

A week-by-week parent-child handbook for
your first 6-weeks in Youth Martial Arts



How to
Build a **SUPER KID**

Transform your child into a determined, confident, and resilient
leader—ready to face life's challenges and opportunities

KEVIN HURLAHE

6 SUPER KID Weekly Lessons:

Help your child learn...

Week 1: How to Overcome Fear of Failure

Week 2: How to Build Self-Esteem & Confidence

Week 3: How to Create a Self-Defense Mindset

Week 4: How to Instill Focus & Self-Discipline

Week 5: How to Inspire Health & Fitness for Life

Week 6: How to Lay a Foundation for Leadership

KevinHurlahe.com



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Kevin Hurlahe

AllenParkMartialArtsCenter.com

How to Build a Super Kid

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This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians or other health care professionals. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife and best friend, Michelle Hurlahe. Michelle not only raised a Super Kid of her own, she helped to build thousands of Super Kids over the last 23 years as a martial arts instructor and school owner.

This book is also dedicated to the instructors, staff members, students, and families from our martial arts centers for having built generations of Super Kids, and for having built better and stronger communities “one Black Belt at a time.”

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Foreword

Is it possible to build a Super Kid by teaching him martial arts? I have been teaching Tae Kwon Do for 55 years, and I believe that kids who stick with their martial arts training gain a real advantage in life. I have personally witnessed generations of young people grow into high achieving adults, representing all professions and all walks of life.

I recently had the privilege of attending the wedding of Master Kevin's son, John, who originally started as my Tae Kwon Do student at the age of four years old. John and his new wife, Jennifer, spent their formative years as martial arts students, and later as teenaged Black Belt instructors at Master Kevin's first martial arts center in mid-Michigan.

It was no surprise to me to see how poised, confident, and accomplished they had become by the age of 28. They had both been straight-A students throughout school – Jennifer the Valedictorian and John the Student Body President. Today, they have successful careers and exude overall self-confidence and radiate genuine happiness.

I was seated at a table among some of Master Kevin's current and former Black Belt students. Like the bride and groom, they were polite, respectful, collected, and had their own list of impressive accomplishments. I met college scholarship recipients, medical professionals, engineers, and more. They all had one thing in common – having been “raised” in Master Kevin's martial arts schools.

One of my table mates at the reception was a long-time Black Belt student of Master Kevin's who was now a successful physician (he moved away 7 years ago to practice medicine). The young doctor mentioned to me how his time spent in Master Kevin's martial arts school was one of the most rewarding and happiest times of his life – and it was why attending John and Jennifer's wedding was so important to him.

Master Kevin has been my protégé for almost 25 years. I promoted him through his 6th Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. He attended my first “Instructor Training College” in the 1990s and began teaching for me in Ann Arbor at that time. At my encouragement, Master Kevin and his wife, Master Michelle, opened their first marital arts center over 20 years ago – and they were instantly successful. They have now built their own martial arts legacy.

My teacher was the legendary founder of Tae Kwon Do, General Choi Hong Hi. While already a Black Belt and instructor of Tang Soo Do, I was fascinated by the General's scientific knowledge of martial arts, his ability to eloquently convey it to others, and the superiority of Tae Kwon Do as a martial art. I studied under him for years, one on one, so that I could capture every nuance of Tae Kwon Do as it was originally conceived.

I later befriended many of the other original Korean Tae Kwon Do masters and absorbed their teaching methods and ideas. For decades, I have labored to simplify and refine teaching methods so that students can enjoy learning Tae Kwon Do as quickly and intuitively as humanly possible. I call my method of teaching/learning “The Eurythmic Approach.”

Master Kevin has fully embraced my methods and philosophies, and I have shared with him my experiences from over a half a century of Tae Kwon Do. Master Kevin still actively trains with me. My vision continues to be that his programs will be the model of my Tae Kwon Do system – and that vision is now becoming a reality.

Will your child become a Super Kid? I cannot say for sure. However, I can say with certainty that you have an excellent opportunity to place him or her in the best position to benefit from the knowledge, skills, and experience that have been passed on from the founder of Tae Kwon Do – through me – to Master Kevin and his team. These lessons will be the building blocks for a life of self-confidence, leadership, and fulfillment. It will be up to you and your child however, to seize this golden opportunity.

I wish you and your family the very best as you embark on this exciting journey!

-Grand Master James B. C. Yu
GrandMasterBCYu.com

Preface

Like most martial artists of my generation, I was inspired when I saw Bruce Lee play Kato in the television show, “The Green Hornet.” After watching the movies, “Billy Jack,” and “Enter the Dragon,” along with the television series, “Kung Fu,” I knew that I was destined to become a martial artist.

It was rare for a 12-year old to be in a karate class in the 1970s. By today’s standards, the training and teaching methods were harsh (and a little less safe). Nevertheless, it was a joy to experience, and it was my first introduction to structure and discipline outside of school or little league football.

Fast forward two decades and I knew that it was time to get my 4-year old son started on his journey into martial arts too. As luck would have it, we were introduced to Tae Kwon Do’s Grand Master, B. C. Yu, who personally gave us an introductory lesson.

That day changed our lives forever.

With Master Yu’s encouragement, on John’s 8th birthday, my wife Michelle and I opened our first martial arts center in Mid-Michigan (I was Director of Academic and Student Services at Saginaw Valley State University at that time). To our surprise, the new school was an immediate success – and our classes were completely full within months. Eight-year old John began a transformational journey that we could have never predicted!

While I taught all classes initially, our small family of three had no choice but to pitch-in. The experience John had as a youth

Black Belt role model transformed him from a typical young boy into a Super Kid. His athleticism, confidence, leadership ability, and professional demeanor were nothing short of remarkable for his age. The skills and character traits that he picked up in the martial arts center transferred to his life in school and extracurricular activities, setting him on a pre-determined path of high achievement from elementary through high-school and then through college and beyond.

It was during these early days of martial arts school ownership that I realized there were benefits for children that went far beyond what I ever conceived (over and above the amazing physical skills of Tae Kwon Do)! I began to spend a few minutes in each class to explain to the kids why we did some of the things we did. We talked about Tae Kwon Do's Tenets, Creeds, and what it takes to become a Black Belt.

Soon, I added "Mat Chats" on topics such as developing focus, confidence, discipline, and leadership. Children responded well to these Life-Skills. The local school district took notice of our accomplishments and we began to partner on student development programs with their teachers and administrators. We became a highly-valued member of the local community.

As our popularity grew, we expanded our schools in Michigan. After more than 20 years and thousands of child success stories, I decided to write this book so that parents like you can have a better understanding of what the proper Youth Martial Arts Program can do for your child's personal development, and to give you a blueprint for your child's first six-weeks of classes.

This book is divided into six chapters. Each chapter corresponds to one week in your child's six-week introductory program. It is meant to be a user's manual for you, the parent. Each week is a life-skill topic followed by interactive exercises and/or discussion points for you and your child. Use this book however it suits you. You may choose to read one chapter per week, or to devour it all in one sitting. Just know that I am here to support you and your child along the way.

Now, more than ever, children need a place where they can learn the life-skills that are necessary to thrive as young adults and beyond. A good martial arts teacher can provide an oasis of support and encouragement in what can otherwise seem like a values-barren desert of a society these days. Youth martial arts is designed to specifically help teach your child courage, focus, and discipline while developing a strong and fit body so that he or she will gain confidence and a positive self-image – and ultimately become a strong, independent leader.

That journey starts with your child's six-week trial program and this book. Feel free to connect with me through my website:

AllenParkMartialArtsCenter.com

Your Friend,

Master Kevin

Kevin Hurlahe, President
Martial Arts Centers, Inc.

How to Build a Super Kid



“Our two sons earned their Black Belts in Tae Kwon Do from Masters Kevin & Michelle Hurlahe. They gave our boys a strong foundation in Martial Arts. Since moving on from that foundation to other coaches and styles, they have won State and National Championships in Tae Kwon Do, numerous championships in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (competing around the world and on TV), and have become accomplished wrestlers. They owe their perseverance, indomitable spirit, self-control, courtesy, integrity, and most of all their sportsmanship and respect towards others to the early teachings of the Hurlahes. We thank Masters Kevin and Michelle and feel very privileged to have had them as teachers for our kids who have grown up to become successes in the mixed martial arts.”

-Tim & Katy Bettencourt, Parents

Chapter One: Week One

Overcoming Fear of Failure

***“When you can overcome the fear of failure,
success will not be far away.”***

- Debasish Mridha



Turning Fear into Courage

I bet when your child was a toddler, you thought, “wow, that kid is fearless!” Like all babies, your child was born without fear. Young kids, when learning to crawl or walk, seem to get into everything and are willing to try anything. That’s how they learn.

But over time, children begin to lose their fearlessness and develop a fear of criticism and failure. Their natural curiosity to “try anything” often results in disapproval, punishment, and criticism (or ridicule).

By the time your child becomes school-age (or even earlier), he or she starts to think, “I’m not good enough.” The fear creeps in about being criticized, not fitting in, being teased, embarrassed, disappointment and failure. These feelings result in apprehension. That hesitancy translates into “playing it safe.” By not risking failure, embarrassment or criticism, your child chooses to be quiet, sits on the sidelines, and stays inside his or her comfort zone.

Your once fearless child may already be nervous about starting something new. Maybe that is one of the motivations for enrolling in a martial arts program? I know because increasing confidence to inspire self-motivation is one of the most common reasons that parents choose martial arts (along with gaining focus/concentration, fitness/athleticism, self-defense against bullying, or just plain having fun and making new friends).

Maybe you are troubled because you hear your child say things like:

“I don’t know how to...”

“I’m not as strong, fast, smart as...”

“I won’t know anyone.”

You know this is not a good sign because it will limit your child’s opportunities for growth and development in the future. Of course, this is a concern of yours because you want the best for your child!

Or maybe, you just feel that your child is “reserved,” but you are still concerned that by sitting on the sidelines, teachers and counselors will not give your child the attention that he or she deserves – which may ultimately lead to a life of mediocrity or worse...

What’s the Solution?

The good news is you’re not alone! There is a simple solution to teaching children to overcome their fears of learning, growing, and trying new things, and it is the foundation of a well thought out personal development program that progressive martial arts schools implement – called Life-Skills Training.

