

*Black Belt Essay*

*By Brittni Romero*

Seven years ago, before I started Tae Kwon Do, I never would have thought of myself as a Martial Artist. Honestly, I wasn't really very sure of what Tae Kwon Do even was. But, within one day, as I reminisce on it, everything changed. I had come home from school, with a small bruise on my back, complaining that I had been bullied by an older student. My parents wondered why I didn't defend myself, and the only reason I could supply, was that I simply didn't know how to. This one incident is what made me join, and I was ready for it.

Right away, everyone could see that I was very shy. When I started, I definitely was a slow learner. Most people said I wouldn't make it past white belt. But, this is what really "fueled my fire." People telling me that I couldn't do something, made me angry, and this really made me want to disprove them. I didn't understand how anyone could be so judgmental about me. With my new determination from everyone's uncertainty in my abilities, I made it past white belt, and I didn't plan on stopping anytime soon. Slowly, I started becoming better at everything I did, yet somehow, people still managed to doubt me.

Whether I was just fed up with people telling me that I could be better, or whether I was simply entering a new phase in life, something made me want to quit Tae Kwon Do. I lost all my determination and dedication, and going to Tae Kwon Do became something I dreaded each day. Still, my parents refused to let me quit it.

As I progressed in belt level, it seemed as if I would never enjoy Tae Kwon Do again. Then, for me, it was just something I was forced to do. I started to slowly become more disrespectful to my parents, and I even spent a few days in Grandmaster's office, being lectured. For my parents, I know it was getting hard to deal with me, but they dealt with me anyway, and tried to help me. Yet, I never gave back to them. Most of this went on through much of my upper belt levels.

Time wore on, and I eventually became more interested in Tae Kwon Do again. I started wanting to go, and I would only be angry if I did miss a day. The change may have seemed sudden, but to my parents, it was a surprise well welcomed. I started having more confidence in myself again, and it was a feeling I liked. I went through the red belt levels enthusiastically, and I was very much ready mentally to test for my black belt. So, with training, and time, I tested. I was honored to know that I had achieved my black belt with Grandmaster Cho, before he had left to Hawaii. Also, something that I really loved was that more people I could get along with started coming to Tae Kwon Do. I was really enjoying Tae Kwon Do as much as I did when I first started.

Now that I was really enjoying Tae Kwon Do much more, I was starting to behave much better. I learned self-control over my temper. Instead of getting annoyed and upset at the small things, I just laughed about them. I was able to obtain discipline, and I understood that getting what I want wasn't always necessary. But even then, what I wanted was really just to make others happy, and to prove myself to them. I also learned a new respect. The first thing I learned in Tae Kwon Do was respect towards others. I understand now that I did not always follow that, but it is very significant. But, the new respect I learned was a respect for myself, and without this respect, you cannot respect others.

I made it over many hurdles, which now seem minute to what others have to face each day just to be able to go Tae Kwon Do. But, there was one thing I still

really wanted to work on. I didn't want to be known as the "quiet one," or the "shy one" anymore, but I knew it would be hard to get rid of that reputation. I started talking a little more at Tae Kwon Do, especially as new friends came. People were shocked to know that, believe it or not, I had a lot to say.

Tae Kwon Do plays a great part in every aspect of my life. Throughout the last seven years that I have been doing Tae Kwon Do, I have changed in many ways. One of the most obvious things Tae Kwon Do has taught me is to defend myself. Tae Kwon do has helped me to become less shy, and much more outgoing. But, most of all, Tae Kwon Do has taught me great discipline and respect. For the way I am today, I have Tae Kwon Do to thank for it.