



SELF-CONTROL

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TAEKWONDO

TENETS

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

Many parents bring their kids to martial arts for reasons related to discipline.

The fourth tenet of Taekwondo, self-control, indicates that **all students over time learn self-control**, other ways of looking at this include self-discipline and self-mastery.

Self-control is, tautologically speaking, nothing more than control over self. So it's not about discipline imposed by others from the outside, like some sort of harshness or stern attitude and behaviour on the part of instructors.

Control of self involves the **ability to manage one's own behaviour, emotions and reactions to events** as they unfold.

It also involves the ability to regulate behaviour towards a larger goal, moderating one's natural inclinations to turn up regularly and consistently, to train hard, and thereby earn progression through the belt system.

Controlling oneself means managing pain when slightly injured, continuing and not stopping at the first hint of discomfort (of course, if the injury requires assistance, students need to stop and seek help).

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Self-control is about facing the thing that normally might stop us, and forging a way through it where we want otherwise, all in the aim of achieving something more.

In Taekwondo and other martial arts, we learn self-control physically, through pulling our punches and deliberately not connecting with kicks during non-contact exercises.

We learn it physically to in self-defence exercises where we learn a technique that can stop someone in their tracks, but learn when to stop before injuring our training partners.

In this, kids and adult students get to **understand their own strength and ability and to moderate it**, even on a stressful day.

Students also learn how to be calm in a difficult situation.

In sparring, self-defence and weapons training, we get to encounter what it's like to face an opponent, gradually getting more comfortable in that type of situation, and hopefully then having a modicum of control and calmness if push ever did come to shove on the street.

It is indeed highly likely one would panic first, but the training means **students have a chance of regaining their composure and dealing with the situation.**

Poomsae develops self-control and self-mastery too. By the exact placement and movement of hands and feet, the mind begins to exert control over the body, knowing what each and every body part is doing simultaneously.

And dealing with the repetition and continually showing up develops self-control over the immediate satisfaction that would have been gained by failing to show up and go do something entertaining instead.

Miyamoto Musashi (16-17th century) said "*Today is victory over yourself of yesterday, tomorrow is victory over (others)*".

Other than participating in sparring and demonstration competitions, much of what happens in Taekwondo training is not about competing against others, it's about **training of the self.**

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Every session, students try and learn to do better than they did the last time they executed a move.

Continual instruction and correction means they learn to control their bodies and minds to achieve better results. **And that skill is transferable to all they do in the rest of their life.**

Learning self-control and self-discipline means students can devote themselves to home work, study or work requirements, managing their desire to be doing something else, knowing that their efforts bring it's own rewards.

Taekwondo is so important for kids, not because the instructors provide a disciplinary atmosphere, but because through every interaction with instructors and peers they learn inhibitory and impulse control, they learn about the impact they have on the world and others around them in very tangible ways, and they learn how to manage their growing, developing strength and bodies.