Your child just needs to re-learn (through positive reinforcement) that it’s okay to be a beginner. In martial arts, everyone starts out as a “White-Belt” (beginner), and through knowledge, practice, and dedication to hard work, becomes competent – many achieving the coveted “Black Belt.” The right

martial arts school will teach your child the joy of learning – how to enthusiastically tackle something new, meet new people, learn how to learn, and even make a great first (and lasting) impression on others!

This positive experience that comes from starting as a new White-Belt, and successfully climbing the ranks (especially upon earning a Black-Belt), helps to form a lasting impression on your child and serves as a perfect metaphor for all future new beginnings as a life-long learner.

By internalizing this positive transformation of starting something new, learning how to meet new people, making a good impression on others, and realizing that it's okay to be a beginner (because everyone is always a beginner at something) – your child will draw on this inner-strength and begin to overcome childhood fears and unnecessary hesitations.

How is this done? Great martial arts schools that focus on child development have the perfect system to welcome new beginners. We expect children to be hesitant to join into our classes initially. Depending on your child's personality and age, this may or may not be a concern of yours right now. But rest assured, even if your child is not hesitant to get involved today, the time will come when that (learned) fear of failure will become a barrier! The sooner these skills are acquired, the better. I know because, after teaching for more than 20 years, I have observed that these fears of failure (e.g. feeling foolish, not good enough, etc.) only become magnified for teenagers and adults.

The First Week of Classes

From the first day, your child will be whole-heartedly welcomed into the school. First, from the moment you enter you will be cheerfully greeted by an office manager, instructor, or assistant – a friendly face that your child and you will have likely already met. She will be the first to offer some words of encouragement to your child and to show him or her what to do and where to go. There is always a caring advocate nearby.

Second, you will notice most professional schools have multiple Black Belt instructors so that the newest students get extra attention to help them assimilate. Schools like ours have more advanced students assist in the class as part of our leadership development program called the “SWAT” team (Special Winning Attitude Team). So, there are a lot of friendly faces to help your child feel welcome and to get off to a successful start.

Every child in martial arts wears a workout uniform. This way your child will automatically fit in and be part of a “team.” There is also a “Belt-Rank” system that designates each student’s level of experience by the color of the belt worn with their uniform. The color-belts range from White Belt to Black Belt with a variety of colors and belt stripes/tips in between (depending on the school).

For example:

**White, Yellow, Green, Purple, Blue, Red, Brown,
Red/Black, Brown/Black & Black Belt**

In our program, for example, the uniform for your child's very first class is the martial arts pants and jacket (or optional school T-shirt instead of the jacket) and *no belt* is worn initially. The White Belt is awarded to your child at the 5th Class. There are two reasons for this. First, everyone (including your child) knows that students without a belt are new beginners, and there are no expectations that they know any martial arts skills yet. That way, we minimize the awkward feeling your child may have about being a beginner!

The second reason for awarding your child the White Belt on the 5th class is to begin establishing the concept of *cause and effect*. Your child will begin to see the benefits of setting and achieving goals – the foundation of building self-confidence and creating a life-long habit of achievement (something that I will cover in chapter two).

We will quickly teach your child how to assimilate into our program so that there is a comfort level and feeling of belonging. We have a specific way of entering the class, lining up, and beginning and ending the training session. These routines are quickly learned, helping children rapidly feel like “experts” during these portions of the class.

Your child will be introduced to a world where respect is given and received (we teach children how to properly show respect – which is expected of everyone). By learning how to show respect toward others, your child will see and feel a reflection of respect back – just like looking in a magical mirror. This experience of learning and applying how to show and receive respect helps alleviate the fear of failure. This reduces the fear of trying something new in the future. Learning to give and receive

respect creates a positive emotional experience and will foster an inner confidence that your child will be able to draw from in future situations.

Your child will also learn to stand and sit-up straight, respond by saying, “yes, sir/no, sir!” or “yes, ma’am/no, ma’am!” We ask that children reply in full sentences and make eye contact when speaking – to be polite and project poise and sincerity. In turn, we will model that exact behavior back to them.

These are the kinds of experiences your child should expect at the most professional martial arts schools in the country with the finest youth programs in the industry.

The School Motto and Philosophy

Top schools will have a vision, mission, and some type of student motto or creed – especially for children. This is a constant reminder that they are building character and values as well as muscles and athletic skills.

At the beginning of each of our classes for example, the instructors lead the students in reciting our:

“5 Tenets of Tae Kwon Do:”

- 1. Courtesy**
- 2. Integrity**
- 3. Perseverance**
- 4. Self-Control**
- 5. Indomitable Spirit**

Your child will not only memorize the words, he or she will understand their meaning and importance. It is a joy to behold! At the end of each class, your child will recite our:

“3 Student Creeds”

...To build True Self-Confidence (through):

- 1. Knowledge in the Mind**
- 2. Honesty in the Heart**
- 3. Strength in the Body**

These foundational tenets and creeds, as well as our uniforms, belt-ranking system, familiar routines, supportive staff, and culture of respect and excellence all work to create a positive feeling about trying something new. We want your child to experience the joy of learning! Overcoming fear and apprehension to strive for success and push oneself to become better through personal development is one of the keys to a future of happiness, fulfillment and growth.

Every parent wants to raise a confident and healthy child that is successful and not afraid to face new challenges. For some children, that comes naturally, but for others like our son, they need a little push. Our son wanted to try martial arts because it looked like fun and he wanted to lose some weight. He also hoped to meet new friends (he is homeschooled). When we enrolled him in class at the Martial Arts Center, it was not with the goal of him becoming a Black Belt someday, rather it was a way to get him involved in something healthy, help with social skills, and give him something to do other than video games.

While he was excited to sign up for the introductory program, when it came time for our son's first class – he wanted no part of it! We assured him that it was okay to be a little nervous and that we were nervous for him too. Just give it a try. The instructors really helped to make it easy.

Our son's confidence and skills began to grow and he no longer needed us to stay and watch (but we did stay because the classes and the messages were so interesting). We teach our children respect and responsibility, and the program reinforces this. It is obvious to us that the instructors have a passion for what they do!

Watching our son transform from a timid kid to a healthy, strong, and confident young man has been incredible! When he earned his Black Belt, he said that he "could now see that anything is possible with a good attitude and the right teachers!" Now that our son is an Instructor's Assistant helping to teach others martial arts, we can't believe how far he has come and how truly amazing this experience has been for him. It is hard for us as his parents to describe the pride we feel when we see him in his instructor's uniform teaching other students – and how truly thankful and blessed we feel toward you for what this experience has meant to our whole family.

-Don & Shirley Leffew, Parents

Week One Exercises



To help your child get a fast start for success in your new martial arts program and beyond (and to overcome fear or shyness either now or in the future), here are some fun life-skills exercises that the two of you can do together.

A Proper Introduction to Another Person:

We teach children how to properly introduce themselves to each other. A proper introduction is made when you meet someone for the very first time (you do not know the other person). Keep in mind that we also teach children about “stranger danger.” So, it’s important to make this exercise age-appropriate

(the parent decides when it is appropriate for the child to make an introduction to another person – especially an adult).

In martial arts, it's customary to bow when you meet or greet someone (this is an Asian custom – versus the American custom of shaking hands). In our martial arts classes for example, when we meet someone, we snap to attention and politely bow as a show of respect.

When we teach the Proper Introduction of two people meeting for the first time, we do this as a general life-skill that is transferable outside of the martial arts class. Therefore, we teach making a proper introduction with both bowing (in martial arts class) and shaking hands (as a skill used outside of class).

This is how to do a Proper Introduction to Someone:

- 1. Stand face to face with the other person (that you are meeting for the first time).**
- 2. Make sure that you look them straight in the eye.**
- 3. Extend your right hand and give a FIRM handshake.**
- 4. Say, “Hi, my name is: _____.”**

That's all there is to it! This is something that is best role-played over and over at first between a parent (adult) and child, until it becomes natural. You may have to help your child practice how to give a good handshake.

Some common handshake mistakes that beginners make include not squeezing hard enough (“the dead fish”), squeezing too hard (“the vice grip”) or, grasping too early and catching only the fingers of the other person's hand (“too dainty”). Just make

sure the student gets a good full-hand grasp, squeezes just right, “shakes” (gently) up and down two or three times, and then lets-go naturally. Confident eye contact is important too.

Step four above can be varied to say something like, “My name is Kevin, nice to meet you – what’s your name?” Keep it simple at first. The main goal is to get into a habit of building the skills to confidently make a good impression and overcome the awkwardness of meeting new people and making new friends (the skills to overcome unnecessary shyness or social awkwardness).

A Proper Greeting to Someone you Already Know:

A proper greeting is similar-to the proper introduction above, except that it is used for those circumstances when you already know the other person. Kids typically ignore adults (e.g. teachers) when they come to class. They’ll either walk right by without saying a word or they will sheepishly waive or grunt something with minimal or no eye contact. It’s not because they don’t care—it’s because they don’t have the knowledge or skills to do otherwise.

This is how to do a Proper Greeting
(to known/ parent-approved adults):

1. **When approaching someone you know make eye contact and smile.**
 2. **When you get close enough, say something warm and polite, such as, “Hello, Master Kevin!”**
 3. **Depending on the circumstances (if nobody is in a hurry, for example) – you may stop and offer a handshake.**
 4. **The greeting above can be varied, for example, “Hello, Master Kevin. How are you today?” “Hi, Master Kevin.” Or, “Good morning, Mr. Hurlahe.”**
- Practice these Proper Greetings and Introductions with your child this week.
 - Then have your child try them outside of your house or family (when and where you deem appropriate – such as at school or religious service, etc.).
 - Ask your child to report back to you and tell you what the reaction was from the adult or other child who received the introduction or greeting.

Finally, if you’re not already doing this within your own family (routinely) see if you can begin to make this a habit at home by politely and sincerely greeting each other at the beginning of the day, after school or work, etc. I am certain you will love the results!

Chapter Two: Week Two

Building Self-Esteem & Self-Confidence

Having positive self-esteem and a high level of self-confidence are two of the biggest ingredients to a lifetime of success and happiness. Martial arts training has always been associated with developing confidence and esteem in its practitioners. After more than 20 years of delivering the confidence-building and self-esteem enhancing instruction to our karate kids, I am confident that you will find no other activity that delivers these results for your child than a quality youth martial arts program.

