if they fail, they will receive a consequence (not punishment but more of giving them additional work out such as more rounds during jogging, or more counts in push-ups) as a whole. Through this, they will learn how to socialize and interact with others, help each other to succeed as a group and grow their bond much more. They will learn the social concept of setting goals together, working towards a unified goal, and achieving them through teamwork. This also helps them create friendships and knowing how to give support to each other.

6. Leadership Skills

I remember that time I was shocked when my daughter started in elementary becoming so involved and carried away in helping classroom management as she was elected as a classroom officer. In 3rd grade, she experienced being the treasurer and collecting funds from classmates and making sure everyone equally contributed, and in another year as a peace officer wherein she helped calm down students in quarrel or report some issues to the teacher. This continued as she experienced being elected as president in both high school and college in their student council and other organizations. Growing up, she would always share and ask advice from me and her mother about how to do better in leading and helping her team members, and in between her sharing, she would always comment, "It's just like in Taekwon-Do", emphasizing that she had derived her leadership style from what she had applied during our trainings. Taekwon-Do is a great place to hone young individuals to stand up as a leader. I do this through assigning some students to lead the student's oath and lead the counting during warm-up exercises (usually from the higher-ranking belts or the black belt). I noticed that in their first times leading the team through

these, students were very nervous when they're chosen to lead in front. I make sure to be patient to facilitate them while they are in front and to compliment them for a job well-done right after. After sometime, when they are called, they actually are enthusiastic to do so. There had been a change of their attitude about being called in front. I realized that it helped boost their trust on themselves. I also sometimes assign some students in 1st gup red with black tip or 1st degree black belt rank to assist a small group of junior in memorizing patterns. During some classes, I also add some creative team games to see some potential leaders who have agreeable attitude and lead the others to a common goal. Assigning them to such roles will help increase their good morale, self-confidence, sense of accountability and responsibility in school, occupational and other social settings.

7. Tenacity through experiencing mistakes and failures

Taekwon-Do can be a humbling experience. Either you are taller or the bigger person, you may still experience losing through tournaments or even in practice free sparring. This may lead them to feeling down or to doubt their skills. It is very important that the instructor will be there to process the students, especially young kids, about what is losing about and how to stand up after it and build a safe environment wherein there is no bullying and other students know how to comfort a teammates who experienced these disheartening situations. They will eventually learn that no one is perfect, that is why it is important to continually hone one's skills and develop determination towards their goal.

8. Learning Resilience and a Strong Spirit

In relation to tenacity and their humbling experiences, students will slowly but surely foster the spirit of not giving up. They will be able to cognize that in reality, they will not always be the best nor always in their best every time. What is more important is that they accept such humbling experiences which do not mean the end for them, but the beginning of their transformation to be stronger, wiser, and better.

9. Self-confidence and self-esteem

Through the different social skills and emotional functions mentioned above, a martial artist will be able to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. It is paramount that the dojang is a place where students are continually complimented for their hard work and good performance, and that no element of humiliation is given to them especially when

they commit mistakes. Once they are confident of themselves, they see their value and worth as persons and become healthy individuals of competence and character.

These points may not be evident or applied by all students. These are more observable to my black belt students who are in their young adulthood as they had matured for years in this martial art. However, there are some young and new students in adolescence who may have manifested such positive characteristics, but there are some others who might still be developing and adjusting. Development is different for each student, and their timeline of learning as well but what is more important is that through time, they will eventually see improvements in themselves in how they relate with those around them and handle themselves with the highest standards and be good role models to others. This social and emotional development strengthens the existence of a strong morality of a true warrior.

THE CULTURE OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN TAEKWON-DO

*"Refrain from reckless and thoughtless actions.
Be as calm and judicious as a mountain."*

*- General Choi Hong Hi,
Founder of Taekwon-Do*

One is not a martial artist if one does not have any high sense of morality and good character. Without the two, one is just a dangerous person because he can overpower others through his skills. One of the greatest distinctions between any sport and Taekwon-Do is that the latter gives much weight on the application of a particular oath for all practitioners and a certain set of precepts to guide the practitioner to one's optimal practice of the art which is called the 5 Tenets of Taekwon-Do. These 5 tenets, which was written in the *Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do* by general Choi, will be discussed here, together with some essential points from the long chapter dedicated on Moral Culture in Taekwon-Do, which are of value to cultivate children's personalities and principles.

I. The Student's Oath

*I shall observe the tenets of Taekwon-Do.
I shall respect my instructors and seniors.
I shall never misuse Taekwon-Do.
I shall be a champion of freedom and justice.
I shall build a more peaceful world.*

This is recited by all Taekwon-Do practitioners before they begin their training proper, raising their right hand as they speak every word in the oath intently. It is such a powerful tool to teach kids about being responsible martial artists. As this is done in the very start before the kicking and other training programs, they are reminded that it is the perfection of moral behavior comes first more than the perfection of physical skills. As a teacher of this martial art, I must see to it first that I prioritize molding students' good will and discipline for the self, which will reflect on how they will use and apply Taekwon-Do throughout their lives. Taekwon-Do can be treated as a weapon. A person of good character knows well not to boast or flaunt his power or capability, but that in times of danger, as a practitioner one must defend himself and others. A person of no good character, on the other hand, may be the one who causes danger to others by instilling fear on the weak with the use of one's skills and even exploit people in doing him favors under his control. A person can easily be an abuser, a bully, an exploiter, because he knows he has the upper hand compared to the others. It is one of our duties as instructors to make sure that our students do not go astray to a dark path with such dangerous skill. We must be accountable and responsible to lead students in the right way.

