





MILE HIGH KARATE®

SIXTEEN WEEKS TO BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

THE BLACK BELT MINDSET

Character lessons and success skills for new students, children and adults.

GRAND MASTER STEPHEN OLIVER & GRAND MASTER JEFF SMITH







MILE HIGH KARATE®

MILE HIGH KARATE® · SIXTEEN WEEKS TO BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

THE BLACK BELT MINDSET

Character lessons and success skills for new students, children and adults.

GRAND MASTER STEPHEN OLIVER & GRAND MASTER JEFF SMITH

The Black Belt Mindset: Sixteen Weeks to Black Belt and Beyond. Character Lessons and Success Skills for New Students at Mile High Karate.

Copyright © 2026 Stephen Oliver and Jeff Smith. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the authors, except for brief quotations in reviews.

Mile High Karate® is owned by Mile High Karate, LLC. The Mile High Karate Student Creed was written by Grand Master Stephen Oliver.

For use by students, families and instructors of Mile High Karate. MileHighKarate.com

First edition, 2026

To Grand Master Jhoon Rhee (1932–2018),

who taught both of us that the kicks and punches are only the beginning.

And to every student who has ever walked through the door of a Mile High Karate school for the first time.

ON COMMITMENT

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too.

All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. I have learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

WHATEVER YOU CAN DO OR DREAM YOU CAN, BEGIN IT. BOLDNESS HAS GENIUS, POWER AND MAGIC IN IT. BEGIN IT NOW."

WILLIAM HUTCHISON MURRAY, *THE SCOTTISH HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION*

INSIDE

CONTENTS

- A Letter to New Students 8
- How to Use This Book 10
- The Mile High Karate Student Creed 12

TEST CYCLE ONE · WEEKS 1–8

01 Aim Before You Kick 14
Goal Attainment & Positive Self-Expectancy · Perseverance

02 Never Quit 23
Definite Commitment · Indomitable Spirit

03 Knowledge, Honesty, Strength 32
Unshakable Character & Personal Honesty · Integrity

04 See the Black Belt in the Mirror 40
Visualization · Courage

05 Expect Good Things 48
Total Self-Confidence · Courage

06 What You Say When You Talk to Yourself 56
Positive Self-Talk · Indomitable Spirit

07 Do It Without Being Told 64
No Excuses · Perseverance

08 Courtesy and Respect 72
Positive Respect · Courtesy

TEST CYCLE TWO · WEEKS 9–16

09 Know Yourself 82
Goal Attainment & Positive Self-Expectancy · Modesty

10 The Fire Inside 90
Definite Commitment · Indomitable Spirit

11 An Action Is Worth a Thousand Pictures 98
Unshakable Character & Personal Honesty · Integrity

12 Like Who You Are 106
Total Self-Confidence · Modesty

13 Walk Like a Black Belt 114
Visualization · Courage

14 You Are in Charge of You 123
Positive Self-Talk · Courtesy

15 Small Steps, Every Day 131
No Excuses · Perseverance

16 The Black Belt Is a Beginning 140
All Eight Together (Black Belt and Beyond) · All six Principles

FOR REFERENCE

- The Eight Black Belt Success Skills 149
- The Nine Qualities of a Black Belt 149
- The Daily Dozen 151
- Count Kick Practice 152
- Grand Master Jhoon Rhee 153
- Grand Master Stephen Oliver 156
- Grand Master Jeff Smith 158
- A Short History of Mile High Karate 160

A Note of Thanks 163

A LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDER

WELCOME TO THE BLACK BELT MINDSET



Grand Master Stephen Oliver, 10th Degree Black Belt, Founder and CEO

Welcome to Mile High Karate.

I still remember my first day of karate. It was 1969, at the Jhoon Rhee Institute in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Like every new student, I did not know how to stand, how to bow, or how to make a fist the right way.

I did not know it then, but that first day changed my whole life.

Since then I have opened schools, taught thousands of students, and watched more than 1,000 of them earn their Black Belts. The youngest was 5 years old. The oldest was 76. They were all different. But every one of them had something in common. They learned that a Black Belt is not something you wear. It is something you become.

That is what this book is about.

At Mile High Karate, we teach kicks, punches, blocks, forms and self-defense. You will learn all of those things. But here is the secret. **The kicks and punches are the delivery system. Character is the cargo.** We use karate to build strong people. Strong in the body. Strong in the mind. Strong in the heart.

My co-author, Grand Master Jeff Smith, knows this better than anyone. He was a world champion fighter for six years. He trained six hours a day for almost twenty years. His story proves that champions are not born. They are built, one practice at a time.

In this book you will find sixteen short lessons, one for each week of our sixteen-week Black Belt Mindset program. Each one teaches a quality of a

Black Belt and one of the eight Black Belt Success Skills. Each one has a true story from my life or from Grand Master Smith's life. And each one gives you one simple challenge to do this week, at home, at school or at work.

But before any of that, I want you to do the most important thing a new student can do. **Set your goal to be a Black Belt.** Not "maybe." Not "we'll see." Every one of the more than 1,000 Black Belts I have watched graduate made that decision early, most of them as white belts. Over the years I have learned that "maybe" almost always turns into "no." So decide now. Then let this book help you get there, and beyond.

You do not have to be perfect. Nobody starts out perfect. You only have to do one thing: **keep showing up and keep getting a little bit better.**

I am proud of you for starting. Now let's get to work.

Stephen Oliver

Grand Master Stephen Oliver · Founder, Mile High Karate

START HERE

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



Mile High Karate students and families. The Black Belt is a family goal.

This book is a sixteen-week program. Each chapter is one week. The sixteen weeks are split into two test cycles of eight weeks, the same rhythm as your belt tests. When Week 16 ends, the program starts again at Week 1, and you go a little deeper each time around.

You can start any week. Every chapter stands on its own. If you join us in Week 11, start with Week 11. You do not need to read the other chapters first.

Every week has the same parts:

- **The Big Idea.** One sentence that sums up the whole lesson.
- **A true story** from Grand Master Oliver or Grand Master Smith.
- **Black Belt Success Skill.** One of the eight skills every Black Belt uses for life.
- **Live the Creed.** One line of the Mile High Karate Student Creed and one Principle of the Black Belt to live this week.
- **From Grand Master Smith.** A lesson from a world champion.
- **Black Belt and Beyond.** This week's step toward your Black Belt goal, and the goal beyond it.
- **In Class This Week.** The Key Word and the call and response you will shout in class.
- **How a Black Belt Does It.** Simple steps you can use right away, including this week's challenge.
- **Say It Out Loud.** "I am" words to say to yourself every day.
- **Words to Know, For Parents and Adult Students, and Remember.**

Use the workbook. The Black Belt Mindset Workbook has one lesson for each week. It has questions, a Black Belt goal page and a seven-day Home Challenge. Finish the challenge, have a parent sign it, and turn it in to earn an attitude stripe. Bring your workbook to class every week.

Change one thing this week. Reading a chapter will not change your life. Doing the challenge will. Seven days of doing one small thing on purpose is how a new habit starts.

For young students: Ask a parent or older brother or sister to read the chapter with you. Take turns reading out loud. Stop and talk about the questions.

For teens and adults: Read the chapter, then do the workbook lesson. The questions marked "Teens & Adults" are for you.

For parents: You are your child's most important teacher, and the Black Belt is a family goal. Read the "For Parents and Adult Students" box each week. Use the same words at home that we use in class. When your child hears the same message at home and at school, it sticks.

WRITTEN BY GRAND MASTER STEPHEN OLIVER

THE MILE HIGH KARATE STUDENT CREED

Mile High Karate students say it together in class. Learn it by heart, and live it every day.

1. *"I develop myself physically and mentally, based on the MILE HIGH KARATE SPIRIT."*
2. *"I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health."*
3. *"I intend to develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others."*
4. *"I intend to use what I learn in class constructively and defensively, and never be abusive or offensive."*

PRINCIPLES OF THE BLACK BELT

MODESTY
Be proud of your work without bragging.

COURTESY
Use good manners and kindness with everyone, every time.

INTEGRITY
Do the right thing, even when no one is watching.

PERSEVERANCE
Keep going when it gets hard.

COURAGE
Do the right thing even when you feel afraid.

INDOMITABLE SPIRIT
Never let anything beat your spirit. Never give up.



WEEKS 1–8

TEST CYCLE ONE

Set the goal. Make the commitment. See it, expect it, and do it without being told.

01 AIM BEFORE YOU KICK

02 NEVER QUIT

03 KNOWLEDGE, HONESTY, STRENGTH

04 SEE THE BLACK BELT IN THE MIRROR

05 EXPECT GOOD THINGS

06 WHAT YOU SAY WHEN YOU TALK TO YOURSELF

07 DO IT WITHOUT BEING TOLD

08 COURTESY AND RESPECT

WEEK 1 · TEST CYCLE 1

AIM BEFORE YOU KICK

POSITIVE SELF-DIRECTION

SUCCESS SKILL
GOAL ATTAINMENT & POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

PRINCIPLE
PERSEVERANCE

KEY WORD
TARGET

> *"A goal is not always meant to be reached, it often serves simply as something to aim at."*
>
> — BRUCE LEE

THE BIG IDEA

Pick a clear goal, write it down, and take a step toward it every day.

Before you throw a kick, where do you look?

At the target.

If you kick without looking, you might hit the target. You might hit the wall. You might hit your instructor! That is why every good martial artist aims first.

Life works the same way. If you do not know where you are going, you will end up somewhere. It just might not be somewhere you want to be.

Knowing where you are going, and steering yourself there, is called **self-direction**. It means you are the one holding the steering wheel of your life.

This week, you are going to aim at the biggest target in this school. Your Black Belt. And then you are going to aim past it.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO CHOICES

I have been teaching since 1974. I have watched more than 1,000 students earn their Black Belts at Mile High Karate. Here is something every one of

them had in common.

They set the goal at white belt.

Not at brown belt. Not "someday." They decided early that they were going to be Black Belts. They made it a definite goal, not a maybe.

Every new student and every new family makes a choice, even if they don't know they are making it. There are only two choices. Choice one: train for a little while, then move on. Choice two: become a Black Belt.

There is no third choice. "Maybe" sounds like a third choice, but it isn't. Over the years I have learned that **maybe means no**. It just takes longer to find out.

Here is the good news. Getting to Black Belt is not as hard as it sounds. For a young child, it is no harder than going from second grade to sixth grade. You don't go to school wondering, month to month, whether you will finish sixth grade. You just keep going to class, and the grades keep coming. Karate works the same way. Come to class two or three times a week, do your homework, and the belts keep coming.

A YOUNG MAN WITH A GOAL

In 1956, a young man from Korea got off a plane in San Francisco. His name was Jhoon Rhee. He was in America to train with the U.S. Air Force in San Marcos, Texas.

He did not have much. He did not have a school. He did not have students. But he had a goal. He wanted to share Tae Kwon Do with America.

He started teaching small classes. Then a club at a college in Texas. In 1962, he opened his first school in Washington, D.C. Later, he taught members of Congress. He became known as the Father of American Tae Kwon Do.

Years later, one of his students, a kid from Tulsa, would open Mile High Karate in Colorado. That kid was me.

Grand Master Rhee did not get there by accident. He aimed first.

WHAT IS A GOAL?

A **goal** is something you want to do or become, that you are willing to work for.

"I want to earn my orange belt by summer" is a goal.

"I want to read 10 books this year" is a goal.

"I want to walk two miles without stopping" is a goal.

A good goal is clear. "I want to be better at karate" is a nice idea, but it is fuzzy. "I want to know my first form by heart in four weeks" is clear. You know exactly what you are aiming at, and you will know when you hit it.

EVERY GOAL MUST BE SMART

At Mile High Karate, we check every goal to make sure it is **SMART**. Each letter stands for one word.

- **S is for Specific.** Say exactly what you want. Not "a belt." Instead: "my 1st Degree Black Belt."
- **M is for Measurable.** You can tell when you get there. A belt is easy to measure. It's either around your waist or it isn't!
- **A is for Attainable.** It is possible for you, if you do the work. A Black Belt is attainable. Students from age 5 to age 76 have earned one at our school.
- **R is for Realistic.** The plan fits your real life. Two or three classes a week, plus 15 to 30 minutes of home practice, fits almost anyone's week.
- **T is for Tangible.** You can see it and touch it. A Black Belt is something you can hold in your hands.

A goal also needs a **date.** At Mile High Karate, it takes about 48 months of steady training to earn a 1st Degree Black Belt. Then it takes about 30 more months to earn a 2nd Degree Black Belt. So if you start today, you can write down a real date for both. A goal with a date stops being a wish and starts being a plan.

THE FOUR BLACK BELT STEPS

We also teach four steps for reaching any goal. They work for a five-year-old and for a 75-year-old. They work in karate, at school, and at work.

Step 1: Say it out loud. Tell someone your goal. Tell your instructor. Tell your mom or dad. Tell your class. When you say a goal out loud, it stops being a quiet wish and starts being a promise.

Step 2: Put it in writing. Write your goal on paper. At our school, we use a **vision sheet**. A vision sheet is a page where you write your goals and maybe draw a picture of them. Hang it where you will see it every day, like your bedroom wall or the fridge. A goal you see every day is a goal you remember every day.

Step 3: Train like a Black Belt. A goal without action is just a dream. Do the homework. Practice your forms. Come to class. Do a little every day, even when nobody is watching.

Step 4: Never give up. You will have bad days. You will want to stop. Black Belts have those days too. The difference is, they keep going.

Imagine a boy named Sam. He is nine. His goal is to break a board at his next belt test. He tells his instructor (Step 1). He writes "Break my board!" on his vision sheet and draws a picture of it (Step 2). He practices his kick every night (Step 3). The first time he tries, the board does not break. He tries again. And again. On the third try, *crack* (Step 4).

Now imagine his grandmother. Her goal is to walk a 5K with her family. She tells them (Step 1). She writes it on the calendar (Step 2). She walks a little farther every day (Step 3). On race day, her knees hurt, but she finishes (Step 4).

Same four steps. Different goals.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I never thought that three years ago, when I started in Mile High Karate that I would ever be sitting and writing about my goals after I got my Black Belt. In fact, I never really thought that I would ever even get there... Well, I just kept working towards a goal that seemed so far away, getting closer and closer..."

ERIC MUROTAKE, BLACK BELT ESSAY

AIM PAST THE TARGET

When you punch a board, your instructor will tell you something strange. Do not aim *at* the board. Aim *past* it.

If you aim at the board, your punch slows down right before it gets there. If you aim past it, your punch goes straight through.

Goals work the same way. Grand Master Rhee taught his instructors a hard lesson about this. He noticed that many students who earned a Black Belt quit about 60 days later. Sixty days. After years of training.

Why? Because the Black Belt was the end of their aim. They hit the target, and they stopped.

So he taught us to always aim past the next target. A student going for a Black Belt should already be thinking about the next degree. When you reach one goal, have the next one ready.

That is why at Mile High Karate we don't just say "Black Belt." We say **"Black Belt and beyond."**

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

GOAL ATTAINMENT & POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

Winning Black Belts expect good things to happen, and then they work to make them happen. Over the long run, people usually get what they really expect. If you expect to quit, you will find a reason. If you expect to earn your Black Belt, you will find a way.

This skill has two parts. First, set a clear, written goal. Second, expect to reach it, and act like it. A student with this skill says "**when** I get my Black Belt," never "if."

Start today. Every time you talk about your Black Belt this week, use the word "when."

LIVE THE CREED

"I develop myself physically and mentally, based on the MILE HIGH KARATE SPIRIT."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **PERSEVERANCE**

Look at the very first line of our Student Creed. It says you develop yourself, body and mind. Nobody can do that for you, and nobody does it in a day. That is why a goal matters. A goal turns "I develop myself" into a plan with a date on it. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Perseverance**: you keep aiming at your target even when it feels far away.

WHERE ARE YOU STEERING?

Every day, you make choices. Play or practice? Snack or water? Complain or help? Each choice steers you a little bit. Self-direction means making those small choices with your goal in mind.

You do not have to be perfect. You just have to keep turning the wheel toward where you want to go.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith has a simple way to explain goals. He compares them to walking toward the horizon, the far-off line where the land meets the sky.

In his words: "You'll pick a point and as you walk towards that point you can see farther."

Think about what that means. When you are a white belt, you can only see the next belt. That is fine. Pick that point and walk toward it. When you get there, something amazing happens. You can see farther. Now you see the next goal, and the one after that.

Grand Master Smith lived this. He picked a point: become a champion. He walked toward it, training six hours a day for almost 20 years. He won the PKA World Light Heavyweight title in 1974 and held it until 1980. Then he could see farther. He became a teacher, a school owner, and today he is Chief of Instruction at Mile High Karate.

You do not need to see the whole path today. Just pick your point and start walking.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week you are going to do what every Black Belt in our school did at the very beginning. You are going to **set the goal.**

In your workbook, find the **SMART Goal Worksheet**. Sit down with your family and fill it in together:

- The approximate date you will earn your **1st Degree Black Belt** (about 48 months from when you started).
- The approximate date you will earn your **2nd Degree Black Belt** (about 30 months after that).
- The benefits you want most, like confidence, fitness or leadership.

- Your action plan: classes each week, testing every two months, and home practice.

Then sign the Personal Commitment, and have a parent sign too. Bring it to your instructor.

Why both dates? Because the 2nd Degree date is your aim past the target. When you already know what comes after Black Belt, you will never be one of the students who stops 60 days later. You will be a Black Belt, and beyond.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

TARGET

INSTRUCTOR **"WHERE ARE YOU GOING?"**

STUDENTS **"BLACK BELT AND BEYOND!"**

You will kick a target while aiming at a spot past the pad, and you will call out your goal before each kick. Then you will tell a partner your Black Belt goal, starting with the word "when."

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Sets the goal today.** Before tonight, tell one person, "I am going to be a Black Belt."
2. **Makes the goal SMART.** Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Tangible, with a date.
3. **Uses all four steps.** Say it. Write it. Train for it. Never give up.
4. **Keeps a vision sheet.** Goals go where they can be seen every day.
5. **Aims past the target.** Before reaching one goal, a Black Belt is already choosing the next.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: SAY YOUR BLACK BELT GOAL OUT LOUD TO SOMEONE EVERY DAY FOR SEVEN DAYS, AND TAKE ONE STEP TOWARD IT EACH DAY.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM GOING TO BE A BLACK BELT, AND BEYOND.
- I KNOW MY GOAL, AND I KNOW MY DATE.
- I SAY MY GOAL, I WRITE MY GOAL, AND I TRAIN FOR MY GOAL.
- I AM A PERSON WHO NEVER GIVES UP.

WORDS TO KNOW

GOAL
something you want to do or become and are willing to work for.

SELF-DIRECTION
steering your own life toward your goals.

SMART
Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Tangible; a test for a good goal.

VISION SHEET
a page where you write and draw your goals so you see them every day.

HORIZON
the far-off line where the land seems to meet the sky.

DEFINITE
clear and certain, with no "maybe."

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults set goals all the time, then let them fade. Use the same four steps you are teaching your child. Say your goal to someone who will ask about it. Write it where you will see it daily. Schedule the action. Plan for the bad days before they come.

Parents, young children supply the enthusiasm. You supply the long-term vision. A seven-year-old can't picture four years from now, but you can. Ask yourself: "If my child were an 11-year-old Black Belt, with the confidence and focus that come with it, is that something we want for our family?" If the answer is yes, make it a family goal. Fill in the SMART Goal Worksheet together this week, sign it, and post the dates on the fridge. Then say "when," never "if."

REMEMBER

- ✓ Aim before you kick. Know your goal before you start.
- ✓ There are only two choices. Maybe means no.
- ✓ Every goal must be SMART, and every goal needs a date.
- ✓ The four Black Belt steps: say it, write it, train for it, never give up.
- ✓ Aim past the target: Black Belt and beyond.

WEEK 2 · TEST CYCLE 1

NEVER QUIT

PERSEVERANCE

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
DEFINITE COMMITMENT	INDOMITABLE SPIRIT	COMMIT

> *"Defeat is a state of mind; no one is ever defeated until defeat has been accepted as a reality."*
>
> — BRUCE LEE

THE BIG IDEA

Champions get knocked down like everyone else. They decide ahead of time to get back up.

I have been teaching karate since 1974. In all that time, I have seen thousands of students start. I have watched more than 1,000 of them earn their Black Belt at Mile High Karate. The youngest was 5 years old. The oldest was 76.

Here is what I have learned. The students who made it to Black Belt were not always the most talented. They were not always the strongest, the fastest, or the most flexible. Many of them struggled. Some of them wanted to quit more than once.

The difference was simple. **They didn't quit.**

That sounds easy. It isn't. Every student hits a hard spot. A form won't stick. A kick won't go high. Homework piles up. Work gets busy. You feel tired, or bored, or embarrassed. A little voice in your head says, "Maybe this isn't for me."

This week is about what you do when you hear that voice. And the secret is this: you decide what you will do **before** you ever hear it.

INTERESTED OR COMMITTED?

There is a big difference between being interested and being committed.

An **interested** person shows up when it is easy. When it's fun, when they feel like it, when nothing else is going on.

A **committed** person shows up no matter what. They made the decision once, and now they just keep it.

Think about brushing your teeth. You don't wake up every morning and ask, "Do I feel like brushing my teeth today?" You decided a long time ago. It's not a question anymore. That is commitment.

When a student is only interested in karate, every hard day becomes a vote. "Should I go to class today?" Sooner or later, a bad day wins the vote.

When a student is committed to Black Belt, there is no vote. The question was answered. The only question left is, "How do I get better today?"

THE MOMENT YOU COMMIT

A mountain climber named W. H. Murray wrote about this many years ago. We have shared his words with Mile High Karate families for decades. Here is the most important part:

> *"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too."*

"Providence" is an old word. Here it means that good things start to come your way. Murray found that once he truly decided, help started showing up. People, chances and ideas came along that never would have appeared while he was still deciding.

I have seen this happen with our students over and over. A family decides, "We are going to be Black Belts." Suddenly they find the time. They work out the rides. The child stops asking, "Do I have to go?" and starts asking, "When is my next test?" The decision itself makes the road easier.

HARD TIMES SHOW WHO YOU ARE

I have told my instructors the same thing since 1983: **"Difficulties don't create character, they reveal it."**

That means hard times don't turn you into a different person. They show who you already are on the inside. Anybody can show up when class is fun and everything is going well. The real question is, what do you do when it's hard?

Here is a kid example. Imagine you are learning a new form. You keep forgetting the middle part. Your friend already knows it. You feel frustrated. One student says, "I'm bad at forms," and stops trying. Another student says, "I don't know it yet," and practices the middle part ten times at home. In a month, which student knows the form?

Here is an adult example. Picture someone who starts training at age 40. Their knees are stiff. The younger students kick higher. After two weeks they feel sore and silly. One adult says, "I'm too old for this." Another says, "I'll be a little better next week than I was this week." Remember, our oldest Black Belt was 76.

The hard spot is not a sign you should quit. It is the part of the path that makes the Black Belt worth having.

THE CHAMPION WHO QUIT

Now I want to tell you something about my co-author, Grand Master Jeff Smith, that surprises people.

Grand Master Smith became one of the greatest fighters in history. He was the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion from 1974 until 1980. He had 32 wins and only 1 loss, with 16 knockouts. He was the first person ever to receive the Bruce Lee Award.

But when he first started karate, as a teenager in Texas, he quit.

He trained for about two months. Then other sports and a part-time job got in the way, and he stopped going. That was almost the end of the story.

But he had a friend named Johnny Woolley who kept after him. Johnny kept telling him to come back. Finally, he did. And when he walked back in, he made himself a promise. In his own words: "I'm going to get back into it this time, and I'm not going to quit."

