

Never back down methodology paper



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Never Back Down (2008) is a heart-pounding, action/adventure film directed by Jeff Wadlow. The story begins with Jake Tyler (Sean Faris) and his father celebrating after his son's football game. After a long night of drinking and shooting pool, the father decides its time to go home. Jake runs out of the bar, and pulls the car around for his father to get into. It's obvious the father had a little too much to drink, and was in no condition to drive home. Jake's father tells Jake to give him the keys and that he is driving home.

Jake is stuck between very tough decisions; let his dad drive with the possibility of him getting into an accident, or keep the keys and drive home safely. Jake gives his father the keys out of respect, and it proves to be a decision that will haunt him the rest of his life. On the way home, the father gets into a horrific accident and loses his life instantly. Jake survives the crash, and bears the guilt of being responsible for his father's death.

Jake tries to cover up his feelings and continues to play football to make his father proud. During the late stages of the Iowa state football championship, a disgruntled opposing player makes remarks about Jake's father. Jake starts a brawl with the opposing player and gets thrown out of school for fighting. His family moves to Orlando, Florida where his brother Charlie has received a tennis scholarship.

During his first day of school, Jake has a difficult time adjusting to the new school environment. Afraid to open up, Jake decides to seek refuge at the grandstand of the football stadium. While enjoying his lunch, he notices fellow student Max Cooperman (Evan Peters) getting attacked in a maintenance room. Jake rushes to Max's aid, only to find out that he was

witnessing a sanctioned street fight. Max discovers the internet footage of Jake's football fiasco in Iowa, and spreads the video all over school.

Max invites Jake to come and learn mixed martial arts with his instructor. Jake receives an invitation from classmate, Baja Miller (Amber Heard), to attend a school-wide party. Jake goes to a party where he is unwittingly pulled into a fight with a bully named Ryan McCarthy (Cam Gigandet). Jake realizes that he's being set up, and attempts to leave. Ryan makes taunts about the death of Jake's dad, which angers Jake and causes him to fight and ultimately get defeated.

Distraught at the outcome of the fight, Max comes to Jake's house to reopen the invitation to come train with his mentor Jean Roqua (Djimon Hounsou) and learn Mixed Martial Arts. Jake accepts Max's offer, and shows up at Roqua's gym to start training. Jake asks Roqua if he could train with the advanced students instead. Roqua puts Jake through a series of training challenges to prove his heart and determination. Jake puts on an incredible display of talent, and Roqua is impressed with Jake's desire.

The following day at school, Ryan makes another crude remark to Jake about his father, which causes Jake to break down emotionally. Angered by this comment, Jake is on a mission to destroy anything and everything in his way. Jake is thrown out of practice for his excessive behavior, which results in him getting into a brawl with three men at a traffic stop. Roqua banishes Jake from training with him because he broke the main rule, no fighting outside the gym. Jake and Max follow Roqua to a grocery store, where Jake confronts him and asks for a second chance. Jake tells Jean about how his father's

death has created an aggressive behavior. Roqua re-admits Jake back into the training program, because he realizes the turmoil he is dealing with.

Jake finally achieves closure over the death of his father, and no longer feels the desire to seek revenge on Ryan. As a result, Jake declines to enter the Beat down, the stage where the final battle between Jake and Ryan was to occur. Ryan gets word of Jake's decision, and feels it necessary to lure Jake into changing his mind. Ryan and his friends invite Max over to his home, where they brutally attack him and leave him to die on Jake's doorstep. Jake changes his mind on the Beat down, fearing for his family and friends safety.

At the beatdown, both Jake and Ryan win their first two fights. During the next fight, Ryan is disqualified for eye-gouging and failed to reach the round which Jake has already advanced to. Jake taps out one second into his semi-final bout, because he has no reason to compete if Ryan was no longer participating. Ryan attacks Jake outside, and they have one final bout in the parking lot. Jake wins the fight, and gains the respect of all his fellow students even Ryan.

