

# BECOME A PREDATOR WRESTLER



**Z** WRESTLING  
MINDSET

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



- 1: PREDATOR Mindset
- 2: Building the Predator Mindset
- 3. Building the Killer Instinct
- 4: Part II: Top Mindset Lessons



## Dear Wrestler,

**M**ost serious wrestlers would agree that wrestling is one of the most mental sports in the world. How often have we all had the technical skills and physical prowess to win, yet still came up short because our mindset was not where it needed to be the day of competition? Not only have I seen this over the past ten years as a mindset coach, but I have also lived it, as a former nationally ranked, All-Ivy League wrestler. Some of the most common mindset struggles we have seen with golfers include choking when under pressure, underperforming in bigger competitions, giving good opponents too much respect, performing better in practice than competition, too cautious/hesitant, and difficulty bouncing back after making a mistake. This is exactly why Wrestling Mindset and this book were created! Wrestling Mindset is a wrestling specific, systematic program made by wrestlers for wrestlers.

This book has two parts. Part one is dedicated to explaining the Predator Mindset versus Prey Mindset and why that is the difference between success and failure in sports, school, and life. It is a simple analogy that permeates all areas of life. Along with the Predator Mindset, you will also learn how to develop a competition “Alter Ego” which has been one of our most unique and successful lessons. Part 2 of this book is designed to share some of our best mindset exercises that have been used with thousands of athletes across the country. The key there is to actually DO THE EXERCISES. There are many books that talk about what confidence is and why it is important. This book will make you more confident if you do what it says to do.

I was a collegiate wrestler and coach. With my background in Psychology, I created Wrestling Mindset which has become the top wrestling specific mindset program in the world working with all athletes from youth through the Olympic teams. Please enjoy learning and most importantly, applying Wrestling Mindset! God bless you.

Gene Zannetti, M.S., M.A.

School Psychologist

Founder of Wrestling Mindset

[www.wrestlingmindset.com](http://www.wrestlingmindset.com)



# CHAPTER 1

## PREDATOR MINDSET



# PREDATOR MINDSET

## The ultimate guide to success in Sports, School, Business, & Life

Deep in the African savanna, a lion patiently watches a gazelle. The lion crouches in the tall grass and stalks ahead, gazing intently at its prey. The gazelle hears a faint rustling and looks up. Its eyes dart from left to right, scanning the horizon for imminent dangers. But it sees none and resumes feeding. The lion springs into action with an explosion of effortless speed and power. By the time the gazelle notices, it's too late. The lion has triumphed once again in this primal fight for survival.

Predator and prey. The animal kingdom can be broken down into these two kinds of animals. Eat or be eaten. It's not pretty, but it's the way of the animal kingdom. There is a simple way to tell if a mammal is a predator or prey just by looking at them. Is it their teeth? No. Their claws? No. Their size? No. It's their eyes.

If you look at predator animals, like lions, tigers, and bears, you will notice that their eyes are located squarely on the front of their head. Why might they have evolved to have eyes on the front of their head? Survival. With eyes on the front, the predator is laser focused on its goal: lunch!

On the other hand, prey animals, like squirrels, chipmunks, and rabbits, have eyes on the side of their head. Why might prey have evolved to have eyes on the side of their head? Again, survival. To live, the prey animal must be on the lookout for what is going on around them or they will get eaten!

I studied animal behavior as an undergraduate in the psychology program at the University of Pennsylvania, where I was an elite college wrestler. At the time, the full impact of studying animals' adaptations hadn't yet dawned on me. And I certainly never would have thought that 10 years later I would be at the U.S. Olympic Training Center, presenting this lesson to some of the top athletes in the world!

As a mindset coach, I have worked with tens of thousands of athletes around the country, from young children to Olympians. I have helped them succeed not only in competition, but in every area of their life, from school to personal relationships.

**The Predator Mindset: Effort, Attitude, and Aggressiveness**, has proven to be the most effective tool in training these athletes. It is the backbone of my winning mindset system, which has become the top sport specific mindset program in the country. The

predator mindset can be stated simply: "Eyes on the front like to hunt, eyes on the side like to hide!"

Predator athletes, with eyes on the front of their head, are focused on nothing but their goals. They focus on the factors within their control. They look forward. They live for the hunt. They go for the kill.

Prey athletes, with eyes on the side of their head, focus on things going on around them. They obsess over factors outside of their control. They follow the rankings. They focus on social media. They worry about what their parents, coaches, and friends think about them.

These timeless principles go well beyond athletics. They apply to business, sales, or even weight loss. In this book, I will train you to maneuver with the ferocious hunger of a lion, rather than the cautious appetite of a gazelle.

Step one is simple. It begins with a consistent morning routine. After you wake up and wash your face and brush your teeth, look at yourself in the mirror and locate your eyes. Are they on the front or the side? I once posed this question to a large group of child and teenage athletes. An eight-year-old literally jumped to his feet in excitement. "I can't believe it, I'm a predator!" After running over to give this enthusiastic kid a high-five, I kindly reminded the audience, "That's exactly how fired up all of you should be feeling!"

Regardless of our external excitement, we must understand this fact: we are all born predators! In this book, I will teach you how to distinguish the patterns of predator and prey thinking, and how to use those patterns to reach your goals. The Predator Mindset will show you how to achieve success in every area of your life.

**Eye of the tiger!**

**DISCLAIMER**

Predator can be a taboo word, particularly in light of current events. It is used throughout this book as an analogy to performance, as a useful way of simplifying our thinking, and of making these lessons memorable. Many of us are prone to overthinking, and we need effective tools to cut through the weeds in our mind. This is what the Predator Mindset is all about! It is in no way related to sexual or violent predators. Now that we have that out of the way, let's get down to business.



To understand how the Predator Mindset is the answer to achieving our goals, we must first examine the role that our mindset plays in our success.

What percentage of sports is physical and what percentage is mental? This is an interesting question. Experience has shown me that I can ask any sports team, of any age, and the answer will be anywhere from 50-90% mental. It is hard to imagine such a uniform answer among athletes of such different sports and ages. My next question is where things really become interesting. What percentage of your time are you training physically versus mentally? Crickets! Most say 95% of their time is spent on physical training. We can instantly see the problem. We must train smarter. It is easy to see how those percentage numbers don't jive. If you are saying sports are at least 50% mental, then it stands to reason you must spend 50% of your time training your mind. Now, not for one second should you think this downplays the importance of physical training. As a personal trainer and sports nutritionist with a Master's Degree in Exercise Science I cannot overexpress how vital it is to maintain a balance between physical and mental training.

**Ok, so we know our success depends on our mindset. Most coaches and leaders understand this. So why isn't more being done to train this area?**

## **I CAN GIVE THREE REASONS:**

1. Coaches don't exactly know how to train their athletes' mindsets
2. Current psychological strategies are too boring or ineffective
3. It is too embarrassing or shameful to admit our weaknesses

## Let's look at each of these.

1. Often, coaches don't know exactly how to train their athletes' mindsets. This is not their fault. Most are never trained on how it's done. I once heard that there are no such things as skilled or unskilled, only trained and untrained. Most are untrained. You won't be by the end of this book. Not knowing how to train mindset results in (a) leaving it to chance (b) circular reasoning (c) well intentioned, weak attempts.

Leaving it to chance. Technique, strength, and nutrition are far easier to see. Things that are easier to see seem to be easier to coach. Therefore, many coaches neglect this area completely, outside of maybe some pep talks, team huddles, and yelling here and there.

## Circular Reasoning

When I was competing, coaches would say I needed to be confident. Okay, great, how do I do that? They would tell me to just believe in myself. Okay, well how do I do that? They would tell me to be confident. Circular reasoning never solved anything. The same thing happened when I would try to overcome nerves and anxiety before competition. Coaches would say to keep calm. Well how do I keep calm? They would tell me to just relax. Okay, how do I relax? By now, you see the pattern. Just keep calm. And the wheels on the bus go round and round. Nothing is solved and now I am beating myself up for not knowing how to fulfill my coaches' instructions. I made these same mistakes as a coach.

## Weak Attempts

I speak to many coaches who tell me they are doing the mindset training with the team themselves. Then when I ask what exactly the coach is doing with the team, I hear very predictable answers: *I have them write down their goals, I usually talk to them before or after every practice, or I have them visualize success.* I agree that this is an excellent start. But this is not what we mean by mindset training. It would be very similar if the team coach told you he or she was doing strength training by doing some pushups and pullups at the end of practice. Again, a great start, but unscientific and definitely not systematic.

2. Current psychological strategies in sports are boring and/or ineffective.

I've seen too many "mindset experts" turn wine into water with athletes in five ways (a) confusing mindset training with motivational speaking (b) using language that is too theoretical/psychological in their approach (c) starting with material that doesn't elicit buy-in from the team (d) employing a damage control approach to mindset training (e) relying on a relativistic approach to mindset training.

### ***Confusing Mindset Training with Motivational Speaking***

As a School Psychologist, I saw firsthand the research on learning retention rates:

| <b>TEACHING METHODS</b> | <b>AVERAGE<br/>RETENTION RATES</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Lecture                 | 5%                                 |
| Reading                 | 10%                                |
| Audio Visual            | 20%                                |
| Demonstration           | 30%                                |
| Group Discussion        | 50%                                |
| Practice                | 75%                                |
| Teaching Others         | 90%                                |

Many coaches will bring in a guest speaker to address their team; this is what these coaches consider "mindset training." It's a great start, but there is no training here other than listening. And listening to a lecture leads to an average of 5% retention. This is especially true with kids; it's 'in one ear and out the other.' Imagine a practice session where the coach just dictated technique as the team sat and listened. How would you expect the athlete to perform this technique in competition without active practice? Instead of passive listening, we want to rely on active teaching methods –practical exercises.

