

## Taekwondo in my Life



**Reena Gupta**  
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I taste salt as beads of sweat drip down my face and over my lips. I'm on hour two. With the sun rays piercing my skin my body feels like it had not stopped moving in days. But lines of worry do not crease my forehead and a complaint will not leave my lips. I do this everyday. I walk three hours each way to bring water to my family. I don't love it, and I don't have to. This is my life. This is how I survive.

Wait. What? Hold on. This isn't me. I will never know what it is like to have to work as a child or teenager for the sole purpose of feeding your family. I will never know the pressure of bearing a brother or sister's lives of your shoulders. When I am thirsty I simply walk over to my

fridge and grab a glass of cold filtered water, unlike the almost 800 million people in the world do not have access to clean water. I live a life where all of my basic needs are handed to me, plus much more. My parents, whom I am so thankful for, provide me with everything, and the only cause of this was my birth. I have done little to earn the food on my table. I'm afraid if hadn't been for taekwondo, the value of hard work would have been lost on me due to the sheltered life I live.

Taekwondo has pushed me to work hard in many different aspects of life, not just at practice. I walked in as a white belt not expecting the workload to come. I figured this would be easy. It will take one to two years at maximum. I was very wrong. As I went up in rank I realized that this sport requires an exceptional amount of effort and if I wanted to move faster I had to work harder. Doing a form once doesn't make you test ready. You have to repeat and repeat. The brain needs uses muscle memory to help us remember our forms, but to get there that point you have to perform

it dozens of times. Taking side glances at the other tester will not help, there has to be a confidence that you truly know it. Even then you are not ready to really test. It not only has to be one hundred percent memorized, but also on top of this there must be technique and strength. Doing the bare minimum will not take you anywhere. In this is a life lesson. I began applying the lesson of hard work to show results, in school and the outcome changed who I am as a student.

Last year in my physics class I was constantly churning out bad grades on my tests. I always blamed my teacher. I thought horrible things like: she's just a terrible teacher. Her lessons are poorly constructed. But who was I to judge? I do not have a teaching degree, nor teaching experience. Yes, it was a challenging class, however there were plenty of students doing much better than me. Never once did it cross my mind that my grades were an effect of the lack of effort I put into studying. I failed to reflect on myself. I did have some subconscious thoughts about how I should maybe study a little more, but I

lacked the motivation to actually do it. But this year when it became closer to the black belt test and I started the tenth grade, I became much more serious. I became more self aware. After seeing in taekwondo class how much harder I had to work to become a black belt, I turned around and put a similar work ethic into school. When I started chemistry this year, I began reading the textbook, watching Khan Academy videos, and going into to see my teacher when I had questions. My grades took a dramatic turn for the better and this is all due to the hard work ethic I applied. I can now see how in physics there were so many opportunities for me to improve if only I had put in more effort.

Not only has taekwondo made a difference in my school work, but it changed my appreciation for social service. I became interested in the early childhood education of young children around eighth grade. I did a social service club here and there, but I didn't really pursue it. In taekwondo we are taught modesty and humility in class. We learn how you should never put yourself above

others. This idea became very important to me. I joined several after school humanitarian rights clubs because I to be more engaged. The clubs raise money for the less fortunate all around the world. Not only do I take pride in it, but I really enjoy myself as well. My favorite of the clubs, refugee relief, is where we go into downtown Chicago and tutor refugees in English. The little kids are so happy to be there, and so am I. Taekwondo has taught me that I should never put myself above my classmates or anyone else, which I can directly apply when talking with the refugees. We are equal spending time together. Had it not been for taekwondo, I do not believe I would be as passionate about social service as I am today.

Taekwondo has molded me into the person I am today. It will always keep me grounded. It will remind me to be thankful for the opportunities I have been given in life. It will continue to drive me to work harder and harder, in school and more. It will keep me modest and humble. So for that, I am so thankful to be a part of this amazing sport.

## My Life and Taekwondo



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Taekwondo is a big part of my life. Ever since I was seven years old, I would go to Taekwondo almost every Friday. I started as a white belt and have worked my way up to testing to become a first Dan black belt. Over the years, I have learned to understand responsibility, dedication, respect and discipline that may relate to any activity that I participate in. Taekwondo taught me so many things that are important to know in life.

Ever since I started Taekwondo, I always looked up to someone, may that someone be the seniors or Master Kim. The seniors taught the lower belts the forms, one-steps, and kicks to take a test. I saw how they respected Master Kim and learned anything from what he said or did. The seniors treated everyone that was in our class like an old friend and cared for how someone

was taught something. I observed this quality that every senior had and applied it to myself when I became a senior. For example, when I teach the green belts, I make them show me their form, their one-steps, and their kick. If I see that one green belt does not know the form as well as the others do, I will make them try it on their own and then I will do it with them, so that they will be more confident on their own and will not have to follow another student. This process makes sure that all students can rely on themselves to know all the requirements to pass a test. I look at teaching the lower belts as my responsibility as a senior because the lower belts will one day be seniors and they will have to do the same thing.

