

PHILOSOPHY OF TAEKWONDO

(Taekwondo ChulHak)

Version 1

The literal and superficial translation of Taekwondo is "the art (Do) of kicking (Tae) and punching (Kwon). In the Korean language, "Do" implies the philosophical approach to a way of life, a pathway to achieve enlightenment. The students of Taekwondo, through rigorous physical training, intend to improve themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually.

A true Tae Kwon practitioner extends this art to all aspects of life in order to achieve harmony with nature and thus a stable and peaceful existence. Taekwondo is not only an excellent method of self-defense, but also a way of life. These qualities can be traced back to the influence on Buddhism, and its aim of the "Mastery of Self." Through the philosophy of Taekwondo, a student can rid him or herself of the ego and live in harmony with the universe.

At the center of this philosophy, is the concept of interaction between opposing forces in nature (Ying vs. Yang). Equilibrium is only achieved when contrary forces are distributed in equal amounts, resulting in balance and harmony. When only one force dominates, however, the result is imbalance, which could mean discord or failure.

In today's society, there are relatively fewer chances to encounter a life-threatening situation than when Taekwondo was first developed. Therefore, it is the spiritual part of Taekwondo that motivate people to become its practitioners. Some people practice Taekwondo simply for the fitness or because they want to train and excel in a sport. However, a true Taekwondo practitioner should never forget the importance of the philosophical, spiritual, and physical aspects of Taekwondo to truly experience all of its benefits.

Taekwondo also teaches the importance of responsibility and honesty as the means to achieve harmony with society. A true Taekwondo student is the one who knows how to behave in any place and at any time and is trustworthy and sincere. This is the insignia for which people would recognize the Taekwondo practitioner.

Respect is an important subject in Tae Kwon Do. Respect, humility, and high morals are utmost important teachings that all Taekwondo practitioners learn and carry out. Respect is extremely important. It maintains a strong and healthy master-student relationship. Respect is expected from all students toward their parents, their nation, their master, their fellow students, and all human beings in general.

Humility is a genuine quality that all Taekwondo students must possess. Although practicing Taekwondo elevates one's self-confidence, one should not convey the false sense of superiority. On the contrary, all Taekwondo practitioners should be humble and considerate and observe the highest regard for morality and ethics.

Version 2

The utmost purpose of Taekwondo is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the oppression of the stronger over the weaker with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom and faith, thus helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

All men, regardless of age, have felt that death is a shame and lamented that they cannot live as long as the pine trees or the turtles that seem to live a thousand years. Righteous men, on the other hand, deplore the fact that justice does not always triumph over the tyranny of power. However, there are two ways to deal with these problems: The former, through mental discipline, the latter, through physical training.

The philosophy of Taekwondo is based on the ethical, moral, and spiritual standards by which men can live together in harmony, and its art patterns are inspired by the ideals and exploits of great men from Korean history.

Korea's famous military and civil leaders (yet, in nearly five thousand years of Korean history have never invaded their neighbor) fought bravely and made great self-sacrifices to defend their homeland against invading enemies.

Each Hyung (pattern) of Taekwondo expresses the thoughts and the actions of these great men, so the students of Taekwondo must reflect the true intentions of those whose name each Tul bears. Therefore, under no circumstances should Taekwondo be used for selfish, aggressive or violent purposes, either by an individual or group. Nor will Taekwondo be used for any commercial or political purpose whatsoever.

The following philosophy and guidelines are the cornerstone of Taekwondo that all serious students of this art are encouraged to live by.

1. Be willing to go where the going may be tough and do the things that are worth doing even though they are difficult.
2. Be gentle to the weak and tough to the strong.
3. Be content with what you have in money and position but never in skills.
4. Always finish what you begin, be it large or small.
5. Be a willing teacher to anyone regardless of religion, race or ideology.
6. Never yield to repression or threat in the pursuit of a noble cause.
7. Teach attitude and skill with action rather than words.
8. Always be yourself even though your circumstances may change.
9. Be the eternal teacher who teaches with the body when young, with words when old, and by moral precept even after death.

Version 3

The philosophy of the dynamic of Taekwondo is based on the “Yin and Yang” theory. Taekwondo is a physical expression of the human will for survival and activity to fulfill the spiritual desire of all beings. With its stress on the coordination of Dan-Jun breathing with body movement, Taekwondo improves the heart, the circulation of blood, and the breathing system. It stimulates digestion and metabolism, as well as developing “Ki” (inner force).

Physically, Taekwondo helps develop the coordination, agility and muscle tone while generating energy in every part of the body to keep one in excellent health and shape through continuous training. Mentally, Taekwondo provides self-confidence, patience, and modesty.