

**How I Have Used my Personal Experiences to Make the Do Jang a More Inclusive  
Environment for Students with ADHD**

Fourth Dan Thesis

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## Introduction

My name is Greg Christie and I have ADHD.  
Because of this I have struggles.

I struggle with paying attention because often my brain gets sidetracked.  
I struggle with writing.  
I struggle with reading.  
I struggle with putting my ideas into a logical order that people can understand.  
I have a lot of ideas.

Those ideas often get released by me talking a lot which people around me try to make sense of.  
My wife calls me the ideas man.  
I like to talk a lot.  
Often I start off on one topic and that leads me to different topics... like going down a rabbit warren...  
I often struggle to read body language or pick up social cues or fit in where others find it really easy.  
I struggle with learning Taekwon-Do theory and writing essays... LIKE I REALLY STRUGGLE.  
To write this essay I have had to ask for help.  
I find it really hard to ask for help.  
I get embarrassed but try to hide behind humour.

For a long time, I didn't realize that a lot of people have similar struggles to me because we all have ADHD.

People with ADHD face struggles every day.  
We get no holiday from it.  
Some people think we are just lazy and need to try harder, especially when we are kids.

BUT

Every cloud has a silver lining.

Although people with ADHD have struggles and challenges we also have advantages.  
Some people call them super-powers!! I'll talk about those soon.

In my journey through Taekwon-Do and life I've tried to make the most of these super-powers and my personal experiences to make the Do Jang a more inclusive environment for students with ADHD.

What is ADHD?

ADHD is a lifelong neuro developmental disorder.

ADHD stands for "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder". It is a medical condition. A person with ADHD has differences in brain development and brain activity that affects:

- Attention
- The ability to sit still
- And self-control.

Sometimes people with ADHD can be:

#### 1. INATTENTIVE

*Or easily distracted because they:*

- Have trouble focusing or concentrating.
- Have trouble listening well to directions or staying on task
- Might miss important details
- Might not finish what they start
- Might daydream or dawdle - might seem forgetful or lose track of things

#### 2. HYPERACTIVE

- Hyperactive people can be fidgety, restless or easily bored.

They can have trouble sitting still or staying quiet, can rush things and make mistakes. They can talk excessively. They can act out by climbing, jumping or being rough when they shouldn't which can disrupt others.

#### 3. IMPULSIVE

People who are impulsive often act too quickly before thinking. They often interrupt conversation or push or grab or find it hard to wait. They might do this without asking for permission or take things that aren't theirs or act in ways that are risky. Sometimes their emotional reactions can also seem too intense for the situation they are in.

However, like I said, "Silver linings to the cloud".

*Are there advantages and benefits to ADHD?*

Research has found that people with ADHD can be:

- More creative and funny
- Better at idea generation
- Can lead to out of the box thinking that's needed for discovery and innovation
- Can have hyper-focus on things that interest them. This can lead to extreme focus and attention to detail as well as passion for work projects and sports and hobbies.
- Often have higher energy levels.
- Can be more resilient because they often develop the ability to bounce back from difficulties.

However, while there are some perks to "ADHD brain" the negative or challenging aspects of living with ADHD are real. People with ADHD must learn to strike a balance between managing the symptoms that negatively affect their lives while enjoying the positive effects of having the ADHD condition.

## **STRIKING THE BALANCE**

Waikanae Taekwon-Do,  
I was the instructor of the Taekwon-Do Waikanae club.  
During that time, I taught a lot of students who had ADHD.  
Our club was largely a family club.  
We considered our club to be a family.  
But we had family units training together within our club.  
Our club was quite small.  
Very unique.  
Quite out of the box.  
But we had fun.  
A lot of laughs.  
We trained and supported each other.  
I challenged my students.  
I believe I shared my passion for Taekwon-Do with my students.  
I recognized the different backgrounds my students came from and if ADHD was a challenge a student was dealing with I could relate.

### *Basketball/Rugby/Scragg game*

One of the ways that we used to make students feel included in the Do Jang and build their confidence was by playing a game at the beginning of training.

We played on a basketball court.  
There were 2 teams.  
The aim was to shoot goals.  
Full contact.  
No rules but play fair.  
Get rid of the ball as fast as possible or face being taken to the ground and battle for control.

The students loved it. It was a classic example of them learning without realizing they were learning. They developed awareness and confidence, practiced self-defence, learnt to co-operate. They laughed and had fun. Tensions were released so that when we carried on with more technical aspects of Taekwon-Do they were more focused.