In order to secure this development, instructors, in any of their own righteous way, shall implement an atmosphere where the five main virtues mentioned by the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do are practiced.

II. Five Human Qualities

1. Humanity (IN) - With humanity, people will learn how to value other people just as how they feel compassion and empathy their loved ones and themselves.

“The heaven provides four seasons while the earth has the power to produce all living things. This privilege is not reserved for any specific person but for all human beings... Therefore, humanity lies in the idea of sharing the fruits of nature with all people.”

2. Righteousness (UI) – When one is righteous, one knows that it is highly important to do one’s duty for the society and to avoid any unlawful acts that taint one’s dignity and which causes disruption to others.

“For the ordinary person, life and death are the most important in the life. However, for the virtuous person to live and die for righteousness is far more important than life and death themselves.”

– Mencius

3. Propriety (YE) – This is the virtue of being well-mannered polite and well-spoken to others.

“Propriety must be practiced for the proper development of personality, and whoever lacks sincerity in his words, cannot be considered a gentleman.”

– Confucius

4. Wisdom (JI) – This is the virtue that enables the individual to recognize what is right and wrong and to choose to pursue what is right.

“No matter how small it is you should not do what you realize is wrong. On the other hand, you must do what is right no matter how small it may seem.”

5. Trust (SHIN) - One must protect the trust of others by keeping one’s promises and to avoid acts of lying, betrayal, nor cheating.

“Your word is your honor...”

-Joyce Meyer

III. Five Tenets of Taekwon-Do

Following recitation of the Student’s Oath, students continue to recite the following:

- Courtesy
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Self-control
- Indomitable spirit

After every start of the class with the Student’s Oath and the Tenets of Taekwon-Do, there must also a reinforcement before classes end. Every after class, I also give time to remind my students that the skills they learn in the dojang should not be used for their benefit, such as when quarrelling with siblings, or when there are some disagreements with a classmate in school and never bully others with it. That not in every uncomfortable situation or threatening time they should directly use their skills. Their skills can be a strong weapon which they should be responsible and wise to know better when is the right time to use it. This is my way to emphasize to them that Taekwon-do is not about being a physically strong person, but it is about being strong in good will and spirit.

TAEKWON-DO IS MORE THAN JUST SELF-DEFENSE

"Your spirit is the true shield."

-Morihei Ueshiba

Martial artists should be a protector of the society, not a power holder.

When I asked parents what their main reason were for enrolling their kids in Taekwon-Do, they all shared a common answer. Self-defense. However, there is much more than that as parents differ in their other secondary reasons such as to keep their kids away from too much gadget use and to be more active, to keep their bodies more toned and physically able, and to help their kids with low socialization skills to be more interactive with others. We had a few times having children with much hyperactivity and much aggressive behaviors and their parents' reason for enrolling their kids is to be disciplined, and for their children to have something where they can put all their energy to. But later on, they'll see that their kids will be gaining much more than that. That in this martial art, one may unlock a better person of self-discipline, resilience, and confidence.

I realized that I had been missing this before. When I was in the sports-related Taekwon-do, it was all about training to be a better player. Surely there was moral culture such as having sportsmanship, indomitable spirit and etiquette and about reaching the goal of a gold medal. But it is only when I had been in the ITF Style Taekwon-Do did I invest much time and effort into cultivating the moral culture to myself as this that it is not only about being a better player, but a better individual with a healthy body and mind and soul, and reaching the ultimate goal of discovering the self, as well as sharing oneself for the good of the many. I encountered this beautiful statement from the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do which says, "Everyone of us, as a social being, desires to live in a free and peaceful society. At the same time, it is our obligation to build such society for the people." Martial artists do not serve mainly by eradicating the bad apples in the society through their fighting skills, but that through their model of behaviors and great character, they shall be the good apple that influences others to be also one.

The question is, how to be that good apple? One may find out through a journey towards building character in Taekwon-do. A journey towards actualizing oneself. A very long journey but a worthwhile one.



Peter “Kit” Tentativa

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“Imagine if every child learned the respect, courtesy, and discipline that martial arts teach. The world would be a different place.”

– Chris Wahmond

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I had so much challenge putting up this thesis yet so much fun in flashing back my roots and internalizing all the things I have learned before. Even though everything I have written here were all things I have seen before, writing this paper made me look at them in new light. I am hoping that I can pass this coming 3rd Dan to 4th Dan grading test, in God’s will. My ultimate dream is to spread ITF Style Taekwon-Do in the Visayas to make our ITF organization’s reach wider, to touch more lives and shape future martial artists that will be our new heroes. I shall keep my fire burning and help the young blood, the future formators, start and keep their own fire in this martial art until such our light combined may illuminate the path of the youth.

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