Self-Esteem

“Parents need to fill a child’s bucket of self-esteem so high that the rest of the world can’t poke enough holes to drain it dry.”

- Alvin Price



What exactly is self-esteem and self-confidence? The two terms are related and work together, but slightly different in their meanings. Self-esteem is what you think and feel about yourself. It is the opinion that you have about yourself. Some other terms used for self-esteem are self-respect, dignity, self-assured, or to be content (with oneself). You can think of self-esteem as *how much you truly “like yourself” as a person.*

Having a high self-esteem leads children to feel “comfortable in their own skin.” That means when your child has a high self-esteem (self-worth), he or she will not be easily enticed into making bad decisions that could lead to self-destructive behavior. For example, a child with a high self-esteem will not be as likely to fall in with the wrong crowd and choose a path of delinquency, drugs, poor sexual relationship decisions, or commit petty-crimes (e.g. shoplifting or vandalism).

Those kids who tend to lean in the direction of self-sabotage do so (in part) because *deep down* they believe they are not “worth much anyway.” Conversely, when your child thinks, “I like myself,” “I’m proud of myself,” “I am a good person – important and valuable to my family and friends,” he or she will *strive to do what is right* and to live up to his or her own ideals of personal excellence.

High self-esteem is a source of inner strength and personal courage.

Can you see why developing a positive self-esteem is such an important part of creating a future life of success and happiness? Of course! But, how does a kids’ martial arts class help to develop a high self-esteem?

The degree of a child's high or low self-esteem depends on two things. First, does he have high expectations for himself, and second, is she meeting those high expectations with her actual behavior. If the answer to both questions are yes, then he or she will tend to have a higher self-esteem.

In a quality martial arts program, children are encouraged to create and envision high standards for themselves. Teen Black Belt role models demonstrate those behaviors that other kids want to emulate, such as leadership, mental and physical strength, courage, kindness, respect, discipline, and personal achievement – inside and outside of the martial arts center.

For example, many of our teen-instructors are honor-roll students and peer leaders, who have gone on to win awards, scholarships, and create amazing futures for themselves already. Over the last 20 years, we have had youth Black Belts go on to become college athletes and/or scholars – including some at Ivy League schools. We have had former Black Belts earn scholarships, attend graduate school, and become very successful working professionals, business owners, medical doctors, and other respected professionals. Those children accomplished more than high honors and achievements, they have also continued to live the character and values recited in our 5 Tenets. *Our success stories are almost endless!*

When new youth students are introduced to an environment of teen and adult Black Belt role-models, their personal expectations of the “type of kid they want to become” rises immensely! We help them to continually define the actions and behaviors required to live up to and achieve those higher standards. The very best martial arts schools know to recognize

and reward those behaviors when they see them – both formally and informally.

It is this very environment of being surrounded by positive role-models, developing high personal expectations, establishing learned behaviors, and receiving positive rewards and recognition for living up to one's own high standards – that creates the atmosphere for increasing and improving your child's life-enhancing self-esteem.

“The Martial Arts Center has a friendly and knowledgeable staff. Your Youth Program has done wonders for my son's coordination, self-confidence, and focus! The children all have fun while advancing in their skills. We highly recommend your classes!”

-Monica Chorkey, Parent

Self-Confidence

“The miracle of life is self-confidence.”

- Lailah Gifty Akita



While self-esteem is the feeling of respect and contentment one has about himself, self-confidence is the inner belief she has in her capabilities.

Some would argue that the single biggest benefit of martial arts training is developing self-confidence. For example, the self-confidence to stand-up to a bully and defeat him if necessary.

Self-confidence is not awarded or granted – it is earned. Confidence in one’s abilities is earned through *achievements*. It’s that simple! Learning to set goals, and then taking the necessary actions to reach those goals (including overcoming obstacles) is the formula for building self-confidence. Success (achieving goals) leads to future successes.

Developing self-confidence through setting and achieving goals is (metaphorically) like lifting weights and developing strong muscles. In weight-training, the more weights you lift – the bigger your muscles grow. The bigger your muscles become, the more weight you can lift! This same principle applies to self-confidence. The more goals you set and achieve, the more confidence you gain in your capabilities. The more self-confidence you possess, the bigger and bolder the goals you know that you are capable of tackling!

The greatest gift that you can give to your child is self-confidence.

The ideal youth martial arts program is designed to build self-confidence. For example, our entire youth program is built around *continually setting and achieving new goals* (that are progressively more challenging and rewarding)!

The core of our *color-belt advancement program* in Tae Kwon Do is designed around goal achievement. From the very first day, your child will be working toward short, intermediate, and long-term goals. Here is an example from our youth program (your experience may be slightly different, but similar in philosophy).

Here is how our belt advancement program works:

- **Each class attended counts as a credit toward promotion to the next level.**

- **As mentioned in Chapter One/Week One, your child will begin the first class with No Belt.**
- **On his or her 5th class, the instructor will automatically award your child a White Belt. This “promotion” to White Belt will take place at the front of the class for all students and guests to see!**
- **On your child’s 10th class, the instructor will award a Yellow Stripe (on each tip of the White Belt). This will signify progress toward his or her Yellow Belt.**
- **On your child’s 20th class, the instructor will award a 2nd Yellow Stripe – so now your child will be wearing a White Belt with two Yellow Stripe tips on his or her belt to signify that he or she is getting close to testing and promoting to Yellow Belt.**
- **After the 25th class – your child’s instructor will begin to review his or her progress to ensure that the skills needed to advance to Yellow Belt are sufficiently learned and he or she is able to demonstrate them at the Promotion Test. Once the instructor is satisfied, your child is invited to test for his or her Yellow Belt (we only invite those who are completely ready and who have demonstrated all requirements ahead of time – so your child will not be permitted to “fail” the test**

in public and be disappointed, embarrassed, or ridiculed).

- **At the Promotion Test, your child will confidently perform a few selected skills, including breaking a wooden board with a Kick! This is a very exciting and empowering time for kids. One that they never forget! Your child will then be awarded his or her Yellow Belt (that will now be worn in class) as well as a beautiful international Tae Kwon Do rank certificate!**

The cycle of progress toward promotion repeats from Yellow Belt to Green Belt, and then for each subsequent color-belt level through the *coveted* Black Belt.

By participating in a youth martial arts program that focuses on personal development, your child learns one of life's most valuable lessons — that success in life is earned through setting high goals for yourself, sub-dividing those big, long-term goals into smaller, shorter-term goals, and then working hard (and persisting) to achieve those goals – until they are accomplished.

Like anything else that is learned and mastered, this process of achievement takes regular practice until it becomes a *habit*. This habit ultimately becomes internalized as a *belief* – a belief in one's self-confidence so strong that the spirit becomes *unstoppable*. Your child will develop what we call an “Indomitable Spirit” (our 5th Tae Kwon Do Tenet!).

The martial arts belt-rank system is not the only self-confidence enhancing technique used in today's progressive

martial arts schools to develop your child’s life skills. There are many other formal and informal character-building lessons and systems. For example, we also have a series of Merit Patches that reward achievement and personal excellence. These patches reward character, skill, and perseverance.

Some merit patches are relatively easy to obtain (e.g. those designed for beginners), and others are more challenging. All are designed to create incentives and rewards for the hard work that is necessary to develop the Life-Skills needed for a future of success and happiness.

Some examples of Merit Patches that your child can earn:

- **Fitness Excellence Patch**
- **Academic Achievement Patch (All A’s in School)**
- **Full-Splits Club Patch**
- **STORM Team (Super Team of Role Models)**
- **Breaking Excellence Patch (Board-Breaking)**
- **Kicking Excellence Patch**
- **Exceptional Progress Patch**
- **Perfect Attendance Patch**

Two patches that your child can earn in the first 6-weeks of our classes include the *“Belt Tying Excellence Patch”* – for mastering the proper tying and wearing of our traditional martial arts double-wrap belt (White Belt), and the *“Legion of Honor Merit Patch”* – awarded to members who refer a “friend/buddy” to enroll in our 6-Week Trial Program!



Belt Tying Excellence

Legion of Honor

Over time, children who persist in our program continually build positive habits and learn new skills (physical skills and life-skills), and they are rewarded for doing so with new rank advancements, merit patches, and even peer-leadership roles (something that we'll cover more in depth in Chapter 6/Week 6).

This on-going, daily routine of positive self-esteem and self-confidence building activity helps to shape and mold the character of children, like yours, as they grow to become teens, young adults, and beyond. There really is no other sport, club, or activity that compares to our Youth Martial Arts Program when it comes to overall personal growth and development!

“We love the Martial Arts Center! The instructors are thorough, accommodating, caring, and highly skilled. The instructor-to-student ratio is low enough that each student receives personal attention in every class. My son loves it and has gained self-confidence and physical strength while building his overall character.”

-Ruth Kaleniecki, Parent

Week Two Exercises



Here is a list of discussion topics that you can have with your child this week that will help you to both “*gauge*” and then begin to “*raise*” your child’s self-esteem (self-image):

- **Remind your child of any of his or her past personal victories or accomplishments.**
 - “*Do you remember when...*”
 - “*Do you ever think about that?*”
 - “*What specifically do you think about it when you do?*”

- **Teach your child to be proud of your family (and that he or she is part of your heritage).**
 - What are some family stories that you (parent) could share with your child that will make him or her feel proud to be a part of?

- **Ask your child who he or she looks up to (such as a friend or role model).** Your goal is to help guide your child toward friends that have high self-esteem themselves.
 - *“What is it that you like about that person?”*
 - *“Why do you want to be like him/her?”*
 - *“Do you think you are/could be like that?”*
 - *“What would it take?”*

- **Ask your child what he or she wants to be like as a teen, in high school, or as an adult?** The goal is to help your child dream big dreams and to “paint a picture” of success so that you can then help to identify specific steps and actions that he or she can take to become that person (no matter how small these steps may be).

Here are a few additional tips that can help you to raise your child’s self-esteem:

- **Help your child to continually strive for improvement – but not for perfection.** Trying to be perfect can lead to anxiety and fear of failure (and

thus to fear of even starting or trying something new). Beginning and failing (at first) is a part of learning. Even the very best “experts” are not perfect!