Before I was a dark blue belt, I came to Taekwondo almost every Friday, but now, I attend Taekwondo on Fridays and on Wednesdays, where I come to teach the lower belts and then stay for the

seniors only class. I used to stand in the very back of the classroom, but now I stand in the front, and as I stand in the front, I am reminded of the dedication that I have for Taekwondo. Without dedication, I would not have come and have not wanted to be better and improve. I would have stayed at the white belt

without the will to push myself to learn more. Nevertheless, I would not be as committed to Taekwondo as I am now without the help of my parents. When I was younger and did not know the reason I was doing Taekwondo, my parents made me go to Taekwondo every week. They told me that I had to go pass a test or be the best I could be is what makes me so thankful for their devotion for me to improve. Their devotion is the cause of my dedication to Taekwondo. Without them, I would not be preparing to become a black belt. The dedication that I have seen by the people around me make me dedicate to achieve new things.

Being at Taekwondo, I saw how all the seniors respected Master Kim. They valued his word about anything and wanted to make sure he approved everything that they did regarding Taekwondo.

Master Kim's opinion was always considered useful and beneficial, and the seniors always wanted to improve with his advice. Now that I am a senior, Master Kim's input and suggestions are very important to me and I value them immensely because without his suggestions, I would not be where I am today. An example: when Master Kim tells me to yell louder, I know that

what he says will help me improve and it will benefit me in the future. The respect and admiration I have for Master Kim is huge and I thank him for pushing me to be where I am today.

As a white belt, I was taught discipline by the seniors and Master Kim. I had to learn and perform the form the correct way and properly execute the kick, for I will always use these things in Taekwondo. Yelling with power and knowing the breathing and hand technique are some things that I learned through discipline during each class: if I did not learn them correctly, then it would be very hard to learn and apply the correct way. Another time I had to use discipline with myself was when I had to fast. When I had to fast for three days, I had to withhold myself from eating, which became challenging on the second and third day because I had never fasted before. The first night of fasting, my family and I went to a party where I did not eat: I sat on the couch and did my homework. It was a difficult experience, but I am thankful that I did it because I truly understood how hard it is to hold yourself back from doing something. When I participated in the ten hour meditation, discipline was very much needed in complet-

ing the meditation. The first seven hours were reasonable: I was calm, did not feel very hungry, and was proud of how far I was able to get. But the last three hours were strenuous. I started to squirm and very much wanted to lay down. I had to discipline myself to stay sitting, and finish the meditation. Without discipline, in Taekwondo and in life, I would have never accomplished anything.

I have learned many things because of Taekwondo. Responsibility, dedication, respect, and discipline are some of the many values that I have achieved to recognize and appreciate due to all the time I have spent doing Taekwondo. My parents, Master Kim, and the seniors have helped me to get into my position. Without them, I would not be motivated, have respect, or feel dedicated to progressing in Taekwondo and in life. Without all the experiences I have gone through in class and for the preparation of becoming a black belt, I would not be here and at all confident in my performance on the test and in Taekwondo in general. I would like to thank my parents, Master Kim, and everyone that has helped me accomplish anything for being persistent figures in my life and helping me become the person I am today.

## Importance of Expecting Politeness

Nowadays, people work in such places as companies, hospitals, and even farms. They work virtually everywhere and that is how our society has become much more complex. Further, because of overcrowdedness, these busy individuals have largely ignored the importance of being polite. Some say that it is unrealistic to expect politeness from others in a fast paced out-of-control society. They might reason that being polite is no longer a top priority. However, politeness is absolutely necessary precisely because the society has become more complex and

overcrowded. Therefore, people should expect politeness from one another for the following reasons.

Firstly, being polite can prevent unnecessary conflicts. When people are busy, they end up communicating with many people. Therefore, people need to learn to be more polite with each other, since it adds flexibility and mutual respect among people who communicate with one another. For example, when a person meets a new person, it is a very rude to not be polite, so he or she should try to be as much polite as possible so that they can have a better conversation the next time they meet again. Therefore, being polite can be beneficial as it prevents unnecessary conflicts.

Secondly, politeness is a basis of a well functioning society. Everyone is taught from his or her childhood that being polite is crucial. It is very important for people who have jobs that are related with having com-

munication, which is the majority of the jobs in the society. Politeness becomes essential when people try to express their feelings and thoughts with words and motions during communication, deciding whether he or she is satisfied or frustrated. So, the basis of a society is politeness.

As a conclusion, expecting politeness from one another should become necessary, even though the society is busy and overcrowded. Being polite can become beneficial and essential in mostly two ways: it prevents unnecessary conflicts and is a basis of a well functioning society. It makes better relationships with each one another, and is a lesson from childhood that one had learned. Therefore, people should be expecting politeness from one another.



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