### Training at the beach

Sometimes in a crazy world it's fun for students to do crazy things.  
We went to the beach.  
To train.  
Initially on the sand.  
Then we did patterns in the sea.  
Again.  
Fun.  
Out of the box.  
Often in the summer we would go for a swim at the beach after training.  
Rewards for hard work.

**Beach Photo.** Waikanae Taekwon-Do Training at the Beach



### **Teaching the Tenants of TKD**

I honestly think the Do Jang is a great place for people with ADHD to be.

Taekwon-Do fits well with us.

We have an environment which is high energy, a lot of variation of skills required, surrounded by people who are passionate about what they believe in.

PERFECT.

Taekwon-Do is my hyper-focus.

Taekwon-Do provides stability and routine which people with ADHD need and crave.

We also easily identify with 3 of the Tenants in particular because we have been faced with them our whole lives.

#### **1. PERSEVERANCE**

We have had to use this skill to learn lots of things which don't come naturally or easily to us.

#### **2. SELF-CONTROL**

This is one of the biggest struggles that people with ADHD have because our brains are wired differently.

#### **3. INDOMITABLE SPIRIT**

This is our backbone that keeps us trying.

We keep trying to achieve our goals even though small obstacles to other people are like mountains to us.

I've gone off on a tangent.

But there's a point to make:

- By sharing my experiences with my students
- By sharing my interpretation of the Tenants

IT ignites the passion for TKD

IT gives them stability and security

IT gives them another family

IT gives them a sense of belonging which they may never have found before.

After the foundations are laid.

Sometimes by just saying the words of the Tenants to students with ADHD is enough to make them feel a greater sense of self and belonging.

### **Coloured posters to hang on the wall**

Alot of people with ADHD struggle with words.

We struggle to retain information.

Sometimes I think it's a struggle to retain the information because the information is so interesting that it makes me think about other things, then I get distracted... RABBIT

WARREN.

I will give you an example of how my brain works. We were brainstorming for this thesis. My friend was talking. Something she said made me suddenly think of her attached to a zip-line zooming through the air. She said "Focus Mr C. You're not listening to me". I said "I got distracted" Then I told her where my brain had gone. She's used to me. We laughed. She said Jesus!! Focus!! I've gone off on a tangent but that's a glimpse of what ADHD brains do....

Sometimes I read something and it's like that saying, "in one ear and out the other". It's really frustrating because I want to remember but it's like it just disappears. A lot of the time I learn by doing it. I learn by watching. I learn by repeating things over and over.

*THE WRITTEN WORD IS THE HARDEST OF ALL THINGS FOR ME TO REMEMBER.*

Because I have challenges with learning I recognized that students with ADHD have similar challenges.

At our Waikanae club one of my students made coloured posters to hang in the Do Jang. They were quick reference sheets with key information that each belt needed to learn. I'm attaching a photo.

Poster 1. Two Step Sparring

# Two Step Sparring - IBO MATSOGI

### Green stripe - 7<sup>th</sup> Gup

**Theory: 17 Rules of Conduct:**  
- inside the dojang e.g

- All members must treat each other with courtesy.
- All instructions issued by instructors or senior members within the dojang must be obeyed.
- Members must not leave the dojang without permission of the instructor.
- Members must not raise any objection or arguments during training in the dojang.

### GREEN BELT - 6<sup>th</sup> Gup

- A: W-stance middle punch, low front snap kick  
D: W-stance inner forearm block, W-stance forearm low block  
C: Middle reverse punch
- A: Side piercing kick, step forward L-stance side punch  
D: L-stance palm downward block, knifehand guarding block  
C: Side piercing kick (front foot)
- A: L-stance knifehand side strike, side turning kick  
D: Crescent kick, dodge to L-stance forearm guarding block  
C: Reverse turning kick.

### Blue stripe - 5<sup>th</sup> Gup

- A: } Same as Green belt  
D: }  
C: W-stance elbow strike
- A: - Same as Green belt  
D: L-stance palm downward block, dodge to forearm guarding block  
C: Reverse hooking kick (front foot)
- A: - Same as Green belt  
D: - Right hooking kick, L-stance outer forearm inward block  
C: - Step, twisting kick

### Green Belt - 6<sup>th</sup> Gup

**Theory: 9 Rules of Conduct:**  
- Dress for training e.g

- Do bok must always be clean, ironed and worn correctly. They should be in good repair. Students may wear a white singlet or T-shirt under their do bok with the permission of their instructor.
- If the do bok needs to be tidied up, students must turn to the left, away from the instructor to adjust.

