

# First Dan Black Belt Essay

Damon O'Donnell

When I began to compose this essay I set out to assess the ways that training at KMAC had changed life and my overall make up as a person. There were of course the obvious physical proficiencies and benefits that training in martial arts gives a practitioner.

However the more I thought about it, the more I was able to note that other less conspicuous returns have had more of an influence on my everyday life.

There are many naturally talented and gifted martial artists who practice at KMAC. Some student's here can throw down techniques that are so good that I find myself slack jawed with admiration. Many people who practice here seem like they were born to do this.

Unfortunately, I am not one of these people.

I'm the kind of mule that needs to come in day after day, week after week, bracing it out until sometimes something eventually clicks. When I do finally get something right I am completely elated and remotivated to press on and step up for another extra large helping of steaming verbal abuse.

It's through this process that I have gained some of the most valuable and unexpected benefits. One of them is the ability to be more patient with myself. I like to get stuff done, force things through and check junk off my list. That approach doesn't quite work here. It took much of my first year here to figure that out. I learned to allow the techniques to work and relax a little.

But just a little.

This newfound patience with myself has transcended my practice at KMAC and into my day to day dealings with other people. I'm a little more willing to listen and a little less adamant about pushing my own agenda.

Today my buttons are a little harder to push than they were when I walked this door.

Thank you

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