



The Purpose of Training

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As the time for my promotion to E Dan approached I found myself wondering what subject to choose for my essay. Somehow that seemed harder than the training to prepare myself for E Dan. I then started to look back at the last three years since my grading to Black Belt, at all of my experiences, and all the lessons that I had learnt in that time. On the surface it seemed that promotion to E Dan had been the purpose all along, but I now realise that there is much more to it than that.

I turned to Grandmaster's Book "The Essence" hoping to find an inspiration for my essay. I reached the page about the fourteen attitudes, and read the title, "Fourteen Attitude Requirements to Master Tang Soo Do"; did I meet these requirements? I had not considered the attitudes as requirements, but more as a guide to training. This led me to look further into each of the fourteen attitudes. Reading them over and over I realised that the first attitude was an amalgamation of the other thirteen.

"The Purpose of training should be enhancement of mental and physical betterment". When learning to recite the attitudes as a Gup grade, this was the longest and hardest one to remember. I now realise why.

Grandmaster states that *"The purpose of Tang Soo Do training should lie in the pursuit of pure ideas, as in reaching the highest goal. Otherwise training could lead to a meaningless effort, resulting in excessive waste and cost, with little contribution to mind and body development."*

I am sure years ago the reasons for training were much different than they are today. Two thousand years ago when Tang Soo Do began, it must have been considered an honour to be trained in the martial arts, with a view to becoming part of an elite guard, whose purpose was to defend and protect their leader and country. Today, training is more of a choice; we choose to keep fit, to learn to defend ourselves, to build confidence and to gain self-discipline. However, the "purpose" is still the same but for a different goal. All of today's reasons are still part of the "enhancement of mental and physical betterment"

"Serious Approach". Grandmaster quotes *"An attitude such as, 'I might need a few self defence techniques, who knows, it might be useful', is likely to lead to failure in a Tang Soo Do course."*

I have always had a serious approach towards my training, it's something that has always been there, but something I had not thought about, until writing this essay. Further consideration of "Serious Approach" makes me wonder how other students might feel about it. I think that to a child, having to stand still would mean having a serious approach. To some students serious implies not enjoying it, when in fact it can bring great enjoyment. I feel that to have a true serious approach must be a part of your character, something you feel inside, not something you can learn, more an attitude that develops.

"All out effort". What can be a great effort for one student can be effortless for another, so can we measure "All out effort"? Is it the number of students out of breath during warm up? Is it the number of red faces at the end of lesson? If at the end of a class everyone was tired, worn out and weary, could you assume that they had given "All out effort"? The answer is no, because it is not purely a physical thing.

One of my students tried his utmost to return from a business trip to Japan, changing to an earlier flight to attend a class on Friday. Grandmaster writes; *"Tang Soo Do is rather sophisticated art as it works with body, mind, and spirit. Anyone trying to utilise these three elements together must do their best in terms of energy, commitment and focus."*

The attitudes **"Maintain regular and constant practice"**; **"Regularly spaced practice sessions"**; and **"Always follow a routine training schedule"** could possibly be considered as a whole. From Grandmaster's comments *"The Tang Soo Do practitioner should train regularly and steadily to achieve a balance in metabolic rate, and avoid excess to either high or low extremes of practice"*, and that *"Regular, systematic, and timely training will insure the best progress"*. He recommends *"That a student follows a traditionally designed training course which adheres to a normal and routine schedule."*

These three attitudes are a must for any student who wishes to progress in Tang Soo Do. I feel that a regular attendance also proves your commitment. Training that may be regular may not be frequent. A student that trains once in a fortnight or even once a week may not train sufficiently to achieve that constant steady progress required. Also with intermittent training progress will be difficult, students find themselves taking one step forward and sometimes two steps back. This is when a student's desire to train starts to dwindle. As an instructor should we ask ourselves which is the cause and which is the effect? Does the poor attendance cause the lack of progress or does the lack of progress cause the poor attendance?

"Practice basic techniques all the time". When a new student first comes to a class they are keen to kick, punch and fight, but first they need to learn the basics. Learning the basic techniques will provide a solid foundation on which we can build. Continued practice of the basic techniques also provides the opportunity for fine-tuning. Without a solid front stance, the low block that follows would be weakened, without the effective low block any further response to an attack would be ineffective. Grandmaster describes this as *"Practising basic techniques consistently to maintain a constantly high level of quality and calibre of performance."*

"Always listen and follow the direction of instructor or seniors".

