

## Essay – Tim Couling 4<sup>th</sup> Dan

. Those testing for 5th and 6th dan must write an essay on the following topic:

- Is Taekwon-Do Practical for street self defence. How do you know?

This all started at the same time as I was starting my fitness testing, 7 months out from grading, when I received an anonymous phone call left on my answer phone.

“Yes this is about Taekwon-Do and you should know that one of your members, ‘Andrew,’ has punched another boy in the face.”

After some investigation with Andrew, his family and others, I came to the following observations:

Andrew is a 13 year old Blue Belt member of the club and he was attacked by another school boy of the same age as he was waiting for the bus after school. This event actually happened in the school bus lines.

The boy charged into Andrew grabbing him in a bear hug from behind. Andrew used his Blue Belt self-defence to release and spin away, leaving the boy to fall on the ground. The boy then charged at Andrew; punching, kicking and pushed him into a bush. Andrew came up with his hands in the self defence posture.

The boy ran in to attack him again and Andrew punched him in the face, splitting his lip. This ended the confrontation with the boy running back into school to tell the teacher that Andrew had punched him.

The school followed due process. The parents were informed, Andrew was on detention for a day, but the other boy was on for longer. Strangely enough, the attacks on others from the boy have stopped since Andrew hit him.

Andrew believes that the other child thought that he was being funny, but there were multiple incidents where this boy had done this to others, both in and out of school and got away with it without a consequence.

In this instance, the self defence syllabus worked for Andrew. He responded appropriately with a B level response and has been supported by his parents and by his instructor. Although the school does not condone violence, I believe Andrew was treated very lightly with the high rates of ‘offending’ by the other student.

Another incident from a club member, ‘Luke’, was relayed to the instructors.

Luke had gone to the pub and was enjoying a night with friends when a man walked up to him, put out his hand to shake Luke’s hand and then just kept on squeezing Luke’s hand. Luke did a release and walked away. The man got more provocative and agitated as the night went on. Luke approached one of the bouncers with his concerns, subsequently, the man was asked to leave the pub. Luke said that his Taekwon-Do training in self defence had enabled and empowered him to not respond violently, but to try and de-escalate the situation and find a solution without

resorting immediately to violence. He did not let the Ego factor rule and worked hard on de-escalation.

In this case with Luke and the man, it could have very easily turned into a very violent confrontation with an ending that no one would have asked for. Using his Taekwon-Do self defence skills, Luke had definitely stopped a potentially violent incident from occurring.

Two more examples are with myself as school principal and dealing with violent situations between students at school. The current generation coming through Primary School are definitely more violent and are not concerned about the consequences of their actions, plus the Ministry of Education have put in very strict protocols about restraint with children in schools. The protocols are around de-escalation and minimal physical contact.

One of the draw-backs with this is that we are already seeing a reluctance on the part of teachers and support staff to risk their jobs by being involved in these conflict situations.

Incident One – We have a 9 year old boy on the Autistic spectrum and has already been excluded from one school by the age of 6. He has a full time teacher aide and the school enjoys full parental support. One of the problems is his unpredictability where he will remember a slight or imagined slight and then just lash out.

My Taekwon-Do self defence skills have helped immeasurably in terms of finding ways to de-escalate and if necessary restrain him from doing harm to others, including himself and me. In restraining there is also that balance so that he is not being hurt, but controlled to move him or others to a safe environment. In all of this is the torrent of abuse and swearing where your parentage is being questioned and you remaining calm and composed so as to deal with the situation clearly.

Incident Two – Dealing with angry and violent parents with in the school. Here I could write a novel about dealing with situations between parents, between parents and teachers and between parents and other children who they feel have done wrong to their child.

Usually these situations are highly emotive and logic is not appreciated straight away. People want to feel heard and while this is happening talking to a calm, receptive person, the situation will usually de-escalate.

In this situation I was in my office with a parent (a father) who suffered from Schizophrenia, was off his medication and high on Meth Amphetamine. It was the first time I had experienced such highs/lows/physical aggression/verbal aggression from a person who was less than half a metre away from me.

The whole situation involved being calm, in a state of constant readiness to be attacked and moving the parent to a place where it was safer to address his concerns. His concerns were actually more around what was happening at home than school but this was not what needed to be addressed at this time.

After 45 minutes the parent had decided to go back home to sort things out. I had managed to partially resolve the situation by being calm, interested, not intimidated and knowing that I had my self-defence skills to back me up if necessary.

So is Taekwon-Do self defence practical on the street – I believe it is with the few cases that I have been involved in our work place.