

Evelin Salas

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2nd Degree

Black Belt

Essay

Many of the people surrounding me seem to believe that earning a black belt is a feat that can only be accomplished by those who possess a special capability or talent. When I think back to the shy eleven year old girl who started taekwondo, she had neither. The one quality she did have was a strong determination that paved the road for success in the form of a black belt. Those who are passionate about something eventually become skilled at it, but pure talent, without any passion, will rarely give results long term. Failures should be used as a learning opportunity. Excellence is a habit, not something that you are born with or without.

One's talent can easily burn out if there is no passion behind what is being done. The skill that I have currently acquired over the course of five years. I can attribute this to nothing but hard work and dedication, as I was not born with much natural aptitude. Talent does not guarantee results over time if there is no persistence behind it. You must have grit, which is a combination of passion and endurance. If you are great from the beginning, then you don't have room for improvement.

Failure should not discourage a person from doing something. It is not a permanent condition, instead an opportunity to learn. Throughout my taekwondo career I have made many

mistakes. Everything from having trouble learning a poomse, to poor physical endurance during drills. This would often make me insecure, especially when it came so naturally to other people. Instead of stopping, I carefully analyzed my mistakes to figure out in what ways I could improve. This proved to be effective, and subsequently I gained confidence and I developed an even greater passion for the sport. This encouraged me to keep going until getting my black belt, something that once seemed impossible to me, became inevitable.

Excellence is a habit that must be exercised constantly. It is through routine that progress can be made. Attending class despite having interfering school work or illness is a form of this, in addition to regular exercise and a rigorous stretching regimen to keep myself in top condition. Everyone can achieve excellence with motivation and a strong work ethic, which is unrelated to talent. If you truly set it in your mind to become better than you were yesterday, that is a form of excellence. It is impossible to advance by simply going through the motions. That is when you prove your determination.

So say to those who, as I did at some point, have the idea that earning a black belt is near impossible, that it is not. I dare say that almost everyone who really sets their mind to it can achieve this. It has been sheer determination that has carried me as far as I have gotten, and would like nothing more than continuing my journey with that same determination. I have come a very long way, and I have no intention of stopping.