### Green Stripe (7<sup>th</sup> Gup)

**Defensive techniques:**

- Outer forearm wedging block - pakat palmok heehyo makgi
- Palm downward block - sonbadak naeryo makgi

**Offensive techniques:**

- Reverse punch - Bandae jirugi
- Straight fingertip thrust - sul sonkut tulgi
- Back piercing kick - dwitcha jirugi

**PATTERN - DO-SAN** TUL - 24 MOVEMENTS

Do-San is the pseudonym of the patriot **AHN CHANG-HO** (1876-1938). The 24 movements represent his entire life which he devoted to furthering education in Korea & its independence movement.

**FRONT RISING KICK** - apcha olligi  
**SIDE RISING KICK** - yopcha olligi  
**TURNING KICK** - dollyo chagi  
**FRONT SNAP KICK** - apcha busigi  
**SIDE PIERCING KICK** - yopcha jirugi  
**SIDE TURNING KICK** - yop dollyo chagi

### Green Belt (6<sup>th</sup> Gup)

Green signifies the **PLANTS GROWTH** as the TKD skill begins to develop.

**PATTERN: WON-HYO** 28 MOVEMENTS

Won-Hyo was the noted **MONK** who introduced **BUDDHISM** to the **SILLA DYNASTY** in the year **686 AD**.

**STANCES**

- Bending Stance - guburyo sogi
- Fixed Stance - ga jung sogi
- Close stance - Moa sogi
- close ready stance A - moa jumbi sogi A

**Defensive techniques:**

- Inner forearm circular block - an palmok dollimyo makgi
- Crescent Kick - banda chagi

**OFFENSIVE TECHNIQUES:**

- Fixed stance side punch
- Knifehand inward strike
- Downward kick - naeryo chagi
- Pick shape kick - gokaengi chagi
- Reverse turning kick
- Reverse hooking kick

**Theory - terminology:**

- Forearm rising block - palmok chockyo makgi
- Forearm guarding block - palmok daebi makgi
- Knifehand guarding block - sonkal daebi makgi
- Outer forearm wedging block - pakat palmok heehyo makgi
- Twin forearm block - sang palmok makgi
- Inner forearm circular block - an palmok dollimyo makgi

**Self defence:**  
defence against grabs from the front

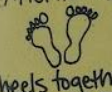
- One handed lapel grab
- Two handed lapel grab + pushed
- Two handed lapel grab + pulled
- Grab to the shoulders or throat
- Grab to the hair
- Bear hug




Poster 2. Three Step Sparring

## Three Step Sparring - SAMBO MATSOGI

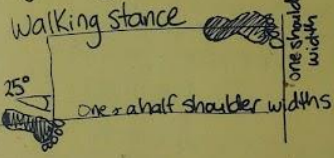
**Attention stance**  
heels together - feet at 45 degree angle



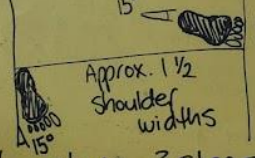
**Parallel stance**  
one shoulder width apart



**Walking stance**  
one and a half shoulder widths



**L-stance**  
Approx. 1 1/2 shoulder widths



### Yellow Belt

1. A: W-stance punch  
D: W-stance inner forearm block  
C: W-stance flat fingertip thrust
2. A: W-stance high punch  
D: W-stance Knifehand high block  
C: S-stance reverse Knifehand front strike
3. A: W-stance front snap Kick  
D: W-stance forearm low block  
C: L-stance Knifehand strike

### Green stripe

1. A: L-stance side punch  
D: L-stance inner forearm block  
C: Side front snap Kick (front foot).
2. A: L-stance side punch  
D: L-stance Knifehand guarding block  
C: Turning Kick (rear foot)
3. A: L-stance Knifehand strike  
D: L-stance forearm inward block  
C: Side piercing Kick (front foot).

