

Taekwondo 태권도

The Psychology of Taekwondo

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What is Taekwondo?

- Ancient history influences from China & Japan
- Modern practices formed after the Japanese occupation ~ 1945
- Korean government aimed to break ties with karate and Japanese influences to link taekwondo with Korean culture
- Integrates physical and psychological fitness, character development and ethical teachings to guide practice

Physical Forms & Elements

tae ("strike with foot")

kwon ("strike with hand")

do ("the art or way")

Physical skills

- poomsae (품새) – movements performed without contact
- kyorugi (겨루기) - sparring
- gyeokpa (격파) – strikes and hits (ex. breaking boards)



5 Tenets of Taekwondo



Mindfulness Practice in Taekwondo

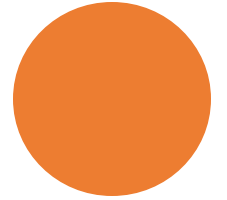
Mindfulness practices

- Meditation
- Body awareness & stretching
- Breathing exercises & grounding postures
- Paced routine forms and practice
- Mind-body connection



Mindfulness Benefits in Taekwondo

- Self-awareness of thoughts, impulses and emotions
- Reduce stress
- Improved attention and focus
- Prosocial connections with others
- Emotional regulation
- Respect of others



Taekwondo → Children

Psychological & Exercise Science Research

Taekwondo is a series of memorizing, practicing and mastering different forms.

Effortful control is a self-regulatory ability to inhibit impulses, pay attention, focus upon & execute tasks to reach a goal.



Taekwondo → Children

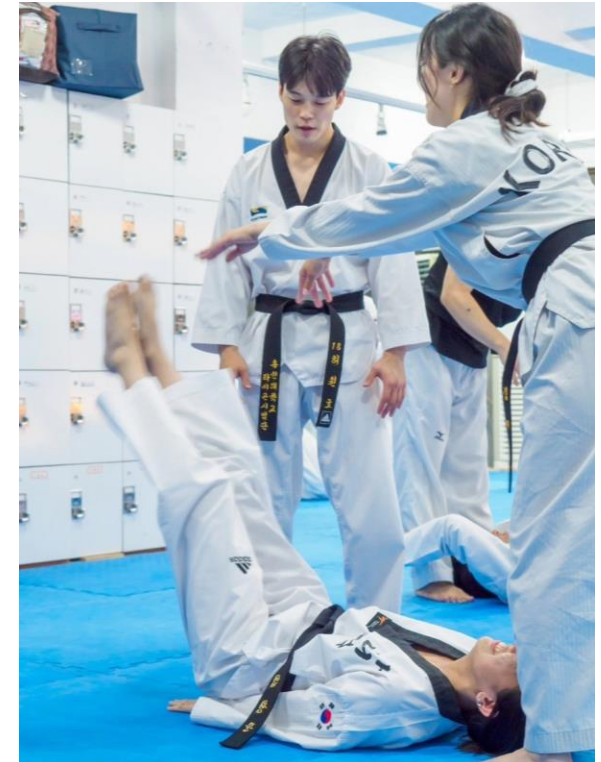
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Self-regulation skills

- Cognitive – executive attention
- Increased capacity for focus & attention
- Emotional regulation
- Reduction in aggressive behaviors

Social Development

- Pro-social behaviors
- Enhanced self-esteem, self-protection



Changing Norms @ Taekwondo Gyms in Korea

- “Kid-ulting” trends
- Taekwondo is not just for kids anymore
- More adult programs for office workers
- Adults nostalgic of Taekwondo
- Taekwondo as cultural tourism



Silver Taekwondo & Successful Aging



Ms Lynn Soh, 78 yo, blackbelt, Singapore

<https://www.aic-blog.com/78-year-old-senior-taekwondo-blackbelt>



Taekwondo → Older Adults

Psychological & Exercise Science Research

- Kim, Kim, Seo and Han (2023). A qualitative investigation of health benefits through a modified Taekwondo activity among nursing home residents.
- Community nursing home
- Modified Taekwondo, participants mid 70s to mid 80s
- Mixed gender

Findings

- Improved cognitive function
- Reduced stress
- Greater confidence, including with physical movement
- Increased sense of happiness
- Reduced loneliness, increased sense of belonging
- Increased sense of self-control
- Positive feelings toward learning about new culture, words

Taekwondo → Older Adults Psychological & Exercise Science Research

“I think it probably stretched me in terms of trying to use my memory, particularly in terms of doing exercise patterns.”

“Learning taekwondo was an interesting and pleasant challenge. I think I could see I was getting closer to learning it with each movement but it was still a challenge for the body and mind. I liked that. I am better at concentrating because of it.”

“I think this activity is most effective as a group activity. We were in a group, which I think gave us more energy. Being together created a situation in which all the people were having fun communicating and laughing so that I kind of liked.”

Summary

- Biological, psychological and social benefits to practice of Taekwondo
- Benefits across age groups – physical, cognitive, physical and self-regulatory

Next Steps

- Discuss research studies in developmental psychology classes
- Further research and analysis of the biopsychosocial benefits of taekwondo



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