- **Give your child regular feedback – but try not to be too “critical.”** You may notice in our classes, that instructors help students to get better by correcting techniques and not criticizing character. Typically, our instructors will offer feedback in a “*Praise-Correct-Praise*” format. Whenever possible, try to offer praise publicly (in front of others) and reprimand, if needed, privately.
- **Guide (and continually reinforce) your child to being honest and leading a life of integrity (honest with himself/herself).** Lying, cheating, cutting corners, and deceiving erodes self-esteem. The 2nd Tenet of Tae Kwon Do, for example is “*Integrity*,” and the 2nd Student Creed in our school is “*Honesty in the Heart*.” Most professional martial arts schools have similar standards for honesty and integrity.
- **Emphasize to your child that health and fitness (and to some extent personal appearance) are important measures of self-esteem and self-confidence!** While we will get into this more in chapter four, a healthy and fit body will reflect on a child’s self-image (and improve energy and confidence). Looking your best (i.e. posture, presence, neatness – not expensive clothes/fashion) will also improve self-esteem. Martial arts programs

emphasize proper wearing of the school uniform and belt, as well as presenting yourself in a positive way (e.g. look, act, speak, and move with purpose...*hustle!*).

Finally, encourage (expect) that your child will stick with goals and see through commitments until the end. Mastery of a skill, hobby, or field is a key to self-confidence!

Mastering something builds the self-confidence to transfer that experience to other aspects of life. Too often children start new activities (lessons, clubs, sports, etc.) – get excited at first, but then quit or give up after it becomes “too hard” or “boring” – only to move on to something else. This habit of starting and quitting, starting and quitting, becomes a pattern that continues into adulthood. *Dabbling* does not lead to success in life – *perseverance, self-discipline, and mastery* are the keys to lifelong success and happiness. Instill these traits in your child as early as possible.

Chapter Three: Week Three

A Child Worth Defending

“As a lifelong practitioner of martial arts, I’m trained to remain calm in the face of adversity and danger.”

-Steven Seagal



“At age 8, my son was at the lower-end of the scale for height and weight. Most of his friends were a good “head taller” than him. As parents, we were worried that he may be an easy target for bullying once he entered middle school. The image of our kid being stuffed into a locker or being pushed around concerned us. A good friend told us about Youth Martial Arts. At your martial arts center our son has learned how to handle bullying situations, and if he had to, how to defend himself. These skills have made him self-confident and more aware of what is going on around him. As a Black Belt, he now understands the true meaning of strength and knows when to leave a situation before it gets out of hand. And no, he has never been stuffed into a locker!”

- Barbara Cappelletti, Parent

A book about youth martial arts wouldn't be complete without addressing self-defense. After all, martial arts are rooted entirely in self-defense! Of course, martial arts training, such as Tae Kwon Do, was not originally intended for children. The rise of children's martial arts programs came of age in the early 1980s & 90s with the popularity of movies and television programming, such as “The Karate Kid,” “Mighty Morphin Power Rangers,” “Ninja Turtles,” and more.

Once children began to enroll in martial arts classes, parents noticed the life-skills benefits associated with following a structured and disciplined course of martial arts instruction. Soon word got out that kids were developing focus, discipline, confidence, and athleticism—and the once “fringe” study of martial arts practice evolved into the popular “kids-karate” of today (rivalling little league baseball and soccer!).

The self-defense prowess that has been portrayed in some children’s martial arts movies has been a little exaggerated (to say the least). Those “campy” fight scenes of pre-pubescent children defeating adult bullies and/or criminals with cartoonish skills is unrealistic. While it makes fun entertainment, kids (and parents) need to know the difference between having some fun fantasizing about being a karate-superhero and knowing what to do in a real-life dangerous situation.

In today’s martial arts youth programs, we focus on age-appropriate self-defense. As children grow to become teenagers and young adults, their self-defense skills can, and do, become quite effective (and dangerous). Young children who earn their Black Belts will also have very impressive athletic skills and be able to deliver powerful strikes (e.g. breaking multiple boards with their kicks). Some children will learn effective grappling skills like taking physical control of a bully or manipulating an arm or leg joint until an attacker submits (gives up).

Most Youth Black Belt Tests are an impressive site to see! However, age, physical size/strength, and mental maturity all play a role in self-defense too (and real-world violence examples are typically not topics that most young children are ready to learn about).

Same-age bullying is very real, however, and the best programs addresses that in an acceptable way. “Stranger-danger” scenarios and other adult/child inappropriate behavior is also an important area of self-defense that should be addressed in classes. Even physical protection skills against bullies by other (same/near age) children are taught – yet how and when it’s okay for students to physically defend themselves is usually left to their parents/families to decide.

For example, we teach our school’s rules that practicing the skills interactively are only allowed at our studio under the supervision of an instructor – or at home under the supervision of/permission of a parent (students are not allowed to “show” their kicks to friends, etc. – and this is not a problem for our members, as children learn self-control quickly). At the same time, however, we tell children that they have the right to defend themselves if threatened with physical harm.

Practical Self-Defense Skills

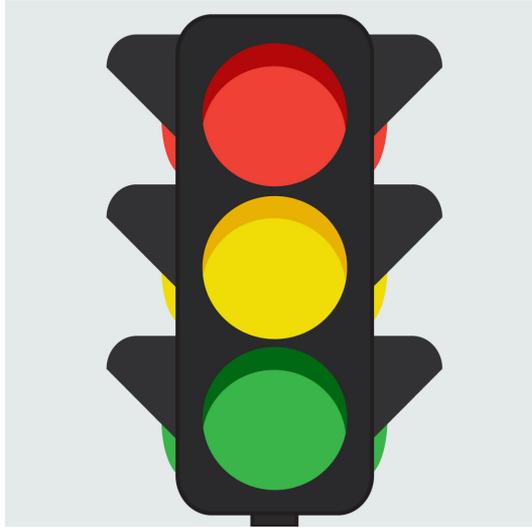
What are some practical and age-appropriate self-defense skills that are taught in youth martial arts classes? First, the number one self-defense “skill” that your child will learn (develop over time) is self-confidence. As described in the last chapter, self-confidence is a primary life-skill outcome of a quality martial arts program. It is well known that bullies prey on the weak, and that kids who project themselves with outward confidence (walk tall, make eye-contact, speak and act with purpose) are not easy targets! Those individuals with a high self-worth and a high degree of confidence are not the ones who are usually picked-on.

There are more specific skills and techniques that we will teach your child. When it comes to interacting with other children who are aggressive and/or potentially threatening, we cover:

- **The importance of mental awareness and how to recognize the signs of danger (e.g. “The Three Levels of Awareness”)**
- **How to position your body if confronted by a bully or stranger**
- **How to position your hands – “Defensive Hands” (palms facing outward instead of balled-up fists)**
- **How to de-escalate a confrontation, speak with authority, and draw attention to yourself if needed**
- **How to move, block, and deflect – against a push, punch, or tackle**
- **How to escape holds, grabs, and mounts (sat on)**
- **How to get up from the ground safely (if knocked down)**
- **How & when to ask for help (“reporting” to an adult vs. “tattling” or “whining”)**
- **When to use your brain, your words, or to run!**

- **How to set personal boundaries and create a safe amount of physical space/distance**
- **How to control a bully with holds, locks, or other grappling moves from Judo or Brazilian Jiu Jitsu**
- **Traditional Tae Kwon Do/Karate skills such as kicking, punching, if needed as a last resort**
- **Continual athletic training and strength/muscle building (covered in more detail later)**

Let me give you an example from the bullet points above in more detail. In our youth program, we teach students about “The Three Levels of Awareness.” You can imagine these three degrees of alertness to your surroundings as a mental picture of a traffic light. The green light means that everything is all clear and it’s safe to proceed, the yellow light means caution and you should be careful, and the red light means stop now (it will be dangerous if you proceed).



When a child is outside, alone, he or she should always be at “Level Two Awareness.” Just like the yellow traffic light, there should always be an element of caution – a keen awareness of his or her surroundings. Does everything appear to be safe and normal? Is there anything unusual – do I notice anything or anyone out of place? Police officers say, “keep your head on a swivel.” This is especially important if there are older kids (e.g. teenagers) or adults nearby. If there are any doubts that something doesn’t look or feel right, then you should avoid those risky situations.

“Level Three Awareness” is the defensive position for “Fight or Flight” once you are confronted with imminent danger. For a child, this may mean confrontation by a bully, or an adult stranger that has gotten too close, making the child feel uncomfortable or afraid. Level three awareness equals taking-action by assuming the basic self-defense stance that we will teach your child (the same stance we teach adults), that allows him or her to clearly set

a personal boundary, send a non-verbal signal to a potential aggressor to “stay back,” and take a position to defend, counterattack, or run. We call this basic standing position “Base-Balance” with “Defensive-Hands.”

A stance of base-balance involves positioning the feet about shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly forward from the other (like you took a step forward, but your feet are wider apart). Typically, your strongest side is the back foot (e.g. your right foot if you are right-handed). Your knees are slightly bent and most of your body weight is on the balls of your feet – as if you are getting ready to run a race.

Defensive-hands refers to the positioning of your hands while you are in the base-balance stance. It simply means that your hands are extended out in front of your face, just below eye-level (so you can see), with your palms open and facing outward – as if to verbally communicate to the aggressor to stop right there! Your elbows should be bent slightly, so that you look like a boxer except that your hands are open with your palms facing outward instead of clenched into fists.

From this self-defense position, we will teach your child how to communicate clearly (what to say and how to say it), to maintain a safe distance and personal boundary, and or to de-escalate the situation. We also teach age-appropriate self-defense skills that include movement, blocking, deflecting, countering, etc. All of this is designed to help keep your child safe from harm.