## ***Language too Theoretical/Psychological***

Often the language that experts use with kids is a little too technical. I know from experience that we sometimes like to use big words that we've learned from our expensive education to make sure we appear to know what we are talking about. This is usually not a huge problem, but it can be a turn off and can overcomplicate the lesson. No one likes to feel talked down too and frankly, longer words tend to put people to sleep. My advice would be to use unnecessarily technical terms with caution.

Most athletes are hands-on, kinesthetic learners, not overly interested in philosophy or jargon. This is why they play sports. They like to use their five senses. They have to actively and physically practice the routines they learn, the body language, the worksheets and exercises. It is no different than weight training or technical practice. You cannot just *think* about strength training or drilling technique. You must actually *do* the technical drills and *do* the weight lifting. In the same vein, you cannot just *think* about mindset training; you must *do* it! If you are not writing things down, repeating your affirmations out loud, action planning, etc., then you are not actually mindset training!

## ***Starting with Material that Doesn't Elicit Buy-In***

I remember back in college, the first of two times the sport psychologist came in to speak, we went over goal setting. Now I get it, that seems like the logical place to begin. And we will cover goal setting in this book, because it is indeed very important. But I remember thinking: *our team is ranked in the top 20 in the country, and almost every member of the team is nationally ranked. We have our goals. We have many more pressing needs, like how to handle pressure and what exactly we should focus on before and during our competitions.* The result was very little buy-in. Over the years, I've seen other approaches to mindset training that focus on sleep, or that use funny team-building cooperation group-play, with equally dismal results. We have to begin with information that will quickly and effectively address immediate mindset needs.

## ***Damage control***

“My kid is in a good place mentally right now.” “He needed it earlier in the season, but now he doesn’t need mindset.” “My one kid is very extraverted and confident, but my other son, who is quiet and shy, needs it.” How many times have I heard these phrases from a coach or parent? The problem here is that they are looking at mindset from a damage control standpoint. The assumption is that mindset training occurs after there is a problem. Michael Yessis’ study of the dominant Soviet Union sports programs found a major difference in the way they approached mindset. Most American athletes have very infrequent contact with someone formally working on their mindset. By contrast, Soviet athletes approached mindset proactively and regularly, BEFORE a problem has occurred. Ben Franklin said, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” You hate to see a Communist nation applying Franklins’ ideas better than we are!

## ***Relativistic Approach***

This critique of the effectiveness (and accuracy) of current psychological interventions would not be complete without denouncing one of the most insidious mentalities of society: relativism, or the belief that there are no truths. Imagine a psychologist who simply reflects back whatever the client says, and then lets the client come to his or her own answers. The psychologist is little more than a sounding board. It is true that we will need to account for individual subjectivity. But we should be careful not to slip into subjectivism, which holds that no view or value is greater than another. There is research and experience that clearly shows the effectiveness and truth (yes, I said it, Truth) of some approaches and values over others. This may all seem like philosophical mumbo jumbo, but I encourage you to pause at this point and think about the approach many take in helping you “find your own way.” Again, I acknowledge room for people’s subjective feelings and preferences, but we must also recognize that, objectivity, focusing on some things is better than focusing on others. Put simply: we need to be taught how best to think. We need to be taught what to focus on. We need to become aware of our own thinking errors and common mistakes in judgment. In what other discipline do we rely on a “you can figure it all out on your own” mentality? We never assume this when a person is learning any skill, be it an instrument or math problem. People need to be taught by experts how to approach information and how best to synthesize and adapt. Our thinking is no different. It always pains me, as a coach, to see relativistic approaches to mindset training.

3. The stigma. Sadly, a lot of people view mindset training as a negative. “You must have a problem if you are getting extra help on your mindset.” Therapy and psychology



get a bad rap with this too. Traditional psychology has long been viewed as problem correction, taking people from -5 to 0 or baseline. With modern advances in psychology, we have learned that being at baseline or 0 does not equal happiness or well-being. Positive psychology has focused on taking people from 0 to +5 in their life. Still, we have to address the elephant in the room: we all have mental and emotional areas to work on. Why are we too proud to admit this? It is easier for us to admit to our physical or technical deficiencies – probably because our physical and technical deficiencies are out in the open. We can hide our thoughts and emotions. We can appear as if we have it all together upstairs. But even the most successful people don't have it all together. Look at all the celebrities with money, fame, and success who are depressed, hooked on drugs, and suicidal. Even the most successful people in the world do not have it all figured out. We need to drop our pride here. Almost 20% of the U.S. has some anxiety disorder. We have doctor and dentist checkups for our physical health. We don't leave that to chance. Yet we will persist with anxiety, depression, limited beliefs, and self/life confusion throughout our lives, stifling our well-being and dreams. To counteract this stereotype, I call what we do "Mindset Training." It's like strength training for your mind. It's easier for the general population to relate to this name. Strength coaches adopted their title of "strength coach" instead of "personal trainer" for the same reason. In a similar vein, many athletes neglect stretching. This might change if we called it "flexibility training." Bottom line: the name matters. We have to either fight against or work around the stigma of mindset training.

Let's look at all of this from a strength-training perspective. "My kid is very strong, so he doesn't need to lift weights." It doesn't make any sense. Common sense says that the kid should work on strength training so that it NEVER becomes a problem. I love the strength training analogy because it illuminates the many misunderstandings we have of mindset training:

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** "Mindset: you either have it or you don't."

**Strength Analogy:** "Strength: you either have it or you don't."

Obviously, some people are naturally stronger than others. But to think that you cannot improve your strength denies all scientific research. Though our potential and rate of strength improvements depend on many factors, we all can improve our strength. Studies show improvements in strength in elderly populations into their 90's! Mindset also can always be improved, wherever you are in your career or life.

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** "Only mentally weak people do mindset training."

**Strength Analogy:** "Only weak people lift weights."

This one is hilarious when you look at it from a strength-training perspective. We know from powerlifting competitions that obviously the strongest people in the world do in fact weight train. In fact, it is highly probable that the strongest people do the most strength training. They usually spend a lot of time with highly specialized strength coaches every day.

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** “My kid has confidence, so he doesn’t need mindset training.”

**Strength Analogy:** “My kid has strong legs, so he doesn’t need strength training.”

That’s one muscle you just mentioned there. There are many muscles in your body. We all tend to have some muscles that are stronger than others. We all have underdeveloped muscles. Body builders will be the first to admit this. We are no different. We know we are only as strong as our weakest link. If my legs and back can support a 500lb deadlift, but my grip can only hold 450lbs, my deadlift will be stuck at 450lbs until my grip gets stronger. In the same way, there are many different “mental muscles.” Being confident, relaxing under pressure, staying in the present moment, and maintaining clarity, mental toughness and aggressiveness, are all very different things. Olympian and Bellator Champ Ben Askren talks about the difference between “preparers” and “cowboys.” Preparers have the mental muscle of discipline: eating well, going to sleep on time, working hard at every practice. But they get very nervous before competition, have difficulty making adjustments, and do not bounce back well from mistakes. Strong in their discipline, they are mentally weak in these three other areas. They will miss opportunities out of fear. Then there are cowboys, who seem to do everything wrong in their preparation, but are very aggressive in competition, take chances, and let go of their mistakes quickly. Weak in their discipline, they are strong in these three other mental muscles. They will shoot themselves in the foot with a lack of preparation. To be the best, you must become *both* the “preparer” and the “cowboy.” There are many mental muscles and every one can improve in some area.

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** “We’ll start mindset training when the season begins.”

**Strength Analogy:** “We’ll start weight lifting when the season begins.”

I hardly need to write anything for this point to be clear. The top athletes strength train (and work on their technique) year-round. Mindset training should be the same. This is similar to when a kid or team starts mindset training two weeks before the post-season. Imagine starting weight lifting before the post-season. Granted, it’s better to start mindset training at some point than not at all. Also, sometimes kids are just more open

to any edge right before the post-season. If this becomes a catalyst for continued mindset training, then great! But to look at mindset training as a magic pill to learn fast is flat out wrong. People don't approach strength training like this.

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** We do mindset training by listening to a speech or reading a book.

**Strength Analogy:** We do strength training by thinking about the exercises. We don't get stronger by thinking about exercising. We get stronger by exercising. We have to be actively involved in our training to call it training. It is the same thing with the mind. We cannot passively consume mindset information. We need to actually DO the mindset exercises, worksheets, and activities.

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** "I don't want my kid to think he has a problem. If he is working on his mindset, then he is admitting he has a problem and this will hurt him more."

**Strength Analogy:** "I don't want my kid to lift weights because I don't want him to admit that he has weaknesses."

That doesn't make sense. We all have weaknesses. To make this more digestible, I do not call them "weaknesses," I call them "improvement areas." We all know the phrase "nobody is perfect." It sounds basic enough. We've heard it a million times. But this is something you must work hard to internalize. My dad always asked me, "what is the biggest room in the world?" The answer is: the room for improvement! This goes for mindset or strength. Sweeping a problem under the rug does not eliminate the problem.

**Mindset Misunderstanding:** "My kid is already thinking too much. I don't want him to have to think about even more."

This one requires more than a strength analogy. Imagine 3 stick figures:

One stick figure is thinking all positive thoughts, the second stick figure is thinking all negative thoughts, and the third stick figure isn't thinking much of anything- the lights are on but no one's home! Which stick figure is likely to perform the best in a competition? We can eliminate figure 2 immediately. But a lot of people are surprised to find that figure 1 is not far behind figure 2. Generally, the best performer will be figure 3: the clear thinker. The role of mindset training is not to make you think *more*, but actually to make you think *less*. More accurately, the role is to have you focus on the right factors so you do not get tripped up by the wrong ones.

