

YOU CAN
LIVE A
BLACK
BELT
LIFE

THE GIFT OF LIFE
DEVELOPMENT

PHIL TOOGOOD

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Published by Phil Toogood Coaching

First published by Phil Toogood Coaching 2022

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ISBN 978-1-969881-0-3

This book is dedicated to my
clients who continue to inspire me
every day.



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FOREWORD

I have been teaching karate for nearly six decades and I have taught in several countries around the world.

I first met Phil Toogood over twenty years ago when I was working out at my gym. He came over and introduced himself to me. He said he was fascinated by karate but was too old and stiff to take it up after many years of playing other sports.

I had, at the time, been teaching karate for thirty-five years. I could see and feel in those few moments that here was a person who had the potential to become someone quite special once he started to truly believe in himself. For me, life is about setting and achieving goals and, instantly, I knew my goal for him was to take him on a journey from someone who knew nothing about karate to becoming a black belt. I quickly recognised he had a deep desire to succeed so I used that to persuade him to turn up for his first karate lesson.

He went on to become a sensei and lifelong friend.

Phil's motivation for writing this book is to show other people what is possible with the right attitude and to pass on the knowledge, experience and wisdom he obtained on his journey.

Phil's adventure in the dojo was a tough one for many reasons and he has now skilfully used his learning, the trials, the ups and downs and, especially, that magic moment when all your efforts finally come together as a parallel to what many of us have to deal with outside of a dojo in our day-to-day lives. And this is exactly how he now approaches his clients as a very successful life and transformational coach, helping people take their lives to new levels. In this book, he shares the process for success he uses with his clients and the challenges they are struggling with.

You Can Live a Black Belt Life is quite different to other books on the subject of personal growth and discovery because the author uses science to support experiences and emotions and explains how focussing on the power of the mind can literally bring significant changes to our lives.

One of Phil Toogood's most important attributes is his zest for life which is, of course, reflected both in his way of life and within these pages. He has also developed into a first-class karate instructor. He is one of my closest friends and is always there for me when I need his help in my everyday life.

I urge everyone to read this book and I truly believe you can, and will, benefit from living a black belt life.

Sensei Peter T. Heal

Royal Marine served with 40 Commando, Justice of the Peace (JP), International Trader

PREFACE

I was in London having coffee with my friend and fellow coach, Jane Smart. She said, 'I think you should write a book; you have a great story to tell.'

At the time I was designing a life and leadership programme using my adventure into the world of karate as a metaphoric framework. I was carrying out motivational speaking engagements that focussed on mental health at work. I called the presentations 'The gateway to greater mental fitness' and 'The gateway to mind and body mastery'. I found a way of developing the system used in the karate journey, from starting as a white belt, progressing through the grades to become a black belt, as a way of communicating self-development and growth in our everyday lives.

The codes of conduct and the written precepts used in karate, along with the brilliantly clear, clever and inspirational goal-setting process, when unpacked and evaluated, all linked to improving performance. I considered this to be an ingenious system for achievement. So simple, yet hugely stretching and challenging, nonetheless. I truly believed it could become a template that could be applied to work/life success.

Having taken the journey, within martial arts, lasting for twenty years or so I tasked myself with figuring out what drove me and others to embark on this route. How does anyone find the mental strength, develop amazing new skills and above all discover the spiritual element that is crucial to bring about change? I then had my epiphany. I realised that each and every one of us face similar challenges to those that occur in martial arts; overcoming our fears, dealing with self-limitations and constantly battling with our minds and what the world throws at us. All this while trying to find that inner peace and calmness we all crave.

I pieced together the answers, gained from some deep reflection, and studied the fascinating results from the One Word Survey (that follows this preface) and began to design a journey that everyone can experience. An intriguing, exciting, rewarding, potentially life-changing adventure of learning, development and self-discovery, a journey from white belt living to living a black belt life.

I am convinced that each and every one of us has the resources and untapped inner wonders that can help us all to grow as human beings in so many ways. This book outlines a journey of self-development; it will be different for each of you. I sincerely hope you discover something unique and special, personal to only you, that helps to take you to another level of life.

Please trust me when I say, 'You can live a black belt life.'

What is a black belt life?

You are about to discover exactly that!

