

TAEKWONDO TENETS

INDOMITABLE SPIRIT

(백절불굴,
PRONOUNCED
BECKJOOOL
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Indomitable spirit is quite possibly my favourite tenet of Taekwondo. Being a compound concept, it's less easy to define than the tenets of courtesy, integrity, perseverance and self-control, which you can just google a dictionary definition of to start with.

Indomitable comes from domitare in Latin, which means to tame. So indomitable means **that which cannot be tamed** or dominated, that which cannot be beaten.

Spirit, refers to that which is within, the core of our being, and our connection with the universe.

Many martial arts and eastern cultures have their own version of the notion of spirit – in Korean its Ki, in Chinese its Chi or Qi, in Indian ayurvedic culture its Prana.

So indomitable spirit, I think, refers to that **essential life force within a person which cannot be beaten down**.

Indomitable spirit brings images to my mind, far more than words. It's the T-Rex at the end of Jurassic Park and Jurassic World lifting its head and roaring its defiance after beating the odds and surviving.

It's Daniel standing on one leg like a crane to win the karate competition in The Karate Kid despite having repeatedly had his leg swept and being in immense pain, and facing a far more experienced opponent.

And it's the "ordinary" person you pass on the street who has beaten all the odds in life to achieve their dreams, who has defied grief or illness or situations beyond their control for years, and overcome it all, and you would never know. It's the last warrior standing surrounded by their defeated enemies.

TAEKWONDO TENETS: INDOMITABLE SPIRIT

Indomitable spirit is an attitude to the whole of life. Miyamoto Musashi (an expert swordsman from the 16-17th century), in *The Book of 5 Rings*, said “There is nothing outside of yourself that can ever enable you to get better, stronger, richer, quicker, smarter.

Everything is within. Everything exists. Seek nothing outside yourself.” Indomitable spirit is self-sufficient and knows that the source of happiness, success and achievement lies within, and nothing can take that away.



But how is indomitable spirit developed through Taekwondo? Do students perhaps just already have that quality – maybe, for some.

However, I’m inclined to think it is developed every time we step on the mat.

Indomitable spirit is bringing your best, when things are at their worst. After those terrible days at school or work or home, where you turn up anyway and sink yourself into training.

Through training our self-confidence in our own abilities increases, knowing ourselves to be capable of things we never thought we could helps us to understand nothing can really stand in our way except ourselves.

Learning to kihap and release that life-force at a target, and putting our hand or foot straight through a seemingly solid chunk of wood builds a spirit that knows it cannot be defied.

Going even further, indomitable spirit extends to our attitude to others. Our student oath refers to “might for right”.

Indomitable spirit extends out from ourselves to cover those around us who may not be able to fight for themselves.

To stand up for the bullied kid in the school yard, to stand against bullying or wrong-doing in the workplace.

Through Taekwondo, a person becomes stronger, more confident in many, many ways.

Come watch a black belt grading one night, and you’ll see it far easier than I can explain it.