## Eyes on the Side Like to Hide: **Prey Mindset**

The stakes are high for meerkats (animals of the mongoose family – think Timon from the Lion King) in South Africa. A dominant pair, usually the biggest male and female, do the majority of the breeding. Competition is fierce for the #1 spot. Meerkats instinctively know the pressure they are under. To improve their chances of success, some meerkats adopt a certain strategy: they compare their own size to that of their rivals. As their rivals grow larger, many meerkats begin to eat more themselves, to keep pace with their opponents' size. These meerkats have adopted a “prey mindset” – comparing themselves to their rivals. Consequently, only half-way through the process of trying to eat more, these meerkats give up. They have wasted their efforts trying to “keep up with the Joneses” in extra foraging and have thus opened themselves up to other dangers.

This is a small example of what I have seen to be the #1 problem in competition: Prey Mindset. Like it or not, we live in a highly competitive society. Very often, we only get one chance to seize the day, and we need to know how to make it count. After working with tens of thousands of athletes, of all ages around the country, I can confidently say that having a Prey Mindset is one of the surest ways to shoot yourself in the foot.

Prey animals are focused primarily on what is going on around them. We can extend this analogy to sports, school, business, and to other areas of our lives that are outside of our control.

The Prey Mindset can be broken down into 3 broad categories. To remember these categories, keep in mind that the Prey Mindset is our real F.O.E.

**F**AN MENTALITY

**O**ther PEOPLE

**E**xtraneous VARIABLES

# Fan Mentality

## **In competition, the “fan mentality” is public enemy #1.**

Back in my college wrestling days at UPenn, we were in the national duals at Arizona State, competing against the best of the best – the top college wrestling teams in the country. During one of the rounds of the tournament, our team had a bye. During our off round, Iowa and Oklahoma State, the two top teams in the country, were competing against each other. As excitable college kids, we naturally anticipated watching these two dynasty programs compete against one another for the number one spot. We were taking our picks about which wrestlers would win each weight class and which team would win the overall dual. Minutes before the match began, our spirits were crushed. “Men, we’re not spectators here, we’re competitors, we’re not watching this match. We’re going into the back room to recover and get ready for our match.” This was coming from our head coach Zeke Jones (World Champion, Olympic Silver medalist, and one of the few Americans ever to win “Most technical wrestler in the world”). We wanted to watch the top teams compete. But instead, we learned an important lesson that day: champions must have the mindset of predators, not prey.

The reality is that society, the media, and even our friends and family have taught us this prey mindset of fan mentality. We are well-trained to think like fans. During the playoffs of any sport, and even well before, we are inundated with records, brackets, rankings, seedings, predictions, storylines, and Vegas odds. Not that these are bad, in and of themselves. They are in fact great for sports. This kind of information makes sports more fun to watch. We love to know about the personal lives of athletes and the struggles they have overcome. We love to see the 40-to-1 underdog shock the world. It’s exciting to fill out brackets for the NCAAs and compare them to the predictions of our friends. Social media only compounds this excitement. We can follow what athletes are saying and doing before, during, and after the competitions in real time. But as a result, the tendency to fall into the fan mentality is greater now than in any time period in the history of the world – and it’s only going to continue to grow.

In other words, the fan mentality is not inherently bad. But it is problematic when we take this mentality into competition.

## **The FAN MENTALITY can be broken down into 3 subcategories:**

### **1. Hype**

### **2. Significance**

### **3. Outcome**

The examples I mentioned above all fall under the subcategory of Hype. Records, rankings, seedings, predictions, storylines, forums, Vegas odds etc. are all factors that add to the hype. These factors are outside of the control of the competitor and have very little to do with the competition itself. Athletes get involved in the hype all the time. They are usually well aware of their personal record and ranking. Coaches even contribute to this by posting rankings and records in the locker room and practice room. Coaches do this with good intentions to motivate their athletes. But athletes often internalize these rankings and records as fixed entities, leading to detrimental results in competition. The seeding or storyline doesn't have anything to do with the competition, so throw that out of your mind!

Lebron James is well aware of how hype increases during the playoffs. To counteract this hype, he goes on a social media "black-out." By doing this, he does not see what others are saying about him or about the upcoming competition. I remember watching an interview in which the commentator asked him if he had heard a negative remark a former coach had made about him; he said that he had no idea about any remark because he abstains from social media during the playoffs. Lebron does it right. Many athletes do the opposite.

Athletes usually begin posting more during the postseason. Sure, it is exciting to see hundreds and thousands of "likes," "hearts," views and shares on your Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook pages. But the question is: does this posting help or hurt your performance? One of the top wrestlers in high school history found himself in the final tournament of the season against a familiar opponent. He beat this opponent in a prestigious Christmas tournament earlier in the year by 10 points. Before the state finals, he posted a picture on Instagram, along with a heartfelt message to all his supporters and fans throughout the years and exclaimed that he looked forward to putting on his team singlet one last time in the championship match. He's a great kid. My recommendation would've been to write this post AFTER the match. After demolishing the opponent earlier in the year, he squeaked by in overtime in a match that he almost lost. He did not write a heartfelt post to all his fans before the Christmas tournament when he won big, but he changed his approach before his finals match. And



it almost cost him. I've seen heavy favorites lose focus before the Olympics, promoting themselves and their sponsored products, over-communicating with fans on social media, and taking too many interviews. Indeed, after some gold-medal hopefuls didn't even place, their coaches admitted that the athletes got caught up in the hype. One of these athletes made the necessary adjustments for the World Championships the following year, avoiding social media before the tournament. This athlete, Jordan Burroughs, went on to win his fifth World Title! He was back on top with a simple shift of mindset. (It was not only hype that cost him the Olympics, but it was a key factor.)

Legendary coach and Olympic-champion wrestler Dan Gable was very careful and selective with whom he allowed his team to communicate before competitions. He knew the impact of hype on the mindset of his athletes. In the movie *Miracle*, recall the legendary coach Herb Brooks, who was the mastermind behind the *Miracle on the Ice*. He wouldn't let his hockey players talk to the press before or after games. He would not even let the U.S. hockey committee into the locker room before the game. The committee, though disappointed, understood his reasoning after the U.S. team pulled off one of the greatest upsets of all time in any sport.

Related to "hype" is the second part of fan mentality: focusing on the significance of a competition. Nine times out of ten, if we make a competition "special" we perform worse. The goal is to make every performance important, but not special. There is a big difference. We overestimate and underestimate opponents when we focus on the significance of an event. To succeed, you want to treat everything the same. If you listen to the top performers in any field, they always bring up the C word – and it is not confidence. It's consistency. We all perform well sometimes, but unfortunately not others. We want to perform consistently well. That begins by treating every competition the same.

Bruce Springsteen is well known for the energy he brings on stage. He broke the New Jersey state record a few years ago for the longest performance (his own record). An interviewer once asked him how he brings so much to each and every show. He told the interviewer that he tells himself two things before his performances: (1) "this is the most important concert of my life" (2) "it's only rock n' roll." The Boss makes every concert important, but not special. Former president Bill Clinton underwent several major heart surgeries. Imagine the pressure felt by the surgeons, operating on a former president! One of the surgeons shared his mindset after the operation, explaining that he treated Clinton like he would treat anyone else. How different most people are when they perform!

## **Here are some of the worst phrases you can tell yourself before any performance or competition:**

“This is it”

“Now or never”

“Do or die”

“Make it or break it”

“There is no tomorrow”

“This is what you worked hard for your whole life”

“This is what counts”

“This is the biggest match of my life”

No doubt, you’ve heard many athletes use these lines – and chances are, you’ve said some of these to yourself or to someone else. But for every 1 person these phrases have helped, they have probably hurt 20. I once had a coach challenge me at a convention in front of more than a hundred of his peers, saying, “before my wrestler competed in the state finals, he told me this was the biggest moment of his life, and then he went out and won.” I asked him if he thought that it was one of the wrestler’s best performances, and the coach shook his head, saying no. I didn’t want to make matters worse by pointing out that he won a state title in one of the weakest states in the country, and that if his athlete had performed the same in other states he might not have won. We cannot define our effectiveness based exclusively on wins and losses. Though wins and losses are objective criteria, top athletes and coaches can see how records can be deceiving. They say nothing about the quality of competition, the physical or mental state of the competitors, referee calls, and many other variables that influence the outcome of a competition. We want our focus to be on thoughts that will bring out our best performance.

We tend to use the above deadly phrases because we are stuck in Hollywood sports movies that teach us to hype up events. We watch movies like *Miracle*, *Any Given Sunday*, or virtually any sports movie and we watch a great actor deliver an Academy Awards-worthy performance of a pre-game rah-rah motivational speech, often reducing the coach and athlete to tears. And then we see the team run out onto the field, fired up, and we watch them win the big game. I’ve seen this strategy replicated

over and over by parents, coaches, and even myself, and we become puzzled when it doesn't work out quite the same way as it did in the movies.

I hate telling this story, but it is so effective in illustrating this point: I always had a flair for the dramatic. My brother Jeff went into the state tournament as the highest placing returning wrestler and the top ranked, top seeded wrestler the whole season. I knew there was a good chance he would win. I wrote a very heartfelt speech, which I delivered to him about a half hour before he took the mat in the state finals. Though it was a great moment we shared, culminating in a big bear hug and tears on both of our parts, I realize now that I was doing one of the worst things for his mindset before a competition. I cringe even writing this now as I recall him getting pinned in the state finals by someone I know he would have beaten in a practice room. (Future NCAA champ and Bellator Champ Darrion Caldwell was only a sophomore in high school at the time; he had one of the best competitive mindsets I have ever seen in all sports; I still maintain my brother was the better wrestler that year. Hats off to DC; he always brought his A-game in the biggest matches).