Look at that sentence. That is not "I'll try." That is a **definite commitment**. And he kept that promise for the rest of his life.

Think about what the world would have missed if he had stayed home. No world titles. No champion's story. No Grand Master Smith teaching students at Mile High Karate today. All of it came from one decision: **to come back and stay.**

If you have ever quit something, that doesn't make you a quitter. What matters is what you decide next.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

DEFINITE COMMITMENT

Winning Black Belts decide for sure. They don't keep the door half open with "maybe" or "I'll try." Once they commit to a dream, they work steadily to reach it.

Committed people also think about the **reward**, not the fear. They picture the day they tie on their Black Belt. They don't spend their energy picturing everything that could go wrong. You always move toward whatever you think about most.

Start today. Take the words "I'll try" out of your vocabulary this week. When someone asks if you'll do something, answer "I will" or "I won't." Then keep your word.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **INDOMITABLE SPIRIT**

Our Student Creed says you develop self-discipline to bring out the best in yourself and in others. Quitting does the opposite. It brings out the worst. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Indomitable Spirit**, a spirit that cannot be beaten. Grand Master Smith had it when he came back to karate and never quit again. You can have it too. It starts with one decision.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

On October 1, 1975, Grand Master Jeff Smith fought Karriem Allah for a heavyweight title. The fight was shown on closed-circuit TV on the same card as the famous Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier fight, called the "Thrilla in Manila."

The fight did not start well. Karriem Allah won the early rounds. Grand Master Smith was behind.

Many people would have given up. He didn't. He kept working, round after round. He came back and won the 11-round decision.

Grand Master Smith only lost one professional fight in his whole career. On January 10, 1980, Dan Macaruso beat him in a split decision and took his title. After six years as world champion, he was no longer the champ.

So what did he do? Later that same year, he won the United States light heavyweight title by stopping Carl Beamon in the third round.

He did not let one loss become the end of his story. He made it the start of his comeback. When Grand Master Smith teaches students how to throw combinations, he says, "You can't stop after that first shot." That works in a fight. It works in life too.

WHY PEOPLE QUIT

People usually quit for one of these reasons:

- **It got hard.** They hit a part they couldn't do right away.
- **They got bored.** The new feeling wore off.
- **They compared themselves.** Someone else seemed better or faster.
- **They felt embarrassed.** They made a mistake in front of others.
- **They got busy.** Something else took their time.

Every one of these is normal. Every Black Belt has felt every one of them. The difference is that a Black Belt has a plan for those moments, and the plan was made ahead of time.

THE NEVER-QUIT PLAN

When you feel like quitting, try this:

First, name the feeling. Say to yourself, "I feel frustrated," or "I feel tired." Just naming it makes it smaller.

Second, remember your goal. Why did you start? Picture yourself on stage at the Black Belt Extravaganza, getting your Black Belt in front of your family.

Third, take one small step. You don't have to fix everything today. Just go to the next class. Just practice the form one more time. Just try the kick five more times.

Fourth, ask for help. Talk to your instructor. That's what we're here for. Most hard spots get a lot easier with one good tip.

Fifth, keep showing up. Showing up is half the battle. Your body follows your feet. If your feet get to class, the rest of you will catch up.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Karate has also taught me to never QUIT. I have more confidence in myself. I have a positive attitude no matter what. The most important lesson I have learned is, knowing that I can accomplish anything with hard work and achieve the goals I set for myself."

JOSHUA THOMPSON, AGE 8, BLACK BELT ESSAY

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

Last time you set a goal. This week you make it **definite**.

In your workbook, find the **Make the Commitment** page. You will read Murray's words about commitment with your family. Then you will write the date you will earn your Black Belt, in ink.

Next, sit down together and answer one big question out loud: "If our student were a Black Belt a few years from now, with all the confidence, discipline and focus that come with it, is that something we want for our family?" Write your family's answer on the page.

Then make your Never-Quit Plan. Decide now what you will do on the hard days, before the hard days come. That way a bad day never gets a vote.

Remember, your Black Belt is not the finish line. The commitment you make now is to Black Belt **and beyond**: your 2nd Degree, the Leadership Team, and helping the students who come after you.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

COMMIT

INSTRUCTOR **"ARE YOU INTERESTED OR COMMITTED?"**

STUDENTS **"COMMITTED!"**

During conditioning, when you reach your number, your instructor will call "Commit!" and the whole class will do one more rep together with a kiai.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Decides once.** Today, tell your family, "I am committed to my Black Belt. It's not a maybe."
2. **Says "yet."** Don't say, "I can't do this." Say, "I can't do this *yet*."
3. **Never quits on a bad day.** If you are thinking about quitting, wait until you have a good day. Then decide. You will almost always stay.
4. **Finishes what you start.** Finish the drill. Finish the class. Finish the push-ups, even if the last ones are slow.
5. **Is a Johnny Woolley.** When a friend wants to quit, encourage them to come back. You might help create a champion.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: FINISH EVERYTHING YOU START, EVERY DRILL, EVERY CHORE AND EVERY PAGE OF HOMEWORK, FOR SEVEN DAYS IN A ROW.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM COMMITTED TO MY BLACK BELT. IT IS NOT A MAYBE.
- I AM A PERSON WHO FINISHES WHAT I START.
- HARD TIMES SHOW HOW STRONG I AM.
- WHEN I FALL DOWN, I GET BACK UP.

WORDS TO KNOW

PERSEVERANCE
keeping going even when something is hard.

COMMITMENT
a promise you keep, even on hard days.

COMEBACK
winning or doing well after being behind or after a loss.

REVEAL
to show something that was hidden.

DECISION
a choice you make; in a fight, it also means the judges' choice of the winner.

COMBINATION
two or more techniques thrown one right after another.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Almost every student, child or adult, hits a "wall" somewhere between white belt and Black Belt. It is a normal part of the process, not a sign the program isn't working. Parents, when your child says, "I want to quit," don't argue and don't give in. Ask, "What part is hard right now?" Then tell their instructor. Most walls are solved with one conversation and one small win. Make it a family rule that nobody quits on a bad day.

This week, have the family commitment conversation and fill in the Make the Commitment page together. Children supply the enthusiasm; parents supply the follow-through. Adults, expect your own wall around month three or four. Put your classes on the calendar like meetings. As Grand Master Smith says, "You don't go to college to drop out as a freshman."

REMEMBER

- ✓ Interested people show up when it's easy. Committed people show up no matter what.
- ✓ Maybe means no. Decide once, for sure.
- ✓ Difficulties don't create character. They reveal it.
- ✓ Grand Master Smith quit once, came back, and never quit again.
- ✓ You can't stop after that first shot.

WEEK 3 · TEST CYCLE 1

KNOWLEDGE, HONESTY, STRENGTH

THE CREED OF GRAND MASTER JHOON RHEE

SUCCESS SKILL
UNSHAKABLE CHARACTER & PERSONAL HONESTY

PRINCIPLE
INTEGRITY

KEY WORD
HONEST

> *"Strength in my body, honesty in my heart and knowledge in my mind."*
>
> — GRAND MASTER JHOON RHEE

THE BIG IDEA

A true martial artist builds three things: knowledge in the mind, honesty in the heart and strength in the body.

In 1977, when I was a teenager running a small karate school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, I got a letter in the mail. It was handwritten. It was from Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, the man many people call the Father of American Tae Kwon Do.

He invited me to come to Washington, D.C., for the summer. I could train for free at any of his eight schools there. And I could test for my Black Belt.

I still have that letter. It is one of the most important pieces of paper I own.

The next year, in August 1978, I tested in front of Grand Master Rhee and a board of his top Black Belts. I earned my 1st Degree Black Belt with one of the highest scores ever given. Nobody in that room handed it to me. I earned it. And I learned from the man who taught me what a Black Belt really means.

This week is about his lessons, and about the kind of person a Black Belt is on the inside.

A BOY FROM KOREA

Jhoon Rhee was born in Korea in 1932. He started martial arts as a young teenager. He served as an officer in the Korean War.

In 1956, he came to America to train with the U.S. Air Force in San Marcos, Texas. He had very little money. He spoke very little English. But while he was there, he started teaching a few people what he knew. Some people believe that was the first Tae Kwon Do class in America.

He went to college in Texas. He started karate clubs at colleges. Then, on June 28, 1962, he opened his first school in Washington, D.C. More than 200 people came on opening day. Twelve of them signed up.

Twelve. That is how it started. Years later, he had schools all over the Washington area. He taught members of Congress. He became friends with Bruce Lee. As Grand Master Rhee liked to say, "Bruce Lee helped me with my punch, and I helped him with his kick." He even worked with the boxer Muhammad Ali, who used a punch Grand Master Rhee taught him called the "Accupunch."

He also cared about keeping students safe. In 1969, a student got hurt by a kick at a tournament. So Grand Master Rhee invented foam pads for the hands, feet and head. Those soft pads changed karate sparring all over the world.

He lived to be 86. He passed away on April 30, 2018. But his lessons live on, in every Mile High Karate class.

GRAND MASTER RHEE'S CREED

A creed is a set of beliefs you say out loud and try to live by. Grand Master Rhee wrote a creed for his students. (Mile High Karate has its own Student Creed too, and you will find it in the box below.) Here is Grand Master Rhee's:

> *"To build true confidence, through strength in my body, honesty in my heart, and knowledge in my mind. To keep friendship with one another*

> *and to build a strong and happy community. Never fight to achieve selfish ends, but to develop Might For Right!"*

Let's break that down.

Strength in my body. Take care of your body. Exercise. Eat good food. Get enough sleep. Train hard in class.

Honesty in my heart. Tell the truth. Be fair. Do what you say you will do.

Knowledge in my mind. Keep learning. Read. Study. Do your homework. Ask good questions.

Friendship and community. We are not here to beat each other. We are here to help each other get better.

Might for right. Your karate is never for showing off or bullying. You use your strength only to do what is right, like protecting yourself or someone who needs help.

Grand Master Rhee once asked, "What is so great about beating people?" For him, karate was never about winning fights. It was about building good people.

WHY ALL THREE?

Picture a three-legged stool. If one leg is missing, it falls over.

That is how knowledge, honesty and strength work. You need all three.

A person with strength but no honesty can become a bully. A person with knowledge but no honesty can trick people. A person with honesty and knowledge but no strength may not have the energy to do the good they want to do.

Put all three together, and you have a Black Belt.

For a kid, it might look like this. You practice your kicks (strength). You study for your spelling test (knowledge). And when you get the test back, you tell your teacher she marked one wrong answer as right (honesty).

For an adult, it might look like this. You go to class even when you're tired (strength). You learn a new skill for your job (knowledge). And you tell your

boss the truth about a mistake you made (honesty).

TRUTH, BEAUTY, LOVE

Grand Master Rhee had another saying I want you to know. He believed the purpose of life is to be happy. And he believed the way to get there starts with telling the truth. Here are his words:

> *"When I am truthful, my heart is beautiful. When my heart is beautiful, everybody loves me. When everybody loves me, I am happy."*

Think about how simple that is. Happiness starts with honesty.

When you lie, you have to remember the lie. You worry about getting caught. You feel bad inside. That is not a beautiful heart.

When you tell the truth, even when it's hard, you feel clean inside. People trust you. And people who trust you like being around you.

I have known thousands of students over the years. The happiest ones are not the richest or the most talented. They are the ones people can trust.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

UNSHAKABLE CHARACTER & PERSONAL HONESTY

Winning Black Belts know who they are and where they are going. They make choices by their own inner compass, not by what the crowd is doing. When friends push them to do something wrong, they don't bend.

Honesty is more than not lying. It means looking for the truth, telling the truth, and taking responsibility for your own actions. "I did it. I'm sorry. I'll fix it." Those are some of the strongest words a Black Belt can say.

Start today. The next time you make a mistake, say so right away, before anyone asks.

LIVE THE CREED

"I develop myself physically and mentally, based on the MILE HIGH KARATE SPIRIT."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **INTEGRITY**

Grand Master Rhee's creed and our own Mile High Karate Student Creed say the same thing in different words. Ours begins: "I develop myself physically and mentally." Physically is strength in the body. Mentally is knowledge in the mind. And the Principle of the Black Belt this week, **Integrity**, is honesty in the heart: doing what is right even when no one is watching.

HIS LESSONS AT MILE HIGH KARATE

When I moved to Denver and opened Mile High Karate on August 6, 1983, I did it with Grand Master Rhee's blessing. I brought his lessons with me.

Over the years, he came to visit us. He taught classes at our Arvada school. He came to our Black Belt Extravaganza. In 2010, he came to our Black Belt Retreat at Keystone and led the Sunday leadership session for our Black Belts.

Imagine being a new Black Belt and learning leadership from the man who taught Bruce Lee to kick better. Our students never forgot it. Neither did I.

Today, every Mile High Karate student is part of his family tree. When you learn Grand Master Rhee's creed, you are learning the same words his students have learned for generations. And every Black Belt in your school has a story about how they got there.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Karate has taught me self control. I have learned to make sacrifices such as working on Karate instead of going outside to play. Karate has helped me to treat others the way I want to be treated. I am a better person. It has reinforced the lessons I learn at home about the difference between right and wrong."

JOSHUA THOMPSON, AGE 8, BLACK BELT ESSAY

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith also learned from Grand Master Rhee. He started as a junior high school student in Texas, at one of the college karate clubs Grand Master Rhee had started there. Later, he moved to Washington, D.C., and became one of Grand Master Rhee's most famous students. He went on to become the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion.

When I trained in Washington in 1976 and 1978, Grand Master Smith was right there on the floor with me.

Ask Grand Master Smith about Grand Master Rhee, and he will tell you, "He was a real master of teaching." Grand Master Rhee did not just teach kicks and punches. He taught people how to live.

Grand Master Smith says the reason children should do karate is "so they can develop their confidence, their discipline, their respect, their concentration." That is Grand Master Rhee's creed in action. Strength, honesty and knowledge, all built on the mat.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

Every Black Belt in your school was once a white belt standing exactly where you are. This week, go find out how they made it.

In your workbook, find the **Black Belt Stories** page. Talk with a Black Belt in your school. It can be a student, a teen, a parent who trains, or an instructor. Ask them:

- How long did your journey take?
- What was the hardest part?
- What kept you going?

Write down one thing they said that inspired you. Your instructor may also have a Black Belt read their Black Belt essay to the class or

perform a form.

Listen for one thing: character. Every Black Belt story is really a story about honesty, hard work and keeping promises. When you hear how they did it, you will start to see how **you** will do it. And remember, the Black Belts who help you today are already living "and beyond." They are giving back to the students who come after them.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

HONEST

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT DO BLACK BELTS BUILD?"**

STUDENTS **"KNOWLEDGE, HONESTY, STRENGTH!"**

You will learn a three-move combination: punch on "knowledge," block on "honesty," kick on "strength." Then you will spend one minute asking a Black Belt, "What kept you going?"

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Learn Grand Master Rhee's creed.** Say it this morning, and every morning, until you know it by heart.
2. **Grow your body.** Move every day. Eat healthy food. Get good sleep.
3. **Grow your mind.** Read every day, even for 10 minutes. Ask one good question in class or at school.
4. **Guard your heart.** Tell the truth, even when it's hard. Keep your word.
5. **Use might for right.** Never use your karate to show off or hurt someone. Use it to protect.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: SAY GRAND MASTER RHEE'S CREED EVERY MORNING FOR SEVEN DAYS, AND EACH DAY DO ONE THING FOR YOUR BODY, ONE FOR YOUR MIND AND ONE FOR YOUR HEART.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM STRONG IN MY BODY.
- I AM HONEST IN MY HEART.
- I AM GROWING KNOWLEDGE IN MY MIND.
- I AM A PERSON WHO USES MIGHT FOR RIGHT.

WORDS TO KNOW

CREED
a set of beliefs you say out loud and try to live by.

KNOWLEDGE
what you learn and know.

HONESTY
telling the truth and being fair.

CHARACTER
the kind of person you are on the inside.

COMMUNITY
a group of people who help and care about each other.

MIGHT FOR RIGHT
using your strength only to do what is right.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

The creed gives adults a simple daily check. Did I build my body today? Did I learn something? Was I fully truthful? Most of us are strong in one or two of these and weaker in the third. Pick your weakest one and give it ten minutes a day.

Parents, the creed works well at the dinner table. Ask three questions: "What did you do for your body today? What did you learn? Was there a time you had to be honest?" Praise the honest answer most of all, even when it comes with a confession. Children tell the truth more when the truth is safe to tell. This week, help your child find a Black Belt to talk with, and ask your child to tell you that Black Belt's story at dinner.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Grand Master Jhoon Rhee came to America with almost nothing and built a legacy.
- ✓ A Black Belt builds knowledge in the mind, honesty in the heart and strength in the body.
- ✓ Karate is for might for right, never for selfish ends.
- ✓ Happiness starts with telling the truth.
- ✓ Every Black Belt story is a story about character.

WEEK 4 · TEST CYCLE 1

SEE THE BLACK BELT IN THE MIRROR

POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
VISUALIZATION	**COURAGE**	**SEE**

> *"Always remember that your success begins inside you: If you can't see it first, no one else ever will."*
>
> — CHUCK NORRIS

THE BIG IDEA

See yourself as the person you are working to become, and you will start to become that person.

Every year since 1990, Mile High Karate has held a big night called the Black Belt Extravaganza. I have been at every single one.

Here is what happens. A few weeks after our new Black Belts pass their test in the mountains, they walk out on stage. Their families are in the seats. The lights are bright. Each new Black Belt is called by name. Then they receive the belt they worked years to earn.

There are demonstrations, too. Forms. Board breaks. Weapons. Team routines set to music. It is quite a show.

But the most important people in that room might not be on the stage at all. They might be the white belts sitting in the audience.

We invite students of every rank to come. Why? Because a white belt who watches a new Black Belt walk across that stage sees something powerful. They see where the path leads. And many of them start to think, "That could be me."

That thought is the beginning of a **positive self-image**. And seeing it in your mind, before it happens, is a Black Belt skill called **visualization**.

WHAT IS SELF-IMAGE?

Your **self-image** is the picture you carry in your head of who you are.

Everyone has one. Some people see themselves as strong. Some see themselves as shy. Some see themselves as "the kid who always messes up." Some see themselves as "the one who never gives up."

Here is the important part. You tend to act like the picture in your head.

If you see yourself as someone who quits, you will find reasons to quit. If you see yourself as someone who finishes, you will find ways to finish.

That means your self-image is one of the most powerful things you own. And the good news is, you can change it.

YOUR PICTURE IS NOT FINISHED

When you walk into Mile High Karate for the first time, you are a white belt. You might feel clumsy. You might not know your left foot from your right in a stance. That is normal. Every Black Belt started right there.

A positive self-image does not mean pretending you are already a Black Belt. It means seeing yourself as someone who is *becoming* one.

Think of it like a drawing. On day one, your picture is just a light pencil sketch. Every class adds a line. Every practice adds a little color. One day, you look at the picture and realize it is finished, and it looks like a Black Belt.

But the sketch has to start in your mind first.

Imagine a girl named Ava. She is seven and very quiet. On her first day, she whispers when she kihaps. Every week, her instructor says, "Bigger voice, Ava. Black Belts are loud!" Little by little, Ava starts to see herself as someone with a strong voice. Months later, her kihap is the loudest in the room.

Now imagine a man named Ray. He is 50. He thinks of himself as "out of shape." After a few months of class, he catches himself taking the stairs

instead of the elevator. Without noticing, his picture of himself has changed. He now sees himself as someone who trains.

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS
>
> *"Karate has also given me self-confidence. I used to be afraid of what other people thought... before I came to karate I was a sheltered shy little girl but after a while I started warming up to people and I came out of my shell now I'm running groups in class and warming up the classes at the beginning of class."*
>
> RACHEL SMITH, BLACK BELT ESSAY

SEE IT BEFORE YOU DO IT

Champions practice in their heads, not just with their bodies.

Before a big form, a Black Belt closes their eyes and runs the whole thing in their mind. Every block. Every kick. Every kihap. They see it done right. That is called **pre-playing**.

After a good performance, they play it back in their mind, so they remember how it felt. That is called **re-playing**.

Your brain treats a clear, strong picture almost like real practice. So when you see yourself doing it right, again and again, your body starts to follow.

Try it now. Close your eyes. See yourself wearing your Black Belt. See your instructor tying it around your waist. Hear your family clapping. How are you standing? How do you feel?

Open your eyes. That person is real. You just haven't met them yet. Every class gets you closer.

A PICTURE THAT LASTS

In the fall of 1983, just after I opened the first Mile High Karate school in Lakewood, Colorado, someone took a photo of me doing a flying side kick.

That photo became a line drawing. The drawing got passed around and used in many places over the years. I still smile when I see it.

But here is the funny thing. The kick in that picture was not luck. It was years of training, starting when I was a kid in Tulsa. I had to see myself as a martial artist long before I looked like one in a photograph.

The picture in your head always comes first. The picture on the wall comes later.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

VISUALIZATION

Winning Black Belts practice in their minds as well as on the mat. They picture a good result before they start, and they replay their best moments afterward. This helps them stay calm, focused and ready.

Visualization also builds desire. The more clearly you can see your Black Belt, the more you want it, and the harder you will work for it. As we like to say at Mile High Karate: self-motivation arrives through visualization.

Start today. Tonight before bed, spend 30 seconds picturing the moment you receive your Black Belt. See it, hear it and feel it.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **COURAGE**

Our Student Creed says you develop yourself in a positive manner. That includes the picture you carry of yourself. A negative picture will hold you back. A positive picture will pull you forward. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Courage**. It takes courage to see yourself as a Black Belt before anyone else does, and to keep that picture when someone laughs at it.

THE MIRROR TEST

Here is a simple test. Stand in front of a mirror. Look yourself in the eye. Now say, "I am becoming a Black Belt."

Did you smile? Did you look away? Did it feel silly?

That is okay. The first time feels strange for almost everyone. Do it again tomorrow. And the next day. After a while, you will not look away. You will stand a little taller. You will believe it a little more.

That is your self-image getting stronger, one look at a time.

HOW TO BUILD A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

1. Picture the person you want to be. Close your eyes. See yourself moving with power. Standing tall. Speaking with confidence. Wearing a Black Belt. Do this often.

2. Act the part, a little at a time. Black Belts stand up straight, look people in the eye, and say "Yes, sir" and "Yes, ma'am." You can do those things today, as a white belt.

3. Collect proof. Every time you do something brave or strong, remember it. Write it down. That is proof you are becoming the person in your picture.

4. Erase the old labels. If someone once called you "clumsy" or "lazy," you do not have to keep that label. You are allowed to draw a new picture.

5. Spend time with people who see the best in you. Good instructors and good friends help you see who you can become.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith became a world champion. But the picture in his head started small.

He was 14 years old when he started sparring with college men at a karate club in Kingsville, Texas. Back then, there was no safety gear. Today, we wear pads and use control, so you will not be doing what he did! But think about how a 14-year-old had to see himself to step in with grown men.

Grand Master Smith said it this way: "So I was used to sparring big guys, and I wasn't intimidated too much."

He did not see himself as "just a kid." He saw himself as a fighter who belonged in that room. That picture grew. He went on to win the PKA World Light Heavyweight title in 1974 and hold it until 1980.

Today, he says this about students who stick with it: "If you get to black belt, you now have lifelong skills for a higher level of discipline, respect and confidence."

Confidence starts with the picture you carry inside.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week you are going to put your Black Belt picture on paper.

In your workbook, find the **Visualization Worksheet: Make a Definite Commitment**. At the top, write the date you will earn your Black Belt. In the middle, draw yourself as a Black Belt, or paste a photo of your face onto the Black Belt figure.