Due to its extensive amount of conflicts in conjunction to a hidden love story, Never Back Down is classified in the Action/Drama genre category.

Throughout the entire film, we are unundated with a plethora of conventional items consistent with an action movie. From the very first scene, we are brought into the world of a Jake Tyler, a young boy greiving the loss of his father. Time after time, the Jake is constantly reminded of his father's death, and since the boy feels responsible, he lashes out at everyone who crosses him. Because of his inner anger, Jake is always getting

into fights, which is a conventional element of an action movie. Also, all of the characters portrayed in this film are extremely well-built, and drop dead gorgeous.

Another conventional element of the action genre portrayed in this film is the underdog mentality. When the boy transitions from Iowa to Florida, he is encapsulated in a world filled with professional Mixed Martial Arts fighters. The young boy does not realize how powerful these fighters are until he unintentionally walks into a tussle that was supposed to be confidential.

Now that Jake has interfered in this group's practices, he is instantly tagged as the next target. The boy is not physically or technically up to the fighters in his school, even though he threw down quite a bit in his former school. Like many action movies, the boy finds someone who is going to mentor him into a fighting machine. After weeks of training, the mentor gives the student an inspirational speech before he battles the enemy. Lastly, the action movie concludes with a heroic bloodshed battle between the victim and his oppressor, with the victim coming out victorious.

Never Back Down can also be considered a drama film because of its passionate romance scenes, and great character chemistry. Throughout the film, there is an underlying romance between Jake and Baja Miller. Although Baja betrays Jake early in the movie, as a viewer you notice the attraction the two have which makes you pay close attention. Through beautiful screenplay, we see Jake and Baja finally become boyfriend and girlfriend, and team up to defeat Ryan McCarthy. A combination of love, quarrels, tragedy, and success all encompass the overall drama theme.

Never Back Down did an exceptional job aligning its setting, characters, theme, and plot in conjunction to conventional elements of a action/genre movie. But there were also elements in the text that were extremely novel, and didn't seem to fit in the storyline. In a prototypical action movie, men are the ones who fight and protect the females from danger. In this particular text, women were the ones who organized and promoted the sanctioned fights around the area. When Jake showed up at Ryan's house to meet Baja, women were the ones who were fighting and taking wagers. Although a large amount of the quarrels were between males, it was unique yet odd to witness women as fighters and the ones wagering and organizing sanctioned bouts.

Propp's seven characters

- * Dispatcher (Max Cooperman)
- * Hero (Jake Tyler)
- * Helper/Donor (Jean Roqua)
- * False Hero (Baja Miller)
- * Villain (Ryan McCarthy)
- * Princess/ Her Father (end of violence in school)

Max Cooperman fulfills the dispatcher role, because he was the one who introduced Jake to underground fighting activity. He made Jake aware of Mixed Martial Arts, and offered him an opportunity to train with master trainer Jean Roqua. Being a dispatcher requires you to let the hero know what he

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will be through. Max definitely showed Jake the behavior of the school, and how MMA fighters had a firm grasp over the whole entire student body. The moment Jake intervened in Max's fight, and laid a vicious haymaker on one of the assailants, he knew he found the answer to the schools problem, and needed to let him aware and prepared to defend.

Being a hero requites you to stand up for the greater good and defend the safety and integrity of your people. Jake Tyler unknowingly undertook this role when he arrived in sunny Orlando, Florida. A decision to eat lunch by himself supplanted himself as the answer to the school's prayers. That day, Jake was having trouble fitting in with his classmates, and needed time to clear his mind. At lunch, Jake wandered to the football stadium where he ran into a fight in a maintenance room under the bleachers. A young man was being viciously beaten, and instincts told Jake to come to his defense. He laid a vicious haymaker on the assailant, and pulled Max to safety. This heroic action may have been the right thing to do, but it made him the target of the MMA fighters who were doing an initiation. Throughout the movie, Jake constantly finds himself filling a hero's shoes.

