

Decide to Commit

In the Dojo with Coach SJ

The Summer Before Jordan's Freshman Year in High School

Eight Years Before She Played in the NCAA National Championship Game

“You can approach this day like a martial artist training to become a White Belt,” the woman said as she walked across the stage. “Or a martial artist training for mastery. A Black Belt.” She paused, making eye contact with every attendee before continuing. “But make no mistake, *you* make this choice whenever you step into a karate dojo, onto a lacrosse field, or into any training arena for the rest of your life. In truth, there are thousands of moments every day when you are faced with this choice; it is up to *you* to make this impactful decision.”⁴ She stood taller, crossed her arms, and took in a deep breath. “So I ask you now, on this day, what do you want?”

“I want to be a Black Belt!” the room erupted in unison.

The response was overwhelming. Jordan stood in stunned silence, amazed at the scene. This was a lacrosse camp, *not* a karate class! What's more, no one in the room knew where the speaker was going with her cryptic message. Jordan was surrounded by 300 of the best 8th-grade lacrosse players in the country, and all of them were smart enough to decide that a Black Belt was clearly better than a White Belt any day.

Each player packed into the tiny auditorium had been invited to this camp because they were the best lacrosse players in their class. They all eagerly sat on the edge of their seats, waiting for the guest speaker to end her dramatic pause and continue. Her confident demeanor seemed to promise she possessed the elusive answer to

⁴ +1: +1 or -1= Destiny Math | Motivation and Personality by Abraham Maslow

the unspoken, burning question these highly driven players were seeking: *How do I get recruited to play lacrosse at the university of my dreams?*

After all, that was why they were all attending this elite recruiting camp in the first place—to get recruited. Weren't they?

“Well, then,” the woman continued, “if you want to be a Black Belt in your life, then you must decide to approach your training like a Black Belt!”

Jordan smiled. She had never heard someone speak with such confidence or boldness before. Other people might be offended by such an approach, but Jordan found it inexplicably refreshing to witness such unhindered authenticity in someone else.

“If you practice each moment with the confidence, focus, grit, and willingness to learn as a karate master training to become a Black Belt, you will soon put yourself in a position to get recruited to your dream school. It's that simple. In fact, that's how you will enjoy the process of achieving any goal you choose to pursue.”

The woman continued, captivating her audience.

“You all have this decision to make at each moment within every drill, for the rest of your lacrosse career. Throughout your life, these Dojo Decision points will show up hundreds or thousands of times each day. After every thought, every emotion, and every sensation you experience, you will have to take action. What mentality will you choose? Black Belt or White Belt? Do you take a step toward growth and success, or a step back, toward fear? Each decision throughout your day impacts the person you become next. Will you move one step forward toward what you want? Or take one step back?”

Jordan, along with every other young lacrosse player in the room, was intrigued. They were all highly motivated to be great. However, to commit every moment of every day to this Black Belt mindset seemed a bit extreme. Was playing college lacrosse *really* worth this kind of “all day, every day” commitment? What kind of person would choose to play this kind of mind game?

As if almost on cue, the speaker answered Jordan's unspoken concerns. "You're breathing, aren't you?"

The audience exchanged awkward looks with each other, some chuckling. She continued. "It's a rhetorical question. You are breathing, which means you're alive. And that means none of you have a choice whether you're going to play this game or not. You're already playing!

"Take this moment for instance. Will you listen to my words with 100 percent presence, trying to absorb the message? Or will you tune me out, scroll through your social media feeds and distract yourself from 100 percent commitment to the present moment?"⁵

Was it really so simple? Jordan thought about the speaker's comment and agreed with the conclusion. She had never truly considered how many choices she made in a day, or their cumulative effect on her life. But regardless of what she knew or didn't know, she was playing the game, in the moment. She smiled, recognizing how even in this moment she could choose to go all in and lean into the present moment ... or she could let her mind wander.

"Make no mistake," the woman said, shaking her head. "Being kind of, sort of, all in is essentially a decision to train like a White Belt. This is what most people choose. It's a negative decision that is acceptable for most, but one must also accept it is a decision that will take you off your path, whether your goal is to play college lacrosse, be your best, or fully enjoy each moment of your life.

"In the world of martial arts, a White Belt simply shows up, happy to 'get through' her training. The White Belt may have the talent to excel, yet she is content to go through the motions, to never fully develop her gift.

