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STUDENT JOURNAL

NAME

MENTAL KARATE™

STUDENT JOURNAL



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WHITE BELT - INITIATIVE

DEFINITION

Initiative is taking purposeful action to improve your life.

WHITE BELT CHALLENGE

To earn your White Belt, take three actions to improve your life. Actions should include efforts to overcome a personal challenge, pursue a hobby you've been interested in developing, or get closer toward accomplishing a life dream.

STUDENT PROFILE: MARIA

To earn her White Belt, Maria determined to (1) bring up two of her grades in school, (2) crochet a scarf, and (3) start her own business. She studied extra hard every night, and was excited to see her efforts pay off when she raised her grade in *three* of her classes! After her homework, Maria would spend time working on her scarf. At first it was frustrating, because she had trouble figuring out how to crochet, but eventually she got the hang of it. Maria was so happy with how she had progressed in her crochet skills that she decided to try selling her pieces online. To start her own business, she made some business cards and set up a website. She sold five items by the end of the month!

STUDENT PROFILE: GREG

To earn his White Belt, Greg wanted to take initiative to (1) become better at speaking French, (2) train himself to speed read, and (3) get better at football. Every other night, Greg studied new French vocabulary lists for fifteen minutes. He spent thirty minutes every night reading a book, and found the more he read the faster he got at it! To improve in football, Greg set up a target in his back yard and practiced kicking the football at it. He also played catch with his dad and brother. He noticed he was much better at catching the football by the end of the month.

White Belt Actions Taken by Mental Karate Students

- Start raising my grades by studying every night
- Stop fighting with other people
- Practice hard to get first chair in orchestra
- Start researching a future career
- Improve my time running a mile
- Improve my English skills by practicing writing
- Spend more time with my parents
- Save up money to buy exercise equipment
- Learn to kick with my other foot in soccer
- Join a hockey camp to get better at my game
- Volunteer answers in class more often to improve my public speaking skills
- Don't wait until the night before an exam to study for it
- Talk to a new student and become his or her friend
- Try out for the school play
- Join an organization that advocates for animals
- Send a gift to a relative in another country
- Raise my hand in every class
- Start taking lessons to learn a new instrument
- Start looking at problems from someone else's point of view
- Donate a belonging to someone in need
- Learn to talk about my feelings and control my anger
- Create a club in my school based on one of my interests
- Make a project for the science fair
- Shadow a student at a high school to prepare for the new experience
- Sign up for a writing class to improve my schoolwork
- Learn a new recipe and make dinner for my family
- Join a new sports team
- Earn money to pay for summer camp
- Start running regularly to stay in shape
- Plan a day for my whole family to spend together

THE TURBO BUTTON

Pages 10-18 from *The Code*, by Mawi Asgedom

A couple of years ago, my little brother Hntsa (HINT-sa) and I were playing Nintendo basketball, and he was schooling me. Dunking on me. Running circles around me.

I couldn't believe it. It was one thing to lose, but he was destroying me. Game after game, no matter what I did, I couldn't come close.

I started to practice in secret. No way my little bro was gonna do me like that. I hooked up the Nintendo when he wasn't looking and played for hours. I'll surprise him, I thought. I'll practice, then whoop him.

We played again, and he smoked me again. And again and again and again. Finally, I asked him: "Hntsa, how come you're always killing me, man? What's going on?"

Hntsa turned his joystick upside-down and showed me a button I didn't realize existed. It was the turbo button. It made you jump higher, run faster, block harder. No wonder he was smoking me. No matter what I did, there was no way that I could compete with him: I didn't have my turbo button pressed.

Playing video games with Hntsa reminded me of a turbo button I had discovered in life, a secret button that can launch anyone to spectacular success. Like the turbo button on the Nintendo joystick, the life turbo button is hard to find unless you know where to look. You won't find it in school, sports, friends, or music. It's so close, it's hard to see.

Where does the life turbo button lie? It's inside your mind. Next to the button, a label reads: "PRESS IF YOU WANT TO TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE YOUR LIFE." Very few people have pressed this button, but it's not hard to spot those who have.

What separates them? The turbo folks are always taking action to improve their lives. The folks who haven't pressed their turbo button, well, they're always making excuses about something.

You know the type: they always blame bad grades on their teachers or whine about how their parents aren't cool. You might hear them say:

- It's not fair my coach hates me. He's the only reason I'm not starting.
- I'm just naturally bad at math – there's nothing I can do about it.
- My parents pick on me all the time. I wish they'd just see things my way.
- *I can't do well because someone else is preventing me. I don't have any power to improve my life, so I'll just complain about it.*

Compare those complaints with the words of those who've pressed their life turbo button:

- I'm gonna talk to my coach and find out what it would take for me to start. Then I'm gonna do my best to make it happen.
- I will talk to my math teacher and see if I can get extra tutoring.
- My parents don't always understand where I'm coming from, but I'm not going to let that ruin our relationship. I will talk to them and try to see things their way, and hopefully they'll respond by doing the same for me.
- *I know I can't control everything in life, but I still believe that it's up to me to create the life I want. I will make things happen for myself through my own effort.*

Which group of people has a better chance of succeeding? Which type of person do you want to be?

The Original Turbo Brother

When we first came to America, my older brother Tewolde, my sister Mehret, and I saw other kids in our neighborhood riding their bikes. Naturally, we wanted bikes too. But our family was broke, so our parents couldn't buy them for us.