The sentiment of the speech I wrote for my brother wasn't wrong. I just should have delivered that speech *after* the match. There should not have been a pre-match speech since I did not do this for him in practice. There's no reason to add more pressure. If I were to say anything, I should have said what top coaches say: "be yourself, do what you always do, just be you out there, be aggressive, have fun." Nothing more. At the turn of the century, ESPN named John Wooden, the Wizard of Westwood, the greatest coach of all time. He said that he did not believe in pep talks. He said pep talks create an energy level of peaks and valleys. After a spike to a peak in energy level following a pep talk, an inevitable low valley would result soon after (in the game, when it counts!)

A wrestler I was coaching had a goal to qualify for the state tournament, but he regularly underperformed in matches relative to his performance in practice. When I asked him about his physical and mental routine before matches, I learned that he would stretch and do a few technical drills. Then, his dad would give him his usual "pre-match speech." I stopped him immediately and asked if his dad gave him this same speech before wrestling in practice. When the wrestler said "no," it was easy to pin-point the big problem here. You want to practice the way you want to play – and play the way you want to practice, minimizing as many variables as possible. If you normally do something or don't do something before performing in practice, and you usually do well, why would you switch things up before performing in a competition? Try to keep things the same. I learned the following exercise from the USOC Sport Psychology Training Manual and I use this with my athletes to this day: write down how you can make

matches similar to practice and how to make practices similar to a match. This usually entails keeping actions and thoughts as similar as you can. In more extreme cases, a nervous performer may want to take practice performances more seriously and competition performances less seriously, usually overcompensating with actions to make themselves smile and laugh, such as dancing, listening to songs that make them smile, or joking around with a friend or teammate. This is how you overcome the “practice room performer” syndrome.

Pete Rose, the all-time baseball hits leader was nicknamed “Charlie Hustle” for his constant aggressive and relentless style of baseball. He was criticized for taking the all-star game too seriously after running over a catcher to score a run. “What difference does it make if it’s an All-Star game, World Series, or regular season game? I’d play that way in a spring training game.” That was how Pete Rose described his competition mindset. He did not distinguish competitions or even practices from one another. Neither should you!

I often tell our wrestlers that live wrestling is live wrestling, wherever it is done - practice, match, backyard, New Jersey, Iowa, Russia, Iran, or Mars (the gravity might be different but it is still the same activity). I learned this lesson and many others from watching interviews after championships in all sports: World Series, Stanley Cups, Super Bowls, Olympics. If you listen to the best athletes’ interviews, they usually sound very different from the “this is it” Hollywood pep talk. For example, Olympic Champ Tom Brands told reporters that the Olympics was, “like any other tournament or any other match.” Kyle Dake, after winning his 4<sup>th</sup> NCAA title against David Taylor - one of the best college wrestlers of all time – stunned interviewers when he told them that he treated the finals the same as any match. They couldn’t believe it because they knew the significance of the match and the quality of the competition he was up against. Dake explained, “you can’t let outside factors play a factor” (in your mindset). We can start to see a pattern here; Dake and Brands were saying the same thing that John Wooden, Springsteen, and Clinton’s surgeon said: treat it the same. Everything is important but nothing is special. Scratch the pep talks.

The third part of the Fan Mentality is focusing too much on the outcome. As a society we are very preoccupied with final outcomes: did you win or lose, how much money do you make, what kind of car do you drive, how many followers do you have on social media, do you have a girlfriend or not? These questions imply that something is wrong with you if you answer a certain way. We get this even at a young age. I remember working one summer as a camp counselor, watching the 8<sup>th</sup> graders as they played laser tag. After the game, I asked one of the kids (not one of the most active and fit children there) if he enjoyed the game. His immediate response was “we lost.” Many

children respond immediately with their result or outcome. Ask any kid how their competition went and 9 out of 10 times the kid will tell you if they won or lost, their record on the day, or their place at the tournament. We want to train kids out of this. Back to that day at summer camp, I asked the kid, “alright well how did YOU play?” The camp director, who I didn’t even realize was walking behind us, decided to join our conversation, saying, “didn’t you hear what he said? He lost.” I was shocked that this was coming from an educator and camp director. “Surely there’s more to the game than winning and losing,” I replied. I could have taken it a step further and said that there are better indicators of personal performance than the outcome of the competition. But I figured we were already operating on different wavelengths so I let the conversation die. Poor kid though, right? Most examples are not nearly as blatant. The outcome focus is usually ingrained in a much subtler way. Any elementary school student playing sports can see and experience a noticeable difference in the demeanors of their parents, coaches, and teammates after winning versus losing. We begin to internalize the idea that winning is the only good outcome, and that losing is bad. Many of us live our lives with extreme internalizing of this win-at-all-costs attitude, leading to cheating and overall dissatisfaction with sports and competition in general.

I’ve seen a lot of people who hate competition because they just do not want to face that thrill of victory/agony of defeat moment-of-truth. We need to use a more productive perspective.

In no way am I saying that it is wrong to desire certain outcomes over others. It’s great to set a goal, like becoming a state champion or making a certain income. But there is a proper time and place to focus on your goal. When you are getting ready to perform, or are actually performing, thinking about your goal only adds pressure; it does not help you focus on factors within your control. Thinking instead about the factors within your control is what will help you achieve your goal. When I am giving a presentation at a coaches’ convention in front of hundreds of people whom I admire, it doesn’t help me to think about how many of them will buy my Mindset Program after my speech. That is just a distraction that adds pressure. I’d do much better to focus on factors within my control: my enthusiasm, intonation, and body language.

This brings us to the difference between *outcome goals* and *process goals*. An outcome goal is to be a national champ, get all A’s, make a million dollars, get into an Ivy-League school, etc. A process goal is to improve your double leg takedown in 6 months by practicing this technique fifteen minutes a day, three days a week, under the supervision of a good coach. An outcome goal is the aspiration; a process goal is the road map to getting there. Focusing on winning or losing a particular competition is an outcome focus. You’d do better to focus on your effort, attitude, and aggressiveness –

factors within your control, which will raise your chance of winning. Focusing on winning, before or during a competition, does little other than add a lot of pressure.

Before the Olympic finals, wrestler Dave Schultz said that more than winning or losing, what he really wants is to give his all on the mat – if he could hit 100 moves or score 100 points he wanted to do it. Of course, Schultz hated to lose, but he shifted his focus to aggressiveness and execution, ultimately winning an Olympic gold medal. In the match of the year between two Olympic gold medalists, Kyle Snyder defeated number #1 Sadulaev. Coming off the mat, Snyder said, “I’m just really proud of my effort in that match, whether I won or lost, I’m real proud of my effort.” And looking at his face, you could tell he was telling the truth. Of course, he wanted to win, but as Snyder himself said while speaking at the Maryland Coaches Convention: “you can’t control winning or losing.” He explained that if he could control winning, he would be undefeated. Instead, you want to, “focus on factors within your control: effort, attitude, attack rate.” He gave me a shout out, saying the coaches probably heard the same thing from me since I had spoken right before him, and he was right – they did. They did because I’ve learned from watching the best in the world.

Let’s look at two striking examples of *process focus* overriding a lack of confidence in the desired outcome. Serena Williams was well on her way to win the Grand Slam while playing in the semifinals of the U.S. Open against her Italian competitor. But the Italian woman defeated Serena in a stunning upset. After the competition, the interviewer asked the Italian woman what gave her the confidence to beat the #1 Tennis player in the world. The player changed her beaming smile to a very serious expression. She quickly shook her head side to side and said, in broken English, “no, I did not think I would win.” So much for confidence. But her mindset was revealed in what she focused on: “I just thought about hitting the ball back over the net on each point.” Proper focus overcame her lack of confidence. And those that just think she was giving a humble response would find it interesting to learn that her flight back home needed to be rescheduled since it was during the same time as the U.S. Open finals the following day. The World Series had a similar story a few years back. The player was up at bat in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning with a runner in scoring position with two outs. It got down to two strikes against him, his team down by one run, and the team was one strike away from elimination. He got a hit, driving in the tying run and the team eventually came back to not only win that game, but to win the World Series. The ballplayer was interviewed after the game and asked what he was thinking about at the plate, knowing all the pressure he was under. Contrary to what most people would think, he said he knew he was probably going to make an out since a .300 hitter makes



an out 7 times out of 10. “I just wanted to have a good at-bat and put my bat on the ball.” Again, success was achieved because *process focus* overrode *outcome focus*.

A few more examples really underscore this point. After pulling off the biggest upset of the 2016 Olympics, Geduev from Russia was winning 6-0 at the half in the Olympic finals against Yazdani from Iran. Imagine yourself in his shoes, ahead at 6-0 with three minutes left in the finals. What are you telling yourself? Be honest! It's probably: be smart, nothing stupid, don't make any big mistakes, you are only three minutes away from being an Olympic Champ! This is a very natural thought pattern to have. Here is how it played out: Geduev let off the gas and did not score another point the rest of the match. And he ended up losing. His loss teaches us a valuable lesson: we need to be a little more hardcore in these moments when we are winning, and we need to finish strong. We should use phrases like “stick ‘em in the ground,” “step on their throat,” “out for blood,” in these moments. These are of course metaphors; I am not advocating wrestling dirty or taking cheap shots. Rather, these phrases are cues to keep upping the intensity during a vulnerable moment (where you might be prone to change your strategy). Do not let off the gas! We had a guy on our college team who couldn't be taken down in the first two periods if you got in on his right leg. But several times, when he had a one-point lead with only one minute left, he'd give up the take down with his right leg. His mindset changed. And it wasn't just my teammate at the 2015 World Championships in Las Vegas; almost every match I watched where one wrestler had a one-point lead with one minute, that wrestler ended up losing. There was a significant mental component at work, where the wrestlers with the one-point lead began to shift their strategy to defense mode.

