

The Tenets... What do they mean?

Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self Control and Indomitable Spirit.

These are the tenets that, along with the student oath, form the foundation of the 'Do' or way of Taekwon-Do.

General Choi used these tenets, because without all of them, one will not succeed in practising Taekwon-Do the way that he intended. The moral culture of Taekwon-Do is as important as any other aspect and it is essential that students understand this.

What is a tenet?

A tenet is a principle that can be followed by a person. In a society tenets are required for people to follow, in order to maintain a peaceful, orderly and harmonious society. Following the tenets of Taekwon-Do will work towards creating this in our own communities and this in turn will have a more far reaching effect.

Courtesy (Ye Ui)

The first tenet of Taekwon-Do is Courtesy

One can practice Courtesy by observing the following.

- Being polite to others.
- Encouraging a sense of justice and humanity.
- Respecting others possessions.
- Handling issues or problems with fairness and maturity.
- Respecting and recognising seniors, in both rank and age.

There are many ways that one can practice Courtesy, but I think that these are the most important.

As stated above, showing Courtesy can be as simple as saying thankyou to someone, or bowing to your seniors when in the Do Jang, but each demonstration of Courtesy is helping to build a more peaceful world, because the receiver will enjoy the courtesy, respect and friendship afforded them and endeavour to do the same to others." I will build a more peaceful world" is also the last line of General Choi's Taekwon-Do Student Oath.

A student needs to exercise Courtesy and show respect for their instructor, seniors and fellow students within the Do-Jang, this in turn helps maintain order, discipline and builds good relationships. A student also needs to have an understanding of Taekwon-Do etiquette to be able to behave in a correct and courteous manner inside and outside the Do Jang.

Integrity (Yom Chi)

Integrity is a personal quality and way of behaving that develops over ones lifetime. A person with high integrity will be honourable, trustworthy, honest and able to distinguish between right and wrong and have a conscience to feel guilt.

Integrity is important in all areas of life, people need to know that they can rely on and trust each other to be able to live in harmony. It is also very important to have Integrity inside the Do Jang, because one without it would not be trusted by club members, and is most likely doing Taekwon-Do for the wrong reasons, such as seeking rank for ego purposes and feeling powerful.

An example of a person with high integrity could be buying something from a shop and receiving more change than should have been given, and instead of walking away with the money, they return it. Actions like these make both the person demonstrating honesty and the person who made the error feel good and also not lose money or profit or perhaps get in trouble for making an honest mistake. These things help develop trust in each other and ourselves.

Perseverance (In Nae)

This tenet almost explains itself, the verb persevere in the dictionary means to be persistent and to never stop, never give in. In Taekwon-Do this is very important, because without perseverance, one will not be able to overcome the hard physical and mental challenges that will be found both inside and outside of the Do Jang. One must also persevere while listening, and have patience to ask questions only when the instructor allows or has finished talking.

There is an old Oriental saying, "Patience leads to value or merit, and one can make a peaceful home by being patient 100 times". This means that a person who is patient is more likely to be happy and prosper in life.

It is very important that a student of Taekwon-Do sets goals, and achieves them, persevering until each goal is met and then setting new goals, which may include getting your next rank, attending and winning the next tournament or helping others to achieve. By setting goals such as this the student will continue to gain personally from Taekwon-do and will not lose interest.

Self Control (Guk Gi)

Self Control is very important inside and outside the Do Jang, because it is important to hold back from doing things and think about them first. For example, many children are taught by their parents to count to ten before reacting to something that may have hurt or offended them in order to prevent a situation from escalating, a child who does this is showing self control.

Self Control in the Do Jang will not need to be like this, as members of that Do Jang will be Courteous and events that will hurt and offend students should not arise, but this doesn't go to say that self control is not needed inside the Do Jang.

Obedying the instructions given to you by your seniors, being quiet, standing still and not fidgeting with your Do Bok and making controlled or no contact during free sparring, are all actions that show Self Control, and if the members exercise this Self Control, the Do Jang will be an orderly, peaceful and enjoyable place to be in.

Indomitable Spirit (Baekjool Boolgool).

To have Indomitable Spirit is to confront injustice, no matter what odds are pitted against you, and do so without fear or hesitation. However one must also develop good judgement and the ability to assess each situation as it arises, as sometimes going against all the odds is unwise, rather than an act of Indomitable Spirit.

A good example of Indomitable Spirit is Mrs Dale Copeland a 63 year old Second Degree Black Belt from our club, Taranaki Taekwon-Do. She rarely misses a training session and is always willing to go where the going gets tough and help out the club. Despite her advancing years, she still keeps progressing with her Taekwon-Do and intends to grade for her Third Degree in the near future. This is one of the most close to home examples of Indomitable Spirit, and a very good one at that.

In conclusion, the Taekwon-do tenets are vital not only to training, but to living a good life. One will need to abide by them to have a happy and peaceful life and be successful with their Taekwon-Do.

Tod Rookes