“Stranger-Danger



When it comes to recognizing danger with older teens or adults, some of the skills that are taught in youth martial arts are:

- **What/who is a Stranger?**

- **Strangers and their tricks – what is a Lure?**
- **Good Touch vs. Bad Touch (inappropriate)**
- **Adults and Children – No Secrets (always tell)!**
- **Boundary Setting**
- **Protecting Personal Information (privacy)**
- **Internet and Social Media Safety**
- **Trusting your Gut (intuition and gut-feeling)**
- **Physical Escape Skills (and verbal commands)**

Most martial arts class time is spent doing exciting, physically active, drills, skills, and exercises. That way children get to learn by doing a variety of activities and getting a great physical workout. In many life-skills based youth programs, however there is usually some time reserved for “Mat-Chats.” These are usually moments between the physical drills when the instructor asks the students to come together and “take a knee” for a quick, two-way conversation.

It is during these few key minutes that instructors talk about important subjects like those “stranger-danger” items listed above. This is usually done in an interactive question and answer format, which children love and look forward to. It is our experience that these valuable life-skills are not effectively taught in very many schools (where they are discussed, solutions are provided, role-

played, and practiced repetitively). Parents and their children alike have told us for over 20 years that these “mat-chats” are some of their favorite life lessons. Be sure to look for a martial arts school that emphasizes both physical and mental development for your child. There is much more to martial arts than just kicking, punching, and wrestling!

The core of every martial arts program is teaching physical martial arts skills. For example, in our school we teach Tae Kwon Do. The basics of this curriculum includes learning how to block, kick, and strike with increasing speed and power. There are numerous styles of martial arts, and they all teach self-defense.

Your child will be introduced to many skills, drills, and the use of training equipment to help him or her build competence over time. Children’s classes should be divided by both age ranges and belt-levels (maturity and experience) so that they can keep the learning and intensity age-appropriate and goal-driven. The benefits of persisting through the different program levels only get better as time goes on!

Week Three Exercises



Here are a couple of discussion topics that you can have with your child this week. One category is more conducive to younger children and the other is for older children:

For Your Younger Children:

- Ask “What is a Stranger?”
 - (Hint: A Stranger is anyone you don’t know.)
- Sounds, easy... Ask your child:
 - “Is the person in the security guard uniform a stranger?”

- “Is a “nice looking” woman a stranger?”
- “Is a “little old man” with a friendly puppy a stranger?”
- Most “strangers” are GOOD people, but because they are strangers and we DON’T KNOW them – we can’t be sure (even if they act NICE).
- “Is there a difference between someone being ‘NICE’ and someone being ‘GOOD?’”
 - (Hint: Anyone can act “nice” even if they are not really “good” – and may want to trick you into thinking they are good by acting nice.)
- Reinforce why your child should always be careful (aware) around strangers!

For Your Older Children:

- Children are exposed to a great deal of violence (media, entertainment, social media, bullying, cyber-bullying, etc.).
- Ask your child if he or she ever feels concerned about personal safety. What does he or she worry about?

Write them down, discuss them, and brainstorm some action steps that can be taken?

Chapter Four: Week Four

How to Develop Focus & Instill Self-Discipline



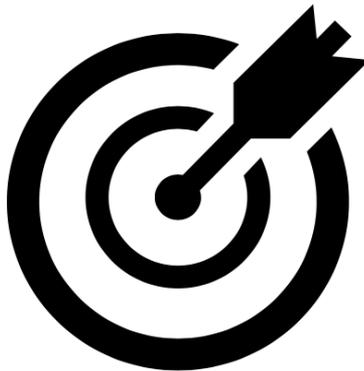
Focus and Self-Discipline are two well established positive outcomes of consistent martial arts training. When asked, parents often report that focus and discipline are two of the most popular reason they choose martial arts lessons for their children. Stories recommending children’s martial arts classes are regularly promoted on television news segments, parenting magazines, newspapers, and Internet articles for enhancing focus and discipline — most commonly around the back-to-school season.

While you may have already heard that martial arts instruction helps some children improve their concentration skills, you may be thinking, “what is ‘focus’ exactly, and how does your Youth Martial Arts Program specifically teach focus?”

Focus

“I don’t focus on what I’m up against. I focus on my goals and I try to ignore the rest.”

-Venus Williams



“I initially enrolled my oldest son in Allen Park Martial Arts Center because I was noticing some inattentiveness issues at school. I was assured that the program would help with self-discipline, focus, and self-control. We have been in the program for over 3 years, and I have noticed a huge improvement. He is now more attentive and organized both in school and at home! He is writing down all homework assignments in his daily notebook and remembering to bring home all learning materials from school.”

-Liz Rea, Parent

Focus is the ability to concentrate and pay attention on a task long enough to see it through until completion. Like anything else worthwhile, the ability to focus is a skill that is learned through regular practice. It’s also age-dependent, where younger children naturally have shorter attention spans than older children, and older children typically have shorter attention spans than high school aged teens and adults.

Our Youth Martial Arts Programs are designed with the attention spans of the age groups assigned to them. For example, our classes for kids from the ages of four to young-six years old are 30 minutes long, and the time spent on each drill or activity only lasts about 5 to 10 minutes before rotating to another topic.

The classes for older-six to nine years of age, as well as those aged 10 to 14 years, are 45 minutes long – and we spend a little more time on each skill or drill before changing to a new topic or activity.

We keep class plans tightly organized, physically active, and mentally engaging so that children maintain their focus and interest level throughout the class period. Finally, we end most youth classes with a “martial arts related game” or extra-fun martial arts drill to reward students for their efforts and end the class on an emotional high-note.

Those classes for teens aged 15 years and older are one-hour in length and they train with the adult members. The ability to maintain focus is assumed and the length of time spent on skills and techniques is expanded (although there is still a wide variety of skills and drills and physical exercise to disguise repetition and keep class interesting and exciting). There are no “martial arts games” at this age level.

Focus and concentration is expected and enforced in martial arts class. We teach your child what focus is and what the benefits of developing concentration and attention-span will mean for his or her future. Like everything we do, we make it meaningfully age-appropriate (we use language, terms, and examples that they can understand and relate to). Most children improve their focus in our program – some remarkably so!

It has even become popular for parents to enroll their children who have ADD or ADHD into martial arts because of reports that it has helped some children to show improvement.

For example, Developmental Pediatrician, Patricia Quin, MD in ADDitude: Inside the ADHD Mind – had this to say about ADHD and Tae Kwon Do:

“Martial arts are all about control. You learn to control your body. The movements are smooth. There is an element of meditation (internal self-control) in taekwondo. In addition, she says, teachers instruct rather than coach; when the child is shown step by step how to do something, there’s little opportunity for distraction.”

“A lasting benefit of martial arts comes from its use of rituals such as bowing to the instructor, Quinn believes. ‘Rituals are good for kids with ADHD because they make behavior automatic,’ she says. For most of us, daily actions such as remembering to take your medicine are automatic. But without rituals such as ‘every time I brush my teeth I take my medicine,’ people with ADHD don’t remember. Martial arts rituals can help teach kids with ADHD to accept, develop and use rituals in other areas of their lives.”

Our experience at Allen Park Martial Arts Center confirms those beliefs and observations in many instances. But we have also found that some children with ADD/ADHD are just not quite ready for group-classes – usually at our youngest age groups (although others returned at a later age with renewed success). Furthermore, a martial arts school is not the place to diagnose or treat a medical condition – that is a job for a qualified and licensed health care professional.

Our instructors are experienced working with children with different levels of focus and stages of learning and development.

We work closely with parents during their child's first six-weeks to help evaluate individual readiness for group martial arts class. Children have the greatest overall results when their parents and the instructors work together as a team.

One example of a lesson that we teach children regarding focus is our "Focus-Motto:"

The Three Steps to Concentrating:

Step One: To Focus your Eyes (on the target... or teacher).

Step Two: To Focus your Thoughts (on the activity, instead of daydreaming).

Step Three: To Focus your Body (in the right position – in self-defense it means the correct stance, in school it means sitting up straight and facing the teacher).

This example is one of our many Mat-Chats that I introduced in the last chapter. Your child will learn many Life-Skills, and those skills will be reinforced until they become habits – eventually becoming part of his or her character. Most of these Life-Skills not only have a link to martial arts and self-defense excellence, but to almost every aspect of your child's future success and happiness outside of the martial arts, such as in school, college, career, and beyond.

Another lesson your child will learn in our program about focus and concentration is how to:

“SPAR Your Way to Mastery”

S.P.A.R. stands for *Skill, Power, Attention, and Repetition* – the ingredients to Mastering any pursuit! For example, to become a better hitter in baseball, a child will have to take batting-practice. To hit the ball more accurately, and with more distance, he or she will have to practice swinging properly (*Skill*), swing the bat hard – with lots of effort (*Power*), focus his or her eyes on the ball (*Attention*), and then practice this over and over (*Repetition*).

If you were to take away any one of the key S.P.A.R. ingredients, you would not be an effective batter. Think about it. Remove the swing technique (*Skill*); what happens? How about swinging the bat without any strength (*Power*), or taking your eyes off the ball (*Attention*)? What happens if you don't continue to practice (*Repetition*)?

Of course, the same principles hold true for martial arts techniques like Tae Kwon Do and basic self-defense. Each move your child learns will need those same elements to build toward mastery. Our goal is to help ensure that the Life-Skills that are developed through martial arts training that lead your child to a Black Belt are also transferable to other aspects of life as he or she grows into a young adult and beyond.

Self-Discipline

“Without self-discipline, success is impossible, period.”

-Lou Holtz



“I enrolled my son at Allen Park Martial Arts Center in 2012 after his previous Tae Kwon Do school closed. While there are many martial arts schools out there (and we visited several of them), the true self-defense and authentic style that is taught through Grand Master B.C. Yu’s lineage is the only system I would choose for my son. My son blossomed under the instructors at APMAC, and we have stuck with their school because of the results – Tae Kwon Do changes lives! My son earned his Black Belt in 2016 and he was humbled and honored by his accomplishment. He learned that hard work and perseverance pays off. This is only the beginning of his professional martial arts career!”

- Tabni Hollenquest, Parent

Self-discipline is doing the actions that are necessary to achieve your goals *whether you feel like doing them or not*. Self-discipline is the internal drive and motivation to do it now. Children are not born with self-discipline (and unfortunately, some never develop it in enough capacity to reach their potential as adults). Self-discipline starts with (external) discipline.