Grandmaster's explanation of this attitude is *"Tang Soo Do is a cultural creation of more than a thousand years, which has been refined by thousands of highly dedicated practitioners to reflect the most favourable ways of training in Tang Soo Do."*

Taken at face value this could be seen simply as a command, if we assume it is just a command we lose the true meaning. I would describe it more as good advice; a source of knowledge, a tried and tested method of training, a wealth of experience, and an attitude that we should be open to the teaching we receive, to guide us on the path to our ultimate goal. After all, we all start from a different beginning, all trying to find the same destination. We have been given a map, on which to draw our own route, but we should not ignore the guide who can show us the way.

"Do not be overly ambitious". Tang Soo Do is described as a lifetime commitment. This may mean we have a lifetime to complete the course. However more importantly, it is not the length of time taken, but that we take each step one at a time, completing each stage before moving on to the next. I think that in today's society, we have a desire to progress to a high level of ability as quickly as we can, yet accepting the requirements of our martial art stabilises us, keeping our feet firmly on the ground.

"Those of us wishing to get somewhere fast, tend to miss the scenery along the way."

We should remind ourselves, each grading not only marks the end of one stage, but the time to move on to the next.

"Frequently inspect your own achievements". Not every achievement is a medal or certificate; not every achievement is a success story. Sometimes achievements are lessons that we learn on our journey through Tang Soo Do. From this we can see that without the knowledge gained from our experiences, we would not be the people we are today. Each 'achievement' has many aspects and the more we look at our achievements, the more we learn about ourselves.

Grandmaster would say that *"Regular review of prior learning's balanced with the frequent reflection of past achievements significantly builds self-esteem and confidence."*

"Repeatedly practice basic techniques already learned". This attitude can be connected with one mentioned previously **"Practice basic techniques all the time"**, but in some way there is a difference. At each different level of our experience we learn a number of basic techniques, without the continued practice of all that we have learned, some of these techniques will become neglected. A good example of this would be "Il Soo Sik Da Ryun", at each belt we learn five hand and foot techniques and five self defence techniques. When we move to the next belt those techniques we have already learnt must be added to, and not discarded.

"When you learn new techniques, learn thoroughly the theory and philosophy as well". What does this really mean?

A Theory is a supposition, an idea explaining something, a speculative thought.

Philosophy - is the pursuit of wisdom or knowledge, a study of the truth? So we must learn the purpose of the technique, the reason for doing it in a certain way, and the objective we are trying to achieve. For example, Hand technique number twenty-one, is made up of three basic moves.

The first being an in to out Soo Do block executed in a back stance.

The next move is to grab the wrist and pull the attacker forward, stepping forward into front stance.

Finally the third part is to execute an elbow strike to the attacker's spine.

A more in depth interpretation of the technique would be;

Move 1 - the object being to defend our self from the attacker's punch, executed in back stance to enable you to move more easily into the next part of the technique.

Move 2 - this forces the attacker to be off balance, whilst moving into a front stance to give you stability, the left hand grabbing the attacker's arm to maintain control.

Move 3 - the final move should contact the attacker's spine at the fifth vertebra or base of the neck area, which will disable the attacker.

"When you feel idle try to overcome this"

At different stages of martial art training some students may become bored, fed up, dissatisfied, impatient, stagnated, lacking in direction, and having no objective. I sometimes refer to it as "orange belt-itous" as it very often occurs around this stage. It is at such times that some students will find it difficult to continue, but as an instructor, part of our teaching should be to make them aware of these obstacles. These things are after all only obstacles and not brick walls, and are not insurmountable. We are often told that "You are the only one who can do it and that no one can do it for you", at no time is this more true. Those students who overcome these obstacles can be seen to blossom and grow.

After all "A winner never quits and a quitter never wins"

"Cleanliness is required after training. Keep yourself and your surroundings clean"

One of my students once asked, "If cleanliness is required after training, why do we sweep the hall before we start?" To which I did not have a ready answer. On thinking about this I wonder if this is perhaps a modern day ritual. As many of our dojangs are used for a number of activities, we need to prepare the area in which we will train. In a purpose built dojang we would find it as we had left it, therefore "cleanliness after training" would also be preparing the dojang for its next use.

Cleanliness also applies to the mind, spirit and body, as well our surroundings. With a clear mind and spirit we can focus our efforts and enthusiasm on our Tang Soo Do training.

Training for the last three years has most certainly enhanced both my mental and physical being, enabling me to overcome some difficult obstacles along the way. But writing this essay has given me a greater understanding of how I have achieved this next step to E Dan.

Lesley Allen Cho Dan

Tang Soo!