



## TAEKWONDO TENETS

# PERSEVERANCE 인내 PRONOUNCED IN-NAY

*Written by Kay Millican, 4th Dan Black Belt*

There's a Japanese proverb I love:  
“**fall seven times, stand up eight**”.

I think that's the very definition of  
perseverance.

It's the capacity to **continually rise  
after adversity**, and you may stand  
up wobbly or you may stand stronger  
than before.

Either way, you get up and go on, no  
matter what knocked you down or  
stands in your way.

This is a quality that serves people  
very well in their whole life.

Grab a thesaurus and you'll  
find loads of synonyms for  
perseverance that all add to  
our understanding of the  
concept: **persistence,**  
**tenacity, determination,**  
**resolve, staying power.**

Taekwondo teaches perseverance in  
many different ways. We learn  
perseverance when we get  
up and carry on in the face of  
something we find:

- Challenging
- Boring
- Hard
- Uninteresting
- Painful
- Repetitious

Take sparring for instance, along  
with building fitness, it develops  
perseverance in many ways. Sparring  
often requires that we  
**carry on despite mental or  
physical stress.**

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We may face a more skilled opponent and feel like giving up. We may be afraid of getting hit or looking like we don't know what we are doing. We may take a hit and get bruised, yet carry on despite the pain.

At times, we even fall to the ground, and it can take **courage to stand back up and keep going.**

The more often we get up and spar again, **the greater our perseverance grows.**

I've already written about poomsae and why we do it. One thing poomsae builds is perseverance because every move is honed and fine-tuned over time and through repetition, with greater focus on technique.

Poomsae demonstrates the notion of practice makes perfect, even though we can never do every single move perfectly every time. If kids are bored, but continue to apply themselves, they **learn to persist** regardless of how they feel at the time.

Self-defence components of the curriculum build perseverance too. In their early days of training, students may find techniques difficult to perform effectively.

Things that look easy from the sidelines can be difficult once our own muscles have to do what we ask them to.

Through persevering with the training, students gradually learn how to make a technique really work, regardless of the size of their training partner.

**Self-defence also develops tenacity**, because sometimes if a move just doesn't work, your opponent is just too big for example, then you keep searching for something that does.

(Like going for the knee if you can't reach the throat, or like one of our students has demonstrated, climb and push up off the opponents own leg to kick them in the head even when you are half their size).

At times in Taekwondo, we have to **face aspects of training that we don't like or think we can't do.**

By doing these over and over, we eventually we gain mastery over them, or at the very least some ability, thereby learning to persist and persevere.

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In my article on integrity I talked about forward rolls, and how difficult I found them, but decided they would not be something I sat out of. So I had to do them hundreds of times, if not more, at home to learn how to be comfortable doing one.

One day, during a Saturday class with the kids, Sir decided to ask us all to dive into a forward roll through a hoop. Having finally thought I'd mastered forward rolls on the big red mat, I was horrified. My heart leapt into my throat – could I possibly do it?

**Perseverance is a matter of mindset**, learning to refuse to be beaten by a circumstance or situation, and that mindset grows stronger the more we get up again.

So I looked at that hoop, and thought “here goes nothing!”. I ran at it and amazingly managed to leap through into a half decent forward roll.

I jumped up ecstatic. And I often see that same look on student's faces when they do something they never thought they could – a board break, a new move, anything.



In Taekwondo, one aspect of perseverance is **learning to finish the journey we started**.

For younger students that may be a term of a sport activity, where parents insist that the term be finished, or the current belt level be achieved before they can stop training and move onto something else.

For some students, there is the achievement of black belt level, a journey of several years or more, and many challenges faced down during that time, and never giving up that dream.

In doing Taekwondo, students learn that **achievement requires effort**, and effort persistently and consistently over time.

Motivation only gets you so far, it gets you in the door, it gets you coming back some days, but perseverance is what keeps you coming consistently

to develop your mind to do what it takes to achieve what you want.

Watching the Karate Kid movie might make a kid (or adult) decide they want to do martial arts, but it won't get them coming back enough times to get a black belt, only perseverance does that.