

I must say, after three years of attending Park's Tae Kwon Do, I have never felt better about myself and my life. Tae Kwon Do was something I wanted to take up ever since I was young. The reason I didn't do so earlier was because my parents believed, and I now agree, that the person I used to be was not suited for a sport such as this. In elementary school I was always in trouble. I was a bully with an explosive, violent temper and very self-conscious. I was always angry with someone, and this attitude and personal choices made life very hard for me, making things even worse. When I grew up a little and transferred to a new school where I knew no one, my anger was subdued sharply by the fact that I now feared the people who didn't know me, and I could no longer use violence to hide my own self-doubt. This caused a drastic change in my behavior as my temper began to boil while trapped beneath my fear. I became timid and nervous to talk to anyone. This is when my parents decided I might be ready for Tae Kwon Do at long last. Almost immediately, Park's positively influenced my life. The constant anger began to ebb away and soon I felt something comforting: happiness. As I learned important lessons, not only in the martial arts, but also in life skills, I left my shell and became more outgoing. Soon I had real friends that I talked with openly without the constant struggle for dominance. The weight I had put on during my depression was lost, and then regained in muscle. I no longer get in trouble at school, and I laugh with the people who I used to go to elementary school with as we remember who I used to be. Thinking back now, it amazes me how this dojang has become a second home to me. Without Park's Taekwondo I do not even want to think about what my life would be like. My dad has noticed this as well, and though we still argue, it is now something we can usually talk about in a calm manner. When I do get into trouble, Master Jacob Park takes me aside and talks to me about my choices, making me a better person each time. Slowly, I have

learned self-control, both emotionally and physically. I am becoming better at keeping my kicks in control to acquire better speed and accuracy. My forms are becoming easier to me as I understand why we use them, and I am able to keep up physical activity much longer than ever before. A mile-long walk that used to tire me out in minutes now turns to a several mile trek around town before I give it a second thought. I'm not done though. As Master Jacob Park once told me: "earning your black belt is not the completion of Tae Kwon Do training, it simply means that you are now ready to start." At the time, I did not understand what he meant by this, but now I realize that he was right. I am not able to keep up with the other black belts in class quite yet, but once I earn my own, I will be able to train and push myself even harder until I am able to. Earning your black belt means that you are physically and mentally capable of handling the stress of vigorous training. Knowing this, I plan on working several times as hard as before.

In my list of personal goals I must reach between my 1st and 2nd Dan, I have included:

Improving the speed and effectiveness of my reflexes in sparring with opponents, bettering my analytical skills during a match to be able to perceive and react to openings, extending the amount of time I can keep up my endurance during a sparring match, and the ability to turn my forms into a personalized demonstration of the skills I have gained. In an effort to realize the first, second, and third goals, I will research strategies and tactics, observe as many matches as possible, and above all, spar at every opportunity I have (during class, of course). To accomplish the fourth goal, I will practice my forms repeatedly, gradually adding my own influence and style to each move I perform. After achieving these goals, I wish to enter competitions and earn medals in sparring, form, and weapon form. I know that this path will be long, hard, and filled with frustration, but I know that with the support of Master Jacob Park, my fellow students, and

my loved ones, I will be able to stand triumphant in the knowledge that I have walked the path unfalteringly unafraid.