

## **How Taekwon-Do can benefit those that may have a disability and building confidence**

**By Kristy Leong**

A disability can be defined as a physical or mental condition that may limit a person's body movement, senses or ability to participate in activities. Those that have a disability are not only facing their personal struggles, but they are also having to deal with societies questioning their capability of independence.

Throughout this essay I will be discussing the benefits of Taekwon-Do as potential therapy for children that have ADHD and those adults that have Bi polar disorder. I will also discuss how this can help build self confidence in other areas of their daily living activities. Benefits of doing martial arts such as Taekwon-Do can improve those with a disability and widen their communication skills and confidence within themselves and in their community. With skills of self control, they may become more independent and control their hyper active states and low moods.

From what I have experienced since joining Taekwon-Do, our organisation is very family oriented and a friendly organisation that allows anyone to become a member. For me personally, since becoming an ITFNZ member after my brother joined, I have enjoyed many experiences such as representing New Zealand at three world champs so far and many other national competitions. Within our organisation, we are very welcoming to anyone and have instructors all over the country that are willing to help those that wish to participate in our sport, such as children and adults that may not be able to help themselves in everyday living activities.

Taekwon-Do has been found to be helpful for those children that have been diagnosed with ADHD. ADHD also known as attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder is a common behavioural disorder that affects an estimated 8-10 percent of school-aged children. Boys are about three times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with it, though it's not yet understood why. Kids with ADHD act without thinking, are hyperactive, have trouble focusing and paying attention. They may understand what's expected of them but have trouble following through because they can't sit still or attend to details.

Of course, all kids especially younger ones act this way at times when they're anxious or really excited. But the difference with ADHD is that symptoms are present over a longer period of time and occur in different settings. ADHD impairs a child's ability to function socially, academically, and at home. The good news is that with proper treatment, kids with ADHD can learn to successfully live with and manage their symptoms.

More and more professionals these days are recommending that children with ADHD should get themselves involved in a martial arts programme. For many children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, the Do Jang provides the ideal place to increase attention span, decrease distraction, and develop motor and behavioural control. It can also improve their self-esteem, and build positive peer relationships. As some parents may have some concerns with their ADHD child participating in Taekwon-Do, this can be highly beneficial as it can enhance the positive benefits that Taekwon-Do can bring.

Participating in sports can be either constructive or negative for all children. Expelling extra energy is a positive side to sports, but playing on a team is often frustrating to those that have ADHD and to those that are team members or coaches. Some children may find it can be difficult for them to learn to hear the rules and fulfil particular needs of the team. Taekwon-Do can be tremendously beneficial for an ADHD child as it permits controlled aggressive behaviour in a safe environment. The instructor provides direction that is immediately followed so that it retains relevance and gives instant satisfaction that the child has completed the task right.

A martial art like Taekwon-Do always emphasises self-confidence, self-esteem and self-control as part of the curriculum. Five tenets are followed while participating in Taekwon-Do. This includes courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit. These five tenets play an important role as they can help a child learn to respect one another, know right from wrong and to have self-control executing techniques and managing their behaviour in the Do Jang. It is important for children that have ADHD build their confidence to believe what many consider negative character issues are actually positives.

In Taekwon-Do training classes, children learn the "right action or movement" at the time they are being taught which can help with impulsive tempers and can be turned into a positive action. Boredom is negligible due to the fast active pace of the class that is full of jumping and running, punching and kicking thus the hyperactive child can unleash behaviour in an appropriate way and be praised for doing it correctly. ADHD children's tolerance and respect of others is praised on also. Although ADHD children cannot out-grow their disorder, we have to help them find ways to work with the negative aspects and to build success in things such as participating in a regional tournament, grading to their next belt level and eventually learning how to break a board which will give the child great satisfaction. Providing them with the chance to learn how to change negative traits into advantages to take into adulthood has been one the greatest experiences of our family's participation in Taekwon-Do.

Bi polar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out everyday living activities. Symptoms of Bi polar disorder are severe. They are different from the normal ups and downs that everyone goes through from time to time. Bi polar disorder symptoms can result in damaged relationships, poor job or school performance, and even can lead to suicide. But Bi polar disorder can be treated, and people with this illness can lead full and productive lives. It often develops in a person's late teens or early adult years. At least half of all cases begin before the age of 25 years old. Some people have their first symptoms during childhood, while others may develop symptoms later on in life.