Almost every athlete can recall several heartbreaking losses where they let off the gas at the end of a competition to protect a lead, ultimately ending in a loss. Football teams sometimes do this, implementing the *prevent defense* far too early. The opposing team starts easily driving the ball down the field. But as the saying goes: “the *prevent defense* only prevents you from winning.” The point of defense is to prevent! My dad and I would sometimes get into arguments watching the final minutes of close football games. He would say a team “scored too early, they should've let time expire more and then score.” That's nonsense. When you are the offense, your job is to score. The defense's job is to defend. You have to focus on your own assignment.

Another wrestling match we might think about was that of Cliff Moore from Iowa in the NCAA finals. He was winning by one point, with under a minute left in the match, and he continued his strategy of staying on the offense, rather than changing to a defensive strategy. It took guts to continue attacking, knowing his goal was on the line

and holding a lead with such short time on the clock. He got one more takedown and put the match out of reach. “Takedown makes it easy, put him away, get one more,” my coach Zeke Jones would yell to our team if any of us found ourselves in a similar situation. Years later I was working as the mindset coach of Edinboro the year they took 3<sup>rd</sup> in the NCAAs. Cliff Moore was their assistant coach and I had an opportunity after a mindset workshop to ask him about his mindset in the NCAA finals of that match. He told me that winning and losing was always secondary to, as he said, “how he represented himself on the mat.” In other words, *the way* he wrestled was always more important to him than winning or losing. If I had a dime every time a parent or coach told me their athlete was afraid of losing! I tell them all the same thing: we need to re-train their athletes’ thinking. Bottom line: when the way you wrestle becomes more important to you than winning or losing, that’s when you will begin to win more.

Of course, there is not always a happy ending to each and every one of these stories. David Taylor was winning 9-0 in the Kids National Tournament and, despite staying aggressive, ended up getting caught and pinned. Years later he relayed this story, and the lesson a coach taught him after seeing him crying after losing: “never let that match stop you from being aggressive.” He didn’t!

Now think about the implications of the Fan Mentality for school, business, and life. As a school psychologist, I have heard many parents say that their kids are not good at taking standardized tests. “My kid is not a test taker.” Never mind that you just negatively labeled your kid. It is very likely that this statement is flat-out false. Your kid might simply put too much pressure on himself for “big” tests like the SATs or ACTs. Parents will often spend a lot of money for SAT prep courses while completely neglecting the mental component of these long exams. The stakes are high: college acceptance, scholarship money, teacher- and parent-approval, standing compared to their peers, etc. What are educators doing to address this part of the test? Very little that I have seen. When you are taking a test, you cannot get caught up in the hype of what your eventual test score might be, what your parents or teachers might say to you after the exam, the implications of the outcome, or the magnitude of the test.

Think back to any interviews you have had in your life: for getting into graduate school or getting a desirable job, for going on a first date or meeting a significant other’s family for the first time, even striking up a conversation with a stranger you are very attracted to. Remember the nerves that went along with these scenarios. “This job would kick start my career.” The significance of the interview adds pressure. “This girl is out of my league because she’s so pretty.” You crash and burn when you make the interaction special. These tests, interviews, and interactions are important, but they are not special. When you begin to treat each test the same from a preparation and perspective standpoint, you will become a better test-taker. When you treat interviews and cold

approaches the same as every interaction, you will become more natural and exude self-assurance to the inter viewer or potential significant other.



# Other People

Why can't I have a wolf as a pet? On a whim, I once googled "dog versus wolf." They look similar enough. Well, one of the most interesting points I learned about was wolves' response (or lack thereof) to human cues. If your pet dog sees you looking in a certain direction for a period of time, the dog will likely look in the same direction as you. Your dog is attentive to your visual cues. A wolf is very different. You could be looking up, down, left, or right and the wolf will not take its eyes off of you. The wolf is locked-in on its objective and doesn't care about you. Ok, so if I want a pet I should get a dog. But if I am looking to succeed, I should be a wolf!

Social creatures take cues from others. Dogs and humans are more alike in this regard; we can read other people's cues and respond accordingly. This helps us in many ways from an evolutionary perspective. If each of us had to learn everything on our own, without recourse to others, we wouldn't get very far. A healthy concern about other people's opinions of us is not usually the problem. Rather, the problem is that we tend to become skewed way too far in that direction, and become preoccupied with others. This inhibits our success.

There are at least four ways in which the way we think about other people hurts us on our quest for success: (1) concerning ourselves with other people's opinions of us, (2) focusing on what other people are doing, (3) comparing ourselves to others, and (4) judging others. Preoccupying ourselves with other people in any of these ways not only stifles our potential, but even worse, leads to a life of misery. As a school psychologist, mental health counselor, and behavior specialist, I have worked with people in despair, and through my work I have seen a clear connection between caring about what other people think and substance abuse, depression, and suicide.

## 1. Concerning Ourselves with Other People's Opinions of Us

Start from the premise: *I don't need praise, recognition, pity, or approval from anyone else.* You may think of the Lady Gaga song, "...I live for the Applause, Applause, Applause..." Catchy song, terrible message. As humans, we love to get a pat on the back. And I am no different. As a people pleaser by nature, I had to (and still have to) work very hard to shake this attitude within myself. The struggle is real. As we grow from infants to children, adults' approval becomes more enticing to us than our favorite candy. I don't know how quickly we grow out of this stage (if we do at all). We usually need to make a conscious effort to override the system. A large part of our mindset training program is dedicated to systematically unlearning this attitude.

This is a story sent to me by one of the baseball coaches we work with:

"I recently helped with a Prep Baseball Report showcase. One of my jobs was to time 60's (60-yard dashes). One of the fastest guys at the event cost himself about 3 tenths of a second in front of several pro scouts. In all his straining and striving to impress the scouts, he got his start looking down at the ground. He didn't look up until he was about 5 steps in. It was too late. He had veered off-course by about 5 feet." Bless his heart, he was trying as hard as he could, but in his striving and straining he forgot one of the most important fundamentals of running a sprint: "keep your eyes on the target". It keeps you focused on the goal, in a rhythmic stride, and running in a straight line. In all OUR straining and striving, how often do we take our eyes off the target? When we finally look up, we find that we have veered off-course.

This situation happens all the time when athletes compete in front of college or professional scouts. Instead of being themselves and doing what they normally do, they concern themselves with wanting to look good – or with not wanting to look bad. It happens to musical artists and speech-givers and anyone else in performance situations. Too many performers think too much about looking good in front of their parents and friends, in front of their colleagues or bosses, in front of the pretty girl who came to see them compete.

Try this: make a list of all the people you are trying to impress or are afraid of disappointing. Maybe on the surface these sound like two different groups of people. But what they share in common is that they take up prime real estate in your mind when you are performing. Thoughts of looking good or looking bad draw your attention away from the very thing you should be focusing on: the performance or competition itself.

One of the college wrestlers I've coached had a strong fear of letting his parents down, specifically his dad. He acknowledged that his dad did not do anything to put pressure on him. (Lucky for him! We often see parents put heavy pressure on their kids.) Nonetheless, he was anxious because he wanted his dad to be proud of him. Similarly, I've dealt with many athletes who are known as the star athlete of their school. These athletes do not want to let their friends down. In both instances, the competitors benefitted immensely from writing down these other people that they thought about when they competed. After doing this, we encouraged the athletes to write a short paragraph explaining that they competed because they liked competing. We encouraged the athletes to speak directly to the above issue, and to put some feeling behind it. As one athlete wrote: "I don't give a crap what my dad or coaches think about me. I compete because I love the sport. This has nothing to do with other people." Now

of course it is not that the athlete does not actually care about what their coach or parent thinks. Rather, he is strategically overcompensating in the other direction, thus alleviating much of his misplaced focus. This very exercise helped lead the above-mentioned wrestler to two state titles and a successful college career.

## 2. Focusing On What Other People Are Doing

“We don’t care what other people are doing! We only care about what our people are doing.” My personal wrestling coach, Donn Ernst, used to drill this into me all the time. Donn worked with four U.S. National Teams, including the 1976 Olympic Coaching Staff that went to Montreal, so I knew that he knew what he was talking about. Donn was teaching me that I shouldn’t preoccupy myself with other people’s actions. It didn’t matter if my teammates were out late, partying and drinking before a competition. It didn’t matter what moves my opponent might try on me during a competition. Instead, I just needed to focus on myself: the way I should take care of myself before a competition, the way I wanted to wrestle during a competition. I have seen the power of self-focus many times over, with myself, my brothers, and with the countless athletes I’ve coached.

As humans, we do a poor job of being aware of things without dwelling on them. This is why scouting can be so detrimental to the performance of athletes. For every one athlete scouting has helped, it has hurt 20. Olympic Champ wrestler Tom Brands says, “be aware of it, but don’t dwell on it” [on techniques and tendencies your opponent uses]. We are great at obsessing about often counterproductive things. More wrestling matches are lost than won by knowing what moves our opponents tend to use. The reason for this is that when we dwell on our opponent’s technique or tendencies in any sport, we take our focus away from what we are trying to do. We lose concentration on our own technique and strengths. We wrongly shift the focus away from factors within our control: The Predator Mindset.

In football, defensive coordinators need to be aware of the offense they are playing against. In baseball, batters need to be aware of what pitches the opposing pitcher throws. Awareness is good, but be sure to be on the lookout for dwelling on what our opponents may do. We had an Olympic wrestler tell us that he was more physically and technically prepared for the Olympics than he was for any other competition of his life. He said his first-round loss was 90% *mental*. He had focused almost exclusively on the fact that his opponent had a good headlock. This might seem like a good strategy on the surface, but what about all the moves he had worked hard to master? It is a good thing to learn new moves or training methods or strategies from other competitors, including your opponents. But it is a mistake to make your opponents’ training habits the center of your focus.



