

The Role of Taekwondo Coaches in Communicating with Students

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Coaches are considered reliable figures in children's lives. They are not only sport activity instructors but also life counselors to their students, helping them build meaningful, constructive, and fulfilling lives. Therefore, students look up to them as leaders and role models. Students often feel more comfortable and open when communicating with their sports coaches, as they perceive fewer barriers compared to school teachers. Drawing from my experience in teaching, instructing, and coaching since the age of fifteen, I'd like to share some key topics that Taekwondo coaches should prioritize to have a positive impact on their students' lifestyles and individual development.

Creating a mindset of having big goals in life is one of the main responsibilities of a coach, trainer, or instructor. From my personal experience teaching Taekwondo in three countries—Iran, Korea, and Armenia—with students from the USA to Africa, Europe, and East Asia, I've seen firsthand how sensitive children are. Even a word or a simple act of encouragement can create a lifelong hope in their minds, or conversely, a lifelong unforgettable trauma. Therefore, coaches should prioritize a high standard of attitude and manner over technical ability and skills. A poorly behaved coach can make a student's time in the sport miserable and destroy their future and hopes. Conversely, a very professional and well-mannered coach can inspire hope, passion, and prosperity in their students' lives.

Children experience different life adventures based on their environment and family structure. In the societies where I've had the opportunity to teach Taekwondo, including Iran, Korea, and Armenia, parents expect their children to do their best. While the level of intensity is higher in Korea compared to the other two countries, parents in all three have high expectations for success and achievement.

Therefore, coaches and instructors must carefully analyze students' lifestyles to ensure that their time and financial investments lead to lifelong accomplishments, rather than just medals and sports event awards.

The main principle and pillar of Taekwondo is discipline. To cultivate sustainable discipline and a strong, victorious mindset in young Taekwondo practitioners, coaches must instill this mindset in their students' minds. They can do this by rewarding students for their respect, manners, and etiquette. For example, rewarding students who arrive on time for training, help their parents with household chores, assist other students with studies or social activities, or excel in academics or sports. These rewards create a sense of pride and recognition, encouraging children to adopt a disciplined lifestyle and share it with their friends, ultimately benefiting society.

In addition to the challenges and difficulties students face based on their environment and family circumstances, they may encounter significant obstacles early in life. For example, an elementary school student might experience bullying or gaslighting at home or school. These children, more than anything, need a safe and secure environment and a trusted adult figure. This person could be a sports coach, school teacher, or music instructor who can provide mental and spiritual support to help these kids feel strong and resilient.

I've personally worked with students who faced bullying and gaslighting at both school and home. My dedication to their mental and spiritual health and safety, coupled with constant care and compassion, helped them transform from a fearful and anxious mindset into a confident, constructive, and victorious one. This ultimately led them to become national champions.

I remember a student named Yunkyung in South Korea. She was just eleven years old, incredibly hardworking, and committed to her training. I could sense from her facial expressions and behavior that she was struggling with challenges at home and school. To better understand her situation, I asked the students to write me letters sharing their thoughts and feelings, as some might be hesitant to discuss their problems openly.

When I received Yunkyung's letter, she revealed that her classmates bullied her, calling her names, and gaslighted her by telling her she couldn't be successful. She also expressed her gratitude for my support, saying, "I love you, Master Hesam, because you call me the most beautiful girl and tell me I will be very successful. That's why I train so hard and try my best at school to get good grades to make you happy, Master Hesam." It was the most impactful letter I've ever received from a student.

This experience underscores the profound influence a coach's words and actions can have on a student's life and mindset. Coaches can inspire and uplift young people, helping them overcome adversity and thrive.

Competitiveness is a strong motivator for children. Based on my experience teaching children, they love to compete with each other. Any activity that involves competition, such as a warm-up running race or a speed kick performance, excites them and brings out their full passion and focus. They strive to win and demonstrate high levels of energy and speed.

To instill discipline in children, we can leverage this competitive spirit. They should approach activities with the same passion and focus as they do competitive events. Coaches can create activities that spark interest and enthusiasm, such as helping parents with chores and receiving a reward like extra recreation time or a field trip, or assisting teachers at school and earning a discipline medal at the Taekwondo academy.

To further incentivize discipline, we can establish city, province, or country-level etiquette awards for students who consistently demonstrate discipline. Collaborating with city officials, these awards can be integrated into existing programs, encouraging children to participate in activities that promote discipline and positive behavior. By working together, we can create a supportive environment that fosters discipline and character development in young people.

Non-verbal discipline teachings of instructors are powerful tools that children observe and learn from. Coaches' appearance, grooming, and behavior significantly influence students. When coaches present themselves as neat, positive, and hardworking individuals, students aspire to emulate their lifestyle. They may adopt similar clothing styles, hairstyles, and communication mannerisms. This non-verbal communication places a significant responsibility on coaches to serve as positive role models for their students.

Teaching children is a valuable and sacred opportunity. Children are the future leaders of the world, and coaches, especially Taekwondo coaches and instructors, have a vital role in shaping their character and aspirations. By fostering a culture of brightness, constructiveness, glory, prosperity, and unity, coaches can inspire students to reach their full potential. To fulfill this responsibility, coaches must continuously seek knowledge and experience to equip themselves with the necessary tools to support students' dreams and goals, working collaboratively with parents with compassion and understanding.

In conclusion, coaches play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of young people. By embodying the values of discipline, respect, and perseverance, coaches can inspire students to reach their full potential and contribute positively to society. As a Taekwondo champion, I am committed to passing on my skills and knowledge to the next generation of athletes. Effective communication, discipline, and leadership are essential qualities for any successful coach.