ONE WORD SURVEY

centred – calm – hard – smart – **positive** – undaunted – no ego – controlled
aware – **mindful** – disciplined – dedicated – strong – committed – masterful
meditative – measured – fluid – confident – has presence – grounded
 humble – inwardly strong – **courageous** – flexible – agile – respected
 restful – respectful – ambitious – driven – motivated
 has humility empowered
 unphased – balanced fast – determined
 relaxed – precise present – special
 glowing – **has belief** trained – **elite**
 role model – inspiring – energetic balanced – healthy
well-being – centred – self-reliant proud – **fulfilled**
 precise – sensei – leader – peaceful persistent – **resilient**
 wellness – single-minded – gifted resilient – cool – **strong**
 humble – sharp – frightening awesome – spirited
 devoted – **trained** – smart – clear – grateful – relentless
 dedicated – spirited – strong mindset – complete
 teacher – learning – self-controlled willpower – **composed**
 tough – **purposeful** – giving principled – humble
 exceptional – amazing – hardworking skilled – powerful
 generous – consistent – **understanding** **focussed** – controlled
 impressive – scary – fierce – accomplished – achiever – winner – peaceful – accurate
self-aware – self-esteem – believing – serious – resolute – fearless – best
 extraordinary – spiritual – attention to detail – happy – restrained – motivational





INTRODUCTION

'Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fail.' ~ CONFUCIUS

When I was forty-one years old, I was at my gym, where I'd been a member for many years, and noticed a guy wearing a beautiful white gi (martial arts uniform). He had a yellow belt wrapped around his waist. Although I'd played amateur sports, predominantly cricket, to a reasonably high level I had always been in awe of martial artists. I have met a few throughout my life and they all seem to have something different, something special about them. I couldn't actually put my finger on it; I can only describe it as a sort of presence. To me, they were not like other people.

I made a point of speaking to the chap in the gi, whose name was Piers, and fired off all sorts of questions which he translated into thinking I wanted to join the club. This was as far from my intention as you could get. It didn't cross my mind for one second. I was just interested in what they did and how they did it. I was not planning to take up karate in my forties.

He moved a little closer and proceeded to tell me the days they trained. I reacted defensively and told him all the reasons why this would be impossible, citing my age (Piers was close to half my age) and the condition of my body after twenty-five years of cricket and fast bowling. I then went into great detail about the state of my back, hips and hamstrings, and further explained how stiff and locked up I was. By this time, he'd stopped listening. He pointed to, what I would politely describe as, an elderly gentleman roughly twenty-five to thirty years my senior, who was doing reps on a nearby sit-up machine, and said, 'Go and speak to Peter, he's the club sensei.'

The next sixty seconds changed my life. It would have been so easy for me not to make that short walk to introduce myself to Sensei Peter. Already there is a lesson learned.

I walked over and the closer I got the more I felt his aura. I paused in front of him and said, 'Piers suggested I introduce myself to you, my name is Phil.'

'So you'd like to join the club?' he said. I launched into the same spiel I had used on Piers as to why I wasn't fit to join. Peter looked at me, his eyes fixed on mine, and said, 'Phil, give me twelve months with you and I will get you doing things you can only dream of.'

The truth is, in response, I felt a rush of emotion – an unusual mixture of adrenaline, excitement, courage and confidence that merged together to give me a strange feeling of power. This all happened in a split second. That one sentence opened up a gateway, that, when I took just one step

through it, unleashed me into a new world.

Within a few days, at approximately 7.00 pm, I was staring at the door of the dojo – the room where martial arts is practised, dressed in a white T-shirt and blue and white Adidas tracksuit bottoms. My heart was racing. What lay beyond the door? I was stepping into something I had never experienced before, into the unknown. It would have been so easy to turn around and walk away or retreat upstairs to watch the training session from the viewing gallery.

But I opened the door and walked into a room full of people, all wearing pristine white gis. Sensei Peter was at the far end of the room and acknowledged me with a nod of the head. I had no understanding whatsoever of the ethics and philosophy that underpin this amazing art. Suddenly, Sensei Peter shouted, 'Line up!' There immediately followed a few seconds of brisk activity while people moved around to find their position, filling the air with the strange noise movement of the gi makes. Then there was complete silence. There was literally no sound.

I didn't know what to do, or where to go. It was quickly pointed out to me that everyone was lined up in order of status, with the lowest grade on the left. So, to give you an idea of my grade, my status, when I looked left I was staring at the wall!

This was it. My success on the cricket field, everything I had achieved in my career meant absolutely nothing. I was emotionally stripped naked. Any ego was left on the other side of the dojo door. Standing to my right, with a far greater rank than me, were people half my age. In those few seconds, which seemed like an eternity, several confusing thoughts entered my head. The first one being, *What the hell am I doing here?*

The sensei shouted, 'Yoi!', which is Japanese for 'ready' or 'prepare'. A second later everyone was focussed waiting for the next instruction.

Sensei Peter looked at me and said, 'You will have to copy the person to your right to begin with.' I had never before felt so inadequate.