The power of self-focus extends far beyond sports and carries over into all aspects of life. Far too many people waste their time (a commodity that can never be recovered once lost) focusing on other people's actions and gossiping about them. Stop gossiping. Resolve to fight that urge. Gossiping actually says a lot more about the gossiper's internal psychological state and confidence level than it does about the objectivity of a given situation. Plainly, we gossip because we are insecure. The same and more could be said about bullying and making fun of other people. It's a waste of time, conveys weakness, and above all, is just mean. When you get the urge to talk negatively to or about others, exercise your strength of discipline and hold your tongue. As far as concerning ourselves with other people, I am with sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer who has said, "resign your position as general manager of the universe." In other words, mind your own business. We often get so focused on other people's problems that we ignore our own. It's very important to care about other people, but we can overdo it when we become preoccupied with them.

### 3. Comparing Ourselves to Others

Think about the old "Keeping up with the Joneses" phenomena. We waste a lot of time and energy caring about our exact standing in the "pecking order." It seems to be very important for us to, "know our role." In a sports competition, we care too much about what we are ranked or seeded. We know who is supposed to win and who isn't. We like to size up the situation and size up the people we are going against in sports, in our classes, in business, and life. At a young age, parents and coaches often get this in our head. "Why can't you be a good boy like your brother?" "Who is faster, you or your friend?" "How did the rest of your class do on the test?" "What are you ranked in your class?" We are trained to think about ourselves in relation to other people. Competition seems to be built on comparing ourselves with - and outperforming - other people. It will be crucial to train ourselves out of this mindset and begin to compare ourselves only to ourselves. The competition becomes you against you. It is a battle for constant improvement. This requires a strong shift in focus. In Japan, the term *Kaizen* is a way of life dedicated to constant improvement. It is common for Japanese students to be critiqued at the end of each day of school. It becomes part of the experience. As a result, the depression associated with high critique rates associated with American students is much lower. We too want to focus on becoming better than we were yesterday. This has nothing to do with your opponent. If we win the battle against ourselves - our laziness, our weaknesses, our pride- we will very likely surpass our opponents without even thinking about them.

We often compare our rate of improvement to that of the people closest to us. This is probably why I hate losing more to my brothers than my friends, more to my

friends than strangers. Logically, shouldn't it be the reverse? In sports, we see a friend progress with greater speed and success than us and we ask ourselves, "what about me" or "why can't I be like him?" A friend may mature faster than us or have more raw talent. We tend to get discouraged upon seeing this. Why focus on it?

Beyond harming our performance in sports, comparing ourselves to other people often negatively affects our well-being. The kids these days already have it harder than past generations because of all the social media around them. We are already wrongly taught to compare ourselves to others, and then social media comes along making matters much worse. It is very easy and very human to judge our lives compared to that of our friends. Our friends often post pictures and write blurbs when times are good, or they try to appear happier and more successful than they are. Few of us are innocent of this. We like to show others how well we are doing. How many of us also have found ourselves scrolling through friends' and family's pages on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat with envy? Why does my friend have a nice car and I don't? Why are they married and I am not? Why is my family or friend not like theirs? Essentially what we do is compare our worst days to our circle of friends and family on their best days. I have seen first-hand as a school psychologist how much stress and sadness this brings to children. We compare how many friends we have, and how many likes we get, and how many people follow us. It's all Prey Mindset. As a business it might be important to think about social media, but even then, becoming preoccupied with where we are ranked on podcasts and with how many followers we have compared to other businesses is not very productive. It is far better to focus on the Predator Mindset – on factors within our control.

#### 4. Judging Others

Very frequently we waste time judging other people and their actions. It is certainly productive to *learn* from others. As the saying goes, "wise people learn from their mistakes, but the wisest people learn from others' mistakes." This is true. But it is even truer that we are often not really learning from others, we are judging them. We try to convince ourselves that we are better than them and would not have made the same mistakes as them if we were in their shoes. This is a waste of time. "You should beat the tar out of him." I still remember hearing that, as a middle-school athlete discussing with a friend how good my opponent was. Then I told my friend, who was on the other team, how he should have no trouble beating his opponent, who was on my team. Looking back, this was a poor mindset strategy for both of us. Who cares how good our opponents were? We would have used our focus more effectively by treating our opponents like anyone else we would compete against. We didn't need the low down on our opponent. Yet, we hear from many of our athletes how their parents and coaches

add a tremendous amount of stress to them by giving them a full run down on their opponents' history, tendencies, credentials, shoe size – you get the picture. Athletes and all performers spend a lot of time trying to determine just how good their opponent actually is.



# Extraneous Variables

There are many miscellaneous things we often choose to waste our precious energy on. The past, future, and even elements of the present fall under this category. Of course, it is vital to plan for the future and learn from your past mistakes. But here I would recommend Pareto's 80/20 principle: spend 80% of your time focusing on the present and only 20% of your time on the past and future. This is an incredibly difficult challenge.

We get stuck in the past. In a job search, it does not matter if you were previously turned down from five jobs. (Of course, be open to learning: you may be doing something wrong.) But do not focus on the fact that this is your sixth interview. Similarly, it does not matter if you lost your last competition or if your last grade was a D (it may have some impact on you but not on what you will do in this current performance).

We get stuck in the future. During a test we think what will happen if we get a poor grade. What will my teacher say? Will I be grounded? These are factors that could have been considered during the test to motivate you to study. But once you're taking the test, they will absolutely hurt your performance by dividing your attention and diminishing your ability to think clearly. In a tournament, we look ahead in rounds. Who might I compete against if I win or lose in this round?

Problems also arise when we focus too much on the present moment, because we focus on extra variables: our age, current lack of experience, time on the scoreboard, how many more questions are on the test, how much more time is on the clock. We bring up personal factors like age or lack of experience to self-handicap (give ourselves an excuse to lose if this should happen). Consequently, self-handicapping could lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where the exact outcome we wish to avoid is now more likely because we are expecting it, and thus we behave in a way likely to contribute to its occurrence.

How much time is left on the clock is important for coaches to know in terms of strategy. But as a competitor, you do not need more than an approximate knowledge of time. Towards the end of a competition, you begin to see athletes look up at the clock and scoreboard at a greater and greater frequency. This distracts them from the task at hand. Top athletes are excellent at scoring with short time, in part because they are not preoccupied with the clock; they just continue competing hard. I remember watching Logan Steiber win the wrestling world championships with many of his points and a few of his wins coming in the final seconds of the match! Instead of breaking his concentration and looking up at the scoreboard and clock, he continued to focus on exactly what he had been doing the whole match: getting to his offense.

# CHAPTER 2

## BUILDING THE PREDATOR MINDSET





The Predator Mindset focuses on factors within your control – which will improve your chances of achieving a desired outcome: *effort, attitude, and aggressiveness*. These are three factors directly within your control at every moment of your performance. I say “performance” because your preparation (intelligence, intensity, frequency, and duration) is largely within your control, but this book is mainly about performance. This does not for one second downplay the importance of preparation. Without proper preparation, peak performance skills and the Predator Mindset mean little. Of course, your mindset toward preparation is the start of that. Another note is that technically, aggressiveness can fall into the effort category but I willfully separate them because in performance, many people have a tendency to play it safe, leading to hesitation and ultimately underperformance. For these reasons, it’s more beneficial to have aggressiveness as its own category.

Effort, attitude, and aggressiveness are factors directly within your control. Focusing on these three factors ensures that you are making the best use of your attention. You only have so much energy. It is important to use your energy on the right things. I like to use the cell phone analogy. If you look at your cell phone, you can quickly see how much battery power it has left. It is the same thing with YOU. You only have so much physical, mental, and emotional energy. You don’t want to waste your energy on anything outside of information that will help you perform at your best.





# Effort

“Are you going to go all out, or are you going to hold back?” This is a question you can ask yourself at every moment of your life, in every situation. Your effort is completely under your control. You hear a lot of people saying they give 110%. I remember my tenth grade English teacher saying, “you can only give 100%. If you are pouring orange juice into a glass, you can only fill it to the top and then it spills over.” You can’t give more than 100%. But I think the reason people say 110% is because this is what it feels like subjectively to the person. That makes more sense. As a personal trainer, I have heard people say they sprint for a minute. Not very realistic. Top runners in the world cannot sprint for one minute straight. What the person is really saying is that they go all out - they give 100%. 100% to me does not necessarily mean the force you exert (like the sprint example). We are human, so we have limitations. A full effort means going all out, at whatever capacity is called for in the moment.

In school, full effort means paying attention to the best of your ability. In sports, at the end of practice, when your team is running suicides, you push yourself and run as fast as you can the whole time. In a wrestling match, you are trying to improve your position and score at every moment. On an exam, you take up the maximum time, and use any time remaining to double check your answers. In prayer, you push yourself to stay engaged, even when you catch your mind drifting. You continue to persevere, bringing yourself back to the present moment. Whether it is physical exertion or mental focus, full effort is not easy. In my Cognitive Psychology doctoral class, I remember learning that we only have about 50 minutes of focusing- energy in a lecture, and the same is true with studying. It is recommended you study 50 minutes on and then 50 minutes off. This cycle works much better than trying to study 4 hours straight. This lesson from my professor was particularly ironic because in the 1.5-hour class, she chose to spend the first half of class (the first 50 minutes of good focus energy) on each of the 20 students’ paper topics (not something that requires a lot of thought). We had a lively class discussion for the first half of class on hypothetical topics! The second half of class, our attention was waning. Then our professor chose to discuss this topic of focus! This not only shows that we as humans don’t always practice what we preach, but also that we have a difficult time with the application of theory.

