

## 성실 - Integrity

The origins of the English word 'Integrity' is derived from the Latin: *integer* which directly translated refers to the feeling of being intact, and thus whole. In that vein, developing true integrity can therefore be attributed to one feeling complete and dealing powerfully with situations presented in life.

The translations to English of the Korean word '성실' include fealty, simplicity, heartiness, sincerity as well as integrity. Thus, having a broader definition than the simple origin of the English word integrity. It can be used to include loyalty to a lord (or instructor) through genuine actions and sincerity of heart. But can also be expanded in many wonderful directions still all serving to enable a person to develop a strong sense of self.

A student of Taekwon-Do learns, at the very beginning of their journey, that ITF Taekwon-Do has a distinct set of values that will serve to engrain themselves in our lives.

Starting out one must deal with the woeful white belt questions at grading when a student flubs the answers to: 'What are the tenets of Taekwon-Do?'. Flash forward a few years to a student knowing all the text book tenets and their Korean translation answers at 3<sup>rd</sup> Gup. Until finally understanding that to be a true practitioner of the art, one must find a way to truly live the words known for such a time.

We may all to come to realise, that simply saying 'I shall observe the tenets of Taekwon-Do' at the start of class, and meaning it, can have far reaching, positive implications on our life, and those whom we have love and care for.

To begin to unpack the term and idea behind the tenet Integrity, one will find that it is exactly what it says in our techniques handbook, Integrity is much looser than the simple definition in the dictionary. When one applies it to all aspects of our lives we can truly appreciate the General's thought and care he put into adding it as part of the syllabus of Taekwon-Do.

## **Why live a life of Integrity?**

### **One's conscience can rest easy.**

Though it is highly doubted by the author that anyone reading this document will be entangled in an intricate web of lies and deceit, it should be mentioned that living a life of integrity means that any rewards in life will be afforded a special richness not possible when sought by other means. Often, a person who is living a life without integrity may achieve the successes in the short term, but will feel empty and hollow.

At the end of the day, a person who lives with their words matching up with their thoughts, can look at themselves in the mirror with pride.

### **Clarity in decision making.**

*A member from another Taekwon-Do club asks for your participation in a demonstration, and just before you go up to do your board breaking as part of the demonstration, they give a wink and tell you: 'It's all right, I've already broken this board, its only lightly glued together, you'll breeze through'. Do you continue anyway?*

*You are encouraged by a work colleague to have a discussion with your bosses to request better working conditions instead of packing it all in and leaving the company. During the discussion, your boss offers you the position of the same work colleague who encouraged you, meaning they'll be demoted and you subsequently promoted and getting all you had hoped for but at a cost for your 'friend'. Do you accept the position?*

*An ex-girlfriend comes back to town and wants to catch up for a friendly lunch. Do you tell your current partner?*

Moral dilemmas are all part and parcel of life, looking at the above situations, one can appreciate that some people may have different knee-jerk reactions to any given situation. Commitment to living a life of integrity will clear the internal dialogue and stressful thought process, providing simple answers to decisions that would take lesser people substantially more time. Providing one with a sense of confidence and unity of purpose.

### **Trust**

Being someone that one can wholly rely on is no mean feat. This affects all aspects of life and is integral to strengthening all interpersonal relationships. Simply put, the reputation of a person who lives with true integrity, is, that if they say they will do something, everyone is able to count on that to be done.

## **What it is to live with Integrity.**

### **Know oneself.**

If one can spend time thinking what they, as a person stand for, it will help prepare them for situations that could arise in life. Knowing when one will stand and fight, and an ideal they will fight for is supremely important because there will be rewards and punishments for sticking with, or abandoning principles respectively. Integrity is at its core an understanding of self, realising what it is for a person to be whole and complete with their values.

Establish a personal value system, review it from time to time. Though, one would suggest these are broader concepts and much easier to keep in check.

### **Take responsibility for one's own actions.**

To take true responsibility for oneself, is to almost take every possible outcome into consideration and taking ownership of it all. It is a holistic and potentially difficult concept to fully grasp, but in doing so, it encourages people around to treat a person them with sincerity and respect.