What did Tewolde do? Instead of complaining or just accepting that we couldn't have bikes, he asked himself the turbo question: What action can I take to improve my situation?

Tewolde started scouting around local dumpsters. Before long, he found one bike that had a front tire he could use. Then he found another bike with a good frame and back tire. Then another bike that had a seat he liked. Tewolde combined the parts and put together a whole bike.

When he was done, he helped my sister and me assemble our own bikes. We went from no bike

to three bikes, from watching our friends bike to biking with them. How? By pressing the turbo button.

Years later, Tewolde used his turbo button again. He was a junior in high school, needed money for college, and wanted to help my parents with the bills. Tewolde asked himself: What can I do to make more money?

Notice that Tewolde didn't ask: How come most of the families around here have money, and mine is broke? Or, why is college so expensive? Or, why won't someone else help me out? No, he asked himself the turbo question: What action can I take to improve my situation?

One day, while working his job as a janitor, Tewolde noticed something funny: the building owner paid Tewolde's boss \$35 an hour, but as an employee Tewolde got only \$7 an hour.

If he became his own boss, Tewolde figured, he could start making \$35 an hour. So at age sixteen, he pressed his turbo button and decided to start Pro Clean, Inc.



No one would hire Tewolde at first because they hadn't heard of his company. But he refused to quit. He posted flyers and asked his friends to spread the word. Before long, he had one customer, then two, then three. Soon he started banking \$35 an hour on a regular basis. He had quintupled his income.

Do you see the power of the turbo button? It's \$35 in your pocket instead of \$7. Three bikes instead of none. Pressing your life turbo button can take you from C's to A's, from loneliness to having friends, from sitting on the bench to starting for your sports team.

Want to know the best part? Pressing your life turbo button is as easy as pressing a button on a joystick. Anyone can do it. All you have to do is sincerely believe:

I realize that no one—not my parents, friends, school, government, no one—can make me succeed. Others can help, but ultimately, I will succeed only when I take responsibility for everything that I can control: how I think, how I feel, how I talk, how I treat others—all my actions. Complaining about life won't get me anywhere. Instead, I'm always going to focus on what action I can take to improve my life.

Brainstorming White Belt Actions

The point of White Belt is you can always take initiative to improve your life. Got a challenge? Take action. Have a dream? Take action. Want to learn a new hobby? Press your Turbo Button and take action. To earn your White Belt, you will need to take three significant acts of initiative. Get started thinking about the actions you might take by brainstorming with the following questions.

What are three of your goals or dreams? Think of something you'd like to accomplish in the future.

1.

2.

3.

What are three hobbies or interests you'd like to learn? Think about things you enjoy doing.

1.

2.

3.

What are three of your challenges? We all have things challenges, but we can't improve unless we identify them.

1.

2.

3.

CREATE S.M.A.R.T. GOALS

Specific – Be detailed.

Measurable – Pick a target.

Attainable – Be realistic.

Rewarding – Make sure you want it.

Timely – Have a deadline.

Unsmart Goal: I want to get good grades.

Smart Goal: I will raise my science grade from a “D” to a “C” by October 31. This will be rewarding because I will be closer to making the honor roll.

Unsmart Goal: I want get up on time for school.

Smart Goal: I will go to bed by 10 p.m. every school night during October. This will be rewarding because I will be able to wake up more easily in the morning, and won't feel tired during the day.

Unsmart Goal: I want to be a better son.

Smart Goal: I will wash the dishes for my mom three times a week for the next four weeks. This will be rewarding because I will enjoy helping my mother, and I will feel good knowing I've contributed to alleviating some of her stress.

Unsmart Goal: I want to look better.

Smart Goal: I will work out four times a week during the month of October and I will also eat at least one vegetable or fruit every day. This will be rewarding because I will look and feel better.

Selecting White Belt Actions

Using your White Belt brainstorm worksheet, pick three acts of initiative you will take over the next week to overcome a challenge, develop an interest or hobby, or pursue a dream. Be sure the actions you plan to take are SMART Goals.

3 ACTS OF INITIATIVE

	Dream / Interest / Challenge	Action I Will Take
1		
2		
3		

WHITE BELT ■ INITIATIVE
TAKING ACTION AND TRACKING PROGRESS



ACT

WHITE BELT ACTION TRACKER

Throughout your Mental Karate journey you will use this journal to keep a record of your actions and chart your progress. Keeping track of your actions is very important, because it is the record of your success. This record is also a way for you to prove to your instructor you completed the actions and have earned your belt. If there's no record of your actions, then you can't earn the belt.

Use the chart below to keep track of the actions you take to earn your White Belt.

Act of Initiative I Completed	Date Completed	How Completing the Action Improved My Life



WHITE BELT REFLECTION ESSAY

Congratulations on earning your White Belt! Use this page to reflect on your accomplishments by answering the following questions.

What actions did you complete to earn your White Belt?

What was the most challenging part of earning your White Belt?

Continuing Initiative After White Belt

What was the most rewarding part of earning your White Belt?

Just because you have completed your White Belt doesn't mean you're done with initiative. Think of all the other areas of your life you can take action to improve. Challenge yourself to keep taking initiative. Whenever you are faced with a problem, think to yourself, "How can I take initiative to make this situation better?" If you develop a new interest, consider, "How can I take initiative to pursue this interest?" If you have a new goal or dream, ask, "How can I take initiative to achieve this dream?" As you take new acts of initiative, record your actions in the space below or in a separate journal. Keep up the great work!