Around your picture, fill the thought bubbles with the qualities you will have as a Black Belt. How will your kicks look? How will you act at home, at school and with your friends? Will you be focused, respectful, brave, a leader?

Then ask your parents to write how **they** see you as a Black Belt. Their words might surprise you.

Bring the finished page to class. A returned worksheet earns an attitude stripe. Hang a copy where you will see it every day, because the clearer you see your Black Belt, the closer it gets. And once you can see your Black Belt, look a little farther. Can you see yourself helping teach a class one day?

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

SEE

INSTRUCTOR **"WHO DO YOU SEE IN THE MIRROR?"**

STUDENTS **"A FUTURE BLACK BELT!"**

You will walk across the mat as if you already wear your Black Belt: chin up, shoulders back, eyes forward. Then you will close your eyes and see your form in your mind before you do it for real.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Sees the finish line in the mind.** Tonight, picture your Black Belt for 30 seconds before you fall asleep.
2. **Pre-plays before it counts.** Before a form or a test, run it in your mind first.
3. **Stands and moves like a Black Belt.** Good posture. Eyes up. A strong voice.
4. **Talks about themselves with respect.** No "I'm so dumb." Instead: "I'm learning."
5. **Keeps a list of wins.** Proof that the picture is coming true.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY NIGHT FOR SEVEN DAYS, SPEND 30 SECONDS PICTURING YOURSELF RECEIVING YOUR BLACK BELT, THEN WRITE DOWN ONE PIECE OF PROOF THAT YOU ARE BECOMING THAT PERSON.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM A BLACK BELT IN THE MAKING.
- I SEE MY BLACK BELT CLEARLY, AND I AM GETTING CLOSER EVERY CLASS.
- I STAND TALL AND SPEAK WITH CONFIDENCE.
- I AM BECOMING THE PERSON I WANT TO BE.

WORDS TO KNOW

SELF-IMAGE
the picture you have in your mind of who you are.

VISUALIZATION
seeing something clearly in your mind before it happens.

POSITIVE
good, helpful, or hopeful.

KIHAP
the loud shout a martial artist makes with a strong move.

LABEL
a word someone uses to describe a person, like "shy" or "brave."

EXTRAVAGANZA
a big, exciting show or celebration.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults often carry a self-image built decades ago. Ask yourself: "What do I believe about myself that may no longer be true?" Training gives you new proof every week. Use it. Adults can visualize, too: rehearse your next test requirement in your mind during your commute.

Parents, children build their self-image partly from the words they hear about themselves. Avoid labels like "shy," "lazy," or "the clumsy one," even as jokes. Describe the person they are becoming: "You were brave today." "You stood so tall at your belt test." This week, fill in the "How my parents see me as a Black Belt" section of the Visualization Worksheet. Be specific. Your words become part of the picture your child carries. And bring your child to the Black Belt Extravaganza.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Your self-image is the picture of yourself you carry in your head.
- ✓ You tend to act like the picture you hold.
- ✓ Champions pre-play and re-play in their minds.
- ✓ Every class adds a line to your picture.
- ✓ See it first in your mind. Then you will see it in the mirror.

WEEK 5 · TEST CYCLE 1

EXPECT GOOD THINGS

POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
TOTAL SELF-CONFIDENCE	**COURAGE**	**EXPECT**

> *"To be a great champion you must believe you are the best. If you're not, pretend you are."*
>
> — MUHAMMAD ALI

THE BIG IDEA

When you work hard and expect to succeed, you give yourself the best chance to win.

In August 1978, I stood in a room in Washington, D.C., ready to test for my 1st Degree Black Belt.

Across from me sat Grand Master Jhoon Rhee. Next to him sat a board of senior Black Belts. One of them was a young world champion named Jeff Smith. Years later, he would become my partner in teaching. That day, he was one of the people judging me.

This was not a show. It was a real test. It was long and hard, and every part of it was scored. Nobody in that room wondered whether the belt would be earned. It would be earned, or it would not be given.

Was I nervous? Of course I was. Anybody would be.

But here is what I remember most. I expected to pass.

I did not expect to pass because I was lucky. I expected to pass because I had been training since 1969. I had practiced my forms more times than I could count. I had taught my own students. I had put in the work, and the work had earned me the right to expect a good result.

I passed. I earned one of the highest scores ever given on that exam. I still remember the score today, decades later.

That kind of expecting has a name. It is called **self-expectancy**. And when you have it, you walk into hard things with **confidence**.

WHAT IS SELF-EXPECTANCY?

To **expect** something means you believe it will happen. You expect the sun to come up tomorrow. You expect dinner tonight.

Self-expectancy is what you expect from *yourself*. It is what you believe you can do.

Some people expect to fail. Before they even try, they say, "I can't do this." "I'm going to mess up." "This never works for me." Guess what usually happens? They do not try very hard, and they get the result they expected.

Other people expect to succeed. They say, "I can learn this." "I will get better." "I've practiced, and I'm ready." They try harder. They keep going longer. And they usually do better.

Your expectations act like a map. Your brain and body tend to follow the map you give them.

EXPECTING IS NOT WISHING

Be careful here. Positive self-expectancy is *not* wishing.

Wishing sounds like this: "I hope I pass my test." Then you sit on the couch and do nothing.

Expecting sounds like this: "I have practiced every day. I know my form. I expect to pass."

Do you see the difference? Wishing skips the work. Expecting is *earned* by the work.

Imagine a boy named Leo. He has a spelling test on Friday. He studies his words every night. On Friday morning, he walks into class and thinks, "I'm ready. I expect to do well." That is self-expectancy.

Now imagine his mom. She has a big meeting at work. She prepares her notes the night before. She practices what she will say. She walks into the room expecting it to go well. Same idea. Different age.

Positive self-expectancy comes from preparation. The more you prepare, the more you have the right to expect.

CONFIDENCE IS BUILT, NOT BORN

People sometimes think confident people were just born that way. They were not. Confidence is built the same way a strong kick is built. One rep at a time.

Every time you prepare and then do well, you add a brick. Every time you try something hard and live through it, you add a brick. After a while, you have a wall. Then someone says, "You can't do that," and it bounces right off.

That is what a Black Belt has. Not a loud voice. Not bragging. Just a quiet, steady feeling that says, "I have done hard things before. I can do this one too."

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

TOTAL SELF-CONFIDENCE

A Black Belt believes, "I can do anything I am willing to work for." That is the whole skill. It does not mean you can do everything today. It means that when you are willing to put in the work, you can get there. A confident person is not shaken when someone else is negative. They do not settle for "good enough," either. They keep climbing.

Confidence and self-expectancy go together. You expect good things because you prepared. Then you do well, and your confidence grows. Then you expect even more.

Start today: Pick one thing you have been avoiding because it feels hard. Do the first small step before you go to bed tonight.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **COURAGE**

Our Student Creed asks you to develop yourself in a positive manner. Expecting good things is one of the most positive things you can do. But expecting is not wishing. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Courage**: stepping up to the target, the board or the test, saying "I expect to do this," and then doing the work to make it true.

WHAT IF THINGS GO WRONG?

Sometimes you expect to do well, and you do not. You miss a step in your form. You lose a match at the tournament. You forget a word on the test.

That does not mean expecting good things was wrong. It means you have more to learn.

A person with positive self-expectancy does not say, "See? I knew I would fail." They say, "That did not go the way I wanted. What can I learn? I expect to do better next time."

Then they go back to work.

EXPECT GOOD THINGS FROM OTHERS

Self-expectancy has a cousin. It is what you expect from the people around you.

At our school, instructors expect every student to reach Black Belt. Not just the fast ones. Not just the strong ones. Every one. Over the years, Mile High Karate has promoted more than 1,000 Black Belts, from age 5 to age 76.

When someone believes in you, it is easier to believe in yourself. So pass it on. Tell your training partner, "You've got this." You may be the reason someone else expects to win.

Grand Master Jhoon Rhee liked to say, "Everything happens for the best." He did not mean bad things are good. He meant that you can learn something from almost anything, if you look for it.

> **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**
>
> *"Before Karate, I would never have had the confidence to do this. Now I do and I feel that I will be a good member of any club I join."*
>
> **JIM NIEMAN, BLACK BELT ESSAY**

WHEN, NOT IF

Here is a small word change that makes a big difference.

Some students say, "*If* I get my Black Belt..." Black Belts say, "*When* I get my Black Belt..."

"If" is a wish. "When" is an expectation. When you say "when," your brain starts planning. It starts asking, "What do I need to do next?"

Parents, this one is for you, too. Never say "if" about your child's Black Belt. Say "when."

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

When Grand Master Jeff Smith moved to Washington, D.C., to train and compete, he made himself a promise. In his words, "I made myself a promise when I came to D.C.: To compete until I was 35 and then retire."

Think about what that promise says. It does not say, "I hope I do okay." It says, "I am going to compete at the highest level, for years, and I will decide when I am done."

That is positive self-expectancy. He expected a long career, and he worked to earn it. He trained six hours a day, in three workouts, for almost 20 years.

And it paid off. In 1974, he won the PKA World Light Heavyweight title. He held it until 1980. He defended that title seven times. His record was 32 wins and only 1 loss.

Grand Master Smith did not expect success because he was special. He expected it because he did the work every single day. That is the kind of expecting that wins.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week, put your Black Belt where you can see it.

Your instructor will take your picture wearing or holding a Black Belt, standing with some of our school's Black Belts. On a strip of tape on that belt, we will write your **target date**: the day you expect to earn your 1st Degree Black Belt. For most students, that is about four years (48 months) from the day they started.

Take the photo home. Tape it where you will see it every single day: your mirror, your bedroom door, the fridge. Every morning, look at it and say, "When I earn my Black Belt..." not "if."

Then look past it. Your Black Belt is not the finish line. Beyond it is your 2nd Degree, the Leadership Team, and maybe one day teaching students of your own.

In your workbook, write your target date and the place you hung your photo.

HOW TO BUILD POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

1. Prepare. This is the big one. You cannot expect to know your form if you never practice it. Practice gives you the right to expect success.

2. Remember your past wins. Think of a time you did something hard. Maybe you learned to ride a bike. Maybe you finished a tough project. You did it before. You can do it again.

3. Watch your words. Change "I can't" to "I can't *yet*." Change "I'm bad at this" to "I'm getting better at this."

4. See it before you do it. Before you test, picture yourself doing every move well. See it clearly. Then go do what you saw.

5. Expect to learn, not just to win. If you expect to learn every time, you will never walk away empty-handed.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

EXPECT

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT DO BLACK BELTS EXPECT?"**

STUDENTS **"TO WIN, BECAUSE WE PREPARE!"**

Before a target kick or a board break, you will look at the target and say, "I expect to hit it." Then you will set your stance and do it.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Prepares tonight.** Within the next 24 hours, practice one thing for your next belt test for 10 minutes. That is how you earn the right to expect.
2. **Says "when," not "if."** "When I get my Black Belt." "When I pass my test."
3. **Says "yet."** "I can't do a jump kick *yet*." That one little word keeps the door open.
4. **Learns from a bad day.** A miss is a lesson, not a label.
5. **Expects good things from others, too.** A Black Belt believes in classmates and helps them believe in themselves.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY MORNING, SAY OUT LOUD, "I PREPARED, AND I EXPECT A GOOD DAY," THEN DO ONE THING TO PREPARE FOR SOMETHING THAT MATTERS TO YOU.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM PREPARED, SO I EXPECT TO DO WELL.
- I AM CONFIDENT BECAUSE I DO THE WORK.
- I AM GOING TO EARN MY BLACK BELT, AND I SAY "WHEN," NOT "IF."
- I AM LEARNING AND GETTING BETTER EVERY DAY.

WORDS TO KNOW

EXPECT
to believe something will happen.

SELF-EXPECTANCY
what you believe you can do.

CONFIDENCE
a steady feeling that you can do something.

PREPARATION
the work you do to get ready.

TARGET DATE
the day you plan to reach your goal.

BOARD
a group of people who judge a test or make decisions together.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults carry old expectations, often from childhood. "I was never athletic." "I'm not a math person." Notice those lines when they show up in your head. Ask, "Is that true, or is it just old?"

Parents, children often rise or fall to what the adults around them expect. Expect effort, and say so: "I know you'll practice tonight." Before a test, help your child prepare, then say, "You've done the work. I expect you to do well." After a tough day, skip "I told you so." Ask, "What did you learn? What will you do next time?"

Support this week's goal step: Help your child hang the Black Belt photo where the whole family sees it. Say "when you get your Black Belt," never "if."

REMEMBER

- ✓ Self-expectancy is what you believe you can do.
- ✓ Expecting is not wishing. Expecting is earned by the work.
- ✓ Confidence is built one rep at a time.
- ✓ Black Belts say "when," not "if."
- ✓ When things go wrong, learn and expect to do better next time.

WEEK 6 · TEST CYCLE 1

WHAT YOU SAY WHEN YOU TALK TO YOURSELF

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

SUCCESS SKILL
POSITIVE SELF-TALK

PRINCIPLE
INDOMITABLE SPIRIT

KEY WORD
CANCEL

> *"If you learn to think positively, your subconscious will go along, even working for you while you sleep."*
>
> — CHUCK NORRIS

THE BIG IDEA

The words you say to yourself all day long become the person you are.

I started karate in 1969. I was a kid in Tulsa, Oklahoma. My school was the Tulsa branch of the Jhoon Rhee Institute. My first teachers were two Black Belts named Bob Olinghouse and Gran Moulder.

Those were the "Blood and Guts" days. Hard training. Hard contact. No participation trophies.

Here is what I remember most. The hardest part of class was not the push-ups. It was not the sparring. It was the little voice in my head.

You know the voice. It talks to you all day long. It says things like, "You can't do that." Or, "Everybody is better than you." Or, "You might as well quit."

That voice is called **self-talk**. And this lesson is about how to make it work for you instead of against you.

EVERYBODY TALKS TO THEMSELVES

You talk to yourself more than you talk to anyone else. Most of the time, you do not even notice it.

When you wake up, you say something to yourself. Maybe it is, "Ugh, I'm so tired." Maybe it is, "Today is going to be a great day." When you see a hard math problem, you say something to yourself. When you try a new kick, you say something to yourself.

Here is the big secret. **Your brain believes what you tell it.**

If you tell yourself, "I'm bad at math," your brain says, "Okay, got it." Then it stops trying so hard. If you tell yourself, "I can figure this out," your brain says, "Okay, let's go." Then it gets to work.

Your brain is a little like a computer. A computer does what it is programmed to do. Your self-talk is the program. If you put in good words, you get good results. If you put in bad words, you get bad results.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

A Black Belt is in charge of the conversation going on inside their own head. They talk to themselves the way a great coach talks to a champion: honest, encouraging and pointed toward the goal.

This does not mean pretending. If you miss a kick, you missed it. But a Black Belt does not say, "I'm terrible." A Black Belt says, "Chamber higher. Again." Your inner voice can push you toward your Black Belt or pull you away from it. You get to choose which one.

Start today: The next time you hear "I can't" in your head, say "Cancel that!" and replace it with an "I am" sentence.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **INDOMITABLE SPIRIT**

Our Student Creed says you will avoid anything that would reduce your mental growth. Negative self-talk is one of those things. Every "I can't" shrinks you a little. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Indomitable Spirit**. A spirit that cannot be beaten starts with words that cannot be beaten. Cancel the "can't." Say the "I am."

A HABIT LIKE YOUR SEATBELT

Think about your seatbelt. Nobody is born knowing to buckle up. Somebody had to teach you. Then you practiced it. You did it over and over. Now you do it without even thinking.

Self-talk works the same way. Most of us got into bad self-talk habits without trying. We heard "no" and "you can't" so many times that we started saying it to ourselves.

The good news? A habit you learned is a habit you can change. You can practice good self-talk until it is as automatic as your seatbelt.

Here is a kid example. Imagine a student named Maya who is learning a new form. She keeps mixing up the turns. In her head she says, "I'm so dumb. I'll never get this." Now imagine she changes one sentence. She says, "I'm still learning this form. I get better every time I practice." Same girl. Same form. But now she is practicing instead of giving up.

Here is an adult example. Imagine a dad who has to give a talk at work. He keeps saying, "I always mess these up." What if he said, "I'm prepared, and I speak clearly"? He would walk into that room standing taller. His words would change his posture. His posture would change how he feels.

FIVE KINDS OF SELF-TALK

For many years, Mile High Karate students read a book called *What to Say When You Talk to Yourself* by Dr. Shad Helmstetter. He explained that self-talk comes in five levels. Here they are in plain words.

1. **"I can't."** This is the giving-up level. "I can't do push-ups." "I'm no good at this." This kind of talk keeps you stuck.
2. **"I should."** This is the wishing level. "I should practice more." It sounds better, but it often comes with a guilty feeling, and nothing changes.
3. **"I don't do that anymore."** This is the deciding level. "I don't quit anymore." Now you have made a choice.
4. **"I am."** This is the Black Belt level. "I am strong." "I am a hard worker." "I am a person who finishes what I start." You talk about the person you are becoming as if it is already true.
5. **"Everything is connected."** This is the big-picture level. It is about feeling part of something good and bigger than yourself, like your family, your school or your community.

Most of the action happens at levels 1 through 4. Your job is to catch yourself at level 1 and move up.

CATCH IT, CANCEL IT, CHANGE IT

You cannot fix a problem you do not notice. So the first step is to listen.

For one day, listen to what you say to yourself. Every time you hear "I can't," "I'm bad at," or "I'll never," stop. **Catch it.** Then say, "Cancel that." **Cancel it.**

Next, say the opposite in a strong voice. Say it like it is already true. **Change it.**

- "I can't do this kick" becomes "My kicks get better every class."
- "I'm always late" becomes "I am on time."
- "I'm shy" becomes "I like meeting new people."

At first, this will feel a little silly. That is okay. The first time you buckled your seatbelt, it felt strange too. Keep going.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"It has strengthened me mentally by making me do something I didn't think I could do."

RACHEL SMITH, BLACK BELT ESSAY

"I control my inner dialogue. I will start my day with positive intentions."

LANI MCBETH, ADULT STUDENT, BLACK BELT ESSAY

OUT LOUD, QUIET AND ON PAPER

You can practice good self-talk in different ways.

Say it quietly in your head. This is great in class. When your instructor shows a hard technique, say, "I can learn this," in your mind.

Say it out loud. Stand in front of a mirror. Look yourself in the eye. Say your words with energy. Out-loud words stick better than quiet ones. Your kiai is self-talk, too. That is part of why it gives you power.

Write it down. Put your self-talk on a card. Tape it to your mirror, your desk or your lunchbox. Read it every morning and every night.

Say it again and again. One time is not enough. Remember the seatbelt. You learn by repeating.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith was the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion from 1974 until 1980. His record was 32 wins and only 1 loss, with 16 knockouts.

In 1975 he was getting ready to defend his world title for the first time. A magazine reporter asked him about the fight. Listen to the way he talked about himself: "I've worked a long time for it. I've won a lot of titles."

That is not bragging. That is a champion reminding himself of the truth. He had trained hard for three years. He knew it, and he said it.

He also told the reporter his plan: "I'm going to probably double my training, do a lot more conditioning stuff." Notice that his self-talk did not stop at "I'm good." It went straight to "Here is what I will do next."

That is the kind of self-talk a Black Belt uses. First, remind yourself what you have already done. Then tell yourself what you will do next. Grand Master Smith did it before a world title fight. You can do it before a belt test, a spelling test, or a hard day at work.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week, put your Black Belt goal into words.

Writing is self-talk on paper. When you write something down, you think it, see it and feel it all at once. So this week you will write the first draft of your own Black Belt essay. Just three sentences:

1. Why I will be a Black Belt.
2. Who I am becoming on the way there.
3. What I will do after my Black Belt.

Notice the word *will*. Not "want to." Not "might." Will.

Every Black Belt at Mile High Karate writes essays before they earn their belt. Some of them read their essays out loud in front of hundreds of people. Yours starts here. You may also hear a Black Belt read an essay in class this week. Listen for the moment they almost quit and what they told themselves.

In your workbook, write your three sentences and ask someone who believes in you to write a sentence about your growth.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

CANCEL

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT DO WE DO WITH 'I CAN'T'?"**

STUDENTS **"CANCEL IT!"**

In class, when a partner says something negative like "I'm too slow," you will block it with a high block, shout "Cancel!" and change it together into "I'm getting faster every class!"

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Listen.** Notice what you say to yourself, especially when things get hard.
2. **Cancel it.** When you hear "I can't," say "Cancel that" right away.
3. **Replace it.** Say the opposite as if it is already true: "I can," "I am," "I do."
4. **Write it tonight.** Before you go to bed tonight, write one "I am" sentence on a card and put it on your mirror.
5. **Watch your words to others, too.** The way you talk about yourself to friends becomes the way you think about yourself.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY MORNING AND EVERY NIGHT, LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SAY YOUR "I AM" CARD OUT LOUD THREE TIMES WITH ENERGY.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM IN CHARGE OF THE WORDS IN MY HEAD.
- I AM STRONG, AND I GET BETTER EVERY CLASS.
- I AM A FUTURE BLACK BELT, AND I TALK LIKE ONE.

WORDS TO KNOW

SELF-TALK
the words you say to yourself in your mind or out loud

HABIT
something you do so often that you do it without thinking

PROGRAM
the instructions that tell a computer, or a brain, what to do

CANCEL
to stop something and erase it

REPEAT
to do or say something again and again

ESSAY
a short piece of writing that tells what you think and why

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults have had decades to practice negative self-talk, so be patient with yourself. Start by noticing the "I always" and "I never" statements you make about work, money, health or relationships. Rewrite three of them as "I am" statements and read them every morning for a month.

Parents, your child is listening to how you talk about yourself, too. If you say "I'm terrible at math" in front of your kids, they learn that line. When your child says "I can't," don't argue. Ask, "What's a better way to say that?" Then let them say it. Praise the new sentence more than the old mistake.

Support this week's goal step: Sit down with your child for ten minutes and help them write their three Black Belt sentences. Then write one sentence of your own about how you have seen them grow.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Everybody talks to themselves. Your brain believes what you tell it.
- ✓ Good self-talk is a habit, just like buckling your seatbelt.
- ✓ Catch it, cancel it, change it.
- ✓ Say it, write it and repeat it every day.
- ✓ Black Belts write "I will," not "I might."

WEEK 7 · TEST CYCLE 1

DO IT WITHOUT BEING TOLD

POSITIVE SELF-DISCIPLINE

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
NO EXCUSES	**PERSEVERANCE**	**DISCIPLINE**

> *"I hated every minute of it. But I said to myself, 'Suffer now, and live the rest of your life as a champion.'"*
>
> — MUHAMMAD ALI

THE BIG IDEA

Self-discipline means doing the right thing because you choose to, not because someone makes you.

When I was a young Black Belt, I thought discipline meant a tough teacher yelling at you to do more push-ups. I had a lot of tough teachers. Back in Tulsa, in the early 1970s, training was hard. Nobody handed out trophies just for showing up.

But the best lesson I ever got about discipline did not come from yelling. It came from Grand Master Jhoon Rhee. He said, "The word discipline can be broken down into two basic ingredients: Attention and respect."

That is it. Two ingredients. You pay attention to what needs to be done. And you respect it enough to do it, whether anyone is watching or not.

Notice what is missing from that list. Punishment is not on it. Fear is not on it. Discipline is not something done *to* you. It is something you do *for* yourself.

THE SELF-DISCIPLINE SHEET

At Mile High Karate, we have a simple tool. We call it the Self-Discipline Sheet. You write down something you did that you did not have to be told to do.

That is the whole rule. Not told. Not reminded. Not asked twice.