*You agree to meet a client at 3:15pm at their offices, but arrive 15mins late because there was an accident on the road. The client accepts it as a completely valid and reasonable excuse to be late, however you take responsibility anyway. Allowing you to think "How could I have REALLY ensured I made it on time?". Instantly, you think that you could have left much earlier to allow for the traffic. Also, you look to installing a comprehensive application on your phone that gives you up to date 'traffic forecasts' that provide up to date information on road conditions. Although anyone can reasonably assume that an accident is not your fault, your client will see that you are someone who takes serious consideration for them, by keeping your promises/meeting times.*

*It puts your mind in a much better place than someone who will allow a situation to drag them and look like a person who has no real passion to have integrity in their life.*

*NB This situation is an extreme example, the author just wishes to articulate the frame of mind that will assist in taking responsibility.*

### **Make clear agreements.**

Often confusion arises out of miscommunication and assumptions. When a person of integrity makes agreements, or says they will do something there are 3 clear guidelines:

- **Who** will perform the activity or task.
- **What** exactly will be happening.
- **When** is the task or deal to be completed by.

**Renegotiating agreements.**

Any time a person knows that they will be unable to fulfil an agreement or statement then they should let everyone involved know beforehand. Express clearly that one wishes to change your agreement and engage in a discussion that will deal powerfully with a foreseen break of integrity.

**Avoid the little breaches of integrity.**

The smallest compromises in integrity can start a person on a very slippery slope. Often one will see a great person topple with such an egregious display of broken integrity and wonder how a person could ever muster the courage to attempt such a faux pas. When in fact, it would have all started with tiny mistruths, small breaks of promises, and thus guide that person on a path that will eventually lead to destruction. Bookmark some times to check with oneself whether any little miscalculations could be occurring to avoid the snowball effect.

## **Integrity for Students**

### **Attendance is mandatory when one says they'll attend.**

If one allows this to be their reality (it is a rather extreme statement), then they most definitely demonstrate their commitment to developing their integrity. This is not to say that all one's statements cannot be unmade and are therefore set in stone. If there is ample time to clear any accidental schedule clashes it should be done in a clear and concise manner. Effort should be made after the fact to ensure that anything that inhibited the statement before it was completed be addressed, so one can continue to strengthen their word.

### **Practise is as practise does.**

One of the simplest and earliest hurdles a new student of Taekwon-Do will face, is integrating their training into their way of life. Finding time to practise techniques if requested or suggested by their instructor can be challenging. Remember to be honest about the amount of effort put in, it will show. It is almost guaranteed that an instructor will be able to tell, and it is a quick way to erode the trust between instructor and student because it is so obvious.

Not all students will be able to commit a massive amount of time to their development and it will be helpful for the instructor to understand if one is upfront about that fact. Most instructors are able to mentally project a generalised learning curve to each individual student and will be able to tailor their teaching accordingly.

### **Rank for ego/Purchasing ranks**

A student making attempts at either of these is a strong example of a person who is seeking validation and thus a person with a fragile sense of self confidence or worth. If one ever catches themselves saying things to the effect of: 'Well, you must do what I say, because I'm a so-and-so belt' they are on the slippery slope of descending well and truly out of integrity. One should impact and inspire people to join with them not because of their rank, but because they have a sense integrity to them that will attract people. Even though they are perfectly within their right to invoke their rank as a persuasive tool, it must be done sparingly, if at all. It will only serve to lower the respect for the person utilizing their rank in such a way.

With regards to purchasing ranks, a student who lives a life of integrity is one seeking a feeling of wholeness and completeness. There is nothing truly satisfactory about purchasing a coloured piece of cloth or certificate and standing next to people of the same rank who have taken the time to develop their skills through a series of trials and tribulations and to say, all is equal.

## **Integrity for Instructors**

### **Classes/Events will start on time.**

Simple as that. Because training/event times are set (in most cases) by the instructor/organiser themselves, whether club or activities start on time is wholly dependent on the instructor/organiser. One can appreciate that sometimes life will waylay the start of class with parents, or club members or just unforeseen circumstances cropping up at unfortunate times. In those instances, it is important to note, that to have true integrity is to take responsibility and work towards clearing anything that inhibits one from doing what they said they would do i.e. starting at a certain time. Learning to be assertive will go hand in hand with developing that sense of integrity required to provide a positive example for students.

