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### Overcoming Your Obstacles

Taekwondo supports the philosophy of self-improvement. This translates to overcoming your personal obstacles that stand in the way of your betterment, whether those obstacles be physical, mental or emotional. The simple definition of the word “overcome”, as given by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is:

*“: to successfully deal with or gain control of (something difficult)”.*

Taekwondo supports this by encouraging its students to gain control of themselves in order to experience success in their taekwondo journey. The art of Taekwondo presents positive challenges that push people to overcome physical, mental and emotional obstacles.

Taekwondo pushes its martial artists to overcome physical obstacles. First, I would like to share my own personal story in this matter. When I was an infant I had reconstructive hip surgery because my right hip had not formed properly before birth. The surgery was successful, and the doctors told my parents that I would only be able to walk, and possibly would even need a cane or leg brace to do so. It was a miracle that I have needed neither the cane nor the brace, and have in fact been able to do much more than walk. However, I still experienced some limitation. For example, when I first started Taekwondo in 2010, my leg flexibility was very poor. At first I thought it was due to a lack of mobility in my hip. However, after pushing myself to work on my flexibility, I have greatly improved and discovered that my hip did not hinder my abilities. My push to excel in Taekwondo resulted in my overcoming of that physical obstacle. Second, pushing oneself to overcome physical obstacles is not just for the sake of having this hobby or interest. Such accomplishments are good for one’s overall health. In her article titled “The Advantages of Taekwondo” found on [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com), Dani Arbuckle briefly states:

*“According to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, taekwondo helps to increase physical fitness. It includes aerobic activities such as blocking drills as well as anaerobic activities such as sparring. Training activities such as pushups help to build strength, while kicking drills help flexibility. Taekwondo also burns calories at the rate of 5.06 calories per minute. This means that you will burn 50 calories in just under 10 minutes of taekwondo.”*

This is a very brief observation on the health benefits of Taekwondo, yet provides ample evidence of how basic training correlates with physical improvement. These physical benefits include flexibility, aerobic benefits, strength, and weight loss. Further research expands upon the many positive physical influences of Taekwondo. The article titled “Top 10 Health Benefits of Martial Arts” provided by Health Fitness Revolution credits martial arts with physical benefits such as cardiovascular health and weight loss:

*“Martial arts are a high-aerobic workout that uses every muscle group in the body. Your stamina, muscle tone, flexibility, balance and strength will all improve through martial arts [...] Due to the total-body nature of a martial arts workout, tons of calories are burned during every class. However, you’ll also find that your natural eating signals become better regulated, so food cravings will disappear and you’ll eat less as a result [...] Research has found that the only real way to improve the status of the cardiovascular system is by participating in activities that stress the heart, such as martial arts [...] A one hour session of moderate intensity martial arts can burn up to 500 calories [...] By participating in martial arts, you can greatly improve the amount of muscle mass you have in your body. The higher your muscle mass, the higher your metabolic demands will be, and subsequently the more calories you will burn each day, thereby helping prevent obesity and promote weight loss. High levels of muscle mass also lead to increased agility, thereby preventing falls as you age.”*

This gives a better understanding of how Taekwondo has a positive impact on one’s overall health including stamina, muscle tone, flexibility, balance, cardiovascular health, and weight loss. This article also comments on how the health benefits one experiences now are an investment into one’s future health, such as preventing falling in later years of life. The challenges of Taekwondo are not just a benefit to your body, but to your mind as well.

Taekwondo requires mental training that results in the overall improvement of the mind including focus, state of mind, and swiftness of the mind. My personal experience has shown me that Taekwondo challenges the mind, causing one to exercise the brain in order to have good accuracy and high-level techniques. The increased amount of focus and concentration required for advanced technique improves mental fitness. Taekwondo also improves one’s state of mind. For example, the moral standards taught bring a better sense of self-control, discipline, and inner calm in intense or stressful situations. I have improved my ability to stay calm during stressful situations because of my mental training in Taekwondo. I also enjoy the challenges of learning new techniques and focusing on how to improve in the most efficient way. Health Fitness Revolution also comments on the various mental benefits of Taekwondo, stating,

*“Research has found that by participating in martial arts, you not only improve your reflexes while performing the activity, but actually experience faster reaction times during all activities of your life. This is very important in a number of daily activities, such as driving [...] As Bruce Lee pointed out, behind the punches, kicks and knees, a true martial artist learns to sit with himself and see where his weaknesses are. As a martial artist, you will learn what it is to be still, challenged and focused [...] Martial arts wisdom has it that after consistent practice, one becomes less impulsive and aggressive towards others.”*

Mental swiftness, focus, and state of mind are all improved through the challenges of Taekwondo.

Emotional obstacles are also overcome through Taekwondo. My confidence has improved overall because of my new martial arts skills. I feel confident in my ability to defend myself if ever needed, and I am confident in myself as a person because of

my achievements over the last six years of Taekwondo training. I am also able to manage stress better because Taekwondo is my physical outlet for it, and the exercise gives endorphins to help lift my mood. Health Fitness Revolution supports this by saying:

*“Due to the goal setting, positive encouragement and respect for values that are part of all martial arts programs, the greatest benefit usually reported by martial arts students is greater self-confidence. You become more comfortable in all situations – whether you’re in danger or simply doing a task that takes you beyond your comfort zone — and you’ll discover you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. [...] Researchers have found that participating in a regular exercise routine is one of the best ways to improve your mood. Performing martial arts is not only a good way to relieve stress and frustration, but may actually help to make you happier. The endorphins released by physical activity appear to be active in your body for as many as four hours after exercise.”*

To further support this, I would like to state that my improvement in stress management has enabled me to overcome the emotional obstacle of anger towards people who had done me wrong in life and never apologized. I felt very unjustified and had those feelings pent up for a long time. When I started Taekwondo, I finally had a physical outlet for those large negative emotions. Talking about the emotions had proved to not be enough to process those life events, but the physical outlet of Taekwondo was exactly the kind of impact I needed to let go of a lot of stress. To this day I know that if I get overly stressed I can go to Taekwondo class and feel better after the workout. Also, my increased self-confidence helped me in practical ways, such as job interviews, and my confidence in my ability to succeed in life and achieve my goals. The support of my Taekwondo family has been a great source of camaraderie and confidence as well. We all encourage each other to achieve greatness both in and out of the dojang.

In conclusion, Taekwondo offers many benefits that ultimately lead one to overcoming personal obstacles. Whether those obstacles are physical, mental, or emotional, Taekwondo is a catalyst in overcoming them and bettering oneself. Taekwondo improves physical conditioning and fitness, increases the sharpness of the mind, and helps manage stress as well as improve one’s overall mood. These statements are supported by both fact and personal experience, and I feel very strongly that they are true. I hope my story has encouraged you in your Taekwondo journey or has inspired you to begin yours and overcome your obstacles. Thank you and God bless.

## Bibliography

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