Maybe you made your bed before Mom said a word. Maybe you put your shoes away. Maybe you started your homework the minute you got home. Maybe you helped carry in the groceries without being asked.

Those sound like small things. They are not small. Each one is a rep. Just like a front kick gets better every time you throw it, self-discipline gets stronger every time you use it.

Here is what I have seen over more than fifty years. The student who learns to do little things without being told grows into the adult who does big things without being told. That person finishes school. That person keeps a job. That person keeps promises.

Picture a student named Sam. Sam's dad has to call him three times to come to dinner. Sam's teacher has to remind him twice to turn in his homework. Sam is not a bad kid. But somebody else is doing Sam's remembering for him.

Now picture Sam six months later. He has been keeping his Self-Discipline Sheet. He sets the table before his dad calls. He turns in his homework on time. Nobody is chasing him anymore. Sam is running his own life. That feels good.

> **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**
>
> *"I take care of myself and my responsibilities without having to be told, such as getting ready for school on time, feeding the cats and making my bed. ... I don't have to be told five times anymore before doing something."*
>
> **LEAH BOURGOIN, BLACK BELT ESSAY**

DISCIPLINE IS A CHOICE YOU MAKE AGAIN AND AGAIN

Here is a secret. Self-discipline is not something you have or don't have. It is something you *do*. And you have to choose it again, every day.

For a kid, that might look like this. Your favorite game is on. Your homework is not done. Nobody is home to tell you what to do. What do you choose?

For an adult, it might look like this. The alarm goes off at 6:00. It is cold outside. You promised yourself you would walk before work. Nobody will know if you stay in bed. What do you choose?

Same choice. Different ages. A Black Belt picks the thing that helps them reach their goal, even when the easy thing is calling their name.

You will not win every time. Nobody does. But every time you choose the harder right thing, the next time gets a little easier.

NO EXCUSES

There is a sneaky thing that gets in the way of discipline. It is called an **excuse**.

An excuse is a reason you give for why something is not your fault. "I didn't practice because my brother was being loud." "I was late because nobody woke me up." "I forgot my uniform because Mom didn't put it in the car."

Here is the problem with excuses. Every excuse hands your power to somebody else. If it is your brother's fault, then only your brother can fix it. If it is your fault, *you* can fix it. Right now.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

NO EXCUSES

A Black Belt takes 100 percent responsibility for their own results. When things go well, they take the credit. When things go badly, they take the blame. They do not point at the weather, the teacher, the referee or their little sister.

That is not about feeling bad. It is about being in charge. When you own the problem, you own the fix.

So a Black Belt does not say, "I forgot my belt because nobody reminded me." A Black Belt says, "I forgot my belt. Tonight I'll pack my bag before bed."

Start today: The next time you start to make an excuse, stop and say, "That's on me. Here's what I'll do next."

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **PERSEVERANCE**

Here is the line of our Student Creed that fits this lesson best: "I intend to develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others." Self-discipline is doing it without being told. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Perseverance**. Anyone can do one good thing. A Black Belt does it again tomorrow, and the day after that.

GOOD DISCIPLINE IS NOT PUNISHMENT

Some people hear "discipline" and think "trouble." They think of being sent to your room or losing your phone.

At Mile High Karate, we look at it the other way around. When you show self-discipline, we notice and we reward it. You earn Attitude Stripes for doing the right thing. Your classmates cheer for you. Your instructor calls out your name in class.

Why? Because we want you to connect discipline with feeling proud, not feeling punished. When doing the right thing feels good, you will do it more.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith was the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion from 1974 to 1980. His record was 32 wins and only 1 loss, with 16 knockouts.

How did he do it? He trained six hours a day. He split it into three workouts every day. And he kept that up for almost 20 years.

Think about that. Six hours a day. For almost 20 years. Nobody stood over him with a stopwatch. He was the champion. He could have taken it easy. He chose not to.

Grand Master Smith believes discipline should be rewarded, not punished. In his school, kids earned a self-discipline sticker for helping at home without being asked. When a teacher notices something good, he says, all the other kids cheer for you.

That is the same idea as our Self-Discipline Sheet. The champion's six hours a day and a seven-year-old putting away his shoes come from the same place. They both come from deciding to do what needs doing, without being told.

PAYING ATTENTION AND SHOWING RESPECT

Remember Grand Master Rhee's first ingredient: attention.

A lot of people don't do the right thing because they don't *notice* the right thing. The dishes are in the sink, and they walk right past them. The trash is full, and they don't see it.

A Black Belt keeps their eyes open. When you walk into a room, look around. What needs doing? Is there a shoe in the doorway? Is a little brother struggling to tie his belt? Is a coworker carrying too much?

The second ingredient is respect. Respect for your parents means you don't make them ask you ten times. Respect for your instructor means you give your best effort, even on the hundredth kick. Respect for yourself means you keep the promises you make to you.

That last one is big. Most people keep promises to other people better than they keep promises to themselves. A Black Belt keeps both. If you tell yourself, "I will practice my form for five minutes tonight," then you practice your form for five minutes tonight. Not tomorrow. Tonight.

DISCIPLINE MAKES YOU FREE

Here is something that surprises a lot of people. Discipline does not take away your freedom. It gives you more.

The student who finishes homework right after school has the whole evening free. The student who puts it off spends the whole evening with it hanging over their head. Same homework. Very different night.

The student who practices at home moves up in rank. The student who doesn't gets stuck, and gets frustrated.

Discipline is how you get what you want most, instead of what you want right now. And what you want most is your Black Belt.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week, make a poster of your journey.

Discipline is easier when you can see what you are working for. So this week you will plan a poster called **"My Journey to Black Belt."** Put on it:

- Your photo
- Your target date for 1st Degree Black Belt
- Your reasons *why*
- A favorite quote or two
- What comes after: your 2nd Degree, the Leadership Team, teaching

One student's poster had these words in big letters: "She believed she could, and so she did." That is a poster that works.

Hang your poster where you see it before you choose between the easy thing and the right thing. When the game is calling your name and your form is not practiced yet, look at your poster. Then choose.

Your poster may be shown in our lobby before graduation. In your workbook, plan what goes on it.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

DISCIPLINE

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT DOES DISCIPLINE CHOOSE?"**

STUDENTS **"WHAT I WANT MOST!"**

In class, you will close your eyes and do your form in your mind, every move, full speed. Then you will open your eyes and do it for real. That is mental practice, and Black Belts do it every day.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Do one thing tonight without being told.** Before bed tonight, find one job nobody asked you to do and do it. Write it down.
2. **Do it now.** When you see something that needs doing, do it right away. Waiting makes it harder.
3. **Do the hard thing first.** Homework before games. The workout before the TV. Then enjoy the fun part with nothing hanging over you.
4. **Drop the excuse.** Say, "That's on me. Here's what I'll do next."
5. **Keep your promises to yourself.** Make small promises, and keep every one.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY DAY FOR SEVEN DAYS, DO AT LEAST ONE HELPFUL THING AT HOME, SCHOOL OR WORK WITHOUT BEING TOLD, AND WRITE IT ON YOUR SELF-DISCIPLINE SHEET.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM A PERSON WHO DOES THE RIGHT THING WITHOUT BEING TOLD.
- I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR MY RESULTS. NO EXCUSES.
- I AM DISCIPLINED, AND I DO THE HARD THING FIRST.
- I AM IN CHARGE OF MY OWN DISCIPLINE.

WORDS TO KNOW

DISCIPLINE
paying attention to what needs to be done and doing it.

SELF-DISCIPLINE
making yourself do the right thing, even when nobody is watching.

EXCUSE
a reason you give for why something is not your fault.

RESPONSIBILITY
owning your choices and your results.

ATTENTION
noticing what is going on around you.

PROMISE
saying you will do something, and meaning it.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults need self-discipline as much as kids. It shows up in getting to class on time, eating well, finishing projects and keeping your word. Try your own Self-Discipline Sheet for a week. You may be surprised how much you rely on reminders. Notice your own excuses, too, especially the ones about traffic, work or "no time."

Parents, the most powerful tool you have is noticing. When your child does something without being told, say so. "I saw you put your shoes away. That was self-discipline." Then tell the instructor, so it can be recognized in class. Resist doing your child's remembering for them. If you have to remind, remind once, then let them own it.

Support this week's goal step: Help your child gather a photo, their Black Belt date and two favorite quotes for their "My Journey to Black Belt" poster.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Discipline has two ingredients: attention and respect.
- ✓ Self-discipline means doing the right thing without being told.
- ✓ No excuses. When you own the problem, you own the fix.
- ✓ A champion trained six hours a day because he chose to.
- ✓ Do the hard thing first, and keep your promises to yourself.

WEEK 8 · TEST CYCLE 1

COURTESY AND RESPECT

COURTESY AND RESPECT

SUCCESS SKILL
POSITIVE RESPECT

PRINCIPLE
COURTESY

KEY WORD
RESPECT

> *"Respect begins the first time a martial arts student steps into a dojo and bows to his instructor."*
>
> — CHUCK NORRIS

THE BIG IDEA

Respect is how you treat people, especially the ones who can't do anything for you.

The first thing you learned at Mile High Karate was not a kick. It was a bow.

Before you ever threw a punch, you bowed to the flag. You bowed to your instructor. You bowed to your partner. Some new students think the bow is just a habit, like saying "Ready, go!" before a race. It is a lot more than that.

A bow says, "I see you. I value you. I will take care of you while we train."

I started training in 1969 at the Jhoon Rhee Institute in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Back then, training was tough. Sparring was hard contact, and nobody wore pads. People got hurt. Many students quit after their first few classes. That was just how karate was done in those days.

Then my teacher, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, changed it.

THE DAY GRAND MASTER RHEE CHANGED KARATE

In 1969, at a tournament, one of Grand Master Rhee's students was kicked in the face. The kick broke a bone in his cheek. Grand Master Rhee could have said, "That's karate. Get tougher." He didn't.

Instead, he went to work. He created foam pads to cover the hands, the feet, and the head. His idea was simple. He asked why you would cover the

whole body when you could just cover the four "weapons": the two fists and the two feet.

That safety gear changed the martial arts. Today almost every karate school in the world uses some kind of padded gear. Years later, his kind of gear was used at the Olympics in Sydney, Australia, in 2000.

Why am I telling you about foam pads in a lesson on respect? Because that gear is respect you can hold in your hand.

Grand Master Rhee once asked a newspaper reporter, "What is so great about beating people?" He believed karate was about building good people, not about hurting people. He wanted students to train hard and still go home safe. That is what respect for your training partner looks like.

When you put on your sparring gear, you are making a promise. You are saying, "I want to get better, and I want you to get better too. I will not try to hurt you."

WHAT COURTESY AND RESPECT MEAN

Courtesy means good manners. It is the polite way you speak and act with other people.

Respect goes a little deeper. Respect means you treat people as if they matter, because they do.

Courtesy is what people see on the outside. Respect is what you feel on the inside. A Black Belt has both.

At Mile High Karate, we teach a simple set of words of respect:

- "Yes, sir." "No, sir."
- "Yes, ma'am." "No, ma'am."
- "Please."
- "Thank you."
- "You're welcome."

These words are small. They are also powerful. They work in class, at home, at school, and at work. They cost nothing. And they tell the world what kind of person you are before you do anything else.

Here is a kid example. Imagine you ask your mom, "Can I have a snack?" Now imagine you say, "Mom, may I please have a snack?" Then, when she hands it to you, you say, "Thank you, ma'am." Same snack. Very different student.

Here is an adult example. Picture two people calling a company to fix a billing mistake. One yells. The other says, "I know this isn't your fault. Could you please help me fix it?" Which caller do you think gets better help? Courtesy is not weakness. It is smart.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

POSITIVE RESPECT

A Black Belt can be happy and get along in the world while showing good conduct and good manners. Respect means you value other people and their rights, even when they are different from you.

There is a second half to this skill that many people miss. A Black Belt also respects **themselves**. That means staying away from habits that hurt your body or your mind. Junk food every day, too little sleep, hanging around people who pull you down: those are not respectful to the person you are becoming.

Start today: Say "please" and "thank you" to every person who helps you today, and go to bed on time tonight.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to use what I learn in class constructively and defensively, and never be abusive or offensive."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **COURTESY**

The last line of our Student Creed says you will use what you learn "constructively and defensively, and never be abusive or offensive." That is respect in action. Your karate protects people. It never hurts or bullies them. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Courtesy**: please, thank you, yes sir, yes ma'am, a bow, a handshake, and kindness to every person, every time.

RESPECT IS NOT JUST FOR GROWN-UPS

Some people think respect only goes up. You respect your teacher, your boss, your parents. That is true. But a Black Belt also shows respect sideways and down.

You respect your classmates, even the ones who are new and clumsy. You respect younger kids. You respect the person who cleans the school, the cashier at the store, and the bus driver.

Here is a test I like. **How do you treat people who can't do anything for you?** That is the real measure of your respect.

When you hold a kicking target for a white belt, hold it as carefully as you would for a world champion. When a little brother or sister wants to play, be kind, even if you are busy. When a new student joins class, smile and help them find their place in line.

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS
>
> *"Karate has taught me to give others respect. I have learned that if you give respect to others that you get respect back."*
>
> JIM NIEMAN, BLACK BELT ESSAY
>
> *"I have become more courteous and respectful of others. I try to be careful not to annoy others, I hold doors open for people and I am helpful at home."*
>
> LEAH BOURGOIN, BLACK BELT ESSAY

RESPECT FOR YOURSELF

Respect starts with how you treat other people. But it also includes how you treat yourself.

You respect yourself when you take care of your body. You eat good food, get enough sleep, and train hard. You respect yourself when you keep your uniform clean and your belt tied right. You respect yourself when you don't let anyone talk you into doing something you know is wrong.

People can tell when you respect yourself. You stand taller. You look people in the eye. And you find it easier to respect others too.

RESPECT FOR YOUR RIVALS

Here is the hardest kind of respect: respect for someone you are competing against.

When you spar, the person across from you is trying to score on you. In a tournament, they want the trophy you want. It is easy to start thinking of them as the "enemy."

A Black Belt doesn't think that way. Your partner is the reason you get better. Without a good partner, you could never find out how good you really are.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

In 1974, Grand Master Jeff Smith won the PKA World Light Heavyweight Championship. In the final round of that title fight, his opponent was penalized by the referee for unsportsmanlike conduct. That means he broke the rules of fair and respectful fighting. All seven judges voted for Grand Master Smith.

Think about that. A world title was decided, in part, by respect. One fighter kept his self-control. The other lost his.

The next year, Grand Master Smith was getting ready to fight the same man again. A reporter asked about his rival. Grand Master Smith was confident he would win. But he did not call his rival names or put him down. Instead, he said, "He's a pretty good person."

That is what a champion sounds like. You can want to win with everything you have and still respect the person in front of you. Grand Master Smith went on to hold the world title from 1974 until 1980, with a record of 32 wins and only 1 loss. He was tough. He was also a gentleman. Those two things go together.

WHEN RESPECT IS HARD

Sometimes another person is rude to you. Maybe a kid at school says something mean. Maybe a driver cuts you off. Maybe a coworker takes credit for your work.

You do not have to like what they did. But you can still choose how you act. Being rude back only adds more rudeness to the world.

A Black Belt answers with calm. You can say, "Please stop," in a firm, polite voice. You can walk away. You can tell a parent, teacher, or boss. What you don't do is let someone else's bad manners take away your good ones.

Grand Master Rhee had a saying: "Nobody bothers me." Later he made it even better: "Nothing bothers me." That doesn't mean nothing ever happens. It means you decide what gets inside your head.

GRADUATION: RESPECT ON DISPLAY

At a belt graduation, you can see respect everywhere. Students line up straight. They bow when they step forward. They bow when they receive their new belt. They thank their instructors and their parents. Then they cheer for every classmate, not just their friends.

Here is something I want you to notice at your next graduation. The new belt is tied around your waist, but it was not earned by you alone. Your parents drove you to class. Your instructors corrected you, again and again. Your partners held targets and let you practice on them. A Black Belt never forgets that. Respect includes saying thank you to the people who helped you get there.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week, look back, then look ahead.

Graduation is a great time to stop and take an honest look. In your workbook, you and your family will write one thing that is going

well and one thing that needs work in three places: **at home, at school or work, and in karate.**

Then look at the **Black Belt Guarantee** checklist. These are the six things that put a Black Belt almost out of reach of failure: show up two or three times every week; really set your goal; picture yourself as a Black Belt every day; parents, keep bringing your student; ask your instructors what to improve; and keep your desire strong by meeting Black Belts and watching them train.

Last, write your **next goal beyond this belt.** Your next belt. Your 1st Degree Black Belt date. And what comes after that: your 2nd Degree, the Leadership Team, helping teach. Students who reach outstanding effort and attitude may receive a special Black Belt and Beyond invitation from their instructor. Respect the goal. Keep climbing.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

RESPECT

INSTRUCTOR **"HOW DO BLACK BELTS TREAT PEOPLE?"**

STUDENTS **"WITH RESPECT, EVERY TIME!"**

In class, you will practice walking onto the floor like a Black Belt: stand tall, bow with care, look your partner in the eye, shake hands and say, "Thank you, sir" or "Thank you, ma'am."

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Thank someone tonight.** Before bed tonight, look a parent in the eye and thank them for one specific thing they did to help you train.
2. **Bow like you mean it.** Stand tall, look at the person, and bow with care. Your bow is a message.
3. **Use the words of respect every day.** Say "please," "thank you," and "yes, sir" or "yes, ma'am" at the school, at home, and at work.

4 **Take care of your partner.** Use control. Wear your gear. Hold targets well. Say "thank you" after every drill.

5 **Respect people who can't do anything for you.** Be kind to the new student, the little kid, and the stranger.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY DAY FOR SEVEN DAYS, USE THE WORDS OF RESPECT AT HOME WITHOUT BEING REMINDED, AND THANK ONE PERSON WHO HELPS YOU.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM RESPECTFUL TO EVERY PERSON I MEET.
- I AM A PERSON WHO SAYS "PLEASE" AND "THANK YOU" EVERY DAY.
- I AM CAREFUL WITH MY TRAINING PARTNERS.
- I AM CALM AND POLITE, EVEN WHEN OTHERS ARE NOT.

WORDS TO KNOW

COURTESY
good manners; being polite in how you talk and act.

RESPECT
treating people like they matter, because they do.

RIVAL
someone you compete against for the same goal.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE
not fair or respectful during a game or match.

CONTROL
using only as much power as you need, so no one gets hurt.

GRADUATION
a ceremony where students receive their new rank.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Respect is a habit, and habits are built by repetition. Parents, ask your child to use the words of respect at home: "yes, ma'am," "please," "thank you." When they do it without being reminded, notice it out loud and tell their instructor. When you call the school or meet a staff member, model the same courtesy you want your child to show. Adults, try one week of saying "thank you" to every person who serves you. And on the mat, take special care of newer and smaller partners. That is how you earn respect, not just ask for it.

Support this week's goal step: Sit down together for ten minutes and fill in the home, school and karate self-assessment. Be specific and kind. Then help your

child write their next goal beyond this belt, and come to graduation to cheer.

REMEMBER

- ✓ A bow says, “I see you, I value you, and I will take care of you.”
- ✓ Courtesy is good manners on the outside. Respect is care on the inside.
- ✓ The true test of respect is how you treat people who can’t do anything for you.
- ✓ Respect yourself, too. Stay away from habits that hurt you.
- ✓ Every new belt is earned with help. Say thank you.



WEEKS 9–16

TEST CYCLE TWO

Go deeper. Know yourself, keep the fire lit, and lead by example, all the way to Black Belt and beyond.

09 KNOW YOURSELF

10 THE FIRE INSIDE

11 AN ACTION IS WORTH A THOUSAND PICTURES

12 LIKE WHO YOU ARE

13 WALK LIKE A BLACK BELT

14 YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF YOU

15 SMALL STEPS, EVERY DAY

16 THE BLACK BELT IS A BEGINNING

WEEK 9 · TEST CYCLE 2

KNOW YOURSELF

POSITIVE SELF-AWARENESS

SUCCESS SKILL
GOAL ATTAINMENT & POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

PRINCIPLE
MODESTY

KEY WORD
MIRROR

> *"Knowledge in the martial arts ultimately means self-knowledge."*
> — BRUCE LEE

THE BIG IDEA

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is where every improvement starts.

In 1975, I opened my own karate school. I was 15 years old.

Read that again. Fifteen. Most kids that age are worried about a driver's permit. I was worried about rent, students and teaching classes.

I thought I knew a lot. I had been training since 1969. I had been teaching since 1974. I could kick, punch and spar. I was sure I was ready.

Then I found out how much I did not know.

THE DAY I LEARNED WHERE I STOOD

In 1976, I traveled to Washington, D.C. That is where Grand Master Jhoon Rhee had his headquarters. Some of the best martial artists in America trained there. I trained alongside Jeff Smith, who was already the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion. I also trained with Larry Carnahan and John Chung.

These were not ordinary students. They were champions, or about to become champions. They were fast. They were sharp. They had trained hard for years.

At home in Tulsa, I was the teacher. In Washington, I was just another student. And I was not the best one in the room. Not even close.

That could have crushed me. Instead, it taught me something. I finally saw where I really stood. I saw what I did well. I saw what I needed to fix. For the first time, I had a clear picture.

That clear picture is called **self-awareness**.

And here is what I did with it. I set a goal. I went home knowing exactly what I had to work on. Two years later, in 1978, I came back to Washington and tested for my 1st Degree Black Belt. Knowing where I stood showed me exactly how far I had to go. It did not stop me. It gave me a map.

WHAT IS SELF-AWARENESS?

Self-awareness means knowing yourself. It means knowing:

- What you are good at
- What you need to work on
- How you act when you are happy, tired, mad or scared
- Where you are now, and where you want to go

It does **not** mean thinking you are the best. It does **not** mean thinking you are the worst. It means seeing yourself clearly, like looking in a clean mirror.

Here is a kid example. Imagine a student who is great at kicking but always forgets the order of her form. If she thinks, "I'm great at everything," she will never practice her form. If she thinks, "I'm terrible at karate," she will want to quit. But if she thinks, "My kicks are strong, and my form needs work," now she knows exactly what to practice. That is self-awareness.

Here is an adult example. Imagine a woman who gets grumpy every afternoon at work. She snaps at people around 3 o'clock. One day she notices the pattern. She realizes she skips lunch. Now she can fix it. She eats lunch, and the 3 o'clock grumpiness goes away. She did not need a new job. She needed to notice herself.

THE CLEAN MIRROR

When you look in a dirty mirror, you cannot see yourself well. Smudges hide things. Some people's mirrors are smudged by pride. They only see the good stuff. Other people's mirrors are smudged by fear. They only see the bad stuff.

A Black Belt keeps a clean mirror. A Black Belt can say, "Here is what I do well," and "Here is what I need to fix," in the same breath. No bragging. No beating yourself up. Just the truth.

That is why we test at Mile High Karate. A test is not there to make you feel bad. A test is a clean mirror. It shows you where you are right now. Then you and your instructor can make a plan.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE BOTH GOOD NEWS

Some students hate hearing about their weaknesses. I get it. Nobody likes to hear, "Your stance is too high." But think about it this way.

A weakness you know about is a weakness you can fix.

A weakness you **don't** know about is the one that hurts you.

When your instructor corrects you, they are wiping your mirror. They are showing you something you could not see yourself. That is a gift. The right answer is, "Yes, sir," or "Yes, ma'am," and then fix it.