Discipline is a word that is often misunderstood and misused. When we think of discipline, we often associate it with a negative feeling – punishment. Discipline is much more than punishment,

however. In fact, discipline is a very positive concept and should be celebrated! Discipline is structure and boundaries that we all need to be productive, to develop good habits, and to create a healthy life-balance that allows us to strive and be happy.

Children excel when they have clear, well defined boundaries. A well-structured program of defined expectations and rules of behavior and conduct – that are fair and equally enforced – is how children begin to learn about self-discipline. At first, it may not seem easy to them. Children like to do what they “feel” like doing at that moment. It takes caring adults to gently but firmly encourage children to stay on track. As parents, we know this can sometimes feel overwhelming!

Our Youth Martial Arts Programs are ideally positioned to help you introduce or reinforce a culture of discipline with your child. The group-instruction of Tae Kwon Do training is crafted around a “military-like” training class. Children line-up for class according to their belt-ranks and stand at attention. The highest ranked child gives the verbal commands to his or her peers to “bow-in” and begin the class formalities.

Instructors conduct classes with a friendly and caring, but firm, command-voice – so that everyone can be heard and so that teaching and training commands are conducted quickly, correctly, and safely. Rules must be followed to ensure safety, and so that the class runs smoothly and efficiently, allowing each child to get the very most out of the allotted instruction time. Children respond very well to this disciplined environment because it’s fun for them and they like to feel competent and a part of something that is excellent.

Children also love predictable routines. That's why young children like to be read the same book repeatedly by their parent or are willing to watch the same video (movie) again and again. For this same reason, your child will enjoy our class routines and the customs and practices of martial arts. We teach children how to come to attention, bow to the instructors, sit at attention, and more – all in Korean commands (the language of Tae Kwon Do). Children love learning these new words and routines, and they look forward to their chance to be the lead student who gets to “give the commands” to the whole class.

You'll also notice that our instructors will politely but persistently reinforce disciplined behavior such as physical self-control, verbal courtesy and respect, as well as following directions – quickly, with spirit and hustle. Children are responsible for making sure they have their uniforms, belts and merit patches worn properly, and are expected to be responsible for their own training-gear, water bottles, and to be efficient/tidy when taking water or bathroom breaks.

Personal responsibility is expected, and these behaviors are rewarded with regular positive reinforcement by our instructors. Altogether, this classroom culture of discipline, and the discipline it takes to persist in attendance and training, creates a culture of excellence that, over time, lead students to become self-motivated and self-disciplined in other areas of their lives.

Our instructors have numerous Mat-Chats and lessons that will help to teach your child to become more self-disciplined and to self-monitor his or her own behavior and strive for personal excellence. Here are a few examples of these lessons:

“Grade Yourself from A to E”

Students are taught to stop and self-evaluate their current efforts on whatever skill or exercise they are working on at that moment, and to mentally give themselves a letter grade (just like in school) of A, B, C, D, or E. How hard am I trying? Am I making this realistic? If I were someone else watching and evaluating myself right now, what would I think? How would I grade my performance?

By learning to self-evaluate his or her own effort and ability, your child will begin to learn personal accountability.

“Be Your Own Master”

Students are taught to continually coach themselves by having an internal voice in their heads that is their own “Master Instructor.” They are to ask themselves, “Am I learning anything?” “Am I getting any better?” “What should I be doing differently?” “Do I know what I am doing, or should I ask someone to explain?”

By learning to be his or her own “Master” or “Coach,” your child will begin to take personal responsibility for his or her own learning and development.

“Be Competitive!” (Healthy Competition)

Our young martial arts students are taught the difference between healthy competition and poor-sportsmanship. Children see enough examples of bad behavior when it comes to sports and competition. We do not tolerate trash-talking, foul language,

booing, or trying to bring down someone else to make ourselves look good.

We do teach children to be competitive and to push themselves however. Your child will be taught that being competitive means that he or she should look around the classroom and think, “is anyone trying harder than I am right now?” Your child will be taught to strive to out-work, out-train, and out-run the competition, and then to become a leader for others to look up to in the future.

“Our son started taking classes at Allen Park Martial Arts Center when he was in Junior High School. He has worked his way up through the ranks and is now part of the staff as a Black Belt Instructor! It has been a wonderful experience for him -- helping him to grow in every aspect of his life. It was one of the best decisions we’ve ever made!”

-Cindy Jones, Parent

Week Four Exercises



The third Tenet of Tae Kwon Do is “Perseverance.” Perseverance (or persistence) is another form of self-discipline. Perseverance is having the self-discipline to never give up. Perseverance is self-discipline in action! If a goal is worth achieving, then it’s important enough to persist until it is completed, even if you don’t always feel like it. We all have moments (ups and downs in motivation) when we don’t feel like doing something important – even though we know that we should.

Read this story with your child:

“Once there were two kids who were close friends. These two friends both joined Tae Kwon Do class at the same time because they wanted to learn those cool karate moves like in the movies, and to become just like their “Superhero” Black Belts that they admired!

They went to their first few White Belt, beginner lessons and LOVED the class! They loved learning the new martial arts commands, the history of Tae Kwon Do, wearing their new uniforms, and doing all the cool new strikes and kicks!

“Wow, this is awesome, they yelled!”

Kicking the bags was a ton of fun! The instructors were *really* nice, and they were *so* cool. They looked forward to the creative and fast-paced karate-games at the end of class. The two friends began to feel just like the martial arts movie stars they admired.

After classes, they would talk with their new friends they made, telling everyone that they were both sure they would become Black Belts! They even talked about how cool it would be to become instructors someday.

After some months went by and they earned their first couple of color belts, the first kid said (in a very whining voice), “Tae Kwon Do isn’t fun anymore.” “I don’t wanna go to class.” “I wanna quit and try something new instead.”

So, he went home and told his parents that he didn’t feel like doing martial arts anymore and wanted to quit. His parents felt

that they “didn’t want to push him,” to continue something he didn’t feel like doing anymore, so they said he could quit if he chose to do so.

So, he quit. And, he started something new instead.

The second child started to feel the same way, thinking to himself, “it is getting a little boring – plus the weather is so nice outside, I wish I could just stay home and play with my friends.” “I also feel like I’m just not getting my new Form – it’s so hard!”

He thought, “maybe I should quit too?”

He also decided to talk to his parents, but his parents weren’t so sure this was a good idea. They talked with him about the boy’s original goals, about the importance of perseverance, and self-discipline. Together, they concluded that it’s better to keep going than to quit. “After all, it’s only a couple of classes per week – and everyone has ups and downs, how about you just stick with it and see how it goes,” they said.

While it was a little hard at first, after a few more classes, it started to feel like fun again. His Form got easier too! Before long, time flew by and he did reach his goal of becoming a Black Belt! He was even invited to become an Instructor’s Assistant – which felt *really cool*.

The first child went on to try different sports and hobbies and activities – every time he repeated the same pattern. He was excited for a couple of weeks or months, wanting to “master” the activity, but once it became “too boring” or “too hard,” he gave

up and moved on to something else. He quit and he quit and he quit.

Discussion Questions:

Which child became more successful in life? Why?

Which child developed more self-discipline? Why?

Which child was the happiest in the long run? Why?

Life-Skills Lessons:

Success developed through goal-setting and self-discipline become easier over time. One success leads to another success, and achieving success becomes a habit too.

The same goes for quitting. They're both habits. Which habit do you want to learn?

“We absolutely love Allen Park Martial Arts Center! The instructors care so much about each student and their teaching goes beyond martial arts. They also work on self-confidence, respect, discipline, fitness, and so much more! My ONLY regret was not getting my son involved sooner!”

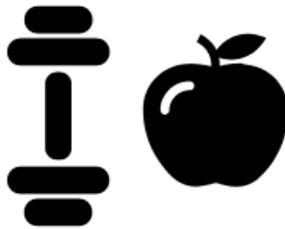
-Kelly Shene, Parent

Chapter Five: Week Five

How to Inspire Health & Fitness for Life

“Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.”

-Winston S. Churchill



Is your child healthy and fit for his or her age? If so, good for you – and your child! If not, you’re not alone. Even if your child is physically active and healthy today, the deck is stacked against your family for him or her to maintain an active, healthy lifestyle and to retain an optimal health and fitness level.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov website – 2017), “The percentage of children with obesity in the United States has more than tripled since the 1970s. Today, about one in five school-aged children (ages 6–19) has obesity.”

The CDC website explains the links between childhood obesity and child wellbeing:

“Childhood obesity has immediate and long-term impacts on physical, social, and emotional health. For example:

- *Children with obesity are at higher risk for having other chronic health conditions and diseases that impact physical health, such as asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes, and risk factors for heart disease.*
- *Children with obesity are bullied and teased more than their normal weight peers, and are more likely to suffer from social isolation, depression, and lower self-esteem.*
- *In the long term, childhood obesity also is associated with having obesity as an adult, which is linked to serious conditions and diseases such as heart disease, type 2*

diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and several types of cancer.”

Finally, the CDC website states:

“Some data show that children with obesity miss more days of school compared to students with normal weights. Missed days of school, whether due to illness or to avoid weight-based bullying, can make it hard to keep up academically.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends:

“a comprehensive approach that supports school nutrition and physical activity environments and makes connections beyond the school day by involving parents and caregivers, as well as other community members. These kinds of changes in the school environment can support the health and well-being of all students—regardless of their weight.”

Are you surprised by any of this information? I bet the answer is no. You see it all around you. The lifestyles of the average families have changed dramatically since you and I were children. In general, I have even observed a decline in “average” wellness and athleticism levels of children who have begun our youth martial arts classes over the last 20 years.

What are the reasons for the increases in childhood obesity (and related health and wellness problems)? I don’t know if anyone has the answer to that question because it is such a complex issue. I personally believe there are two broad contributing factors to the “general decline” of physical fitness

levels of children (that I have observed over the last several decades):

1. Non-Healthful Eating (what kids eat)
2. Reduced Physical Activity

Healthful Eating



Do you ever feel confused about what constitutes healthful eating? I don't blame you if you do! We are inundated with so much dietary information, and contradictory information, that it's hard to keep track of what the proper recommendations are today. As a certified health and wellness coach, this is an area that is very dear to me. My team of instructors and I are committed to helping you reinforce common sense healthful eating tips to your child.