I always loved Bruce Lee’s famous quote, “willingness is not enough, we must do, knowledge is not enough, we must apply.” When I explain this lesson on *effort* to an audience, I want to practice what I preach. I let them know that I have spoken on this topic hundreds of times and I must make the decision to go all out. It would be very

easy to go through the motions. All of us are guilty of sometimes going through the motions. I get it - we are humans, we are flawed. But we really want to push ourselves to give a full effort as often as possible. When we catch ourselves slacking, we should not beat ourselves up, rather we just remind ourselves to raise our intensity. Intensity is key. If you are not an intense person (with your effort) it is going to be very difficult to beat someone who is. That is Prey Mindset right there. It doesn't matter about beating someone else; your consequence will be failing to reach your maximum potential.

What do we do when we feel the urge to slack? In those moments, where we feel like giving less than our best- when we are tired, bored, feeling lazy, feeling weak in moments of temptation, feeling peer pressure to do something we know is unproductive, immoral, or harmful? We have several mindset exercises for this.



# Your Motivation Buttons

In the heat of the moment, we need a quick jolt of energy. We need our “motivation buttons.” We all have buttons- things that make us mad (pet peeves), sad, happy, or feel any other emotion. Step one is identifying your buttons and step two is pressing them at the right time. Many times, when people do this exercise, they identify their buttons and write down situations when they will press them – but when the moment comes, they forget to press that button. It takes practice, it takes repetition, it takes visualization.

## Identifying your Motivation Buttons.

Are there any songs, pictures, videos, quotes, or people that get you motivated? Make a list. What fires you up? When was the last time you were really motivated? Can you think of any other times you were motivated? Many people use up-beat music, inspirational Bible verses, or YouTube videos by people they respect. Do what works! We all have things that get us going. Once you have identified your buttons, you will want to plan ahead for situations where you will use them. Think about common times you might slack off- 20 minutes into studying, the very end of practice, right after lunch at work, after winning, after losing? Make a list. You can count on these situations happening again. Remember, insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If it happened before, it will likely happen again. But this time, you will be ready! Take time visualizing yourself in these weak moments and using your motivation button to plow through.

Limit the amount of television that you watch, but when you do watch TV, try to make it a point to watch things that uplift you and stimulate you to take positive actions. Avoid content that demotivates you or takes the wind out of your sails. Bruce Lee was right when he said that all knowledge begins with self-knowledge. Start paying attention (not obsessively, just take note) to how different stimuli moves you. Does this information get you more excited or less excited, angry or happy? Once you have a feel for how you respond to different stimuli, then you can judge if it is helpful or harmful. Perhaps you respond in a negative way because you have to work through a particular issue.

## Social Support

Begin to surround yourself with people who pick you up rather than put you down. This may mean making some new friends and/or spending less time with other friends. This becomes more difficult when negative people are in your family or even in

your home. You will benefit from going out of your way to join clubs, groups, and organizations with other motivated people. Use your social media for this: begin to follow, friend, and subscribe to people on social media channels who are inspiring. Just remember that social media does not replace face-to-face interactions with other motivated people. The idea is to do both. We are social creatures. No person is an island. My great grandma used to say, “show me who your friends are and I’ll show you who you are.” A more recent quote I have heard is that you are the average of your five closest friends. However you look at it, the people we surround ourselves with matter! In Richard Brodie’s book *Virus of the Mind*, he compares the transfer of information to the transfer of genetics. In the transfer of genetics, there are genes. In the transfer of information, there are memes. Genes are passed to us vertically from parent to offspring. Memes (or ideas) are passed both vertically (from our parents and other adults) as well as horizontally, from our peers. Our memes, like our genes, become a very real part of who we are. We want to make sure we catch the right memes and actively avoid negative memes. In other words, surround yourself with motivated people.

## Body Language

The fastest way to change the way you feel is to change the way you move. Think about Newton’s First Law: objects in motion stay in motion and objects at rest stay at rest. We want inertia working in our favor. One of my great heroes, Dr. Rob Gilbert, always says, “our actions change our attitudes, our motions change our emotions, and our movements change our moods.”

My wrestling team did this in college without realizing it. We would frequently have 7am lifts, which no one enjoyed. No one wanted to be there. Before and during the workout, we would joke around, yell at each other, push each other physically – all in good fun, and what do you think happened? We all started to wake up! We didn’t realize that we were activating a very powerful mindset strategy: when you *act* motivated, you begin to *feel* motivated. And this of course goes for any other emotion you want to feel. Researchers have tested people’s happiness after laughing and smiling, and found that those very behaviors actually improved their self-reported feelings of happiness. Walk around with your head down, move slowly, frown: you will feel the energy get sapped from your body.

The rule of thumb is this: *act* the way you know it would be most productive to *feel* at this moment. Here is an example: you are sitting in a boring class and you are not interested in the content. You know it would be most productive to feel very awake and interested right now. What would your body language look like if you were awake and interested? You open your eyes wide, you make eye contact with the teacher, you



lean forward, you tilt your head, bring your thumb and index finger to your chin, you nod, you take furious notes. Now that you identified the body language, you fake it till you make it. Or better yet, you fake it till you feel it!

Now do the same thing with motivation. Write it all down. What did you look like when you were most motivated? How did you walk, talk, and move? If this is hard, think of motivated people you know or have seen. How do they walk, talk, and move? How do they carry themselves? Note that this is not Prey Mindset because we are focusing on other people for a very clear purpose, which will get us closer to our goals. Take time to practice motivated body language. That may seem strange. But, you have to practice this if you want it to be there when you need it. Where will you practice this and for how long?

## Purpose

Even more important than your goal is your purpose. People do a lot of talking about goal setting. But people almost always fail to bring up the most important lesson of goal setting: your purpose is more important than your goal. In the book *Rich Dad Poor Dad*, Kiyosaki talks about the importance of entrepreneurship and makes the very important point that you cannot be in it just for the money. Yes, money is a powerful motivator. So is winning or success in any capacity. The flipside is often true too. Losing can be motivating. But far more important than the money or success, Kiyosaki identified *purpose* as one of the key factors of successful entrepreneurs. When we compete, we want to be warriors out there. History has a lot to teach us about warriors. Think of the most successful warriors: the Spartans, Samurai, Apache, Aztecs, right through today's U.S. Armed Services. What do they have in common? Two things: (1) They know what they believe, (2) They are willing to die for it.

Think about some great non-violent warriors: Martin Luther King, Gandhi, the Christian martyrs. What do they have in common? First, and this is the most important - they know what they believe. They have a shared purpose. They know who they are. They honor their creed. They live by a code. And as a result, they are willing to die for their belief. Now this may seem to have a superficial relationship to suicide. But the two couldn't be further apart. For in one case, there is no purpose, meaning, or hope and in the other, there is massive purpose, meaning, and hope.

As a society, we have sadly regressed into a relativistic approach to life where we judge people who believe in objective truth and we hold that everyone can make up their meaning since there is no *real* purpose. And then we look at the very sad prevalence of suicide and wonder why. In the depression unit of my abnormal psychology doctoral class, we learned the warning signs of suicide: IS PATH WARM:

Ideation, Substance Abuse, Purposelessness, Appetite changes, Thoughtlessness, Hopelessness, Withdrawal, Anger, Recklessness, and Mood change. Look again at Purposelessness and Hopelessness. Those are key to me. Notice some of the warning signs seem to be more causes and others are effects. At the heart of it is that a person without purpose has no hope for the future, so why take care of himself and his belongings? His mood changes, he's not hungry or he gorges himself, and slowly he wonders if life is worth it. People should take this very seriously. Who cares about reaching your peak potential if you're questioning living. And if there is no objective purpose, we are on very weak footing. Life becomes far too subjective. And subjective is not a far cry from arbitrary. We need to be solid in who we are and in what we believe. This is the cornerstone of mental toughness. It is very important to identify who you are and what you believe. A solid foundation enables you to make good decisions despite peer pressure, media pressure, and your feelings, which can be very misleading.

Most people are ruled by their feelings. We proudly proclaim that we do whatever we feel like doing and whatever makes us happy. We do this and call ourselves free. But think about freedom a little bit longer. If all you do is what you feel like doing, are you truly free? Or are you rather a slave to your emotions? When we consistently answer our urges and feelings, we can no longer separate ourselves from animals. Animals cannot make rational decisions, project themselves into the future, and delay gratification. We call ourselves progressive by saying we do whatever we want, while we've actually abolished that very factor that makes us human. In what area of life do we think it is smart strategy to be led by our feelings and emotions? If you want to do well in school, you do not only study when you feel like. You don't only train when feel like it. You must learn to have your feelings and emotions in their proper place. They are not bad in and of themselves. But they must be subservient to our goals. Pursuing our goals must be an act of *will*.



# Attitude

Are you going to be positive or negative? Positive thinking is a buzz term in our society. This is a great thing, but it also gets a little bit of a bad rap because of a misunderstanding of exactly what positive thinking is. People equate positive thinking with a soft, feel-good mentality - rainbows and sunshine and people holding hands in a circle singing Kumbaya. There's nothing wrong with any of that. It's just not what we mean by positive thinking. Positive thinking is a very hard thing to do. When you catch yourself complaining, immediately take note of three things you are thankful for. The opposite of depression is not happiness, but rather thankfulness. To put this into practice: any time you catch yourself complaining, immediately say three things you are thankful for. This is not an easy thing to do when you are having a bad day. We have all been there - you lost your match, you have 10lbs to lose before your next match, you failed a test, your parents, teachers, and coaches are coming down on you, and just when you think things couldn't get any worse, you find your girlfriend ran off and left you for the drummer. It is during these low points that we don't want to be positive. We want pity, and we want to stay angry and upset. But thinking this way only hurts us.

