

Flexibility: A Physical and Spiritual Issue

by Dr. Dennis McCain

I have always been amazed at the ability of some students in the martial arts, allowing them to attain great height with their kicks. To kick higher and with great power is one goal of TKD. But there is more to be said for flexibility. Flexibility:

- Allows a greater range of movement
- Provides greater strength
- Prevents injury
- Does not compromise the integrity of the pattern performed.

All of these critical areas show the evidence of hard work and beauty when the pattern is demonstrated. Although TKD flexibility is entirely physical, there are good lessons to be learned for our personal lives, when we study flexibility. Through life, we are challenged to be more flexible. We will not see eye to eye with everyone we meet, work or train with (our instructor, our parents, or our friends, etc.).

Being flexible without compromising the integrity (pattern) of our lives is one key to getting along with other people. The character quality of flexibility develops patience with others as we progress along the road of success. Without being flexible we may be “injured” by others when they disagree with us, our range of movement is restricted (less freedom to act), we will not gain the strength needed to succeed, and the integrity of our life pattern will be compromised (our designed purpose for living).

*Working at being flexible pictures the need for flexibility in our spiritual lives. Being flexible allows us to accept those differences as part of the program of growth for each person. When we are tempted to conform to a lower standard or act incorrectly, (drugs, drinking, pressure from peers to be immoral, etc.), we must say no, and maintain the integrity of our “pattern” for life. Flexibility is inseparably linked to transformation, maturity, and change in our lives. Look at this succession of truths:

If we are not flexible, our thinking cannot be transformed. In other words, we are not teachable if we are inflexible. No one can change the way we perceive truth unless we are flexible, realizing our need for change.

Without real transformation there is no personal growth.

Without personal growth we cannot mature.

Without maturity we stagnate in our lives and our Taekwondo remains immature.

Our martial art is also inseparably linked to our spiritual well-being. If our life is stagnate and inflexible, we fail to recognize the purpose of our training in the martial arts: to build our life to a place of greater personal character, spiritual strength, and physical well-being!

Why not reach for the greatest potential that is possible? The potential for man is limited. However, the potential that God provides for man is unlimited! I have added a new line to the student oath: "I will honor God with my Taekwondo." Although this is not part of the original student oath, it reminds me of the greatest purpose of my life and art, to honor God and fulfill the tenets of Taekwondo. (Romans 12:1-2)