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Red Sash Essay
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A little less than three years ago I decided I needed to get in shape. I had finished school a year prior, was settled into my new job and like many fresh college grads found my cushy job adding a bit of “cush” in places I didn’t need it. I knew from previous experience that simply “going to the gym” did not work for me. I needed an activity that would challenge me mentally as well as physically. I needed something that gave my workouts a purpose. I needed something I could be passionate about.

In the past, I had taken dance, martial arts, yoga and even some aerobics classes, but the experience was pretty much the same. Pay someone to pat you on the back and say “great job” no matter how poorly you perform. Praise means nothing when it’s given out for free. I had always enjoyed the balance between form and function in martial arts, so I decided to give it another go. After previewing several different schools in the area I decided that the Boulder Kung Fu academy might have more to offer than your average martial arts school, and boy was I right.

After a few months of classes I started to wonder if I was cut out for this level of physical activity. But every day I was sore and every day I improved, and I reminded myself that the point of all this was to improve my physical condition, and it was working. I felt myself becoming stronger and fitter within the first few months, greatly due to the instructor, Sifu Wang, who never provides empty praise, and his criticism is always extremely constructive. He seems to know exactly how much to push and when to let up, and he taught me how to test my own limits both physically and mentally. His traditional style of teaching Kung Fu demands much from his students. As a result, many do not stick around long, but those who do benefit greatly from their perseverance.

Now, after nearly three years studying under Sifu Wang, I am in the best shape I have ever been. I’ve gained confidence in my ability at physical activities, and as a result, have picked up some new recreations to help keep fit, sometimes in sports I never dreamed I could play. Kung Fu has even improved my overall coordination. I was never skilled at sports or athletics, but without even practicing I find myself catching, throwing and kicking with better accuracy than I ever thought possible. I believe now that it was never the case that I was not athletic, but that I was not fit enough to expose my athletic potential.

Kung Fu is one of the best things that have happened to me. Not only have I found a new passion for staying in shape, but I also feel like a door of possibilities has been opened to me.