Your strengths matter too. Knowing your strengths gives you confidence. If you know your side kick is strong, you can use it. If you know you are a good helper, you can help newer students. Strengths are the tools you already have.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

GOAL ATTAINMENT & POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

Winning Black Belts expect good results, and then they work to make those results happen. Over the long run, you usually get what you actively expect. But you cannot aim at a target you cannot see. That is why this skill starts with a clean mirror. When you know where you stand, you can set a goal that is real, expect to reach it, and do the work in between. Start today: tell yourself where you stand in one honest sentence, and then say what you expect. "My form needs work. I expect to know it cold by my next test."

LIVE THE CREED

"I develop myself physically and mentally, based on the MILE HIGH KARATE SPIRIT."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **MODESTY**

Our Student Creed begins, "I develop myself physically and mentally." To develop yourself, you first have to know where you stand today. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Modesty**. A modest person can say, "Here is what I do well, and here is what I still need to work on," without bragging and without putting themselves down.

KNOW HOW YOU FEEL

Self-awareness is not just about skills. It is also about feelings.

Do you know what makes you angry? Do you know what makes you nervous? Do you know what helps you calm down?

A Black Belt notices feelings early. Imagine you feel your face getting hot because your little brother took your stuff. If you notice it early, you can take a deep breath before you yell. If you don't notice it, the yelling comes out first.

Adults are the same. If you notice that traffic makes you tense, you can leave earlier or play calm music. You can't change what you don't notice.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith was the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion from 1974 to 1980. He defended his title seven times. He knows a lot about what makes a champion.

One thing he says is this: "The better your training partners, the better you do all over the world."

Think about why that is true. When you train only with people you can beat, your mirror lies to you. You think you are better than you are. When you train with people who are better than you, the mirror gets very clean, very fast. You see exactly what you need to work on.

In 1978, I tested for my 1st Degree Black Belt in front of Grand Master Jhoon Rhee and a board of senior Black Belts. Jeff Smith was on that board. Nobody in that room was going to let me fool myself. I had to show exactly what I could do.

That is the gift of being around people who are better than you. Don't be afraid of them. Learn from them.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I was an overweight twelve-year-old, just recovering from a broken arm. What chance did I have at a Black Belt? Well, I just kept working towards a goal that seemed so far away, getting closer and closer..."

ERIC MUROTAKE, BLACK BELT ESSAY

A CLEAN MIRROR FOR YOUR GOAL

You probably set a Black Belt goal when you started. Maybe you wrote a date on a goal sheet. Maybe your family signed it with you.

Now it is time to hold that goal up to the clean mirror.

Ask yourself three honest questions. Am I coming to class two or three times every week? Am I practicing at home? Am I on track for my next test?

If the answer is yes, great. You might even be able to move your Black Belt date sooner. If the answer is "not yet," that is good news too. Remember, a weakness you know about is a weakness you can fix.

What you should never do is look away. Students who stop looking at their goal are the ones who drift. Students who check their goal often are the ones who get there.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week you will take a second look at your Black Belt goal. In your workbook, write the Black Belt date you set before. Then look in the clean mirror and decide: keep that date, or move it sooner?

Next, check your action plan one line at a time. Train two or three times a week. Test about every two months, with 16 or more classes. Practice at home 15 to 30 minutes a day. Be honest. Circle the one part you need to fix, and fix it this week.

Then sign your commitment again, with your parent. Why do it twice? Because a goal you look at once is a wish. A goal you look at again and again is a plan.

And don't stop at 1st Degree. Write your 2nd Degree date too. The Black Belt is not a finish line. The students who already have their next goal in mind are the ones who keep growing.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Make two lists, tonight.** Write down three things you do well and three things you want to get better at. Keep both lists.
2. **Welcome corrections.** When your instructor fixes something, say "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am," and practice the fix.
3. **Train with people better than you.** Watch the higher belts. Ask how they do it.

4 **Notice your feelings early.** When you start to feel mad, scared or upset, name the feeling before you act.

5 **Check yourself every night.** Ask, "What went well today? What will I fix tomorrow?" Then fix it.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY NIGHT, WRITE ONE THING THAT WENT WELL AND ONE THING TO FIX TOMORROW, AND THEN DO THAT FIX THE NEXT DAY.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

MIRROR

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT KIND OF MIRROR DOES A BLACK BELT KEEP?"**

STUDENTS **"A CLEAN ONE!"**

In class, you will tell a partner one thing you do well and one thing you are fixing. Then you will show your instructor the fix.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- **I AM HONEST ABOUT WHERE I STAND.**
- **I KNOW MY STRENGTHS, AND I USE THEM.**
- **I AM FIXING MY WEAK SPOTS, ONE AT A TIME.**
- **I EXPECT TO EARN MY BLACK BELT, AND I AM ON TRACK.**

WORDS TO KNOW

SELF-AWARENESS
knowing yourself clearly: your strengths, weaknesses and feelings

STRENGTH
something you are good at

WEAKNESS
something you need to get better at

CORRECTION
when a teacher shows you how to fix a mistake

PATTERN
something that happens the same way again and again

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults often have the dirtiest mirrors. We have years of habits we never question. Try this: ask one trusted person, "What's one thing I do well and one thing I could

improve?" Then just say thank you. Don't defend yourself.

Parents, help your child build a clean mirror. Avoid "You're the best!" and avoid "You're hopeless." Instead, be specific. "Your kicks were high tonight. Let's work on remembering the form." Specific praise and specific correction teach children to see themselves accurately, and that is the start of every improvement.

This week, sit down with your child and review their Black Belt goal sheet together. Re-sign it with them. Say "when you get your Black Belt," never "if."

REMEMBER

- ✓ Self-awareness means seeing yourself clearly, like a clean mirror.
- ✓ A weakness you know about is a weakness you can fix.
- ✓ Corrections are gifts. Say "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am," and fix it.
- ✓ Train with people who are better than you.
- ✓ Check your Black Belt goal often. A goal you look at again and again is a plan.

WEEK 10 · TEST CYCLE 2

THE FIRE INSIDE

POSITIVE SELF-MOTIVATION

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
DEFINITE COMMITMENT	**INDOMITABLE SPIRIT**	**FIRE**

> *"Champions aren't made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision."*
>
> — MUHAMMAD ALI

THE BIG IDEA

The strongest push to do great things comes from inside you, not from someone else.

In 1977, a letter came for me in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was handwritten. And it was from Grand Master Jhoon Rhee himself.

I was a teenager. I had been training since 1969. I had been teaching since 1974. I had opened my own small school in 1975, when I was 15 years old. Nobody made me do any of that. I did it because I wanted it more than I wanted almost anything.

Grand Master Rhee's letter offered me free training that summer at any of his eight schools around Washington, D.C. It also offered me the chance to test for my Black Belt.

Think about that. The most famous Tae Kwon Do teacher in America wrote to a kid in Oklahoma. Why? I believe it was because he saw a fire in me. He did not light that fire. I did. But he noticed it, and he fed it.

I still have that letter. It is one of my treasures. In August 1978, I tested for my 1st Degree Black Belt in front of Grand Master Rhee in Washington. I passed. But the story did not start with the letter. It started years before, with a boy who kept showing up to class because something inside him said, "Keep going."

That something has a name. It is called **self-motivation**.

WHAT IS SELF-MOTIVATION?

To be motivated means you have a reason to act. Your reason is called a **motive**. It is the "why" behind what you do.

There are two kinds of motivation.

The first kind comes from outside. Someone pushes you. A parent says, "Clean your room or no video games." A boss says, "Finish this report or else." Outside pushes can work for a little while. But when the push stops, you stop too.

The second kind comes from inside. You do something because *you* want it. You practice your form because you want to get better. You read because you like the story. You help your friend because you care.

Inside motivation is like a fire. Outside motivation is like a match. A match burns for a few seconds. A fire can burn all night, as long as you keep feeding it.

A Black Belt has a fire inside.

WANT IT MORE THAN YOU FEAR IT

Here is something I have learned in more than 50 years of martial arts. Almost everything you want has something hard standing in front of it.

You want to earn your next belt. Standing in front of it are push-ups, practice, and a test.

You want to make the team. Standing in front of it are early mornings and tired legs.

You want to feel stronger and healthier. Standing in front of it are the couch, the snacks, and the excuses.

Self-motivation is what gets you past the hard thing. It is wanting the goal more than you dislike the work.

Imagine a student named Maya. She is eight. She wants her yellow belt more than anything. One night, her favorite show is on, but she has not

practiced her form. Nobody tells her to practice. She turns off the TV and practices anyway.

That is the fire inside.

Now imagine her dad. He is 42. He wants to get in shape. It is cold outside, and his bed is warm. Nobody will know if he skips class. He goes anyway.

Same fire. Different age.

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS
>
> *"I have learned to make sacrifices such as working on Karate instead of going outside to play."*
>
> JOSHUA THOMPSON, AGE 8, BLACK BELT ESSAY

WHERE DOES THE FIRE COME FROM?

People ask me, "How do I get motivated?" Here is the truth. You do not wait to *feel* motivated. You build it. Here is how.

1. Know your "why." Ask yourself, "Why do I want this?" Maybe you want to feel brave. Maybe you want to be strong for your family. Maybe you want to make your parents proud. Your "why" is the wood for your fire. The bigger your why, the bigger the fire.

2. Picture the finish. Close your eyes. See yourself on stage, getting your Black Belt. Hear people clapping. Feel the new belt in your hands. When you can see it, you will want it more.

3. Start before you feel ready. Motivation often shows up *after* you begin, not before. Put on your uniform. Walk into the school. Bow in. The fire usually catches once you start moving.

4. Stay near other fires. Fires burn hotter together. Train with people who work hard. Watch the senior students. Their energy will rub off on you.

5. Notice your wins. Did you remember a new move? Did you do one more push-up than last week? Celebrate it. Every small win adds wood to the fire.

"MAYBE" PUTS THE FIRE OUT

There is one thing that puts out a fire faster than anything else. It is the word "maybe."

"Maybe I'll go to class tonight." "Maybe I'll practice later." "Maybe I'll get my Black Belt someday."

Over many years, I have watched hundreds of families on the road to Black Belt. Here is what I have learned. "Maybe" means no. Almost every time. Not because anybody planned to quit, but because "maybe" never makes it onto the calendar.

Every Black Belt I have ever promoted made a decision. Not "maybe." Not "we'll see." They decided, "I am going to be a Black Belt." Once they decided, the hard days got easier, because the question was already answered.

A decided student doesn't ask, "Should I go to class tonight?" A decided student asks, "What time do we leave?"

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

DEFINITE COMMITMENT

Winning Black Belts decide for sure, and then they work steadily to make it happen. They think about the reward, not the fear of failing. A definite commitment is different from being interested. An interested person does what is easy. A committed person does what it takes. There are only two real choices on the road to Black Belt: yes or no. "Maybe" turns into no all by itself. Start today: say out loud, "I have decided. I am going to be a Black Belt." Then do one thing tonight that proves you mean it.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **INDOMITABLE SPIRIT**

Our Student Creed says you develop self-discipline "to bring out the best in myself and others." That is your fire. When your reason is strong, your fire stays lit, and it lights other people up too. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Indomitable Spirit**: a fire inside that bad days, hard tests and tired muscles cannot put out.

REWARDS ARE NICE. REASONS ARE BETTER.

At Mile High Karate, we give out Attitude Stripes. We give stickers. We cheer for each other. Those rewards are good. They help young students learn what "good" looks like.

But a stripe is not the reason you train. The reason is who you are becoming.

I have seen students work for years with no reward in sight except their own improvement. Those students do not quit when the stickers stop. They keep going because the fire is theirs.

So enjoy the rewards. Say thank you when you earn them. But do not need them. Need your reason instead.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith became a world champion. But he started as a junior-high paperboy in Kingsville, Texas.

His mother worked at Texas A&I, a college there. One day, young Jeff saw a sign for a karate demonstration. He went. He was hooked. There was one big problem. The karate club was for college students only. Jeff was just a kid.

Most kids would have given up right there. Jeff did not. He talked to his mother. In his words, "I talked to my mother, she talked to the

dean, and they decided to let me and several other of the faculty kids in."

Nobody told Jeff to go find a karate class. Nobody begged him to ask. The fire was his. He wanted it badly enough to ask for something that looked impossible.

That fire carried him a long way. Grand Master Smith became the PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion. He held that title from 1974 to 1980. His record was 32 wins and 1 loss, with 16 knockouts.

It all started with a boy who wanted something enough to ask.

What do you want badly enough to ask for?

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week is a Commitment Check. In your workbook, you will rate yourself from 1 to 10 on four things: how often you come to class, how much you practice at home, how hard you work in class, and whether you finish your goal-step pages.

Be honest. A 6 is not a bad grade. It is a starting point. Pick the lowest number and write one fix for the next two weeks.

You will also read a famous idea about commitment. A mountain climber named W. H. Murray wrote that the moment you truly commit, help starts to show up that would never have come while you were undecided.

Then write your Black Belt date under the words "I have decided." Your parent signs with you.

Why does this matter beyond Black Belt? Because the habit of deciding for sure will help you with school, sports, jobs and every big goal for the rest of your life. Black Belts don't just earn a belt. They learn how to commit.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Writes down a "why" tonight.** A Black Belt knows the reason behind the goal and looks at it often.
2. **Shows up, even on hard days.** A Black Belt does not wait to feel like it. Showing up is the first win.
3. **Starts on time.** When practice time comes, a Black Belt starts within five minutes, before the excuses show up.
4. **Asks for help or a chance.** Like Grand Master Smith, a Black Belt is not afraid to ask, "Can I try?"
5. **Feeds the fire with good company.** A Black Belt trains with people who work hard and want to grow.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: PICK A SET TIME FOR HOME PRACTICE EVERY DAY, AND START WITHIN FIVE MINUTES OF THAT TIME, WITHOUT ANYONE REMINDING YOU.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

FIRE

INSTRUCTOR **"WHERE DOES YOUR FIRE COME FROM?"**

STUDENTS **"INSIDE ME!"**

In class, you will build a "fire" together. Each student will step up, punch with a strong kiai, and shout one reason they train.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM MOTIVATED FROM THE INSIDE.
- I HAVE DECIDED. I AM GOING TO BE A BLACK BELT.
- I START ON TIME, EVEN WHEN I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT.
- MY FIRE IS MINE, AND I KEEP IT BURNING.

WORDS TO KNOW

MOTIVATION
the reason or push that makes you want to act.

SELF-MOTIVATION
a push that comes from inside you, not from someone else.

MOTIVE
the "why" behind what you do.

COMMITMENT
a promise to keep going until you reach your goal.

DEAN
a leader in charge of part of a college.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults often wait to "feel motivated" before acting. Flip that. Act first, and the feeling usually follows. Write your "why" on a card and keep it in your car or on your desk.

Parents, the goal is to help your child build inside motivation, not to push harder from outside. Ask questions instead of giving orders. "Why do you want your next belt?" "What would make you proud this week?" When your child practices without being asked, notice it out loud. Praise the effort and the choice, not just the result.

Children supply the enthusiasm. Parents supply the long-term vision. This week, do the Commitment Check with your child, rate your own part (getting them to class two or three times a week), and sign the "I have decided" line together.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Outside motivation is a match. Inside motivation is a fire.
- ✓ Know your "why." The bigger your why, the bigger the fire.
- ✓ Start before you feel ready. Motivation often shows up after you begin.
- ✓ "Maybe" means no. Decide for sure.
- ✓ A Black Belt keeps going because the fire is theirs.

WEEK 11 · TEST CYCLE 2

AN ACTION IS WORTH A THOUSAND PICTURES

INTEGRITY AND LEADING BY EXAMPLE

SUCCESS SKILL
UNSHAKABLE CHARACTER & PERSONAL HONESTY

PRINCIPLE
INTEGRITY

KEY WORD
ACTION

> *"A picture is worth a thousand words; an action is worth a thousand pictures."*
>
> — GRAND MASTER JHOON RHEE

THE BIG IDEA

People believe what you do much more than what you say.

You have probably heard the saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." It means you can learn more from one photo than from a long speech.

My teacher, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, took that saying one step further. He said:

> *"A picture is worth a thousand words; an action is worth a thousand pictures."*

Think about that. If a picture beats a thousand words, then one real action beats a thousand pictures. What you *do* is the loudest thing about you.

Grand Master Rhee lived this way. He didn't just talk about fitness. He did push-ups every day. People say he could do 100 push-ups in about a minute, even in his sixties and seventies. He didn't just talk about serving his country. For years, he taught karate to members of the United States Congress at 5:00 in the morning, as a volunteer. He didn't just tell parents to

teach good habits. He said the most important rule for parents and teachers was **"Lead by example."**

THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

Grand Master Rhee liked to say there are three kinds of people in the world:

1. **People who make things happen.**
2. **People who watch things happen.**
3. **People who say, "What happened?"**

Which one do you want to be?

The first kind of person sees a mess and cleans it up. They see a new student and say hello. They see a problem and start fixing it. They don't wait to be asked.

The second kind of person sees the same mess and just looks at it. They might even say, "Somebody should clean that up." But they don't.

The third kind of person doesn't even notice the mess until somebody else trips on it.

A Black Belt is the first kind of person. A Black Belt makes things happen.

Here is a kid example. Imagine your family just finished dinner. One kid gets up and carries their plate to the sink without being told. Another kid goes straight to the TV. A third kid doesn't even notice dinner is over. Which one is making things happen?

Here is an adult example. Picture a meeting at work where everyone agrees something needs to be done. Three weeks later, one person has done it. The others are still talking about it. Who do you think gets trusted with the next big job?

WHAT INTEGRITY MEANS

The big word for this lesson is **integrity**. Integrity means your actions match your words. If you say you will do something, you do it. If you say you believe something, you live it.

A person with integrity is the same person when no one is watching as when everyone is watching.

Here are some ways to show integrity:

- You promise to practice your form at home, and you do.
- You tell your instructor you'll be at class on Thursday, and you show up.
- You find money on the floor of the school, and you turn it in.
- You make a mistake, and you say, "That was me. I'm sorry."

Every time your actions match your words, people trust you a little more. Every time they don't, people trust you a little less. Trust is built one action at a time.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

UNSHAKABLE CHARACTER & PERSONAL HONESTY

Winning Black Belts know who they are and where they are going. They make choices by their own inner compass, not by what the crowd is doing. Honesty is more than not telling lies. It means telling the truth with your actions, too: doing what you said, owning your mistakes, and taking responsibility for your choices. People with unshakable character change the room they walk into. The room doesn't change them. Start today: make one small promise, out loud, to someone in your family. Then keep it before bedtime.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop self-discipline in order to bring out the best in myself and others."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **INTEGRITY**

Our Student Creed says you develop self-discipline to bring out the best "in myself and others." You bring out the best in others mostly by what you do, not by what you say. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Integrity**. Integrity means your actions match your words. If you say it, do it. If you promise it, keep it.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I take care of myself and my responsibilities without having to be told, such as getting ready for school on time, feeding the cats and making my bed... I don't have to be told five times anymore before doing something."

LEAH BOURGOIN, BLACK BELT ESSAY

THE TIME MY OWN IDEA CAME BACK TO ME

Let me tell you a funny story about actions and words. It involves my friend Chuck Norris.

Back in the 1990s, Chuck Norris had a foundation called Kick Drugs Out of America. It taught karate to kids in schools to help them stay away from drugs and stay on the right path. Every year, a group of karate school owners, including me, raised money for it.

Each year we tried to come up with a new prize to get school owners excited. One day I was sitting with Chuck and his team, thinking up ideas. I said something like this: "All these karate guys want to be you. Why not give the top fundraiser a guest spot on your TV show, *Walker, Texas Ranger*?"

Everyone loved the idea. The deal was set. Whoever raised the most money would get to be on the show.

So what happened? I raised the most money. I won my own contest!

I told Chuck, "I don't want to be a TV star. I was talking about those other guys."

He said, "No, no, no. That was the deal. You have to do it."

Chuck was teaching me a lesson. **A deal is a deal.** If you say it, you do it, even when it's your own idea and you'd rather not.

So I went. First they offered me a part as a surgeon. I said no. I told them to give it to an actor who needed the job. Finally they called with a karate scene: a big tournament. I could wear my own uniform and be the center referee. That I could do. I even brought my mother from Tulsa so she could meet Chuck.

When I got to the set, the crew taped over all my Mile High Karate patches. Then they found out I didn't have a special card that TV actors need to talk and show their face at the same time. So they filmed the whole scene from behind me. On TV, you see the back of a man in a black uniform running the match. That's me!

And the night it aired? Colorado showed a high school basketball game instead. Almost nobody back home saw it.

I laugh about it now. But I'm proud of the real action behind it. Our students and families raised money to help kids across the country. In 1996, Chuck sent me a letter thanking me for raising $18,267 for his foundation. That money did more good than any TV scene ever could.

ACTIONS OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

At Mile High Karate, we believe a Black Belt is measured by what they give, not just by what they can do on the mat.

That's why every student must finish a **community service project** before testing for 1st Degree Black Belt. Each candidate picks a way to help people in the community. They do the project. Then they share what they did, who it helped, and what they learned, on video, so the whole school can see.

Some students have done these projects alone. Some have done them with their brothers, sisters, or parents, testing together as a family. Our school has published 76 of these projects. Every one of them is an action worth a thousand pictures.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith teaches that the best way to grow good habits is to notice good actions. At his schools, children could earn a self-discipline sticker for helping at home without being asked. When a teacher recognizes a good action in class, the other kids cheer.

Why does that work? Because actions are contagious. When one student does the right thing and gets noticed, other students want to

do it too.

Grand Master Smith also says, "A good instructor will motivate, but a great instructor will inspire." Motivating is pushing someone from the outside. Inspiring is lighting a fire on the inside. And you can't inspire anyone with words alone. You inspire people by what they see you do.

That goes for students too. When you hustle in class, help a classmate, and keep your word, you are inspiring the people around you. You might not even know who is watching. But someone always is.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

Every Black Belt in your school was once a white belt. Many of them wanted to quit at least once. What got them through? Their actions. They kept showing up.

This week, you will interview a Black Belt. It can be a student, an assistant or an instructor. In your workbook, ask them one big question: "What did you say to yourself when you wanted to quit?" Then ask what action they took that kept them going. Write down their answers.

Next, pick one of their actions to copy this week.

Why? Because the road to Black Belt is not a mystery. Hundreds of people have walked it before you. The fastest way to get there is to do what they did.

And remember the goal beyond Black Belt. One day, a new white belt will come to you and ask the same question. Your actions between now and then will be your answer.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Do what you say, starting today.** Before you make a promise, make sure you can keep it. Then keep it.
2. **Make things happen.** When you see something that needs doing, do it. Don't wait to be asked.
3. **Lead by example.** Be the student you would want a younger student to copy.
4. **Own your mistakes.** Say, "That was me. I'll fix it." Then fix it.
5. **Help your community.** Look for ways to help your family, your school, and your neighborhood.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: WRITE DOWN EVERY PROMISE YOU MAKE, BIG OR SMALL, AND CHECK THE BOX EACH NIGHT THAT YOU KEPT EVERY ONE.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

ACTION

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT IS AN ACTION WORTH?"**

STUDENTS **"A THOUSAND PICTURES!"**

In class, you will act out the three kinds of people: one who makes things happen, one who watches, and one who says, "What happened?" Then everyone practices being the first kind.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM A PERSON WHO DOES WHAT I SAY.
- I AM THE ONE WHO MAKES THINGS HAPPEN.
- I LEAD BY EXAMPLE, EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS WATCHING.
- MY ACTIONS SHOW WHO I AM.

WORDS TO KNOW

INTEGRITY
when your actions match your words.

EXAMPLE
a person or action that others can copy.

FOUNDATION
a group that raises money to help people.

COMMUNITY
the people who live, work, and go to school around you.