"However, the opposite mindset is the Black Belt. The Black Belt shows up with the intention to master her craft. She approaches her training with enthusiasm and passion to not just identify her limitations, but how to overcome them. She trains with the

5 +1: The Master | Mastery by George Leonard

understanding that she will never achieve mastery or perfection. Perfection is a pipe dream, a mirage in the desert. No, she happily accepts that she is and will always be a work in progress, yet she relishes every opportunity to improve in each moment of each training session, for the rest of her life.”⁶

She paused again, taking stock of the room, silently identifying those who were engaged and those who had begun to wander within their minds. “So I ask you today: what will it be for you? A White Belt or a Black Belt?⁷ I hear you all saying Black Belt, but I see in your eyes that not all of you are ready to make such a decision. And it is a decision.

“I urge you to not make it lightly. With your mouth I hear you say you want to be a D1 lacrosse player on game day when your fancy gear is shining in the sun, when your families and friends are cheering you on, and the TV cameras are rolling. But the decision cannot be made with your mouth. It must first be made within your *mind*.

“Do you *really* want to be a D1 lacrosse player? Will you want it on the hard days? On days when you have to wake up at 4:30 in the morning and leave the comfy confines of your bed, only to run until you puke? To practice until your hands are covered with blisters? *That* is the life of the Black Belt.

“You see, success on the lacrosse field is easy for those few who are willing to do the work. You just need to follow these three simple steps. First, you must decide “who” you want to *be*, *not* just what you want to accomplish.”⁸

Jordan nodded her head, taking it in.

“Secondly, you must calculate “the price” you will need to pay to become that person, as well as devise a plan. And finally, you must do the work.”

Of course, Jordan thought, smiling.

6 +1: Practice: When Can I Stop | Spiritual Economics by Eric Butterworth

7 +1: Going Through the Motions | How Bad Do You Want It? by Matt Fitzgerald

8 +1: “Want Better Habits, Start with Who!” | Atomic Habits by James Clear

“You must get busy paying that price with hard work, constant intention, and persistent action. Your current habits are already running your life. You need to choose to first uninstall the habits that are sabotaging your success and then install the micro, too-small-to-fail habits that will help you improve.”⁹

“I’ve had the privilege of evaluating you all day at camp, and as I look around this room, I see 300 excellent lacrosse players. You are the best in your class. The *best*. Truthfully speaking, I believe you all have the talent to play for your dream school.” She watched as their faces lit up and heads nodded in agreement. “However, talent is not enough. Talent, even your talent, is common. The world is *littered* with talented players—players who have decided to squander their potential by approaching their training like a White Belt.”

She smiled and pointed at the group. “Ah, but those of you who choose to approach their lives as Black Belts, *you* are the players who will innovate the game. *You* are the ones who will reach your unknowable potential. *You* are the few I am speaking to today!”¹⁰

Jordan felt like the woman was speaking directly to her. She was so inspired by the Dojo Decision speech, right then and there she mentally committed to a life of striving to be her best self—on and off the field.

As the speech concluded, Jordan was filled with an excitement that energized her. She decided to use that energy to thank the speaker and share her desire to become a lacrosse-training Black Belt.

As she fought through the crowd to the auditorium stage, Jordan found a line of people waiting to meet with the speaker. Clearly, she wasn’t the only one fired up by the words they just heard.

While waiting in line, Jordan noticed a handful of legendary coaches and current professional players mixed in with her peers who had been working the camp. Each lacrosse legend waited patiently in line before eventually greeting the speaker with a hug and sincere,

9 +1: The First Lesson of Navy SEAL Training | 101 Class: Unstoppable Teams by Alden Mills

10 PN: +1: Your Greatness | The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand

joyful conversation. Who was this woman to command such respect from all the players and coaches Jordan had always idolized?

She slowly crept to the front of the line. She had determined exactly what she wanted to say. But as she made eye contact and moved to shake the speaker's hand, Jordan found herself at a loss for words.

The speaker stared directly at Jordan with a kind expression. As she extended her hand, the woman lit up with such genuine enthusiasm that Jordan felt like the most important person in the world. It was an amazing first impression, and the speaker had yet to say a word!

Jordan was still speechless, but was able to take the woman's hand. "Hi, my name is Jordan," she stammered nervously. "I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your speech. And I want you to know, I plan to be a Black Belt!"

"Nice to meet you, Jordan. My name is Coach SJ, and I can't express how grateful I am that you took the time to listen to me speak!"

"Of course! I appreciate you taking the time to speak to us." Jordan continued, unable to contain her enthusiasm. "I want to become a Black Belt. I'm ready to commit! How do I start?"

Coach SJ paused for a long moment before responding to Jordan's question. "You've already started. You've taken the first step, Jordan. You took action and 'went first.'"

"Really?" Jordan asked, her face flushing a bright red.