I glanced to the right where everyone was standing in a position of almost robotic concentration. I bent forward slightly so I could see the line of people wearing this wonderful white uniform, all sporting different coloured belts – orange, red, yellow, green, purple, brown. I bent over further so I could see the end of the line where the black belts were standing. I was star-struck by this elite group of people.

Can I make that journey down the line of coloured belts and one day

stand at the other side of the dojo? Could I really achieve this? Should I go for it? Why am I doing this? Even though 'the journey' was only 30 feet across the floor it would take years to reach that special place at the far end. A 30-foot journey that takes years to travel. Incredible.

Another instruction blasted out in Japanese and the class reacted in unison to complete a move in military-style precision. That is, with the exception of me. For the next torturous hour, I found myself facing the opposite direction to every other student, time and time again. To say I struggled is an understatement.

Yet again, I asked myself: *Why am I doing this?* The fear of failure, the unknown, rejection, humiliation and criticism started to get into my head. My confidence was shattered, my self-worth was zero and my ego was in danger of preventing me from ever entering that dojo again. *Do I really need to do this at this point in my life? Should I return to face that door again in three days' time?*

I didn't know it then, but I was already on my own private, personal journey of self-discovery and I'm about to share my learning and transformation with you using this unique experience as a metaphor for what each and every one of us go through at some point in our lives. Your trip of a lifetime to self-mastery begins here.

This is not just another self-help book. It is a powerful journey; and it's going to be your journey. Follow the syllabus and you will travel down the line of belts and reach the other end to stand with the black belts in life. I will provide you with the models, tips, tools, skills, guidance; brain training and mind maintenance you need to build your own bulletproof system that will lead you to that magical place dreams are made of, that unique place of self-control and inner peace.

This book is designed to provide you with a deeper knowledge of 'self', of you. It's designed to tap into your inner potential to discover the best version of you. My aim is to teach you new skills and arm you with tools that allow you to press pause, risk assess and perform with confidence in all the arenas of your life. No matter who you are, how old you are or what physical or emotional shape you are in, this book will provide the inspiration you need to change your life. It will motivate you, lift your performance levels and provide the clarity, meaning and purpose to help you alter the course of your life.

In my profession as a life and performance coach, I have worked

with many people who have transformed their lives. I have witnessed them having many 'aha' moments, powerful epiphanies that dramatically affected the way they look, feel and deal with life. I have worked with people from all walks of life, including many high performers, who work hard to improve themselves. However, they constantly battle with anxiety, low confidence and damaged self-worth, as well as mental health challenges, such as depression, and well-being issues. I am lucky enough to have been with them when they celebrate their successes, make remarkable changes to their lives, win their inner battles, make career changes, improve relationships, manage stress and transform their mindset to one of peace, progress and positivity.

One of my clients reversed clinically diagnosed depression, in six months, after many years of suffering. After working together for only half a year, he took the same test that had originally confirmed the diagnosis of clinical depression, and the results were astonishing. I observed a transformation taking place in front of my eyes – a straighter back, a more purposeful stride, a natural smile and genuine engagement and laughter. Over time, a new confidence and purpose started to evolve in him. He is the perfect example of what we can achieve if we put our mind to it. The key word here is 'mind'.

Earlier I defined the dojo as a room where martial arts is practised. Translated dojo means 'place of the way'. Traditionally, the dojo is said to take on two aspects. The first, as the training centre and learning ground for martial arts, the second as a place to develop and grow as a person, as a human being. To unlock and develop unseen strengths from untapped potential while overcoming your fears and frailties.

That is 'the place'. So, what is 'the way'?

For me it's almost too special to capture in words. The way is a mystical pathway, a route, a journey, a passage of time dedicated to commitment, change, growth and transformation. If you keep on the way no matter what is thrown at you to send you off course, and continue to follow the path with grit and determination, I promise you will end up in a very special place indeed. This book will show you the way to an awakening, described by the famous American author Deepak Chopra, as the state of being when you are no longer living in a dream world. You awaken to understanding who you really are in a deeper sense; your inner world. You awaken from the inside-out.

For me, one of the most beautiful things about this book is that, apart from picking it up and reading it, you do not have to go anywhere or invest in anything new. The answers, the tools, the wisdom to finding the way, exist within you, hence my brand philosophy being InsideOut Living. I often describe this as an attitude towards life that transcends our existence producing a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

I eventually came to realise exactly what had I put myself through to become a black belt. From the first meeting with Sensei Peter and walking through the dojo door at, what then seemed like, the ridiculous age of forty-one, to the fears, setbacks, injuries, and mental obstacles I had to face. I came close to giving up many times. I realised this was a journey many of us face every day, not in the dojo, but in life. I now understand what I endured mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and scientifically. More importantly, I have unravelled the mystery as to what kept me going from beginning to end, from white belt to black.