INSPIRE
to give someone the wish to do something good.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Children copy what we do far more than what we say. If you want your child to be on time, be on time. If you want them to keep promises, keep yours, even small ones like "I'll watch your form after dinner." Catch your child making things happen: clearing a plate, helping a sibling, finishing homework without a reminder. Name it out loud.

Adults, try this for one week: write down every promise you make, big or small, and check it off when it's done. Most of us are surprised how many small promises slip. Integrity is built in those small moments, and so is the trust of everyone around you.

This week, help your child find a Black Belt to interview. Then write one sentence in their workbook about a time their actions matched their words.

REMEMBER

- ✓ An action is worth a thousand pictures.
- ✓ There are three kinds of people. Be the one who makes things happen.
- ✓ Integrity means your actions match your words.
- ✓ A deal is a deal, even when it's your own idea.
- ✓ A Black Belt is measured by what they give.

WEEK 12 · TEST CYCLE 2

LIKE WHO YOU ARE

POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

SUCCESS SKILL
TOTAL SELF-CONFIDENCE

PRINCIPLE
MODESTY

KEY WORD
EARN

> *"Showing off is the fool's idea of glory."*
>
> — BRUCE LEE

THE BIG IDEA

Real self-esteem comes from what you earn, not from comparing yourself to others.

Every year, Mile High Karate holds a Black Belt Retreat in the Colorado mountains. Today it is in Breckenridge. The Black Belt test there has run about 48 hours from start to finish. A photo from 2007 shows me teaching 150 Black Belts on their 43rd straight hour, at 8,500 feet above sea level.

It is hard. It is supposed to be hard.

When it is over, I do something I have done for many years. I sit down with the brand-new Black Belts and their parents. And I ask them one question.

"If I gave you $1,000,000 right now, would you give back everything you gained on the way to Black Belt? The confidence. The discipline. The friendships. The person you became. All of it. Gone. For a million dollars."

By 2007, I had asked 487 Black Belts and their parents that question.

Every single one said no.

Not one person took the money.

WHY NOBODY TAKES THE MONEY

Think about that. A million dollars is a lot of money. You could buy a lot of video games with a million dollars. You could buy a house.

So why does everybody say no?

Because they know what they earned is worth more. They know they changed. They became stronger, braver and more focused. They know they did something hard and did not quit. You cannot buy that. And once you have it, you do not want to sell it.

That feeling has a name. It is called **self-esteem**.

WHAT SELF-ESTEEM REALLY IS

Self-esteem means liking and respecting who you are. It means believing you have value.

But here is the important part. Real self-esteem is **earned**.

Some people think self-esteem comes from hearing "Good job!" a hundred times a day. It doesn't. If someone says "Good job" when you did a bad job, you know it. Deep down, it does not feel good.

Real self-esteem comes from doing something real. You practice. You get better. You pass the test. You keep a promise. Then you feel proud, and you should.

That is why we never just hand out belts at Mile High Karate. Rank is earned, never sold. When you tie on a new belt, you know you earned it. That is real self-esteem.

DON'T MEASURE YOURSELF WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S RULER

Here is a trap a lot of people fall into. They decide how they feel about themselves by looking at other people.

"She's better at sparring than me, so I'm not good."

"He has a bigger house than me, so I'm not doing well."

This is like measuring your height with someone else's ruler. It never works. There will always be someone faster, smarter or richer. There will also always be someone who is behind you.

A Black Belt compares only one person: **you today versus you yesterday.**

Here is a kid example. Imagine a 7-year-old who just earned her gold belt. Next to her is a 12-year-old with a blue belt. If she compares herself to the older student, she might feel small. But if she compares herself to where she was three months ago, she will see that she can do things she could not do before. That is something to be proud of.

Here is an adult example. Imagine a man who starts karate at age 45. In his class are teenagers who can kick over their heads. If he compares himself to them, he might feel silly and quit. But if he notices that he can now touch his toes, that his back feels better and that he has more energy at work, he will keep going. And he will feel good about himself for the right reasons.

> **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**
>
> *"I trained hard and when I raced him again, I lost. But the loss gave me hope. It was a much closer loss. I kept at it... Eventually I was able to beat him around the track..."*
>
> **ERIK CHEN, BLACK BELT ESSAY**

SELF-ESTEEM IS NOT BRAGGING

Some people mix up self-esteem with bragging. They are not the same thing. In fact, they are close to opposites.

People who brag usually do not feel good inside. They need other people to tell them they are great. So they show off.

People with real self-esteem do not need to show off. They already know what they are worth. They can be quiet. They can be kind. They can cheer for other people, because someone else winning does not make them smaller.

The best Black Belts I know are humble. They are confident and kind at the same time.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

TOTAL SELF-CONFIDENCE

Winning Black Belts know they can accomplish anything they are willing to work for. They are not knocked down by other people's negative words, and they do not settle for "just okay." Total self-confidence is not something you are born with. It is built from proof. Every promise you keep and every hard thing you finish is one more piece of proof that you can do it. The more proof you collect, the less anyone can shake you. Start today: finish one hard thing you could have skipped, and then tell yourself, "I earned that."

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **MODESTY**

Our Student Creed says you develop yourself in a positive manner. Liking who you are is part of that. But there is a difference between self-esteem and showing off. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Modesty**: being quietly proud of the work you have done, while still treating every other student as just as important as you.

HOW TO BUILD IT

You cannot get self-esteem from a store. You build it the same way you build a strong kick, a little at a time.

Every time you keep a promise to yourself, your self-esteem grows. Every time you do your best even when nobody is watching, it grows. Every time you help someone, it grows. Every time you try something hard, it grows, even if you don't get it right the first time.

And every time you quit something easy, cheat or break a promise, it shrinks a little. You know it, even if nobody else does.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith has taught children for a very long time. He likes to catch kids doing something good.

At his schools, a student who helped at home without being asked could earn a self-discipline sticker. At Mile High Karate, the same kind of choice can earn an Attitude Stripe. And when a teacher recognizes a student in class, Grand Master Smith says, "all the other kids cheer for you."

Notice what is being cheered. It is not who is the fastest or the strongest. It is a good choice that student made. That is how real self-esteem is built.

Grand Master Smith puts it this way: "If you get to black belt, you now have lifelong skills for a higher level of discipline, respect and confidence."

Lifelong skills. That is what those 487 people were not willing to sell. Not a belt. Not a certificate. The skills and the confidence that come with them, which stay with you for the rest of your life.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"My son is very introverted and struggled a lot with social anxiety. Since he has been in karate, our extended family compliments him all the time on his confidence and leadership abilities."

MINDY DAVIS, PARENT REVIEW

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week you will see yourself as a Black Belt again, but this time with "I am" words.

In your workbook, write the date you will earn your Black Belt. Then draw yourself as a Black Belt, or paste a photo of your face on a Black Belt picture. Around it, write six "I am" statements about the Black Belt you are becoming. "I am strong." "I am focused." "I am kind to new students." Your parent will add how they see you as a Black Belt, too.

If you made a picture like this before, compare the two. What has changed in how you see yourself? That change is your self-esteem growing.

Why do this? Because confidence grows from what you can see. When you can see the Black Belt you are becoming, you start acting like that person today.

And see past the first belt. Picture yourself as a 2nd Degree Black Belt helping a nervous white belt on their first day. That is a confident person.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Earn it today.** Do one hard thing you could have skipped. Real pride comes from real effort.
2. **Compare yourself only to yourself.** Ask, "Am I better than I was last month?"
3. **Keep your promises to yourself.** If you say you'll practice 10 minutes, practice 10 minutes.
4. **Cheer for others.** Someone else's success does not take anything away from you.
5. **Stay humble.** Let your actions speak. You don't need to brag.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY DAY, FINISH ONE HARD THING YOU COULD HAVE SKIPPED, AND WRITE DOWN "TODAY I EARNED..."

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

EARN

INSTRUCTOR **"HOW DO YOU GET SELF-ESTEEM?"**

STUDENTS **"I EARN IT!"**

In class, you will cheer for classmates who make good choices. When your instructor calls out a good choice, the whole class claps for that student.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- **I LIKE WHO I AM, AND I LIKE WHO I AM BECOMING.**
- **I AM CONFIDENT BECAUSE I EARN WHAT I GET.**
- **I COMPARE MYSELF ONLY TO ME, AND I AM GETTING BETTER EVERY DAY.**

WORDS TO KNOW

SELF-ESTEEM
liking and respecting who you are

EARN
to get something because you worked for it

COMPARE
to look at two things to see how they are alike or different

HUMBLE
not bragging or showing off, even when you are good at something

CONFIDENCE
believing you can do something because you have proof

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

For adults, self-esteem is often tied to work, income or appearance. Those are other people's rulers. Try measuring by your own: Did I keep my word today? Did I do my best work? Did I treat people well? Those are things you control.

Parents, the most powerful thing you can do is praise effort and choices, not talent. "You practiced every night this week, and it shows" builds more lasting self-esteem than "You're so talented." And resist the urge to make things easy. Letting your child struggle, and then succeed, is how they earn the kind of confidence nobody can take away.

This week, fill in the "How my parents see me as a Black Belt" lines in your child's workbook. Be specific. Your words will become part of the picture they carry.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Real self-esteem is earned. It comes from doing real things.
- ✓ Compare yourself only to you, yesterday.
- ✓ Self-esteem is quiet. Bragging is loud.
- ✓ Confidence is built from proof. Collect some every day.
- ✓ What you gain on the way to Black Belt is worth more than a million dollars.

WEEK 13 · TEST CYCLE 2

WALK LIKE A BLACK BELT

POSITIVE SELF-PROJECTION

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
VISUALIZATION	**COURAGE**	**PICTURE**

> *"He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life."*
>
> — MUHAMMAD ALI

THE BIG IDEA

How you stand, look and speak tells the world who you are before you say a word.

You can spot a Black Belt from across a room. I don't mean the belt. I mean the way they walk in.

Their head is up. Their shoulders are back. They look people in the eye. When they say hello, you can hear them. They don't shout. They don't mumble. They just carry themselves like someone who knows where they are going.

That is what this lesson is about. We call it Positive Self-Projection. That is a big phrase for a simple idea. *Projection* means sending something out. Self-projection is what you send out to other people about yourself.

Everybody projects something. The question is what.

FIVE A.M. ON CAPITOL HILL

Let me tell you about my teacher, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee.

He came to America from Korea in 1956. He did not have money. He did not have famous friends. In 1962, he opened his first school in Washington, D.C.

A few years later, in 1965, he started teaching karate to members of the United States Congress. These were some of the most powerful people in the country. Class was at 5:00 in the morning, three days a week. He did it as a volunteer.

Think about that. A man who came here with almost nothing was teaching lawmakers how to kick, punch and stand tall. Over the years, hundreds of members of Congress trained with him.

How does someone do that? A big part of it is self-projection. Grand Master Rhee walked into a room like he belonged there. He stood straight. He looked people in the eye. He spoke clearly and kindly. People wanted to follow him.

He did not get that confidence from being rich or famous. He built it, one class at a time. So can you.

YOUR BODY TALKS

Before you ever open your mouth, your body is already talking.

Try this right now. Slump your shoulders. Look at the floor. Let your arms hang. How do you feel? Small? Tired? A little sad?

Now stand up tall. Pull your shoulders back. Lift your chin. Look straight ahead. How do you feel now? Stronger, right?

Here is the cool part. Your body does not just show how you feel. It can *change* how you feel. When you stand like a confident person, you start to feel like one.

At Mile High Karate, we stand at attention at the start of class. Feet together. Hands at your sides. Eyes forward. That is not just a rule. It is practice for how to carry yourself everywhere.

SEE IT FIRST

Every Black Belt I know did the same thing long before they earned the belt. They saw it first.

They pictured themselves walking onto the stage at the Black Belt Extravaganza. They pictured the belt being tied around their waist. They

pictured their family clapping. They saw it so many times that by the time it happened, it felt like they had been there before.

That is called **visualization**. It means making a clear picture in your mind of something before you do it.

Here is how it works with self-projection. Close your eyes. Picture yourself walking into class like a Black Belt. Head up. Strong steps. A clear "Yes, sir!" when your instructor calls your name. See it like a movie. Now open your eyes and go do it.

Your mind practices the picture. Then your body follows the picture. The more clearly you see it, the more naturally you do it.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

VISUALIZATION

Winning Black Belts see it before they do it. They practice in their minds and picture the good result before it happens. They "pre-play" a form before they perform it, and they "re-play" their best moments afterward so they remember how success feels. Your mind practices whatever picture you give it, so give it a winning one. This skill works with self-projection, because the person you picture is the person you start to carry around. **Start today:** before your next class, close your eyes for 30 seconds and picture yourself walking onto the mat like a Black Belt. Then walk in exactly that way.

LIVE THE CREED

"I develop myself physically and mentally, based on the MILE HIGH KARATE SPIRIT."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **COURAGE**

Our Student Creed says you develop yourself "based on the MILE HIGH KARATE SPIRIT." You can see that spirit in how a Black Belt walks into a room: chin up, eyes forward, strong voice. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Courage**. It takes courage to look people in the eye, speak up and stand tall, especially when you feel nervous inside.

THE FOUR LAWS OF CONCENTRATION

In class, we teach the Four Laws of Concentration. You have probably heard your instructor say them:

1. **Focus your eyes.** Look at the person who is speaking.
2. **Focus your ears.** Listen to every word.
3. **Focus your mind.** Think about what they are saying, not about something else.
4. **Focus your body.** Stand still and ready.

These four laws help you learn karate. But they also help you project confidence everywhere you go.

When a teacher at school sees a student with focused eyes, ears, mind and body, what does the teacher think? *This kid is serious. This kid is ready.*

When a boss at work sees an adult listening that way in a meeting, what does the boss think? Same thing.

EYES, VOICE, HAND

When you meet someone new, three things matter most.

Your eyes. Look at the person. Not at your shoes. Not at your phone. Eye contact says, "I see you, and I'm not afraid."

Your voice. Speak loud enough to be heard. A clear "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am" in class is practice. So is a strong kiai (pronounced *KEE-eye*), the shout we use when we strike. If you can kiai in front of the whole class, you can say your name clearly to a new friend.

Your handshake. Firm, not crushing. Look them in the eye while you shake. Say their name back to them. "Nice to meet you, Mr. Lopez."

Picture a girl on her first day at a new school. She walks in looking at the floor. Nobody talks to her. Now picture the same girl walking in with her head up. She smiles. She says, "Hi, I'm Maya." Which Maya do you think makes a friend by lunch?

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Before I came to karate I was a sheltered shy little girl but after a while I started warming up to people and I came out of my shell now I'm running groups in class and warming up the classes at the beginning of class."

RACHEL SMITH, BLACK BELT ESSAY

SELF-PROJECTION KEEPS YOU SAFE

Here is something many people don't know. The way you carry yourself can help keep you safe.

At Mile High Karate, we teach the ABCs of conflict avoidance:

- **A — Avoid** dangerous situations.
- **B — Breathe** and stay calm.
- **C — Communicate** with confidence.

That last one is self-projection. People who want to cause trouble usually look for someone who seems scared or unsure. A person who stands tall, looks alert and speaks clearly is much less likely to be picked on.

You don't have to fight to be strong. Most of the time, a Black Belt never has to throw a punch. Their confidence does the work.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith became PKA World Light Heavyweight Champion in 1974. The next year, he was set to face the same man he beat for the title, a fighter named Wally Slocki.

Before the rematch, a karate magazine interviewed him about the fight. Was he sure he would win? His answer was short: "No question." That is confidence. He had trained hard for years, and he knew it.

But listen to what he said next about his opponent. "He's a pretty good person." Grand Master Smith did not trash-talk. He did not put the other man down to make himself look big.

That is real self-projection. Strong and sure of yourself, and still respectful of others. Weak people need to make others look small. Strong people don't.

Grand Master Smith also says something I love about training: "You had to show that you were serious about the training, that you had heart." People can see heart. They see it in how you stand, how you work and how you treat others.

CONFIDENT, NOT COCKY

There is a difference between being confident and being cocky.

A cocky person brags. They interrupt. They make fun of people who are still learning. Deep down, they are usually not that sure of themselves.

A confident person does not need to brag. They let their actions speak. They help the white belt who is struggling. They say "thank you" and "please." They are strong *and* kind.

At Mile High Karate, we want you to be confident. Never cocky.

PRACTICE MAKES CONFIDENCE

Some people think you are either born confident or you are not. That is not true. Confidence is a skill. You practice it, just like a side kick.

Every time you stand at attention, you practice. Every time you answer "Yes, sir!" in a strong voice, you practice. Every time you step onto the mat at a tournament, even when your stomach is full of butterflies, you practice.

Here is a secret: almost everybody gets nervous. Black Belts get nervous too. The difference is that they have practiced standing tall *while* they are nervous. After a while, the butterflies don't stop them anymore.

So the next time you feel shy, don't wait to feel brave. Stand like a Black Belt first. The brave feeling usually catches up.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

Some time ago, you may have had your picture taken with our Black Belts, with your target date written on the belt. This week, we take a new one.

Stand next to the Black Belts again. Hold the belt. Stand the way you picture yourself standing on your Black Belt day. Then say your target date **out loud**, in a strong voice, for everyone to hear. Saying it out loud is self-projection. You are telling the world, and yourself, where you are going.

If you have an older photo, put the two side by side. Look at how you stand now. Look at your eyes. That change is proof that the picture in your head is coming true.

Don't stop at the first Black Belt. Picture the day after, too: training for Second Degree, joining the Leadership Team, teaching a newer student. In your workbook, paste your new photo, write your target date and write what you see yourself doing after Black Belt.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Stand tall today.** Before you walk into school, work or class today, stop for three seconds. Head up, shoulders back, eyes forward.
2. **Picture it first.** Each night, spend one minute picturing yourself walking in like a Black Belt.
3. **Use the Four Laws.** Focus your eyes, ears, mind and body whenever someone speaks to you.
4. **Eyes, voice, hand.** Greet people with eye contact, a clear voice and a firm handshake.
5. **Be strong and kind.** Confidence never means putting someone else down.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

INSTRUCTOR **"HOW DO YOU WALK IN?"**

STUDENTS **"LIKE A BLACK BELT!"**

Key Word: **PICTURE**

In class, you will close your eyes and picture your Black Belt walk. Then you will walk across the mat one line at a time, exactly the way you pictured it.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY DAY FOR ONE WEEK, GREET ONE PERSON WITH EYE CONTACT, A CLEAR VOICE AND A FIRM HANDSHAKE, AND PICTURE YOUR BLACK BELT WALK FOR ONE MINUTE BEFORE BED.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM A BLACK BELT IN TRAINING, AND I SEE MY BLACK BELT DAY CLEARLY.
- I AM STANDING TALL AND LOOKING PEOPLE IN THE EYE.
- I AM SPEAKING CLEARLY AND WITH CONFIDENCE.
- I AM STRONG, AND I AM KIND.

WORDS TO KNOW

SELF-PROJECTION
what the way you stand, look and speak tells others about you.

VISUALIZATION
making a clear picture in your mind of something before you do it.

CONFIDENT
sure of yourself in a calm, quiet way.

COCKY
bragging or acting better than others.

POSTURE
the way you hold your body when you stand, sit or walk.

EYE CONTACT
looking at the eyes of the person you are talking to.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults project every day: in job interviews, meetings, phone calls and parent-teacher conferences. Notice your own posture the next time you walk into a room.

Do you look at your phone, or at the people? Before an important meeting, take 30 seconds to picture it going well. Athletes do it before every event. So can you.

Parents, practice greetings at home. Have your child shake your hand, look you in the eye and say, “Nice to meet you.” When a server brings their food, let them order and say thank you themselves. This week, post the new Black Belt photo where your child will see it every morning, and ask them to say their target date out loud to you. Your child copies your posture and voice more than your advice.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Self-projection is what you send out to the world about yourself.
- ✓ See it first. Your mind practices the picture, and your body follows it.
- ✓ Your body can change how you feel. Stand tall, and you feel stronger.
- ✓ Focus your eyes, ears, mind and body.
- ✓ Be confident, never cocky. Strong people don’t need to make others small.

WEEK 14 · TEST CYCLE 2

YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF YOU

POSITIVE SELF-CONTROL

SUCCESS SKILL
POSITIVE SELF-TALK

PRINCIPLE
COURTESY

KEY WORD
CHOOSE

> *"Under pressure you need to slow down, control your thoughts, and control your movements."*
>
> — CHUCK NORRIS

THE BIG IDEA

You can't control everything that happens, but you can always control how you respond.

When I started training in Tulsa in 1969, there was not much padding. It was hard training and hard contact.

Things changed. In 1969, a student of Grand Master Jhoon Rhee had his cheekbone broken by a kick at a tournament. Grand Master Rhee did not just shrug. He went to work. He created foam pads for the hands and feet, and for the head. Those pads changed the martial arts.

Today, at Mile High Karate, we wear safety gear and we spar with **control**. Some people think control makes karate softer. They have it backward.

Anyone can swing wildly. Anyone can lose their temper. It takes real skill to throw a fast kick and stop it exactly where you want. It takes real strength to stay calm when someone bumps you.

That skill is called **self-control**. And it is one of the most important things you will ever learn.

MIGHTY MEANS IN CONTROL

At Mile High Karate we teach a saying: **"A mighty person is one who has control over their emotions."**

Notice it does not say a mighty person is the one with the biggest muscles. It does not say a mighty person is the one who yells the loudest. A mighty person is the one who is in charge of their own feelings.

Feelings are not bad. Everybody gets mad. Everybody gets scared. Everybody gets frustrated. The question is: **Who is the boss, you or the feeling?**

When the feeling is the boss, you say things you don't mean. You hit things you shouldn't hit. You quit things you should finish.

When you are the boss, you feel the feeling, take a breath and then choose what to do.

YOU CAN'T CONTROL WHAT HAPPENS. YOU CAN CONTROL WHAT YOU DO.

Lots of things happen that you do not get to choose. Rain cancels your game. Your sister eats the last cookie. Your teacher gives a pop quiz. Somebody cuts in line.

You don't control those things. But you always control your **response**. That means what you do next.

Here is a kid example. Imagine a boy whose brother knocks over his Lego tower. His first feeling is anger. He wants to knock over his brother. Instead, he stops. He takes a deep breath. He says, "Hey, that made me mad. Please don't touch my stuff." Then he tells a parent. Nobody gets hurt. He stayed in charge.

Here is an adult example. Imagine a woman driving to work. Someone cuts her off in traffic. She wants to honk and yell. Instead, she takes a breath and lets it go. Ten minutes later, she gets to work calm and has a good morning. The other driver did not ruin her day, because she did not let him.

That is self-control. Same feelings. Better choices.

THE VOICE IN THE MIDDLE

Here is something most people never notice. Between what happens and what you do, there is a little voice. It is the voice in your head. It is your **self-talk**.

When the brother knocks over the tower, the voice might say, "He did that on purpose! Get him!" Or it might say, "I'm mad. Breathe. I can fix this."

Same tower. Same brother. Different words in the middle. Different ending.

That is why self-control and self-talk go together. If you want to be in charge of what you do, start by being in charge of what you say to yourself.

Black Belts use three simple steps:

1. **Catch it.** Notice the angry or negative words in your head. "I always mess this up." "This is so unfair."
2. **Cancel it.** Say "Cancel!" to yourself. Don't let the old words run the show.
3. **Change it.** Say something better. "I'm mad, and I'm in charge." "I'm learning this, and I get better every time."

