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Tae Kwon Do is a way of life; any person can say this, but not all can understand. My name is Brittini Romero, and I have been training at Cho's Tae Kwon Do for over ten years. Along this journey there have been many ups and downs, but I feel that I can truly say that I am one who has come to understand the full meaning of the Martial Arts. This realization did not come quickly, or without effort. After achieving my black belt, I began to assist in class. Now that I have matured, enabling me to teach more often and more independently, I appreciate more than ever the life lessons and the complete transformation of the mind and body that are offered through instructing as a higher-ranking belt. With this said, it is instructing that has become the largest part of my Tae Kwon Do journey, as teaching enhances the original lessons of the art.

One of the first things taught at Tae Kwon Do is the idea of modesty. As white belts begin to learn the Tae Kwon Do Aims To Achieve, the first they will say is that Modesty means "being humble and unassuming." On the journey through Tae Kwon Do, a sense of understanding of this idea is found, but modesty cannot be fully achieved until one has instructed. When I teach, I learn about modesty in a new sense. First of all, I see others making mistakes, and see their awkward movements, and their struggle with some techniques. Correcting their mistakes, however, does not create arrogance, but rather helps me to relate to them, and remember the mistakes I once made, and still do make. Also, there are times when a student is able to correct me because I forget a move, or simply get confused for one reason or another. This reminds me that I am not perfect, despite the fact that I am a black belt. Teaching develops a stronger sense of modesty, and with this modesty, I can take Tae Kwon Do and apply it to my personal life. Tae Kwon Do creates a habit of goal setting, and when I am able to accomplish those goals, I do it more modestly. Teaching as a black belt has helped me because it has helped me to grow as a person, and continues to instill in me the values that I must in turn share with others.

Another aspect of Tae Kwon Do is overcoming obstacles that may impede a person in some way. My own personal obstacle has always been my timidity. I have always lacked aggression and I have always struggled with asserting myself. I cannot change my nature, but Tae Kwon Do has helped me, even before teaching, to overcome it. But now that I have begun to assist others, I am overcoming my shyness with even more strength and willingness. Instructing is a requirement for black belts, and with this, I am forced to teach. This was originally a horrifying thought to me. I found it difficult to teach because I was so unsure of myself. However, with time, teaching has helped me to grow increasingly aware of my own knowledge of Tae Kwon Do, and I have learned that speaking in front of a few people is not the worst experience. It is teaching that has helped me to learn my own strengths, as well as my weaknesses, and to learn to accept them all, which ultimately reduces my fear of expressing myself. While introversion seems harmless, it truly hinders my ability to live to my fullest potential in the "real world," and I fully believe that if I were not an assistant at Tae Kwon Do, I would not have overcome my timidity as much as I have. With this, I am able to accomplish much more in my personal life, and to mature to newer levels.

Finally, Tae Kwon Do encourages self-control, and along with self-control comes patience. From day one the Martial Arts work to create a deep level of patience in each student, and it is teaching that is the ultimate means of achieving that patience. Any instructor would admit that teaching is often draining, and that it is fairly easy to become annoyed. However, they would also admit that in teaching, a friendship and care for the students is developed. I myself find myself attached to students, and I care about their well-being. With this, it becomes easier and easier to control my own anger and frustration towards a student that is not listening, or just

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not understanding. Teaching, in a way, helps me to find patience not only in the studio, but also with others outside of Tae Kwon Do, as I have grown accustomed to relaxing myself when irritated, and to focusing on the positives, such as when a student does listen or do something extraordinarily, rather than the negatives. Teaching forces me to find some form of patience, as there would be negative consequences for losing my control that I would rather avoid. I, by nature, am an impatient person, but Tae Kwon Do itself, as well as teaching at the school, have helped me to gain some patience in my quest for self control. With teaching, my self-control and patience is tested every day, but more than ever, it is also growing.

Tae Kwon Do is more than just kicking and punching. Tae Kwon Do is about learning about yourself, and about improving your life based on the teachings of Tae Kwon Do. While different students learn these teachings at different levels, I believe that the life-lessons of the art cannot be appreciated fully without instructing. For me personally, teaching students at Tae Kwon Do has improved my modesty, has helped me to overcome my timidity, and also has amplified my self-control, and therefore my patience. Teaching has taught me these lessons on a level that could not have been reached solely in learning for my own benefit, as now I must learn more completely in order to pass the teachings onto another student. Tae Kwon Do has become a way of life for me, and if I receive my third degree black belt, I will continue in the art with the intention of furthering not only my understanding, but also that of many other students.