**Yellow stripe - 3 step sparring**  
One way - alone  
Compulsory techniques:  
1. Inner forearm side block  
2. front punch  
3. flat fingertip thrust

### White Belt (10<sup>th</sup> gup)

**Stances**

- a) Attention Stance - charyot sogi
- b) Bow - kyong ye
- c) Parallel Stance - narani sogi
- d) Walking Stance - gunnan sogi

**Defensive techniques**

- a) Forearm low block - palmok najunde makgi
- b) Knifehand low block - sonkal najunde makgi
- c) Inner forearm side block - an palmok yop makgi
- d) Front rising kick - apcha olligi

**Offensive techniques**

- a) Forefist punch - ap joomuk jirugi
- b) Front Snap Kick - apcha busigi

**Fundamental Exercises**

- a) Four direction punch: Saju Jirugi
- b) Four direction block: Saju Makgi

### Yellow Stripe (9<sup>th</sup> gup)

**Stances**

- a) Sitting stance - annul sogi
- b) L-stance - niunja sogi
- c) Single stepping - forward - nagagi
- d) Spot turning - gujari dolgi
- e) Step turning - dingyoldidimyo bolgi

**Defensive techniques**

- a) Side rising Kick - yopcha olligi
- b) Outer forearm inward block - pakat palmok anuro makgi
- c) Forearm guarding block - palmok daebi makgi

**Offensive techniques**

- a) Side front Snap Kick - yobap cha busigi
- b) Turning Kick - dollyo chagi
- c) Flat fingertip thrust (opun sonkut tulgi)

**Pattern: CHON-JI** - 19 movements

### Yellow Belt (8<sup>th</sup> gup)

Yellow signifies the EARTH from which a PLANT SPROUTS AND TAKES ROOT as the TKD foundation is being laid

**Pattern: DAN-GUN** 21 movements

Dan-Gun is named after the holy Dan-Gun, the legendary founder of KOREA in the year 2,333 BC.

**Defensive techniques:**

- a) Forearm rising block - Palmok chookip makgi
- b) Outer forearm side block - pakat palmok yop makgi
- c) Knifehand side block - sonkal yop makgi
- d) Twin Forearm block - sang palmok makgi
- e) Knifehand guarding block - sonkal daebi makgi

**OFFENSIVE techniques:**

- a) Knifehand side strike - sonkal yop chagi
- b) Backfist side strike - taerid chagi
- c) Reverse Knifehand strike - sonkal dung taerigi
- d) Side turning Kick - yop dollyo chagi
- e) Side piercing Kick - yopcha jirugi

Not sure if I'm meant to attach photos but a picture paints a thousand words.

My friend calls them Visual Aides.

I call them coloured posters.

THEY HELP.

How do they help?

They act as a quick reference guide. For example, if I needed students to run through step sparring for each belt they would go to the area with the right colour poster.

They didn't feel under pressure to remember.

They weren't put on the spot.

They didn't have to feel dumb.

It was all there.

Quick reference.

To start with there was a lot of looking and a lot of reading to remember.

But with repetition they got comfortable and stopped having to rely on the posters so much.

I believe it was another way that we made our Do Jang more inclusive for students with ADHD or for that matter with learning challenges.

### **Labels**

When I was growing up there weren't labels to explain why people were the way they were.

Or if there were labels I didn't know about them.

I didn't know there was a Spectrum.

We didn't use words like

ANXIETY

DEPRESSION

ADHD

AUTISM

Or if people did I didn't know about it.

We didn't have School Councillors or Guidance Councillors.

We didn't talk about the way things made us feel....

When I went to school if you were naughty you got the cane.

Times have changed.

The school system is a lot different.

From what I know school's now recognize that some kids are wired differently and sometimes in exams for instance they can get extra time or reader/writers to help get their answers down.

Because of my personal challenges with learning the written word I recognized that theory testing for some students is not easy.

The coloured posters helped.

Unfortunately, testing is really challenging.

I can panic if I'm asked a direct question.

It's hard for me to admit that.

But if I don't admit it you can't begin to understand the ADHD brain.

If I panic my mind can go blank.

I am lost for words.

I am uncomfortable.

I doubt myself.

All my hours of trying to learn theory go out the window....

I can recognize the struggles with testing students because I have been in their shoes.

I'm in those shoes now.

So, at Waikanae Club how did we test theory?

Quite often it was my Senior asking the student questions from the book.

They were by themselves.

We tried to make it relaxed.

No other students were listening or watching.

Small simple things sometimes work the best.

Tried to make them as comfortable as we could.

Gave them warnings about when the theory session would be.

Sometimes we would have to retest a couple of days later.

Most of the time these small things worked, and I believe it made learning theory easier.

I think it was another way that it made the Do Jang a more inclusive place for students with ADHD to be.

### **Relating to students**

One of the benefits of having a small club is that you get to know your Students really well.

You learn their strengths and weaknesses.

And they learn yours.

I didn't hide my challenges from my Students.

I didn't hide my struggles.

I talked a lot.

I mean a lot.

Sometimes their eyes glazed over.

But often a lot of information went in.

I truly believe they could relate to me.