You don't pretend the bad thing didn't happen. You just refuse to let the angry voice make your choices.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Winning Black Belts control their inner dialogue. That is a fancy way of saying they are the boss of the voice in their head. They make that voice a coach, not a critic. A coach says, "Good. Now fix this one thing. Again." A critic says, "You're terrible. Quit." Both voices will show up. You get to choose which one you listen to. When your self-talk is calm and strong, your actions are calm and strong too. **Start today:** the next time you feel upset, catch the first thing you say to yourself. Say "Cancel!" and change it to one calm, strong sentence.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to use what I learn in class constructively and defensively, and never be abusive or offensive."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **COURTESY**

The last line of our Student Creed says you will use what you learn in class "constructively and defensively, and never be abusive or offensive." That takes self-control. Anyone can be kind when they are calm. A Black Belt stays in charge when they are angry, too. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Courtesy**: you choose good manners even when someone else does not.

THE ABCS OF STAYING SAFE AND CALM

At Mile High Karate, we teach a simple way to handle trouble. We call it the **ABCs**.

A — Avoid. The best fight is the one that never happens. Stay away from dangerous places and people who are looking for trouble. If you can walk away, walk away.

B — Breathe and stay calm. Take a slow, deep breath. In through your nose. Out through your mouth. Breathing tells your body to calm down. A calm mind makes better choices.

C — Communicate with confidence. Stand tall. Look the person in the eye. Use a strong, clear voice. "Stop. I don't like that." Confident words stop a lot of trouble before it starts.

Martial arts gives you the skills to defend yourself. Self-control is what makes sure you only use them when you truly need to. A Black Belt never fights to show off. A Black Belt fights only to protect.

THE PAUSE BUTTON

Imagine you have a pause button inside you. When a big feeling shows up, you press it.

During the pause, you do three things:

Breathe. One slow, deep breath.

2 **Think.** "What happens if I do what I feel like doing? Is that what I want?"

3 **Choose.** Pick the response a Black Belt would pick.

The pause might only last three seconds. But those three seconds can save a friendship. They can keep you out of trouble. They can keep you from saying something you will be sorry about later.

The more you use your pause button, the stronger it gets. Just like a muscle.

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS
>
> *"One of the most important things that Karate has done for me is to help me understand that I control my own life. I am in charge of my future and the path I take to get there."*
>
> MATTHEW GASSER, BLACK BELT ESSAY

SELF-CONTROL IS MORE THAN ANGER

Self-control is not only about anger. It is also about:

- Not eating the whole bag of chips
- Turning off the video game when it's time for homework
- Waiting your turn to talk
- Staying still in your stance when your legs are shaking
- Getting up when your alarm goes off instead of hitting snooze

Every time you choose what's best over what's easy, you are using self-control.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

On September 14, 1974, Jeff Smith fought for the PKA World Light Heavyweight Championship. It was a full-contact world championship.

In the final, he faced a tough fighter named Wally Slocki. Slocki won the second round. The fight was close. Then, in the third round,

Slocki lost control. The referee penalized him for unsportsmanlike conduct.

When it was over, all seven judges voted for Jeff Smith. He was the new world champion. He held that title until 1980.

Think about that. Two great fighters. A world title on the line. And the one who stayed in control is the one who walked away a champion.

Grand Master Smith had a record of 32 wins and only 1 loss. He was one of the hardest hitters of his time. Yet the night he won the world title, control was the difference. Power without control is not a skill. It is a problem.

In class, in school and at work, the same rule holds. The person who keeps their cool usually wins.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

Writing is one of the strongest kinds of self-talk. When you write something down, you think it, see it and feel it all at once. That is why our Black Belt candidates write essays.

This week, you will write your own **Black Belt Essay**. If you already wrote a few sentences about why you will be a Black Belt, now you will make it longer and stronger. If you have never written one, start now.

Answer three questions. What has karate done for me so far? Why will I be a Black Belt? What will I do after I earn it? Write it in your own words. Use "I am" and "I will," not "I hope" or "maybe."

Then read it out loud to your family. You may be asked to read it to the class, too. Your essay is proof that you are in charge of your path. You are not waiting to see what happens. You are deciding. In your

workbook, you will find space to write your essay and a box for your family to sign.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Use your pause button today.** The next time a big feeling shows up, stop and take one slow breath before you speak.
2. **Catch, cancel, change.** Notice angry or negative self-talk. Say "Cancel!" Then say something better.
3. **Remember your ABCs.** Avoid, Breathe, Communicate with confidence.
4. **Choose best over easy.** Homework before games. Practice before TV.
5. **Spar with control.** In class, show your skill by putting every technique exactly where you want it.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

INSTRUCTOR **"WHO'S IN CHARGE OF YOU?"**

STUDENTS **"I AM!"**

Key Word: **CHOOSE**

In class, your instructor will call out a frustrating moment. You will freeze, take one slow breath, say "Cancel!" and then say a calm, strong sentence out loud.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: EVERY DAY FOR ONE WEEK, CATCH ONE UPSET MOMENT, PRESS YOUR PAUSE BUTTON, AND CHANGE YOUR SELF-TALK TO ONE CALM, STRONG SENTENCE. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU SAID.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM IN CHARGE OF ME.
- I AM THE BOSS OF THE VOICE IN MY HEAD.
- I AM CALM, I BREATHE, AND I MAKE GOOD CHOICES.
- I AM A PERSON WHO CHOOSES WHAT'S BEST OVER WHAT'S EASY.

WORDS TO KNOW

SELF-CONTROL
being the boss of your feelings and actions

SELF-TALK
the words you say to yourself in your head

RESPONSE
what you do after something happens

EMOTIONS
feelings, like happy, sad, mad or scared

UNSPORTSMANLIKE
acting in a rude or unfair way in a game or match

CRITIC
someone who points out what is wrong

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults are tested on self-control all day: traffic, deadlines, a difficult coworker, the snack drawer, the phone. Pick one area where your feelings tend to make the decision, and practice the pause there for one week: breathe, think, choose. Listen for the first thing you say to yourself after a mistake. Is it a coach or a critic?

Parents, children learn self-control by watching us lose it, or keep it. When your child melts down, your calm voice is the lesson. Afterward, ask, "What could you say to yourself next time?" Make "Cancel!" a family code word, and let your kids call it on you too. This week, help your child with their Black Belt Essay. Ask the three questions, listen, and let them write the answers in their own words.

REMEMBER

- ✓ A mighty person is one who has control over their emotions.
- ✓ You can't control what happens. You can control how you respond.
- ✓ Between what happens and what you do is your self-talk. Make it a coach.
- ✓ Catch it. Cancel it. Change it.
- ✓ Power without control is a problem. Power with control is a skill.

WEEK 15 · TEST CYCLE 2

SMALL STEPS, EVERY DAY

GOOD HABITS

SUCCESS SKILL	PRINCIPLE	KEY WORD
NO EXCUSES	**PERSEVERANCE**	**STREAK**

> *"Do it. Then do it again, and when you think you've learned it all, do it all again from a slightly different angle."*
>
> — CHUCK NORRIS

THE BIG IDEA

Big results come from small things you do every day, until they become habits.

Grand Master Jhoon Rhee was famous for push-ups.

Not one or two. Hundreds. For years, push-ups were part of his workout every single day. Even in his sixties and seventies, he could do 100 push-ups in about a minute. People who saw it could hardly believe it.

He did not get there in one day. He got there one push-up at a time, one day at a time, for years.

Grand Master Rhee had a goal he shared with everyone. He wanted "100 years of wisdom in a body of a 21 year old." In other words, he wanted to grow wiser every year, and keep his body strong and young while he did it.

How do you do that? Not with one big workout. With small steps, every day.

THE SEATBELT

Let me ask you something. When you get in the car, do you buckle your seatbelt?

Of course you do. You probably don't even think about it. Click. Done.

But you were not born knowing how to do that. Somebody taught you. Then you did it over and over, every single ride, until it became automatic. Now it would feel strange *not* to buckle up.

That is a habit. A habit is something you have done so many times that you do it without thinking.

At Mile High Karate, we use the seatbelt to teach kids about habits. Nobody is born with good habits. You practice them until they are as automatic as clicking your seatbelt. As we tell our students, we are working on habits that help us make it to our goals.

GOOD HABITS, BAD HABITS

Here is a saying we teach every new student at Mile High Karate:

"Good habits are hard to make but easy to live with. Bad habits are easy to make but hard to live with."

Read that again. It is one of the most important things you will ever learn.

Think about brushing your teeth. It takes a little effort to make it a habit. But once you do, it's easy. And you get to keep your teeth.

Now think about staying up too late. That habit is easy to make. Just keep watching one more video. But living with it is hard. You are tired at school. You are grumpy. You can't focus in class.

Adults know this too. Eating a healthy lunch takes planning at first. Then it's easy. Grabbing fast food every day is easy at first. Then it's hard to stop, and hard on your body.

A Black Belt chooses the habits that are hard to make, because they are easy to live with.

NO EXCUSES

Every habit has an enemy. It is called the **excuse**.

"I'm too tired." "I'll do it tomorrow." "I didn't have time." "My brother was being loud." "The dog ate my practice sheet."

Excuses are sneaky. They sound reasonable. But every excuse does the same thing. It hands your result to someone or something else.

Black Belts don't do that. They take 100% responsibility for their own results. If they skipped practice, they don't blame the weather. They say, "I skipped it. Tomorrow I won't."

That might sound hard. It is actually freeing. If your results are somebody else's fault, then only somebody else can fix them. But if your results are *yours*, then you can fix them. Today.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

NO EXCUSES

Winning Black Belts accept 100% responsibility for the results in their own lives. They take the credit when things go well, and they take the blame when they don't. They never push their failures off on other people, the weather or bad luck. Instead, they ask, "What can I do better next time?" This skill is the best friend of good habits, because an excuse is how most habits die. **Start today:** pick the one small habit you've been putting off. Do it before you go to bed tonight, even if it's only for five minutes. No excuses.

LIVE THE CREED

"I intend to develop myself in a positive manner and avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health."

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **PERSEVERANCE**

Our Student Creed says you will "avoid anything that would reduce my mental growth or physical health." Small daily choices decide that: what you eat, what you read, when you sleep, whether you practice. The Principle of the Black Belt this week is **Perseverance**. Small steps only work if you keep taking them, day after day, until they become who you are.

WHY SMALL STEPS WORK

A lot of people try to change everything at once. They say, "Starting Monday, I'll get up at 5:00, run three miles, read for an hour and never eat sugar again."

By Wednesday, they quit.

Small steps work better. Want to read more? Start with 15 minutes a night. Want to be more flexible? Stretch for 5 minutes after school. Want to get better at your form? Practice it once a day.

Small steps are easy to start. Easy to keep. And here is the magic: they add up.

Picture a student who does 10 push-ups a day. That doesn't sound like much. But in a year, that is more than 3,600 push-ups. In four years, the time it usually takes to earn a Black Belt at Mile High Karate, that is more than 14,000.

Ten a day. Fourteen thousand. That is the power of small steps.

THREE SMALL STEPS THAT BUILD CHAMPIONS

At Mile High Karate, we have three home challenges that earn attitude stripes. Each one is a small daily step.

The Reading Challenge. Read for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Young readers can read with a parent. Books about martial arts, sports heroes, leaders, health or anything that grows your mind all count. Reading builds the mind of a champion, on and off the mat.

The Healthy Eating Challenge. Each time you make a smart food choice on your own, write it down: what you chose, and what you passed on. An apple instead of chips. Water instead of soda. You can't out-train a bad diet. Food is fuel.

The Self-Discipline Challenge. Each time you do something helpful at home, at school or at work *without being asked*, write it down. Make your bed. Clear the table. Help a classmate.

None of these is big. Each one takes a few minutes. But do them every day, and in a few months you will be stronger, smarter and more trusted than you have ever been.

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS
>
> *"Although there were times that I didn't want to complete the conditioning log or homework cards I am glad that I did because I really feel they have helped with my curriculum and physical condition."*
>
> MATTHEW GASSER, BLACK BELT ESSAY

STEPPING STONES

At Mile High Karate, we break the big goal of Black Belt into small steps.

Every new belt is a step. Every stripe is a step. Every class is a step.

We have also held Intramural Tournaments since 1985. These are tournaments just for our own students. In the late 1980s, 500 to 800 students competed each quarter. In September 2026, we held our 125th one.

Why so many tournaments? Because each one is a stepping stone. You compete. You learn. You get a little better. Then you do it again. Nobody goes from white belt to Black Belt in one leap. You get there one stepping stone at a time.

It takes about 48 months of training to earn a Black Belt at Mile High Karate. That sounds like a long time when you are a white belt. But here is what our Black Belts will tell you: it went by fast. Because they were not trying to do four years at once. They were just trying to do today.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith became a world champion one workout at a time.

When he was competing, he trained six hours a day, split into three workouts. He did that for almost 20 years. Nobody can do that by

thinking about all 20 years at once. You do it by showing up for today's workout. Then tomorrow's.

Grand Master Smith has a great way of explaining goals. He says, "You'll pick a point and as you walk towards that point you can see farther."

Think about walking toward a hill. When you get to the top, you can see the next hill. You couldn't see it from the bottom. That is how goals work. Each small step lets you see the next one.

He also tells students that if you get to Black Belt, "you now have lifelong skills for a higher level of discipline, respect and confidence." Those skills don't come from one class. They come from hundreds of classes, one small step after another.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

Some students make a poster called "My Journey to Black Belt." It has their photo, their target date, their reasons why and their favorite sayings. If you made one before, this week you will update it. If you haven't made one yet, this week you will start.

Here is what's new: add your **Black Belt self-talk**. Write three or four of your strongest "I am" sentences on your poster. "I am practicing my form every day." "I am a reader." "I am a future Second Degree Black Belt."

Then add your **daily small steps**: how many classes a week, how many minutes of home practice, and which challenge you are working on right now.

A poster is a picture of your goal that you see every day. It reminds you, on the tired days, why the small steps matter. Hang it where you will see it every morning. In your workbook, you will plan your poster before you build it.

HABITS BECOME WHO YOU ARE

Here is the best part about good habits. After a while, they stop being things you do. They become who you are.

At first, you *try* to bow when you enter the school. After a few months, you just bow. At first, you *try* to say "Yes, ma'am." After a while, it comes out on its own, even at the grocery store.

Picture a student who reads 15 minutes every night for four years. By then, she is not someone who is trying to read more. She is a reader.

Picture an adult who stretches every morning for a year. He is not trying to be flexible anymore. He is flexible.

That is what we mean when we say we don't just teach karate. We build Black Belts. One small habit at a time.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Start tonight.** Pick one small habit and do it before bed tonight. Not Monday. Tonight.
2. **Make it small.** Small enough that you can do it even on a busy, tired day.
3. **Do it at the same time.** Tie it to something you already do, like after brushing your teeth or after dinner.
4. **Track it.** Check off each day on a chart or calendar. Watch your streak grow.
5. **No excuses. Never miss twice.** If you miss a day, own it, and get right back on track the next day.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

INSTRUCTOR **"WHAT DO BLACK BELTS MAKE?"**

STUDENTS **"NO EXCUSES!"**

Key Word: **STREAK**

In class, you will do 10 push-ups together and then do the math out loud: 10 a day is more than 3,600 a year. Then each student will say the one small step they will do every day this week.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: PICK ONE SMALL HABIT (15 MINUTES OF READING, ONE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICE, OR ONE HELPFUL ACT WITHOUT BEING ASKED) AND DO IT EVERY DAY FOR ONE WEEK, WITH NO EXCUSES. CHECK OFF EACH DAY.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM TAKING SMALL STEPS EVERY DAY.
- I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR MY RESULTS. NO EXCUSES.
- I AM GETTING A LITTLE BETTER EVERY DAY.
- I AM BUILDING MY BLACK BELT ONE DAY AT A TIME.

WORDS TO KNOW

HABIT
something you do so often that you do it without thinking.

EXCUSE
a reason you give for not doing something, often to blame someone or something else.

RESPONSIBILITY
owning your choices and your results.

STEPPING STONE
a small step that helps you reach a bigger goal.

STREAK
doing something many days in a row.

WISDOM
knowing what is good and wise to do, learned over time.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

Adults often fail at change because they try too much at once. Choose one habit small enough to do on your worst day: five minutes of stretching, one glass of water before coffee, fifteen minutes of reading. Attach it to something you already

do. Track it on paper where you can see it. Listen for your own excuses this week, and replace each one with "What can I do next time?"

Parents, help your child pick one challenge sheet (Reading, Healthy Eating or Self-Discipline) and post it on the refrigerator. Celebrate streaks, not perfection. If they miss a day, say, "That's okay. Never miss twice." This week, help your child update their Journey to Black Belt poster, and hang it where the whole family will see it. Most important, let them see you building a habit of your own.

REMEMBER

- ✓ Big results come from small steps, every day.
- ✓ Good habits are hard to make but easy to live with. Bad habits are easy to make but hard to live with.
- ✓ An excuse hands your result to someone else. Black Belts own their results.
- ✓ Reading, healthy eating and helping without being asked are small steps that build champions.
- ✓ If you miss a day, never miss twice.

WEEK 16 · TEST CYCLE 2

THE BLACK BELT IS A BEGINNING

LIFELONG LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

SUCCESS SKILL
ALL EIGHT TOGETHER (BLACK BELT AND BEYOND)

PRINCIPLE
ALL SIX PRINCIPLES

KEY WORD
BEYOND

> *"Learning is a constant process of discovery, a process without end."*
>
> — BRUCE LEE

THE BIG IDEA

A Black Belt is not the end of the road. It is where the real journey starts.

Here is a question I ask every new student: "What do you think happens after you get your Black Belt?"

Most people say something like, "I'm done!" or "I'm an expert!" or "I can stop!"

I understand why. A Black Belt is a big goal. At Mile High Karate, it takes about 48 months of steady training. You pass informal tests, a formal test, and a written test. You finish a community service project. Then you go to the mountains for our Black Belt Retreat. When you finally tie that black belt around your waist, it feels like the top of the mountain.

But I want to tell you a secret my teacher taught me. **The Black Belt is not a finish line. It is a starting line.**

SIXTY DAYS

When I was a young man, I worked as a head instructor and branch manager at the Jhoon Rhee Institute in Washington, D.C. I was going to college at Georgetown University at the same time. I worked for my teacher, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, and next to Grand Master Jeff Smith.

The Institute was very successful. It was producing hundreds of Black Belts. But when we looked at what happened after the belt test, we found a big problem.

On average, a new Black Belt kept training for only about **60 days** after earning the rank. Then they quit.

Sixty days. After years of training.

How could that happen? Students had worked so hard. They had sweated, struggled, and never given up. Then, right after their biggest success, they left.

Grand Master Rhee figured out why. The students had been told the Black Belt was the goal. So when they got it, there was nothing left to reach for. They had arrived at the finish line, so they stopped running.

THE GOAL IS ALWAYS ONE STEP AHEAD

Grand Master Rhee fixed this with one simple rule. He taught us that you can never let a student's goal be the rank they are about to earn.

He explained it like this. A brown belt's goal can't be First Degree Black Belt. **The goal has to already be Second Degree Black Belt, before they even test for their first.**

I have taught that lesson for decades. It is one of the most important things I know. And it doesn't just work in karate.

Here is a kid example. Imagine a student whose goal is to make it to 5th grade. They get there and think, "Done!" Now imagine a student whose goal is to finish high school and go to college. When they reach 5th grade, they think, "Good. Next step." Which student keeps learning?

Here is an adult example. Picture a person whose goal is to lose 20 pounds for a wedding. They hit their goal, the wedding happens, and the weight comes back. Now picture a person whose goal is to be healthy and strong at 80. They hit 20 pounds and keep going, because their goal was never just the number.

Whatever goal you are working on right now, add one more step past it. Then you will never arrive at a dead end.

That is why we call it **Black Belt and Beyond**.

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS
>
> *"I once thought that getting my 1st Degree Black Belt meant that I knew Karate. Now I understand that it is only the beginning. ... My goal after earning my 1st Degree is to become a 2nd Degree Black Belt. I want to become an instructor and teach Karate to other people."*
>
> JIM NIEMAN, BLACK BELT ESSAY

ALL EIGHT TOGETHER

Every Black Belt at Mile High Karate learns eight **Success Skills**. They are not just for karate. They are for school, work, family and the rest of your life. Here they are, all together:

1. **Goal Attainment and Positive Self-Expectancy.** Expect good things, and work to make them happen.
2. **Definite Commitment.** Decide for sure. "Maybe" means no.
3. **Unshakable Character and Personal Honesty.** Know who you are. Tell the truth. Own your actions.
4. **Visualization.** See it in your mind before you do it.
5. **Total Self-Confidence.** You can do what you are willing to work for.
6. **Positive Self-Talk.** Make the voice in your head a coach, not a critic.
7. **No Excuses.** Take 100% responsibility for your results.
8. **Positive Respect.** Good manners, respect for others and respect for yourself.

Each one is strong by itself. Together, they are what a Black Belt really is. The belt is just the sign on the outside.

BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILL

ALL EIGHT TOGETHER

A winning Black Belt doesn't use one success skill at a time. They use all eight, every day. They set a goal and expect to reach it. They commit for sure. They stay honest. They see it before they do it. They believe in themselves. They talk to themselves like a coach. They make no excuses. And they treat everyone, including themselves, with respect. This week, you will write one "I am" sentence for each of the eight skills. That is your **Black Belt Self-Talk Script**. **Start today:** read your script out loud tonight, and then every day for the next 30 days.

LIVE THE CREED

All four lines of the Student Creed

PRINCIPLE OF THE BLACK BELT: **ALL SIX PRINCIPLES**

You know the whole Student Creed now. Say all four lines out loud. Then say the six Principles of the Black Belt: Modesty, Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Courage and Indomitable Spirit. A Black Belt does not stop living the creed after graduation. That is what "Black Belt and beyond" means. The creed is not something you finish. It is something you keep.

THE BLACK BELT RETREAT

At Mile High Karate, every new Black Belt finishes testing in the Colorado mountains. For many years, our Black Belt Retreat was at SilverCreek, near Granby. Then it moved to places like Keystone and Breckenridge. Today it is three days in Breckenridge.

The test is hard. For many years, the testing part ran about 48 hours from start to finish. In 2007, there is a photo of me teaching 150 Black Belts in their 43rd straight hour, at 8,500 feet above sea level. That's high enough that the air is thin and you get tired faster.

Every year at the retreat, I sit down with the new Black Belts and their parents. I ask them a question:

"If I gave you $1,000,000, would you give back everything you gained on the way to your Black Belt? The confidence, the discipline, the friendships, the goals you've reached?"

By 2007, I had asked 487 new Black Belts and their parents that question. Every single one of them said no.

Think about that. What you are building right now, one class at a time, will be worth more to you than a million dollars. Not the belt. The person you become while earning it.

THE BLACK BELT EXTRAVAGANZA

A few weeks after the retreat, our new Black Belts walk across the stage at the Black Belt Extravaganza. We have held it every year since 1990, and I have been at every one. There are demonstrations and performances, and the new Black Belts receive their belts in front of their families and the whole school.

I want you to come, even if you are a brand-new white belt. Sit in the audience. Watch the new Black Belts. Picture yourself up there. It is one of the best ways to set your own goal.

But remember what you're watching. You're not watching people finish. You're watching people start.

WHAT COMES AFTER BLACK BELT

At Mile High Karate, the journey keeps going after the Black Belt. There are more degrees of Black Belt to earn. Second Degree usually takes about 30 more months of training. There is the **Black Belt Club**, with three levels of reading and training. And there is the **Leadership Team**, where students grow in three stages:

1. **Team member** — you learn to work well with others and help the team.
2. **Leader** — you learn to guide and encourage other students.
3. **Teacher** — you learn to teach, so you can pass on what you know.