### **Students put forth for grading have the adequate skills required to succeed in the promotion to their next rank.**

As an instructor, to put a student up for grading is to give approval and indicate to the examiner that the student is of a suitable skill level to deserve a promotion. Anything other than that is not understanding the true position of being an instructor. To tell a student that they are ready for their next grade even though, as an instructor, there is a bit of doubt with regards to their capability, is to be out of integrity. In other words, it is a situation when one's words and thoughts do not align. A much more emotionally straining decision is to tell a student that they will not be put forward, even if they have been working exceptionally hard or feel themselves that they are worthy of their next grade. When done clearly and with definite reasons and solid background to the decision, one remains true to themselves and thus keeps their integrity. There may even be a parting of ways between the student and club, which would be unfortunate, but always a possibility. If an instructor is unsure or worried about the ramifications of students rebelling or being upset at a decision like not allowing them to grade, it is important to remember at the beginning of class, all members state: 'I shall respect my instructor and seniors'.

It must be stressed that to hold a student back from a grading should only be done on technical and/or with appropriate and clear reasons. It is far too easy when reasons are not clear, for there to be a miscommunication, and for a student to feel victimised or unfairly treated.

The positive ramifications of having a strong sense of integrity with regards to student abilities are with the students that will remain in club. They will feel that they are deserving of their ranks and wear their belts with the appropriate sense of confidence and pride in their achievement. There may be that moment of when tough decisions must be made, but it is never said that to live by the tenets would be easy.

**An instructor's own knowledge is kept up to date.**

If an instructor is to expect certain technical proficiencies from students, then one must ensure that all the syllabus taught is the relevant and appropriate knowledge to be imparted. A healthy appreciation that an instructor themselves may not, in fact, have all the answers can assist to develop a continual thirst for knowledge which will be fundamental. Making that effort to think about all the different avenues for continued learning, whether it be attending seminars, purchasing and studying any of the various documents and textbooks, cross training other martial arts, or simply attending training sessions from other ITF instructors are all valid ways to test and strengthen all the current syllabus being taught by the instructor. Thus, anything taught is, to the instructor, the truest and most up to date knowledge available, meaning they can teach with clarity and confidence.

## **Integrity outside of Taekwon-Do**

As implied earlier, simply developing integrity for use only within Taekwon-Do, is not grasping the full ideal behind the tenets, and especially integrity.

Practising integrity in other areas can look like such:

### **Workplace**

Completing the work that one is paid to do. Often, especially in media, workplaces can be portrayed rather relaxed and it is assumed that 'goofing off' is the norm.

Have nothing to hide. No one will find fudged numbers, office stationary or anything untoward anywhere they shouldn't be.

Credit where credit is due. If one is accidentally attributed praise for completing an activity or task, then the person giving the praise is to be informed immediately of the error and praise given to the correct party.

Leave the company if the values of the company do not align with the core values of the person.

### **Relationships with Friends/Partner**

A person must keep their word, following through with their promises and agreements.

Avoid gossip. It is to be out of integrity if you have something to say about a person behind their back but not to their face. If one is trusted in confidence, then that confidence will be kept.

With romantic relationships, being an open book is important at building trust. Even if secrets are irrelevant, it is often still hard to know that a partner has been keeping something hidden. It can slowly erode trust.

End a relationship if it over. With regards to a romantic relationship, if one is true to themselves and the other person is not right, it serves almost no purpose to drag them along. Friendships can also be ended if they are no longer positive for both parties.



### **Clearing instances where integrity was lacking**

Anyone will know, that life has a way of sometimes de-railing even the strongest of agreements. There may be times when one has made a misjudgement or has simply not done what they said they were going to do. They are considered out of integrity.

Taekwon-Do syllabus expects that in this instance a person should feel a sense of guilt, which would imply that the person is, in their subconscious, seeking to live with integrity and currently, they have let themselves and others down.

Instead of wallowing in self-pity and for the benefit of oneself and all those around, working to clear the space and move forward is vastly important.

### **Take responsibility**

As talked about earlier, it is important to take responsibility, but now, one must also articulate it to the party who has been wronged. Being clear that the responsibility for the slipup is the fault of no other party outside of oneself. Make a commitment to getting back into integrity with that party.

### **Restore trust**

If there is a serious breach in integrity, this may not be possible, but it is always better to make the attempt, than to leave it be. Engage in a discussion, work out what can be done to make amends. Move forward powerfully, and make the solemn effort to earn the trust back. This may never be achieved, but integrity is to do the right thing, no matter if one will be rewarded for it.

### **In Conclusion.**

In unpacking the tenet integrity, we can be struck with the care that the founder of Taekwon-Do put into developing tenets for the art. Also, be humbled at the fact that the General would have us striving to observe it in our daily lives. As a community, we continue to move towards the goal of integrity and the real understanding of what it will take to live our lives in such a way.