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May-3-2011

Like most Asian children, I've dabbled in martial arts through out my life. I went to karate classes for a while when I was little, punching the air with childish enthusiasm. But I was a naturally lazy child, and by the time I hit high school I could barely be bothered to do high school P.E class.

The "watershed" moment came when one day my father suddenly, and rather rudely, threw me into a kendo dojo. He had gotten tired of seeing me loaf around the house, and he thought that kendo would force me to exercise a bit.

I was originally determined to resist. I had no interest in beating up other people with wooden sticks, and I scoffed at the "myths" that claimed martial arts improved focus and concentration. But then the kendo instructor did something rather radical. In our first lesson, instead of telling us to practice waving our kendo sticks around, he told us to stand in place for twenty minutes. It proved to be surprisingly mentally exhausting. When I saw older, more experienced students very serenely remain motionless for hours, I suddenly realized just how unfocused, undisciplined I was in comparison. It was a bit disturbing to realize, considering how I used to pride myself on being able to crank out history essays in ten-hour stints. Suddenly my ability to frantically type fifty words a minute seemed somewhat shallow.

When I went back to Taiwan over the winter and discussed possible second semester P.E options with my instructor, he rather flatly ordered me to do Tai Chi. Like always, I was rather reluctant. Tai chi seemed boring in comparison to all the other things I could be doing. But two years in the dojo had taught me it wasn't exactly wise to disagree with one's instructor, and I mutely did as I was told.

While one semester of tai chi hasn't exactly given me any real skills (I still flop through the routine like a dead fish), it has made me conscious of concentration and balance. Through the disaster that is my tai chi, there *were* moments of

startling clarity and calm. I think that was what my instructor was trying to show me, and I'm beginning to realize it isn't something so easily conveyed with words.

In modern society that so prizes mental intelligence and physical prowess, we often forget just how inexplicably linked the two are. The stereotypes of weak geek and dumb jock have made us lose sight of how the fundamental basics of control and concentration are universal. The concentration, patience, and determination needed to cram through a textbook are the same qualities needed to correctly perform any given physical feat.

I can't say I've fallen in love with Tai Chi, but I will continue to pursue it nonetheless. I *want* to attain that inner control and concentration that Tai Chi teaches. I suppose it'll be a bit easier to find a studio or a park in Taiwan where Tai Chi is a commonly practiced art form and where I probably won't get laughed at *too* much for flopping around like a fish. 😊

Thank you Instructor Kin, for teaching me. While I do spend most of your class flustered and a bit overwhelmed, it was an experience that has shaped my life and will influence me for years to come.

Best of luck in the next class! Hopefully most of the students don't flop around as horribly as I did.