"You see, many people seek out inspiration. They listen to speeches, read a few books, and they catch enthusiasm from all sorts of sources. Yet, many motivated people don't see the improvements in their lives because they don't transform their motivational energy into taking action.

"Do you see these professional players and coaches I have been greeting?"

"I have! Yes!"

“Once, they were all in your shoes. In fact, many of them were at a camp just like this when they first made their Dojo Decision.”

Jordan looked at the Team USA members and elite college coaches in line. “Did they hear the same Dojo Decision speech?”

“They did! And just like you, they didn’t wait for good luck to show up at their doorstep. Instead, they ‘went first’ and took the initiative to ask for help.”¹¹ The woman shook her head as her smile faltered a bit. “Jordan, I don’t have all the answers in life, but I do know that if you don’t ask for help, you won’t get it. But when you ask for help, you will be surprised to find that those with the ability to help are itching for the opportunity to do just that. I have mentored many of the players and coaches you see waiting in this line, but even the most talented individuals need someone to challenge and hold them accountable. That being said, how can I help you, Jordan?”

Jordan was blown away by Coach SJ’s offer to help. With all the courage she could muster, she asked, “Will you mentor me to transform into a Black Belt?”

Coach SJ didn’t hesitate, “Of course I will, Jordan. If that is what you really want.”

“Of course that’s what I want!” Jordan said, not knowing what Coach SJ was implying.

“Then I will teach you to train like a Black Belt and reach your lacrosse goals.”

“Yes!” Jordan pumped her fist in the air and grinned.

The woman mirrored her grin. “I love your enthusiasm! However, I have seen many people respond like you just did after hearing an inspiring speech. That speech you just heard is where my motivation stops.”

Jordan frowned. “Oh. Uh...”

11 +1: Be Proactive (aka Response- Ability) | The Seven Habits of Effective People by Stephen Covey

“In fact, I can’t truly motivate you. I may be able to fire you up for a brief moment, but *you* must be driven from within, or ‘intrinsically motivated’ as the fancy professors like to say.¹² Only you can motivate yourself, Jordan. And if you can’t find a way to wake up each morning with a genuine excitement to attack your goals, your commitment will dwindle, and you will fall back to your White Belt habits.”

Jordan became nervous. She was excited to commit to the training, but she also recognized that what Coach SJ just said was true. Jordan *had* felt this same excitement many times before. When her charismatic coaches and teachers delivered motivational speeches, her spirit soared, and she felt ready to run through a wall.

But this felt different. Jordan knew if she didn’t take instant action, time would pass, her enthusiasm would wane, and eventually, she’d lose her motivation. She took a moment to assess her doubts and fears, then nodded again. “I’m in!”

“Great! Oh, I forgot to mention, you must agree to one condition before we start.”

Jordan felt nervous. Her eyebrows knit together as she asked, “What’s that?”

“You must tell me what you are willing to give up.”¹³

Jordan’s eyes grew wider.

Coach SJ continued without giving her a chance to reply. “Let me elaborate. It’s lonely when you decide to step into the arena and begin to train as a Black Belt.”

“Lonely? I don’t understand...”

“You will be separating yourself from many of your peers when you make such a decision, close friends who will be perfectly content to

12 +1: The Growth Mindset | Relentless by Tim Grover

13 PN: Be Unstoppable by Alden Mills

train as White Belts. This is their choice, and it's fine—the world is filled with White Belts.”

“Sure.”

“But you, Jordan, will need to distance yourself from them. They will be sitting in the figurative stands, staring down as you sweat and strive for mastery on the arena floor.¹⁴ They may say they support you and admire you, but they will nonetheless judge you, criticize you and, most painfully of all, attempt to persuade you to quit.” She paused to lock her eyes with Jordan's, now filled with concern and a growing sense of dread. “It is true that they will encourage you, but what they will encourage you to do is dial down your enthusiasm and join them in the bleachers. But make no mistake: just as joining a gritty culture is the easiest way to get gritty, hanging out with lazy people is the fastest and easiest way to become lazy.”¹⁵

“Makes sense,” Jordan said, nodding.

“So, are you ready to limit the time you spend hanging out with negative people, engaging in counter-productive activities that hold you back? This means cutting out spending hours taking selfies and putting on make-up, mindlessly scrolling Instagram or TikTok, even eating junk food. Jordan, what I'm asking is this: are you ready to accept the tradeoffs that go with a Black-Belt commitment?” She held up her hand before Jordan could speak. “I don't need an answer now. Like I said to the group, this decision is not to be taken lightly.”

