

# My Experience in Tae Kwon Do

By Laurie Ellwood

In order to express my feelings about this experience so far, I need to give you a little background about my journey to get here in the first place. Before I walked through that front door, I knew that I needed something to motivate me and challenge my body. I also knew I needed to retrain my mind and get past all those perceived limitations of clumsiness, injury, age, weight, and fear of failure. Now mind you, I had already lost sixty pounds, I had always been active, and I struggled through back injuries, arthritis, broken bones, stitches and all the other ills that come with years of wear and tear on the body too much weight lifting and softball. I needed something else to keep me moving. Most of my problems and injuries were probably due to overcompensating and over doing in some of those areas I mentioned above. My confidence in myself and in my body was way down even with my current successes. I feared that someday I might not be able to move at all. And even though I am not twenty any more, I now I am too young for that. Not doing anything is not an option.

So, I worked up my courage and started looking into Tae Kwon Do again. It is something I had always wanted to do, but just never got there. I tried a few times, but would visit or call area schools and either couldn't get any information, or felt like they didn't want to give me the time of day; I was discouraged by the whole process. Then I came to the front door of this dojang. Grand master (Sabom nim) Kim was on his way out and informed me they were closed. Figures right? So I apologized, but instead of just turning me away, he invited me in and we talked for a bit. I made an appointment to meet with him on the following Monday for a lesson. He wanted to make sure I liked it before I made a decision. I am thinking to myself, really? Well what a lesson it was! I was full of sweat, but I felt good, and I was hooked. He even told me he thought I was in pretty good shape for my age. Ok I am thinking I like this man a lot. I am encouraged; maybe I really can do this.

Before my first real class, I watched the kids in the previous class. They were lit up, excited, polite and very talented and I became even more inspired. Then my class started and I realized I was probably one of the oldest people in the room, and I must surely be the slowest. I felt a little overwhelmed and out of place, but I turned around and a very mature and polite "kid" (I call everyone a kid now so I hope I don't offend anyone) introduced himself, and then another, and then the instructors, and then Grandmaster Kim. Everyone said hello, shook my hand, and we went forward from there. These "kids" along with the instructors are very patient and responsive and they have helped me along every step of the way. I am grateful and humbled by their spirit. I look to them to teach me, and I learn more every day. I can feel small changes taking place in me and I look forward to what the next lesson may bring. I can feel small changes taking place in me and I look forward to what the next lesson may bring. With each class that passes I am testing myself. How many push-ups can I do? Can my body bend that way? Can I kick a little higher? Will my knees and back hold up? Can I learn the forms and steps? Can I remember everything? Can I really do this? Now I am not sure if I will ever

reach that black belt, but I am sure I will aspire to it, one test, one belt, one step at a time. Can I do this? I most certainly believe I can try. Then I hear these words, "I can do it, you can do it, we can do it, Tae Kwon!" and I smile and think, maybe, just maybe I can.