The poor food choices and large portion sizes that we have tended toward as a society have surely contributed to the growing obesity trends in the USA, and to (what I have observed as) the

decreased fitness levels of today's youth. Whether it's too much "junk-food" (e.g. fast food, processed and packaged foods, bad cooking fats, preservatives, additives or other chemicals), or too much sugar from sweets and/or refined carbohydrates (e.g. breads, cereals, pastas, crackers, cookies, starches, etc.) – generally, children are not getting the proper nutrition needed to provide them with adequate energy sources, or to keep them full and satisfied so that they don't overeat more unhealthy junk food.

We are not here to make dietary recommendations for our members (that should be left to registered dieticians or other qualified and licensed health care professionals). I recognize there are cultural and/or religious differences toward food choices, as well as dietary needs for specific medical conditions (e.g. diabetes or celiac disease). However, there are some general health and wellness recommendations that we underscore in our Mat-Chats with children in our youth programs.

For example, we reinforce the importance of a fit and strong body for both martial arts and athletic excellence, as well as for self-defense effectiveness. An important component to having a strong and physically fit body comes from giving it the proper fuel it needs to build and repair itself. In our Mat-Chats, we teach the importance of making good, healthful food choices (in conjunction with your parents' direction), such as minimizing junk foods, snack foods, high-calorie/low nutrition foods – and choosing natural, whole foods instead.

We discuss the three macro-nutrients of protein, fat, and carbohydrates, and depending on the age of your child, review the difference between good fats and bad fats, fast and slow burning carbohydrates, as well as the benefits of fresh, colorful vegetables,

fruit, lean sources of protein, and other foods provided by nature. Our experience has proven that children love to talk about these subjects, and by tying together the principles of good nutrition to their desire to excel in martial arts (and be more like their Black Belt role models), these talks about health and nutrition really peak their interest!

Physical Activity



Today's children just don't get the same amount of physical activity that earlier generations used to get. Do you agree? It's obvious to me, and I see it in different ways. My observation is that some children do not look as physically fit compared to those in their peer groups from two or three decades ago. In other cases, today's kids are not quite as coordinated, athletic, or "tough" as they once were, and don't start their martial arts course by already knowing how to do fundamental calisthenics, such as jumping-jacks, push-ups, sit-ups, (or perhaps not knowing their right from left – at ages when this would have been taken for granted in earlier generations).

There are any number of reasons for these (generalized) changes in fitness and athleticism levels of today's children – none of which come as a surprise to those of us who are parents or teachers. For example, reduced outside playtime because of our

busier lifestyles, concerns for your child’s personal safety, lack of other children to play with, and competition from modern technology (e.g. video games and other “screen” activities). In some cases, schools have reduced their physical education requirements and offerings, and/or reduced recess and other outside play times. Moreover, fewer children walk to school, or ride their bicycles as a mode of transportation (again, because of personal safety or our fast-paced lifestyles).

The good news is there is an answer to this conundrum – martial arts training. Our Youth Program, unlike any other sport or activity, is ideally suited to fill these physical fitness and athletic activity gaps described above. While organized team sports are a good source of healthy exercise for many children, they can have drawbacks. With team sports, the kids that are starters typically get the most playing time and thus get the most exercise and athletic experience. Those kids who sit on the bench, or are not as good as the other children, are less likely to get the same benefits of physical exercise, skill-development (and self-confidence) – and those differences can turn a child off to life-long physical activity.

Your child will get a great deal of physical activity, two times per week, week after week in our program. Ideally, this activity becomes a life-long habit. Martial arts training is a “sport” that can be practiced throughout life (not just while in school – like many traditional team sports). Because martial arts training is an individual activity, and participation, progress, and advancement, is self-paced, every child is involved equally – and benefits equally.

Some of the physical benefits of our Youth Martial Arts Programs include:

- **Improved muscle development that includes building stronger arms, legs, and core (e.g. abdominals)**
- **Increased flexibility for longer, leaner muscles and better range of motion that may help reduce injuries (some kids are quick to develop the full-splits, for example)**
- **Improvements in balance, as well as overall coordination and grace of movement and agility**
- **Faster reflexes with improvements in footwork, timing, and quickness (reaction time and hand-eye coordination)**
- **The routine physical exercise and activity, along with applying the knowledge of healthful eating and nutrition, combine to help maintain a healthy body weight, improved energy, and awareness of overall health and wellness**
- **An ability to better react to dangerous situations (e.g. run from danger, fend off another child-bully, etc.)**

For these reasons, your child's training in martial arts classes helps to serve as a great method of cross-training and preparation for other sports and activities, whether they are team sports or other individual sports. Many of our Black Belt kids have gone

on to have great athletic successes in high school and some even in the NCAA.

What are some of the physical exercises and other physical activities your child will be performing in their first six weeks of classes and beyond? Here is a partial list:

- **Traditional calisthenics, such as jumping jacks, push-ups, abdominal crunches, abdominal planks, squats, and more**
- **Muscle building/strengthening exercises, such as pull-ups, plyometric exercises (jumping exercises), light hand weights, exercise bands, exercise balls, etc.**
- **Cardiovascular/aerobic capacity building activities, including jogging, sprints/relay races, jump rope, and progressively challenging Tae Kwon Do drills**
- **Extensive use of martial arts training aids, such as striking (punching, chopping, elbowing, and kicking) of punching bags, hand-held targets and shields, as well as striking in the air**
- **Interactive exercises (typically with an instructor at first and then later with a partner while wearing protective safety equipment – under close supervision) – such as choreographed light-contact blocking drills and self-defense maneuvers**

- **Martial arts inspired “games” (some that are learning drills that are disguised as games) – involving getting up and down from the ground, running, jumping, dodging, and doing exercises (such as push-ups as part of the game)**
- **Additionally, there are slow movements, such as “yoga” breathing and stretching of muscles**

Almost every class will be a vigorous workout that includes heart-pumping exercise, sweating, and the joy that comes from using your body the way it was intended. The best part is that your child will not even realize that he or she is exercising because he or she will be focused on learning skills while having fun (the exercise is a byproduct).

Over time, your child will begin to define himself or herself as an athlete. There will be a sense of pride and confidence that comes with being fit, strong, coordinated and powerful. Because there is no “season,” your child will develop an on-going lifestyle of health and wellness and an understanding of a constant connection between the mind and body (learning and doing).

Martial arts training and conditioning is not a “diet” or a “competition” to get in-shape for, rather it’s a lifestyle of personal development and personal excellence. It is our goal that by catching your child early on in life, we will help you and him or her to sidestep the trend from poor weight management and reduced physical activity toward attaining peak physical potential.

“After watching her brother for a year at Allen Park Martial Arts Center, our daughter decided she wanted to join too. She had always been one to try to keep up with her brother, but she was younger and less athletic. APMAC was the perfect fit for her. With each class she became stronger, her coordination grew, and so did her confidence. Instead of competing with her brother, she would ask him for help with her skills. Her athletic abilities have continued to excel throughout her years at APMAC. The coordination and flexibility she has gained also helps her be a better goalie for her travel soccer team. I can honestly say APMAC has played an important role in helping shape our daughter’s character.”

- Barbara Cappelletti, Parent

Week Five Exercises



The third Student Creed that we recite at the end of each class is “Strength in the Body.” As a reminder, we recite three student creeds at the end of each class as a constant reinforcement of the building blocks to developing self-confidence (the other two are “Knowledge in the Mind,” and “Honesty in the Heart”).

Obviously, developing a strong body is a key component to martial arts training, as well as to becoming truly self-confident – hence our declaration of it in every class. As an at-home parent-child activity this week, choose a callisthenic exercise and challenge your child to safely perform as many repetitions as he or she can so that you can establish a baseline for future progress (and personal challenges).

Children love these fitness challenges! This is especially so when conducted by trusted adults, such as their parents or martial arts instructors. As an exercise, you could choose push-ups, pull-ups, squats, or abdominal crunches. Just be sure that they are performed safely and properly. If you have any questions, ask an instructor at the Martial Arts Center, or look for a trusted source on-line. Be sure to record the number of repetitions to be used as a future reference. Have a discussion with your child about physical fitness and exercise after completing the challenge.

A second exercise for this week involves health and nutrition. There are two parts:

1. “Walk your child” through your refrigerator, freezer, cupboards, and pantry – pointing to each food item, and asking him or her to tell you which item is “healthful,” “junk-food,” or perhaps, “okay in moderation.” Some are very easy to identify, such as fruit and vegetables or candy and chips. Others may fall into the “okay in moderation” category, such as potatoes, rice, pasta, and peanut butter.
2. Next, take your child grocery shopping and ask him or her to “help you” make healthful food purchasing choices (identifying food items as “healthful,” “junk-food” or “okay in moderation.”). This is a great start toward teaching your child to develop life-long skills for lasting health and wellness. It’s also a great parent-child relationship building activity – and a reminder to the whole family about healthy living. Who knows what good can come of such a worthwhile activity?

Chapter Six: Week Six

How to Become a Future Leader

“Two-thirds of leadership is encouragement.”

- Matshona Dhliwayo



The world is starved for leadership. All organizations, businesses, groups, communities, and teams are looking for leaders. Leaders are always in high demand. In chapter two I suggested that the greatest gift you can give your child is self-confidence. I also believe that one of the greatest skills your child should develop is leadership.

People often misunderstand leadership. There is an age-old question about leadership: “Are leaders born, or are they made?” I believe they are made. I have discovered through over two decades of experience that there are very few, if any, activities that I know of that help to develop young children into leaders more than a qualified Youth Martial Arts Program like ours.

Leadership is a skill, and like all skills, it is developed through practice. Practice builds competence. Repeating the skill over and over turns it into a habit (it becomes second nature). Once leading becomes a habit, over time, that habit will turn into a personal quality – and it will then be a part of your child’s *character*.

With leadership, that learning process begins as an awkward attempt at trying something new. The process, and eventual outcome, of becoming a leader is no different than the Black Belt who now effortlessly executes a perfect side kick, but who once started as an awkward White Belt that had to first try something new.

Like leaders being made not born, another misconception about leadership is that leaders must be outgoing. In other words, only extroverts can become leaders – not introverts (who are more reserved or quiet around other people). Being an extrovert or an

introvert is a personality type (that you are born with). One personality type is not better than the other, as they both have their strengths. Leadership is a skill that is learned and developed through knowledge, situations, and use – regardless of your personality type. Just like it doesn't matter if you are an extrovert or an introvert to earn a Black Belt, it doesn't matter with leadership either.