In order to better understand how the general public view a black belt in martial arts, I subsequently conducted a survey (the One Word Survey, reproduced at the beginning of this book). I asked people I came in contact with to answer this question: How would you describe a black belt in one word? The results were fascinating. I kept looking at them and realised all of the words on the list can be applied to everyone. We can all become black belts in life. This survey convinced me to write *You Can Live a Black Belt Life*.

I have, therefore, written a book that contains my own personal experiences and subsequent learning, both in and out of the dojo. I use the time spent in the dojo as a parallel of life looking at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual sides to our being. There are some key messages within these pages, as you will discover, but I must share an important one with you here – *if I can do it, anyone can!*

Human beings are learning machines and I intend to take advantage of this to help you find inner peace, happiness born from experiencing self-acceptance and personal fulfilment. I want to help you to discover new and exciting things about yourself, venturing into uncharted territories of your potential to unleash on the world.

The goal of this book is to take you on a journey of inner self-exploration, an adventure whereby you will be able to enjoy new learning, gain new life-supporting tools, greater confidence and self-worth and convert them

into special skills that will enable you to design a new version of your life.

Playwright and Nobel Prize winner, George Bernard Shaw famously said, '*Life is not about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.*' I truly believe it's a bit of both as we have so much potential locked away, awaiting discovery. I want you to treat this book as your treasure map to find those hidden gems and, from that point onwards, you can then begin to create something remarkable. The aim of this book is to help you feel alive!

When you open this book, you will be entering a special and sacred gateway into the dojo of life. It will show you how to transform your life, through eight steps of transition, corresponding to the belts in karate, from white to black, and guide you to places you didn't know existed within you. Along the way, you will be challenged and stretched. You will ask yourself many questions. I promise it will be *you* that finds the answers.

This book is for anyone who has ever suffered with low confidence, poor self-esteem and a genuine lack of self-worth. It is for all those who suffer from negative, demotivating and demeaning self-talk, regularly overthinking situations and anyone who finds it difficult to control and manage their emotions. It's for all of you who have reached a crossroads or dead end in your life and are looking for a compass to navigate you to somewhere new. It's for people who find themselves living a life of comparison and excuses, always looking outwards at how well others are doing and then creating judgements and justifications that keeps the fire of jealousy burning within.

It's for anyone who spends their time consciously suffering feelings of guilt and regret about their past and/or is in a constant state of worry and anxiety about the future. It's also for people who live with the pain of fear. Fear of the unknown, rejection and failure.

And finally, this book is for everyone who wants to take their life to another level no matter where they start from. It's for high performers who want to challenge themselves to see if they can achieve even greater heights, as well as those just starting out in their chosen career.

I list these issues because I have faced them all myself throughout my life. After years of reflection, research and reinvention, believe me when I say that the tips, tools and techniques I'm going to share with you, changed my life for the better. I have no doubt they will change yours, too.

However, I must be clear from the outset that to create a change in direction, re-engineer your life and achieve the results you are hoping to obtain, you will be stretched and pushed outside of your personal comfort zone into a world of new learning and development. Change requires hard work!

I have designed this book so that you don't actually need to buy a gi, join a club, get licensed and go through years of physical and mental training in martial arts. All you have to do is immerse yourself in this book as if it was your own unique and private dojo and then simply follow the way.

Each chapter represents a different coloured belt, the same as in karate. The journey from white to black is hugely significant, it's a process, just as it is in the dojo. Move through each chapter and gain your belts. Complete the drills, use the tools, create new habits and adhere to the six pillars of the way and you too can live a black belt life.

This book will help you become part of a unique community of people, who all started at exactly the same place and worked their way through a specific journey of tests and challenges metaphorically taking them from living a white belt life to living a black belt life. They learned how to operate within a specific culture that teaches you first and foremost to believe that anything is possible. I want you to realise this from the outset – you can achieve anything. I want you to stretch and challenge yourself. To attempt things, you'd not just thought about but dreamt about.

