FIRST CLASS FOR A NERVOUS KID

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A lot of kids who freeze at the door think class means a fight. This is one checklist for the coach and one for the parent, built on how Joe Tussing gets scared kids out of the car and onto the mat at Midgard in North Las Vegas.

Student first name: _____

First class: ____/____ at _____

Practice buddy: _____

What a Nervous Kid Thinks Is About to Happen

Joe Tussing says it's almost the same story with every scared kid who comes in.

FROM THE MAT

"They're like, oh, I have to go fight somebody, right? That's what every kid think. Oh, I have to go fight now?"

Joe Tussing, owner and head coach, Midgard

"You have to kind of like put them at ease so they can come in here and give it their all."

Joe Tussing

1 Before the First Class Parent

- [ ] **Tell the coach your kid is nervous.** Before the first class, not at the door. A good coach plans for it.
- [ ] **Say what class actually is.** Ask the coach what the first class looks like, then tell your kid in plain words: a warm-up, drills with a partner, maybe a game. Most kids picture a fight.
- [ ] **Ask for a practice buddy.** One kid who knows the room and walks over to say hi.
- [ ] **Get there a few minutes early.** Rushing in late, in front of a full class, is the scary version.
- [ ] **Don't promise they'll love it.** Promise they'll try it. Loving it can take a few weeks.

2 At the Door Coach

- [ ] **If they won't get out of the car, go out to the car.** Joe did. Have a conversation, not a pitch.
- [ ] **Tell them nobody is fighting today.** Name the first thing they'll do, so the room stops being a mystery.
- [ ] **Hand them a practice buddy.** Pick a kid who's been the new one recently.
- [ ] **Have the class introduce themselves.** At Midgard, the kids walk up to new students and say hi. It's practice for making friends anywhere.
- [ ] **Learn their name and use it.** Small things that make a kid feel important go a long way.

3 During Class Coach

- [ ] **Start with something they can do.** An early win is worth more than a perfect technique.
- [ ] **Keep your voice down.** Strict and still fun. No screaming, no yelling, on the mat or at a tournament.
- [ ] **Let the buddy partner them.** A familiar face for drills beats being paired with whoever's left.
- [ ] **Save a game for the end.** At Midgard the games are earned after the work. On day one, that's the reward for showing up.

4 After Class Coach and parent

- [ ] **Coach: one minute with the kid and the parent.** Say one specific thing they did well.
- [ ] **Parent: ask what they liked.** Not whether they were scared. They already know they were.
- [ ] **Both: agree on the next class before you leave.** Put it on the calendar while it still feels good.
- [ ] **Both: give it a few weeks.** Judge it after a month, not after one class.

WHY A FEW WEEKS

"Oh, I was definitely afraid of doing this. I was like, 'Oh, I don't know if I'll be good enough.' … But I just stuck with it for a few weeks and I fell in love with it."

A teen student at Midgard

"I have to get them here, but once they're here, they're good to go."

Mario, a Midgard parent

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