That's how Mile High Karate has always grown. Students become assistant instructors. Assistant instructors become instructors. Some instructors go

on to lead whole schools. Our students don't just learn karate. They learn to lead.

We have promoted more than 1,000 Black Belts at Mile High Karate. The youngest was 5 years old. The oldest was 76. Every one of them started as a white belt, just like you. And the best of them understood, on Black Belt day, that they were only getting started.

FROM GRAND MASTER SMITH

Grand Master Jeff Smith has been in the martial arts since 1965. He became a world champion. He is a 10th Degree Black Belt and the Chief of Instruction at Mile High Karate. And he is still learning and still teaching.

He likes to compare training to going to school. In his words: "You don't go to college to drop out as a freshman." Nobody signs up for college just to quit after the first year. You go to finish, and then to use what you learned for the rest of your life.

He also explains goals with a picture of the horizon, the line where the land meets the sky. "You'll pick a point," he says, "and as you walk towards that point you can see farther." When you reach your first goal, you can see the next one. That's how a Black Belt grows.

Grand Master Smith says, "If you get to black belt, you now have lifelong skills for a higher level of discipline, respect and confidence." Lifelong. That means the Black Belt isn't just for now. It's for the rest of your life.

THIS WEEK'S GOAL STEP

BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

This week is graduation week. Some of you will earn a new belt. Every one of you will take a step closer to Black Belt.

Graduation is the payoff for the work you've done. But a Black Belt never stops at the payoff. Before you tie on your new belt, you will

already know your next goal.

This week, you will finish two things in your workbook.

First, your **Black Belt Self-Talk Script**: one "I am" sentence for each of the eight Success Skills. Some students read their script at graduation. All of you will read it out loud every day for the next 30 days.

Second, **My Goal Beyond Black Belt**: your target date for First Degree, your target date for Second Degree, and what you want to do after that. Join the Leadership Team? Become an assistant instructor? Teach a white belt the way someone taught you?

Write it down. Sign it. Share it with your family and your instructor. Then come back next week and start the next step. That is what Black Belts do.

HOW A BLACK BELT DOES IT

1. **Name your next two goals today.** Say out loud your next belt AND the belt after it, before you go to bed tonight.
2. **Set your goal past Black Belt.** Always know what comes after the goal you're working on.
3. **Stay a student.** Even Grand Masters keep learning. Never think you know it all.
4. **Help someone behind you.** Show a newer student the way. Teaching is the best way to learn.
5. **Come to the big events.** Watch the Extravaganza. Picture yourself on stage.

IN CLASS THIS WEEK · KEY WORD

INSTRUCTOR **"WHERE ARE YOU GOING?"**

STUDENTS **"BLACK BELT AND BEYOND!"**

Key Word: **BEYOND**

In class, you will stand in a Winner's Circle. One at a time, you will step in, deliver your strongest "I am" sentence with a kiai, and the whole class will answer, "Yes, you are!"

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE: FINISH YOUR BLACK BELT SELF-TALK SCRIPT AND READ IT OUT LOUD EVERY DAY FOR ONE WEEK, THEN KEEP GOING FOR 30 DAYS.

SAY IT OUT LOUD

- I AM A FUTURE BLACK BELT, AND MY BLACK BELT IS A BEGINNING, NOT AN END.
- I AM ALWAYS WORKING TOWARD MY NEXT GOAL.
- I AM BECOMING A LEADER AND A TEACHER.
- I AM LEARNING FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

WORDS TO KNOW

RETREAT
a special trip away from home to train, learn, and test.

DEGREE
a level of Black Belt; First Degree, Second Degree, and so on.

SUCCESS SKILL
a habit of mind that helps you reach your goals.

LEADERSHIP
guiding and helping other people do their best.

HORIZON
the line far away where the land seems to meet the sky.

LIFELONG
lasting for your whole life.

FOR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS

The most important thing you can do as a parent is talk about Black Belt as a beginning from the very first month. Instead of "When you get your Black Belt, you're done," say, "When you get your Black Belt, you'll be ready for the Leadership

Team." Bring your child to the Black Belt Extravaganza every year, whatever their rank. It is the best goal-setting event we have.

This week, sit with your child while they write their Black Belt Self-Talk Script, and post it where the family will see it every day. Write a script of your own and read yours alongside theirs. Adults, set a goal that reaches past First Degree, such as Second Degree or becoming an assistant instructor. People who aim past the finish line rarely stop at it. Our oldest new Black Belt was 76. It is never too late to begin, and it is never too late to keep going.

REMEMBER

- ✓ The Black Belt is not a finish line. It is a starting line.
- ✓ Always set your next goal before you reach the one you're working on.
- ✓ The eight Success Skills, all together, are what a Black Belt really is.
- ✓ What you gain on the way to Black Belt is worth more than a million dollars.
- ✓ You don't go to college to drop out as a freshman.

FOR REFERENCE

THE EIGHT BLACK BELT SUCCESS SKILLS

Every eight-week test cycle teaches all eight. Use them at home, at school, at work and on the mat.

1. GOAL ATTAINMENT & POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY

Set a clear goal, expect to reach it, and do the work that makes it happen.

2. DEFINITE COMMITMENT

Decide for sure. "Maybe" means no. Think about the reward, not the fear.

3. UNSHAKABLE CHARACTER & PERSONAL HONESTY

Know who you are, tell the truth, and take responsibility for what you do.

4. VISUALIZATION

See it in your mind before you do it. Practice it in your head, then do it for real.

5. TOTAL SELF-CONFIDENCE

You can do anything you are willing to work for, no matter what others say.

6. POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Be in charge of the words in your head. Make them help you, not hurt you.

7. NO EXCUSES

Take 100% responsibility for your results. Never blame others.

8. POSITIVE RESPECT

Use good manners, treat others well, and respect yourself with healthy habits.

THE NINE QUALITIES OF A BLACK BELT

Every Mile High Karate Black Belt is built on nine qualities of character. Learn them. Live them. Teach them.

1. POSITIVE SELF-AWARENESS

Knowing your strengths, your weak spots and where you stand.

2. POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

Liking who you are, without needing to compare yourself to anyone.

3. POSITIVE SELF-CONTROL

Being in charge of your choices and your reactions.

4. POSITIVE SELF-MOTIVATION

Working toward goals because you want them, not because you are pushed.

5. POSITIVE SELF-EXPECTANCY
Expecting that your effort will lead to success.

6. POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE
Seeing yourself as the person you are working to become.

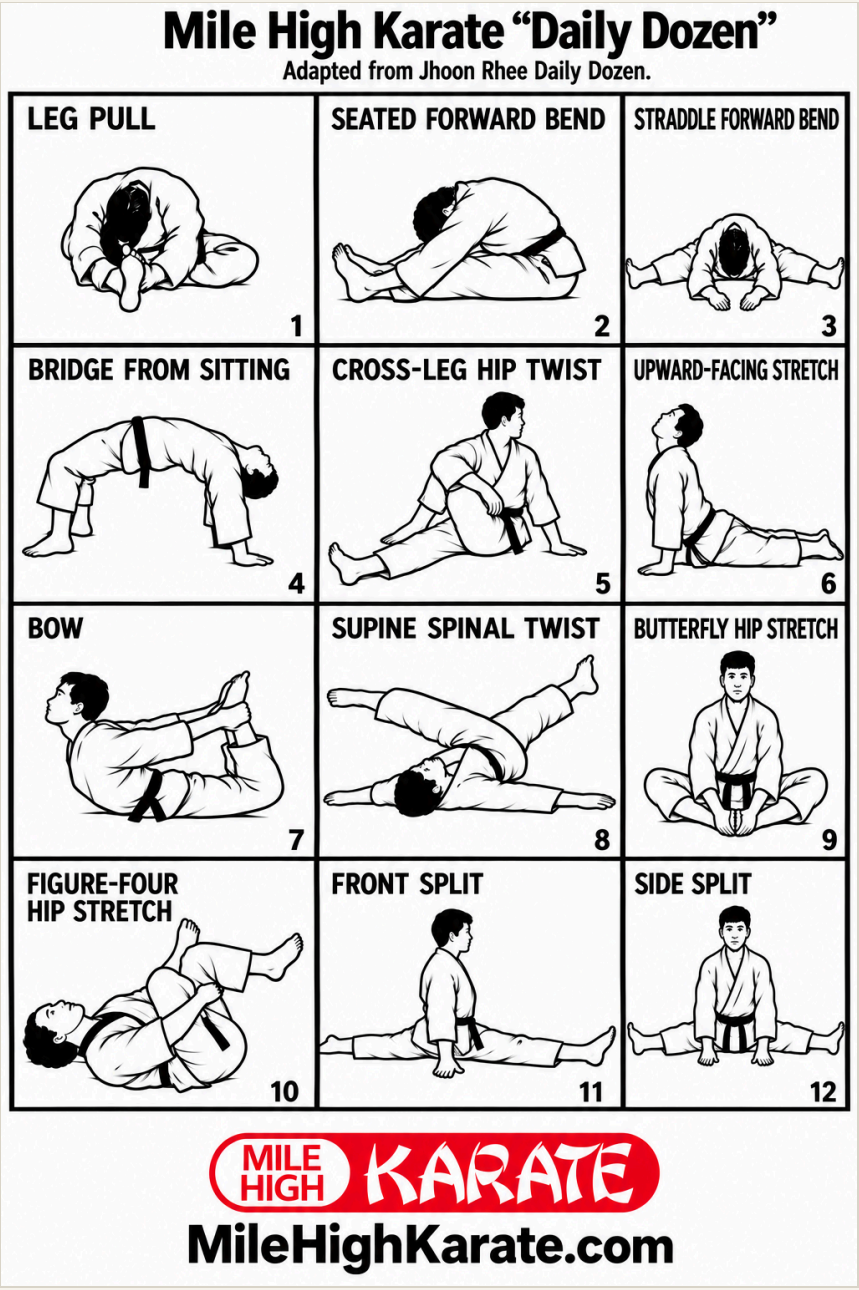
7. POSITIVE SELF-DIRECTION
Setting clear goals and making a plan to reach them.

8. POSITIVE SELF-DISCIPLINE
Doing what your goals require, especially when it is hard.

9. POSITIVE SELF-PROJECTION
Carrying yourself with confidence and courtesy.

THE DAILY DOZEN

Twelve stretches to do every day. Hold each one for a slow count of ten and breathe. Never bounce, and stop if anything hurts.



PRACTICE RESOURCES

COUNT KICK PRACTICE

Practice each kick slowly, one count at a time, then faster. Return to your guard stance after every kick.



OUR LINEAGE

GRAND MASTER JHOON RHEE

FATHER OF AMERICAN TAE KWON DO · 1932–2018



Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, Father of American Tae Kwon Do.

Every Mile High Karate student trains in a lineage that runs directly back to Grand Master Jhoon Rhee.

Jhoon Rhee was born on January 7, 1932, in Korea. He began training in the martial arts as a teenager and served as an officer in the Korean War.

In 1956 he came to the United States for training with the U.S. Air Force in San Marcos, Texas. He spoke very little English, but he started teaching a few people what he knew. Many people believe those were the first Tae Kwon Do classes in America. His first American Black Belts, Allen Steen and Pat Burleson, went on to build the schools of Texas and Oklahoma, and that family tree later produced both Jeff Smith and the Tulsa instructors who taught Stephen Oliver.

On June 28, 1962, he opened the first Jhoon Rhee School of Tae Kwon Do in Washington, D.C. Beginning in 1965, he taught karate to members of the United States Congress at 5 a.m., three mornings a week, as volunteer service. He became friends with Bruce Lee, who helped him with his punch while he helped Bruce Lee with his kick. He taught Muhammad Ali his "Accupunch." After a student was hurt by a kick at a 1969 tournament, he invented foam safety equipment for the hands, feet and head, and padded gear like his changed sparring around the world. He also created martial arts "ballet," forms set to music.

Grand Master Rhee taught that every person should build three things: knowledge in the mind, honesty in the heart and strength in the body. He

lived what he taught. He kept doing a hundred push-ups in about a minute well into his later years, and he set a life goal of "100 years of wisdom in a body of a 21 year old."

He awarded Stephen Oliver his 1st Degree Black Belt in 1978 and his ranks through 6th Degree. He gave his blessing when Mile High Karate opened in 1983, taught classes at the Mile High Karate school in Arvada, and led the leadership session at a Mile High Karate Black Belt Retreat in 2010. He passed away on April 30, 2018, at age 86.



Grand Master Jhoon Rhee training with a boxer.



Jhoon Rhee sparring with Bruce Lee.

A LIFE THAT SHAPED AMERICAN MARTIAL ARTS

- **1932** Born January 7 in Korea.
- **1956** Comes to the United States for training with the U.S. Air Force in San Marcos, Texas, and begins teaching.
- **1962** Opens his first school in Washington, D.C., on June 28.
- **1965** Begins teaching members of Congress at 5 a.m.
- **1970s** Develops padded safety equipment and musical forms; teaches Muhammad Ali the "Accupunch."
- **1978** Awards Stephen Oliver his 1st Degree Black Belt.
- **1983** Gives his blessing as Mile High Karate opens in Colorado.
- **2018** Passes away April 30, at age 86.

YOUR LINEAGE AT MILE HIGH KARATE

GRAND MASTER JHOON RHEE
Father of American Tae Kwon Do

ALLEN STEEN & PAT BURLESON
His first two American Black Belts, Texas

GRAND MASTER JEFF SMITH
Jhoon Rhee student, PKA World Champion

▼

GRAN MOULDER & BOB OLINGHOUSE
Jhoon Rhee Institute Black Belts teaching in Tulsa, Oklahoma

▼

GRAND MASTER STEPHEN OLIVER
1st through 6th Degree from Jhoon Rhee · 7th through 10th Degree from Jeff Smith

▼

MILE HIGH KARATE INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS

FOUNDER AND CEO

GRAND MASTER STEPHEN OLIVER, MBA



10th Degree Black Belt. Official Taekwondo Hall of Fame, 2026.

Grand Master Stephen Oliver, MBA, is a 10th Degree Black Belt and the Founder and CEO of Mile High Karate and Martial Arts Wealth Mastery, one of the martial arts industry's leading coaching and consulting organizations for professional martial arts school owners, BJJ academies, and MMA gyms. A martial arts school owner since 1975 and business coach since 1985, Oliver has spent more than five decades building, operating, and advising successful martial arts schools. He also serves as CEO and Chairman of NAPMA (the National Association of Professional Martial Artists) and Publisher of Martial Arts Professional magazine. A Georgetown University cum laude graduate, he earned his Executive MBA through the Executive Program at the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver. He was promoted to 10th Degree Black Belt in April 2026 and inducted into the Official Taekwondo Hall of Fame in August 2026. Learn more at MartialArtsWealth.com and StephenCOliver.com.

He began training in 1969 at the Jhoon Rhee Institute in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was teaching by 1974, and in 1975, at age 15, he opened his own school. In 1976 and 1978 he trained at Jhoon Rhee headquarters in Washington,

D.C., alongside Jeff Smith, and in August 1978 Grand Master Rhee awarded him his 1st Degree Black Belt with one of the highest scores ever given on the exam. While studying at Georgetown he worked for the Jhoon Rhee Institute as a head instructor and branch manager.

On August 6, 1983, with Grand Master Rhee's blessing, he opened the first Mile High Karate school in Lakewood, Colorado. He has been present at every Black Belt Extravaganza since 1990, and he has watched more than 1,000 Mile High Karate students, ages 5 to 76, earn their Black Belts.

50+
Years in the martial arts

1,000+
Black Belts promoted

1983
Founded Mile High Karate

RANK

- **1969** Begins training in Tulsa, Oklahoma
- **1978** 1st Degree Black Belt, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee
- **1992** 5th Degree, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee
- **1994** 6th Degree, Grand Master Jhoon Rhee
- **2001** 7th Degree, Grand Master Jeff Smith
- **2006** 8th Degree, Grand Master Jeff Smith
- **2016** 9th Degree, Grand Masters Jeff Smith, Bill Wallace, Pat Burleson and Joe Corley
- **2026** 10th Degree (April), Grand Master Jeff Smith; Official Taekwondo Hall of Fame (August)



Receiving his 1st Degree Black Belt from Jhoon Rhee, 1978.

EDUCATION

- **MBA** Executive MBA, Executive Program, Daniels College of Business, University of Denver, 1992
- **AB** Georgetown University, cum laude, International Economics, 1982
- **1978–80** University of Tulsa, University Scholar and National Merit Finalist

CHIEF OF INSTRUCTION

GRAND MASTER JEFF SMITH



Grand Master Jeff Smith, 10th Degree Black Belt, former PKA World Champion.

Grand Master Jeff Smith is a 10th Degree Black Belt and the Chief of Instruction at Mile High Karate and Martial Arts Wealth Mastery, where he oversees instructor training, Black Belt testing and curriculum. He has been in the martial arts since 1965, when he talked his way into Jhoon Rhee's college karate club in Kingsville, Texas, as a junior-high paperboy.

He became one of the greatest fighters of his era. On September 14, 1974, he won the Professional Karate Association (PKA) World Light Heavyweight Championship, and he held that title until 1980, defending it seven times. On October 1, 1975, he defeated Karriem Allah in a heavyweight title fight on the closed-circuit card of the Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier "Thrilla in Manila." He finished his professional career with a record of 32 wins and 1 loss, with 16 knockouts. He was the first recipient of the Bruce Lee Award.

He trained with Stephen Oliver at Jhoon Rhee headquarters in 1976 and 1978 and sat on the board that tested him for Black Belt. He founded Jeff Smith Karate in 1981, was promoted to 10th Degree in 2016, and serves as President of Sports Operations for PKA Worldwide. He is the co-author, with Stephen Oliver, of *Extraordinary Teaching*. His favorite lesson for students and instructors alike: "A good instructor will motivate, but a great instructor will inspire."

A WORLD CHAMPION BEHIND EVERY BLACK BELT

- **1965** Begins training in Jhoon Rhee's karate club in Kingsville, Texas
- **1974** Wins the PKA World Light Heavyweight Championship (September 14)
- **1975** Defeats Karriem Allah on the "Thrilla in Manila" closed-circuit card (October 1)
- **1980** Holds the world title until 1980; finishes 32–1 with 16 knockouts
- **1981** Founds Jeff Smith Karate
- **2016** Promoted to 10th Degree Black Belt
- **Today** Chief of Instruction, Mile High Karate



Grand Master Smith leading a Mile High Karate Black Belt training event.

AT MILE HIGH KARATE

As Chief of Instruction, Grand Master Smith is responsible for instructor training, Black Belt testing and development, and curriculum oversight.

SINCE AUGUST 6, 1983

A SHORT HISTORY OF MILE HIGH KARATE

1983
Founded in Lakewood, Colorado

6
Schools in 36 months

1,000+
Black Belts, ages 5 to 76

Mile High Karate grew out of a family tree that runs back to Grand Master Jhoon Rhee. Stephen Oliver began training at the Jhoon Rhee Institute in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1969, opened his own school under Jhoon Rhee at age 15, earned his Black Belt from Grand Master Rhee in 1978, and then taught and managed schools for the Jhoon Rhee Institute in Washington, D.C.

1983: The founding. With Grand Master Rhee's blessing, Stephen Oliver moved to Denver and opened the first Mile High Karate school at Kipling Street and Jewell Avenue in Lakewood, Colorado, on August 6, 1983. He started with $10,000. Within 90 days the school had more than 150 students. The name came from Denver itself: the Mile High City, 5,280 feet above sea level.

1983–1986: Six schools. Mile High Karate opened five schools within 18 months and six within 36 months, in Lakewood, Arvada, Aurora, Arapahoe Village and Boulder. Each new school was staffed by students who had come up through the curriculum and become assistant instructors, then instructors. That is still the Mile High Karate way: students become leaders, and leaders become teachers.



Grand Master Stephen Oliver teaching students and families at a Mile High Karate event.

Traditions that began early. Intramural tournaments began in 1985, and by the late 1980s 500 to 800 students were competing each quarter. The Black Belt Retreat began in the mid-1980s and moved over the years from SilverCreek to Keystone, Breckenridge and Estes Park. The Black Belt Extravaganza, where new Black Belts receive their belts on stage, has been held every year since 1990.

1989–1999: The Mile High Karate Classic. For eleven years Mile High Karate hosted the Mile High Karate Classic in Denver, a national tournament on the NASKA World Tour that drew competitors from across North America.

Character first. From the beginning, Mile High Karate built character lessons into the belt system. Young students brought school grades and teacher forms before testing, kept Self-Discipline Sheets of things they did without being told, and set the Black Belt as their long-term goal. Grand Master Jhoon Rhee himself taught classes at the Mile High Karate school in Arvada, and Chuck Norris visited the same school while Mile High Karate families raised money for his Kick Drugs Out of America program.

Growing beyond Colorado. Mile High Karate's first franchise school joined in August 1998, and international franchising began in 2000. Over the years, Mile High Karate schools taught students in more than fifteen states and in New Zealand and Australia.

Mile High Karate today. Mile High Karate still teaches Colorado families today. The old systems are still in daily use: the Black Belt as every student's long-term goal, about 48 months to reach it, intramural tournaments, a three-day Black Belt testing retreat in Breckenridge, and a student body in which well over 30 percent of active students are Black Belts. Grand Master Stephen Oliver remains Founder and CEO, and Grand Master Jeff Smith is Chief of Instruction.

More than 1,000 students, ages 5 to 76, have earned a Mile High Karate Black Belt. The next one could be you.

Source: The Complete History of Mile High Karate, MileHighKarate.com/history.

THANK YOU

A NOTE OF THANKS

For many years, Mile High Karate beginners studied two excellent books: *The Psychology of Winning* by Denis Waitley and *What to Say When You Talk to Yourself* by Dr. Shad Helmstetter. Many of the ideas our students learn, including the qualities of a winner and the power of self-talk, were shaped by these authors. We are grateful to both of them, and we still recommend their books to every adult student and parent.

We also thank the instructors, students and families of Mile High Karate. Since August 6, 1983, you have shown us what a Black Belt really looks like.

THANKS TO OUR BLACK BELTS

The short passages marked “In Their Own Words” come from essays written by Mile High Karate Black Belt candidates and from reviews written by Mile High Karate families. We have printed them as they were written, with each writer’s name. Thank you for letting new students hear from people who have already made the trip.



Grand Master Stephen Oliver and Grand Master Jeff Smith.

MY NOTES

NOTES

MILE HIGH KARATE® · SIXTEEN WEEKS TO BLACK BELT AND BEYOND

EVERY BLACK BELT STARTS WITH ONE DECISION.

For more than four decades, Mile High Karate has used the martial arts to build strong, confident, disciplined people. More than 1,000 students, ages 5 to 76, have earned a Mile High Karate Black Belt. Every one of them started by setting the goal.

The Black Belt Mindset is the sixteen-week character program every new Mile High Karate student begins with. In plain words that a seven-year-old can follow and an adult can use at work, Grand Master Stephen Oliver and Grand Master Jeff Smith teach:

- ✓ The eight Black Belt Success Skills, from Definite Commitment to No Excuses
- ✓ The Mile High Karate Student Creed and the Principles of the Black Belt
- ✓ True stories from Grand Master Jhoon Rhee, PKA World Champion Grand Master Jeff Smith, and Grand Master Oliver's 50+ years on the mat
- ✓ A weekly goal step toward Black Belt and the goals beyond it
- ✓ One simple seven-day challenge each week that turns a lesson into a habit

> *"I never thought that three years ago, when I started in Mile High Karate that I would ever be sitting and writing about my goals after I got my Black Belt."*
>
> ERIC MUROTAKE, BLACK BELT ESSAY

MILE HIGH KARATE®

MILEHIGHKARATE.COM