I truly believe this book will guide you to wonderful destinations, unlocking magnificent and mystical treasures along the way. All you need to do is open up, commit to the process and remember the words of my sensei, *'Give me twelve months with you and I'll get you doing things you could only dream of.'* Treat this book as your sensei, your dojo, your place of the way and you, too, can live a black belt life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



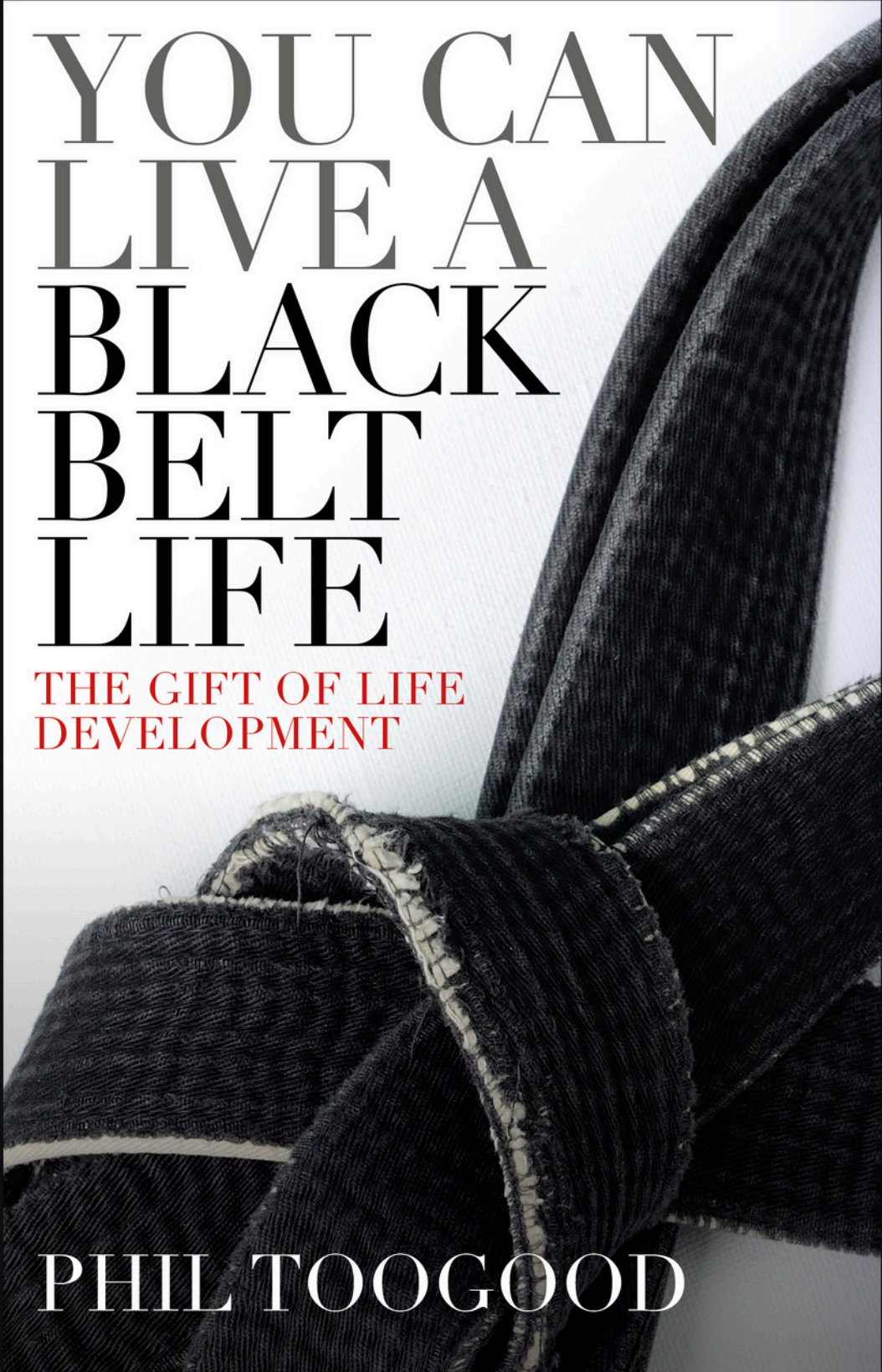
Phil is a successful life and transformational coach.

Throughout his life he has shown an unrelenting love of sport, fitness and well-being, martial arts, leadership and, above all, personal development. He has also been a passionate student of mindfulness for many years.

He trained with the NeuroLeadership Institute, becoming a brain-based coach, and has since continued with his quest for knowledge, studying positive psychology and well-being, neuroscience and emotional intelligence, all supporting his mission in helping people to grow or transform. He has taken this, together with his own work/life experiences, a lifetime in team sports, and the proven principles of karate, to create his own unique, powerful and successful coaching system that has subsequently delivered incredible results.

Born in Sudbury, Suffolk, Phil now resides in the historic village of Lavenham where the streets and houses were famously used for scenes in the Harry Potter movie franchise.

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