They weren't scared of me.

I think by sharing with them it helped them be more comfortable in the Dojang.

I talked a lot about the Tenants.

A LOT!!

I often talked about the Tenants trying to help us be better people or the best version of ourselves.

My talking and sharing helped my students do the same.

I believe it made them feel like family and that they were part of something bigger than themselves.

The more comfortable they became at the club the more I could see them grow.

Not just their TKD skills but personal growth.

By creating a more comfortable inclusive club the students confidence would grow.

We would go to tournaments.

Students gaining confidence to compete is a great reward.

Watching students support fellow students is a great reward.

Watching students enter events outside their comfort zones is a great reward.

I often challenged them to challenge themselves.

See where your head goes I would say.

Alot of special moments were created.

Not because they won medals,

BUT

Because they learnt to face their inner fears and build confidence within themselves.

That is something they get to keep for the rest of their lives.

While brainstorming for this thesis I have been reminded of many of the things that I used to say to my students.

Often my students would try to make excuses to get out of tournaments.

Complicated excuses.

With many justifications attached...

My advice (which I was reminded about) was often:

SIMPLE, BASIC...

"You've got 2 arms/legs. Break with the other one"

"Suck it up"

"What would the General do?"

"We're not here to play tiddlywinks"

The above pearls of wisdom said with sometimes humour attached.

Sometimes not.

It would help make them reflect.....

RABBIT WARREN!!

Point is that it was all groundwork to encourage them to face their fears, be better people and that the Do Jang was a safe and inclusive place for everyone no matter what their challenges were.

### **MY SON SEAN**

My son Sean has been *formally* diagnosed with ADHD.

Below are some questions I sent him to answer, together with his replies.

My questions:

1. What aspects of your ADHD did you find most challenging when attending TKD?
2. Do you have any suggestions or ideas about things that could be introduced to TKD to help people who have ADHD learn more effectively?
3. Did you find the theory side of TKD challenging?
4. Did you enjoy TKD?
5. What did you enjoy the most?
6. Can you remember any moments which stood out in your TKD journey that help you in your present-day life?
7. When you attended school did they have any learning tools in place to help you with ADHD such as reader/writers, extra time for exams?
8. If you answered yes to 7 what tools helped the most?

Seans answers to questions in numbers:

1. Definitely theory as a youngster. Even remembering the answer, I had just read, even 6 minutes after I had just read it. As an adult now my memory for things that don't interest me has evolved and I have a good memory now.
2. Depending on if there's a reasonable solution. With the youth in theory testing there could possibly be physical demonstrations of the skills as well as written answers.
3. In my youth, absolutely.
- 4 & 5. I enjoyed the brotherhood of being a family member of ITFNZ and the challenge of having a foe in front of me but still having the confidence to fight regardless of the outcome. We step out of the ring as winners because we do what very few men and woman would.
6. The things I feel that helped me in my current life from Taekwon-Do are discipline, respect to my elders and seniors' and mental strength. More confidence in situations of conflict and great memories.
7. Throughout 1998 to 2010, I don't remember having any extra guidance in my curriculum.

Taekwon-Do has helped give me strength not just in myself but the strength and guidance to give to one another in the industry, taking pride in others, growing as martial artists and not giving up, getting hit physically and mentally and keep on going, proving to yourself that you're much more capable than you think. I also gained self-control through distraction and being too busy to get into trouble because I had something to go to daily.

### **Sharing Responsibilities**

Often at club I would pick a student to run the warm-up.

Could be a coloured belt.

Could be a white belt.

Sometimes it had interesting results.

Sometimes for the person picked it would be the first time they had been given such responsibility.

It made them feel good I think.

Another way to help students feel included.

Sometimes students would ask for a class to include certain things.

Like sparring.

Or pad work.

They sometimes were under pressure from other areas of their lives and needed to release.

The Do Jang was a safe place to do this.

Again, I think it made them feel like the Do Jang was an inclusive place to be.

Seems like a small thing

*LISTENING*

but before being able to listen

Students need to feel comfortable enough to

*SPEAK*

### **Conclusion**

My journey in Taekwon-Do and life with ADHD has helped teach me skills which hopefully have made me more understanding towards others who face similar challenges and has perhaps resulted in creating a more inclusive Do Jang.

I have tried to describe skills and practices put in place which have included;

- Creating and igniting passion for Taekwon-Do.
- Games to release pressure, having fun while teaching.
- Fun activities which are a little out of the box.
- Coloured posters.
- Help with testing theory.
- Conversation and shared experiences.