Much like batman or Superman, Jake is always there to help the downtrodden or save the beautiful girl from trouble. Whatever the situation may be, Jake Tyler always made sure that the problem was either prevented or taken care of. A prime example of this occurred at the halfway point in the movie when Jake decided not to enter the Beat down. Ryan, the villain got word of this decision and tried to take Max's life. Jake finds Max in the nick of time and rushes him to the Emergency Room where he had several broken ribs and a collapsed lung. Fearful of another attack, Jake decides to

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eliminate Ryan once and for all. He eventually defeats Ryan, and peace is once again throughout the community.

The role of the villain is played by Ryan McCarthy. Ryan is a chiseled, MMA professional who invokes fear on all that cross his path. His pompous attitude and legion of minions makes walking the halls of school very intimidating. Ryan meets his match when new kid Jake comes to town. When Jake knocks one of his posse members out, Ryan realizes he has met his match. Ryan unleashes his terror every chance he can whether it's taunting Jake about his father's death, assaulting Baja, or trying to kill Max. The villain is relentless in his terror. Just like Commodus in *Gladiator* or Alonzo Harris in *Training Day*, in which these two did everything they could to exploit and weaken their enemy. But like most action movies, the victim usually encounters an ally who bestows great advice that helps the overthrown the oppressor. *Never Back Down* was no different; Ryan was ultimately defeated by Jake after months and months of torture on his behalf. When watching these types of films, you can't help but take a moral with you, and that is bullying individuals' lasts for a short time until karma turns on you. This movie is a great example of karma working in its fullest form.

The defining part of the film is when new student, Jake is approached by the blond bombshell, Baja Miller. Baja is very flirtatious, and makes Jake believe he may have a chance with her. Baja shows Jake around the school, laughing and smiling the whole way. Jake has no reason to suspect Baja of being fake, so he considers her a friend. At the end of the day, Baja invites Jake to a party where he learns the fate of Baja's intentions. Baja earns the role of False Hero, because she intentionally makes Jake like her to get him to come

to her boyfriend, Ryan's house to get his butt kicked. Befriending an ally is the description of a false hero, and Baja epitomizes this title when she wholeheartedly intended on tricking Jake to come to Ryan's home. Baja later realizes the consequences of her actions and decisions and how it impacted Jake's life she eventually ends her relationship with Ryan and teams up with Jake to seek revenge on her soul-less, cold-hearted, ex-boyfriend Ryan.

For the hero to develop the skills necessary to beat the villain, they must undergo extensive training from a master. In *Never Back Down*, the role of the Helper and Donor was played by Jean Roqua. Jean is a MMA professional who is responsible for teaching Jake Tyler how to fight. What first starts out as basic training, Roqua unleashes his most difficult tests to determine his heart and dedication. Roqua is helping Jake learn the foundation of MMA, but also is stressing the importance of being level-headed and focused.

Roqua is not only a mentor to Jake, but is also a father figure to the young man. The relationship between Roqua and Jake is very similar to that of Daniel and Mr. Miagi, in *Karate Kid*. What starts out to be strictly business, leads to the development of a close relationship. Roqua is helping Jake not only become a proficient fighter, but transition to a well-behaved human being.

I believe that in a similar fashion, Roqua also fills the role of a donor as well. Not only does Roqua help Jake through troubling times, but he also gives him the tools to conquer his enemy. Providing Jake with the tools to become an elite fighter ultimately makes him win his final fight against Ryan. Without Roqua's open arms, countless training hours, and keen advice, Jake would

have not matured from an uncontrollable unstable boy into a level-headed, unstoppable man. I gave Roqua both roles, because he is the glue to this movie. He helps Jake channel his emotions into something productive, but also gives him the tools of fighting which is needed to accomplish his goal which is, to protect his family and friends from Ryan.