Bi polar disorder is not easy to diagnose when it first begins as the symptoms may seem like separate problems, not recognised as parts of a larger problem. Some people suffer for years before they are properly diagnosed and treated. Like diabetes or heart disease, Bi polar disorder is a long-term illness that must be carefully managed throughout a person's life.

Providing an adult that has Bi polar in a surrounding area like a Taekwon-Do Dojang where everything is controlled, this will be able to help put them in a positive environment. Bringing a family member or close friend along that they are comfortable working with will help keep them in a positive state of mind without having any high or low mood swings. Someone that has just been released from the clinic would not be an ideal candidate to participate in Taekwon-Do as they may have an instant relapse because it's too early for them to start. Those that are on their meds will be able to benefit in something that will keep them satisfied and happy. In a case I recently read, this gentleman that had Bi polar was able to come off his meds because of starting Taekwon-Do which helped keep him at peace.

Building confidence is a big part to living and having confidence with their conditions will help them look at the world in a more positive way. By participating in Taekwon-Do, they will be able to experience friendships, communicating with others and have more confidence with themselves. Providing 6 simple steps of building confidence will help benefit their everyday performances in all areas.

The 6 steps are:

- 1.to take action
2. face your fear
- 3.understand in what order things happen
- 4.prepare
- 5.realise that failure or being wrong will not harm you
- 6.get to know who you are and what you want out of life

The most important step in building self-confidence is to simply take action. By sitting around at home and thinking about doing it will just make you feel worse. To make it easier for the first step, three ways to benefit you is to be present, lighten up and if you really, really want it, go for it.

By being present, this will help you snap out of over thinking and just go and do whatever you want to get done. This is probably the best tip so far for taking more action since it puts you in a state where you feel little emotional resistance to the work you'll do.

To lighten up is one way to dissuade yourself from taking action is to take whatever you are about to do too seriously. That makes it feel too big, too difficult and too scary. If you on the other hand relax a bit and lighten up you often realise that those problems and negative feelings are just something you are creating in your own mind.

And if you really, really want it, take action, it's a natural thing you can't wait to do.

The second step is to face your fear. Having experiences where you face your fear is what really builds self-confidence. By being curious and realising that fear is often based on unhelpful interpretations, this can help you breakthrough barriers between things that may scare you. The third step to building confidence is to understand what order things happen. You experience different situations and no longer have to psych yourself up to doing it. The fourth step is to be Prepared. By preparing yourself and educating yourself can be a big help and can make a huge difference in your confidence levels if you take the time to prepare yourself.

The fifth step is to realise that failure or being wrong will not harm you. In this step, you have to face your fear yet again. It is only then that you discover the thing that billions of people throughout history have discovered before you. Failure won't kill you, even if you are wrong. Instead of seeing it as failure, you can look it at like a learning curve/experience. Sometimes you just have to fail on your own to learn a lesson and to gain an experience. Each time this happens, or you fail again, you become a stronger person and are able to hold your head high and are more likely to succeed in life.

The sixth and final step to building self-confidence is to get to know who you are and what you want in life. You have to get to know and understand yourself. When you know more about who you are and what you want out of life you will have more confidence in yourself in what you can do. In this last stage you will be able to trust your own opinions without feeling like you have made the wrong decisions.

Following each of these steps through your training and Taekwon-Do can benefit you not only in Taekwon-Do but also in your normal day-to-day life. I have found following these steps can make you a stronger person, which can benefit you by providing more opportunities. As children with ADHD grow up, these steps will apply more to them as they will have a better understanding and will be able to control their behaviour and thoughts more clearly. Adults with Bi polar, these steps will benefit them from feeling depressed.

Those that have ADHD and Bi polar can be helped through the participation of Taekwon-Do. Building confidence is one of the most important things in life as it can take you in many different directions and life changing experiences. With the 5 tenets of Taekwon-Do, each can be followed in everyday living activities.

Quoted by General Choi Hong Hi "Everything is controlled by the law; Yin and Yang, good and evil... Joy can often come from catastrophic events." Those that may not feel normal and do not feel like they fit in with society can be affected in many ways. Everyone is effected by their own choices.