Yet another misconception made about leadership is thinking that you must be appointed to a “leadership position” to start leading. Paradoxically, this thinking is completely backward! The truth is that first you learn how to lead, begin to be a leader, and only then are you considered for a “leadership position” (in your work or career, for example).

We teach children how to become leaders.

How do we teach children to become leaders? First, we define what leadership is (and what it is not), as well as the many benefits to becoming a leader. Like other Life-Skills, we do this through our Mat-Chats. Your child will begin to learn “The Three kinds of Leadership they can Develop.”

Three Ways to Be a Leader:

- 1. Leading by Example:** By doing your very best in class, or anywhere else you may be setting an example (such as in school), so that other will look up to you as someone they want to be like.

2. **Leading One on One:** Teaching or showing someone else something that you already know and are good at – by being a “Mentor” or “Helper.”
3. **Leading a Group or Activity:** Such as being the leader of a class activity, teaching or coaching a small group, or speaking/presenting in front of a group or class.

Your child will learn examples of how they can apply these scenarios in school, after school – extracurricular activities, with their siblings, and with other sports or activities.

More importantly, your child will get a chance to perform these leadership opportunities in our martial arts classes! First, we will always emphasize to your child the importance of being focused, giving full effort, and practicing his or her best technique – even when the instructors are not watching (because other kids are watching, and deciding who the leaders are!).

There will be ample opportunities, encouragement and praise for your child’s leadership development and to eventually become part of our Leadership Development Program (SWAT). This is one of the early opportunities to mentor and teach other peers “one on one” or in small groups.

Eventually, your child may be leading segments of an entire class, such as by conducting warm-ups or commands. All children will perform skills in front of small and large groups (developing poise and courage) – whether it’s through practice, performance, or belt rank testing.

These skills and activities are all part of a larger plan to develop confidence and leadership skills that are transferable to other aspects of life – now and in the future. All our instructors to date have come from the ranks of our Martial Arts Programs (most of them started in our Youth Classes just like your child is now!).

We will also teach your child that being a good leader requires having the right attitude. Your child will come to understand that his “attitude will determine his altitude in life.” In other words, it will be up to him, and him alone to determine how high he will climb in life. There is no room for blame and victimization if one is to become a true success.

Our Life Skills on leadership will include how to have a positive attitude and how to look for the good in situations (to see the “glass as half-full”). We will practice ways to control negative behaviors that accompany normal feelings of anger or frustration.

Finally, we will practice humility, helpfulness, and kindness toward others – some of the greatest concepts of leadership. We teach that it is a responsibility of those with strength and power (from martial arts training) to stand-up for, and to be kind to others. The “Father of Tae Kwon Do in America, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee,” defined this concept as “Might for Right.”

The topic of Leadership was chosen for Chapter 6/Week 6 for a specific reason. Some of the benefits of martial arts training in our Youth Program are earned from the very beginning, while others take longer to develop and to realize. For example, learning to overcome the fear of trying something new or learning some basic safety awareness skills can happen rather quickly.

Other benefits, such as becoming physically fit, gaining improved social interaction skills, and improving self-confidence may take several months to see significant progress. The life-changing benefits that transform a child into a Super Kid, come from longer term persistence – that can (and should) take a few years, such as the time it takes to earn a Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do.

I tell my students that the greatest benefits in life come at the end of a long journey, not at the beginning. The students who learn to stick things out are the ones who reap the greatest benefits out of life. That holds true for Tae Kwon Do and the Life Skills that are developed along the way, as well as other worthwhile endeavors that require an investment of time and effort (such as saving and investing money to build wealth or earning advanced or professional university degrees).

Your child has the potential to do great things in life and to not only become a Super Kid, but to grow into the adult that you dream for him or her to become. You have taken a positive step by enrolling your child into our six-week introductory martial arts program, and I sincerely hope that you find it as worthwhile as those who have come before you. You have my promise that our team will do everything possible to help you and your child to reach his or her full potential.

Allen Park Martial Arts Center is truly a second home for our family. It is hard to separate the partnership of APMAC from the overall development of our daughters. The mutually beneficial relationship between the classes and staff and the positive impact on the girls' growth, development, character, and leadership skills, is amazing. While both girls are introverted by nature, they have and are developing self-esteem and self-confidence as black belts and SWAT team members which carries over to the classroom and life in general. Further, not only does APMAC teach martial arts and self-defense, they give back to community charities, participate in fundraisers, and host assemblies at the local schools, all efforts that teach our daughters the importance of caring for our neighbors – a core family value.

-Andrew & Kelley Ellis, Parents

Week Six Exercises



One of the key ingredients to great leadership is sincerely caring about others and being kind to other people. Here are two exercises for this week:

1. “The Starfish Parable:”

(The Starfish Parable is a well-known parable adapted from “The Star Thrower” that was part of an essay by Loren Eiseley that was published in 1969 in Unexpected Universe. The following adaptation was given to my son, John when he attended leadership training through Junior Leadership Saginaw program.)

Read “The Starfish Parable” with your child:

One morning an elderly man went for a walk on the beach. As the sun was rising, he saw a young boy from a nearby town run up the beach, grab a starfish, and throw it out into the sea with all of his might.

As the man approached the young boy, he realized that there were literally thousands of starfish that had washed ashore from the high tide.

“Young man,” he said as he neared the young boy, “what are you doing?”

The boy hurled another starfish into the waves and ran back up the beach to grab another one. “I’m putting the starfish back into the water. They’ll die if they stay in the sun.”

“But young man, there are so many starfish up and down the beach. You can’t possibly get them all. How can what you’re doing make any difference at all?”

The young boy looked out at the waves, unsure of how to respond. He turned around, walked up the beach, picked up another starfish, ran to the water, and gave it a mighty heave.

He said to the old man: *“It made a difference to that one.”*

2. Random Acts of Kindness:

One of our Life-Skills activities is to teach children to perform Random Acts of Kindness. By doing simple acts of kindness for others, without any expectation of getting anything in return, children learn the value of giving. One of the mysteries of the universe (or one of the key principles of some religions) is the more that you give in life, the more you will receive.

For this exercise, I simply suggest that you challenge your child to perform 10 Random Acts of Kindness over the course of this week. It is up to you to determine what is acceptable, and to whom these acts of kindness should be provided to (remember, we also teach children about stranger-danger, so depending on the age of your child, be careful not to send mixed messages).

Some examples include, holding the door open for another child or a teacher at school, picking up something that was dropped by someone else, raking a neighbor's leaves (or shoveling the snow), etc. Perhaps it could be doing something nice and unexpected for a sibling, another family member, or an elderly person. There are any number of Random Acts of Kindness that could be performed. I recommend starting with 10 acts – and writing them down, so that you have something to review and to discuss at the end of the week.

Random Acts of Kindness Journal:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Random Acts of Kindness Discussion Topics:

Here are some discussion questions/topics for you and your child after he or she completes the 10 Random Acts of Kindness exercise:

- Describe some of the Acts of Kindness that you performed.
- What were some of the reactions of the people who received your kind acts?
- How did doing this activity make you feel?
- Were the kind acts hard for you to perform?
- Would you do them again? Why?

Epilogue

One of the byproducts of having taught martial arts to children for over 20 years is that I have attended more high school graduation parties and open-houses than anyone could possibly imagine! Children who persist from White Belt to Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do typically attend classes for 4 years or longer. Some even train beyond their initial Black Belts and earn 2nd and 3rd Degree Black Belts – adding additional years of training!

The relationships developed through years of teaching and learning leaves a lasting impression on those students and their families. The personal transformations made while earning their Black Belts are so emotional and rewarding, they never forget those experiences the rest of their lives. That is why I have been invited to hundreds of high school graduation parties from former students over the past two decades!

Sometimes those students have trained right up to their graduations, but in other cases, students may have discontinued their Tae Kwon Do training years earlier (e.g. after earning a Black Belt at the age of 10 or 12 years old.). Regardless of how long they've been away from the martial arts center, they always proudly display their Black Belts at their graduation parties!

Prominently showcased among their high school diplomas, academic honors, varsity letters, and any other awards and recognitions, are their childhood Tae Kwon Do belts. They may also feature their martial arts uniforms, rank-certificates, tournament trophies, pictures, and even broken-boards from their rank-promotion tests.

I cannot tell you how many times those former Youth Black Belts, their parents, and even some grandparents reported to me that their time spent at the martial arts center – earning their Black Belts – were the greatest accomplishments of their young lives! It is why their prized martial arts memorabilia always has such a prominent position in their displays of awards and honors.

Interestingly, the more accomplished the graduates, the more sentimental value they place on their martial arts achievements. I admit, there were numerous times when I attended the graduations of highly-accomplished students (e.g. varsity quarterbacks and valedictorians with multiple scholarships etc.) and wondered if they would acknowledge the Tae Kwon Do years of their earlier childhood.

Yet, without exception, I found myself overwhelmed at the importance those graduates and their families placed on earning their Black Belts – even as much as 7, 8, or 9 years later. They invariably remembered every detail of their Black Belt journeys, and how those experiences laid the foundation for their future successes.

If you've read this far into the book, dear parent, I trust you now have a deeper understanding about our Youth Martial Arts Program and how we go about "Building Super Kids." Children don't typically turn into Super Kids by accident. They need a system that focuses on personal growth and development through reinforced learning and practice – in a disciplined but supportive environment.

We provide that system for your child.

Now that you've experienced (or are currently in the process of experiencing) our six-week introductory program for your child, I ask you to continue with his or her Tae Kwon Do lessons at Allen Park Martial Arts Center. This way, your child will also get to enjoy some of the longer-term benefits of martial arts training and the Life-Skills that come with persistent guidance and repetitive practice.

I want to personally thank you for reading my book!

Your Friend,

Master Kevin

Kevin Hurlahe, President
Martial Arts Centers, Inc.
Allen Park Martial Arts Center

Additional Resources



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Email Master Kevin Hurlahe:
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How to Build a Super Kid



AllenParkMartialArtsCenter.com

To Learn More About GrandMaster BC Yu
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Notes