



# INTEGRITY **염치** PRONOUNCED YEOM-CHI OR YUHM-CHI

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Integrity – what an awesome concept, and an awesome life skill for kids and adults alike to learn.

There are two fairly distinct definitions of integrity in my mind, they are related, but different.

Integrity can be defined as the **quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.**

When I think of this definition, I think of a saying I heard once that integrity is doing what you say you will, and doing it **even when no-one is watching.**

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This links to the concept of martial artists as being of **good character**, as well as having the physical skills of a warrior.

Integrity can also be defined as the state of being whole and undivided (it comes from the latin root “integer” – which if you remember back to school refers to whole numbers, not fractions).

A good analogy I heard about this definition of integrity was that of a three legged chair (no, not a stool).

A chair that is missing one of its legs has no integrity – **it isn’t whole and it can’t deliver on the purpose it was built for.**

So in learning Taekwondo, a student develops into a **whole rounded being**, and a person of good character, who takes responsibility for doing what they say they will do, whether anyone is watching or not.

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This reminds me of a story I recently heard about a special forces trainee who did something wrong and was sent to do a set of exercises as punishment until the instructors came for him.

The instructors forgot about him, and when they went back two hours later he was still doing the exercises with every ounce of strength in him. Now that's integrity!

As with all the tenets of Taekwondo, developing integrity is not a quick fix, it develops over days, months, years of meeting expectations – and eventually its **setting and meeting our own high expectations of ourselves without any need for outside interference or monitoring.**

Being a whole person who always keeps their word takes time, and practice.

Such a welcome quality in the world we live in today, where not everyone lives like this.

Aspects of Taekwondo that start to develop a student's (and Instructor's) integrity in terms of quality of character are things like turning up consistently, and arriving well before a class starts and being ready as soon as the instructor is prepared to start – and turning up whether you feel like it or not.

Kids learn integrity by starting to see their impact on others in class, and learning not to hold up the class with their poor behaviour.

They learn by **being pushed to try their best, time and time again, despite setbacks.**

Students all start to appreciate that second between stimulus and response, and the value of choosing to act in accordance with the values of the Dojang.

Taekwondo also develops the notion of a whole person. When training, every facet of a person is involved – **mind, body, spirit.**

Each student learns to flex their character in how they respond to each and every moment on the mat.



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Kids learn the impacts of their behavior on their instructor and their fellow students.

Students also learn to know themselves and what they are truly capable of, becoming a whole person in the process.

Integrity is developed by students through **working on their weaknesses, not just their strengths**. I remember when I was a coloured belt, my biggest weakness was forward rolls. I hated them.

Ever since childhood I'd struggled with somersaults, doing tumble turns in the pools, pretty much anything that meant having my head lower than the rest of my body.

When it came to forward rolls, I just couldn't do them and I felt stupid and clumsy.

So I had a choice – I could live with a weakness in my training and a gap (no-one was going to force me to do them, I could easily have made an excuse and sat it out), or I could jolly well learn how to do them.

I chose the latter. I went onto YouTube and found an Aikido master who broke down a basic forward roll into its components, I watched where his head went, his arms, his legs, his shoulders, how his body moved.

I watched that clip over and over, pausing it to check particular body positions, until I thought I had the mechanics straight in my head.

Then I pulled a mattress out on the floor and tried and tried until my body felt broken, the wind knocked out of me every time I landed on my back instead of going over my shoulder.

Finally I progressed to doing them on my king size bed, lucky in hindsight I didn't put a foot through the wall.

And one night I walked into the Dojang and executed an, I thought, amazing forward roll even coming up into the standing position with my fists raised afterwards.

**I pumped the air, I have never felt so good!**

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My instructor smiled broadly.

It was like I'd climbed Everest that day. What it built in me was a **confidence and wholeness to know I could conquer whatever challenge came my way.**

(Be warned, I may well use this example again when we talk about persistence!).

A third definition of integrity involves **consistency of action.**

As you watch students mature and progress through the belt system, you start to see more consistency of action emerge (including consistency of thoughts with actions), and with it a thoughtfulness towards others and **a focus on doing their best, no matter what the situation.**

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