Jordan now grasped the gravity of her decision. Coach SJ didn't have the time to train those who weren't motivated to succeed. If Jordan wanted to be the best, to reach her full potential, she knew her life would have to change. And she had to admit, not many of her current friends were willing to walk this kind of path. It would be difficult and likely painful, but Jordan was ready to give up caring what they thought of her. She was even ready to give up the junk in her life, the food, and media inputs. She didn't see this as a

14 +1: The Peanut Gallery | Daring Greatly by Brene Brown

15 +1: The Audience Effect | How Bad Do You Want it by Matt Fitzgerald

sacrifice. Instead, it was a decision to be great.¹⁶ She was on a path to greatness, determined not to let anything or anyone knock her off her path.

“I’m in, Coach,” she answered. “I’m ready to give up the distractions that will keep me from becoming the best I can be!”

16 +1: Sacrifices vs. Decisions | The Way of the Fight by Georges St-Pierre

TAKE ACTION: COMMIT

(Use your Journal page or your *Heroic App*)

1. Download the [FREE trial of the Heroic App](#) to access:
 - The +1 wisdom expanding on the big ideas referenced within each chapter, Along with the full library of 1,400 (*and growing*) +1s, 600+ Philosophers Notes, 50+ 101 Master Classes.
 - The Heroic journal function, to remind yourself of your identity and habits for the *big three* areas of your life: energy/sports, school/work, and within your relationships.
 - Heroic Social! Join a social network of like-minded people who encourage you to pursue your goals.
2. Use the journal page in this book and your Heroic App to:
 - Decide what mountain you want to climb (the #1 goal you want to pursue).

Find a mentor or accountability partner to read this book with.
 - Assess where you're at on your *Dojo Decision* journey.

Quantify each on a 1-10 subjective scale.
 - Assess how motivated you are to improve.

Quantify each on a 1-10 subjective scale.
 - Decide what you're willing to 'give up' in order to reach your goals.

Commit

◆ I REALIZE MY TIME IS MY MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE. THEREFORE, WHATEVER I COMMIT TO, I WILL COMMIT TO IT WITH 100% FOCUS AND EFFORT. ONCE I COMMIT, THERE IS NO TURNING BACK. I WILL CUT OFF ALL OTHER OPTIONS AND MAKE WHATEVER I DECIDE TO PURSUE THE RIGHT DECISION.

◇ I WILL WAKE UP EACH MORNING EXCITED TO MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS MY GOAL.

◆ TO FUEL MY PASSION. I WILL CONSTANTLY FEED MYSELF POSITIVITY AND LOOK FOR INSPIRATION THROUGH ROLE MODELS, SPEECHES, MOVIES, BOOKS... EVERYWHERE! I ALSO RECOGNIZE MOTIVATION MUST COME FROM WITHIN. I KNOW MY PATH, AND CHOOSE TO WALK IT! I WILL RISE ABOVE THE POSITIVE PRAISE OR NEGATIVE CRITICISM OF OTHERS, AND COMPETE FIRST AND FOREMOST TO MAKE MYSELF PROUD.

◇ I AM WILLING TO GIVE UP THE DISTRACTIONS THAT GET IN THE WAY OF MY GOALS. I MUST MAKE A CHOICE: CONSUME ENTERTAINMENT OR CREATE AN INSPIRING LIFE. IF I WANT TO SUCCEED I MUST INVEST MORE TIME PRACTICING MY CRAFT THAN I SPEND IN FRONT OF SCREENS (WATCHING TV, SCROLLING SOCIAL MEDIA, OR PLAYING VIDEO GAMES).

◆ I WILL LEAN ON MY TEAMMATES, COACHES, FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR SUPPORT. I AM COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING A MENTOR OR TEAMMATE TO SUPPORT ME, ALONG WITH A TEAMMATE TO TEACH MY BLACK BELT MENTALITY.

I, _____ pledge to recommit to this every morning to start my day!

Signature:

Date:

name _____

Go to dojodecision.com for inspiration!



O. COMMIT

What Is Your Goal?

(Your mountain to climb and your arena to apply the lessons you learn in this book?)

For that goal, (1) being just starting, (10) being arrived, Where are you now on your road of success? (1-10)

Just Getting Started!! 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Arrived!

How bad do you want it? Will you quit after the first obstacle or distraction? What is your level of commitment to improve? (1-10)

I will quit at the first obstacle! 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I will never quit!

What are some obstacles or distractions that could get in the way of achieving that goal? What unproductive habits will you give up?



What is your plan to address each obstacle?

My Teacher/ Accountability Partner:

Everyone needs a coach, mentor, accountability partner to help them commit. Who will hold you accountable?



My Student

When learning a new skill, the easiest way to hold yourself accountable is to teach it to someone else. Who will you teach?