To fight this kind of negative thinking, name three things that you are thankful for, right away. You can name anything! *I am thankful for my family, I am thankful that it's a nice day, etc.* I remember back in graduate school when I had to write very long papers and I would remind myself that this was a good problem to have, because I was thankful to be in school. Remember, gratitude is the opposite of depression!

# Aggressiveness

Parents and coaches ask me all the time why their athlete will not compete aggressively. Why are these athletes timid and scared to pull the trigger on techniques that they execute with ease in practice? I tell them all the same thing: “when being aggressive becomes more important to you than winning, that is when you will begin to win more.” Most athletes are far too attached to the outcome of their competition - whether they won or lost. Focusing on winning and losing derails them from concentrating on what they are actually doing and on factors within their control. Athletes must first describe in detail exactly how they want to compete. This often means redefining wins and losses. They must also redefine their view on mistakes and failures. Successful people view losses and mistakes as a necessary part of the process of success.

I recommend first making an exhaustive list of all the situations you could find yourself in, and then scripting out exactly what techniques you will use if those situations should occur. Olympic champion Mark Schultz said he and his brother Dave (also an Olympic champion) did this in wrestling with much success. This is important to get clarity. Having clear goals is one of the three conditions necessary to enter “Flow.” Some athletes call this the “Zone” and scholars call it the “Ideal Peak Performance State (IPPS).” It is the feeling that you cannot miss – that time and accuracy seem to be moving at your command. All good athletes and performers know this feeling. When you compete, the idea is to be in this state as often as possible. Behavioral psychologist Dr. David Lieberman describes this “ideal state,” as he calls it:

“Your ideal state of mind is to have no ego and this is achieved by focusing on your objective. This will allow you to be unconcerned with how you are coming across and help you avoid second-guessing yourself. If you are absorbed with your objective, the “I” or the ego disappears and you can pursue your goal relentlessly. Focus only on the outcome, not on yourself.”

In addition to clear goals, immediate feedback and a balance between perceived skill and perceived challenge are necessary to enter this “Flow” state. I only want to focus on clear goals here. When I tried to apply this information to my athletes, I would tell them to have a clear goal when they competed. This was not very effective. All athletes will essentially say that their goal is to win or dominate. But this isn’t actually representative of what having a clear goal means. A clear goal means knowing what technical skill you will perform in a given situation. I’ve worked with the number 1 high school wrestler at the top team in the country, and even he struggled with clear goals.

Not that he didn't know he wanted to win! Of course, he knew that. But he had too many techniques he knew he could use, and this caused a kind of analytical paralysis in his mind. In any given situation, he would think of ten different moves to use. We talked about limiting his possibilities to the best three moves in each situation. If he still felt a delay, he would limit it to two moves and, if need be, only one. I recall some big football players who began wrestling in high school, and had greater success than some of their teammates, who had been wrestling for much longer. The experienced wrestlers knew more moves – many more, in fact. But the football players were only shown one move (a double leg takedown). They knew what they were going to do; they had a clear goal. And that clear goal made them stronger and faster athletes (without any additional weight training or speed drills)!

Clear goals make you faster because they will reduce or even eliminate your hesitation. Even a strong, fast, and knowledgeable athlete will lose speed and strength if he is not decisive. Decisiveness is the key. To be decisive, you must know exactly what you are planning to do with your technique. But there is a caveat: you do not want to break the move down to such an extent that your mind hyper-focuses on too many details; those details should already be ingrained in your muscle memory. It's good to write down all the technical aspects – and to memorize and practice them. But in a competition, you only want to give yourself short cues at very specific moments, like “hands high” or “look up!” or “move your feet!” Short, simple commands during competition work best.

Some dogs bite, other dogs don't. Even with a lot of work, aggressiveness is still a very hard attribute for some athletes to acquire. I found this after working with tens of thousands of wrestlers, and wrestling is a sport built on aggressiveness! Still, many people hold back in competition; they are too tentative, conservative, hesitant. This is one of the biggest mindset red flags I have seen. Sometimes competitors just don't pull the trigger. They don't do what they normally do. They lose their killer instinct. I initially got frustrated working with athletes because it seemed that very little of my teaching and psychological studies were helping athletes become more aggressive. I didn't know what to do. As a school psychologist, I would normally teach people how to be less aggressive. But that was the exact opposite of what I wanted to do with these athletes! And that was my eureka moment. In sports, and any other kind of performance, aggressiveness is important. We need to do something I don't know has ever been formally done: we need to work backwards. We need to reverse engineer the psychological lessons to make people more aggressive in competition. This was gonna be one heck of a journey. And that's where I found the idea of the alter ego!

# CHAPTER 3

## BUILDING THE KILLER INSTINCT



# Building Aggressiveness in Competition

This was by far the wildest thing I had ever done in my psychology career. I was embarking on a journey that could get me in a lot of trouble if taken the wrong way. My intention was never to make anyone into an immoral or aggressive person. But in the realm of competition (and more generally, performance), aggressiveness is necessary. I figured as long as I gave proper warnings that this is supposed to be domain-specific, we'll probably be ok as a business. I have taught these lessons on aggressiveness for a few years now, and have done many talks in front of many groups, and the audience seems to understand where I am going with this.

## Modeling

I became a mad scientist, pouring through my old psychology books, studying aggressiveness, ready to begin the reverse-engineering process. I also studied the ancient warriors and some of the most popular aggressive athletes. One of the first things I thought about was the classic bobo doll study in psychology on modeling behaviors: one group of children observed other children hitting a bobo doll, and another group of children observed other children playing nicely with the bobo doll. Not too surprisingly, the children who witnessed the aggressive behavior toward the doll mimicked that behavior when it was their turn to play, striking the doll themselves. The children who had observed the nice behavior were not nearly as likely to strike the doll. The lesson was behavior-modeling. Suppose you have an aggressive child who you want to make less aggressive: do not let him watch aggressive movies, play aggressive video games, etc. So, in reverse, to develop aggressiveness in competition, observe other athletes who are aggressive in competition.

## Colors

### Back in Black!

Sports studies have shown that, historically, teams that wear black get more penalties. Of course, we do not want penalties, but we do want aggressiveness. In my own competition days – though I didn't know about these studies – I always wanted black socks, black boxer briefs, and even a black superman shirt. And I wasn't alone. The Brands brothers – University of Iowa World Champion wrestlers – said that they always liked wearing the Hawkeyes Black and Gold because it made them feel

dominant. It is not by chance that our programs under Winning Mindset have black as one of its colors. (Also, black makes you look thinner and it shows less sweat!)

## Seeing Red!

In Olympic combat sports, the color assigned to competitors is either blue or red. Researchers have found that the athlete in red has won 58% of the time, which is statistically significant, more than you would expect by chance. The reason is not entirely clear. Maybe the athlete in red feels more dominant or maybe the other opponent, seeing red, gets more psyched out. Evolutionary theory shows that we are programmed to respond to the color red, perhaps because it is the color of blood – usually a bad sign if you see it. A red light means stop. Think about a businessman who wears a red tie, calling it his “power tie.” Whatever the reason, red seems to give you a competitive advantage. So, I recommend that our athletes work the colors red and/or black into their competitive wardrobe or equipment whenever possible.

## Numbing your Heart

I would consider myself more of a dog that doesn’t bite naturally. As a kid I always gave my opponent a hug after my match, whether I won or lost. I was always overly careful to not hurt my opponent. Then, after many years competing, with all the ups and downs, hard work, painful losses, bad referee calls (or so I thought), and other minor life disappointments, I began to stop feeling sorry for my opponents. I began to think, “the heck with you. I don’t care about your feelings.” But how do you expedite this process earlier in your career, without having to deal with as many painful setbacks and losses?

The Aztecs trained their warriors to become savage killers without remorse. They would have them torture and kill an animal at a young age, almost as a gateway drug to committing murder. Of course, this is a very terrible thing that should not be done. But the Aztecs did teach aggressiveness, and there has to be a way to apply this lesson in a better way. So, I began to teach my athletes to practice dominating their practice partners. In combat sports, very frequently, your practice partner is or becomes one of your best friends. It is much harder to dominate a friend, especially when you know he is having a bad practice or a tough day. I remember going into the college wrestling room for the first time. Some of my best friends on the team unapologetically kicked the crap out of me if I wasn’t wrestling well that day. They didn’t feel sorry for me when things weren’t clicking. So that’s what you need to do. In practice, when your coaches simulate live competition, you have to crush your opponent without feeling bad. Think of how many points you are looking to score, and strive to hit that number. This will force you to work hard and to get a great workout, and it will teach you to stop feeling bad



about your opponent because you will be focused on the number you want to hit, rather than on your opponent's feelings. NCAA Champ Spencer Lee said he became a world champion in high school, in part because he was honestly trying to score over 100 points on his opponents in practice. By doing this on a daily basis, he developed the attitude that would allow him to dominate top competitors around the world.

You've heard the phrase "it's only a game." That's a very important thing to remember. But while many athletes might begin their participation in sports with this attitude, they eventually start to take their sport more seriously – so seriously, sometimes, that it seems like a matter of life or death. This attitude only raises the pressure, working against them. Remind yourself that competition is only a game. Think about a video game; if you lose, you simply hit restart and try again. That is the attitude you need to carry into competition. If you make a mistake or lose, just try again.

## Buttons

We all have triggers. We all have pet peeves that really set us off. What are things that set you off to make you more aggressive? When was the last time you got aggressive? What sparked it? Again, this lesson is for competition and performance, but you may want to use something that sparked aggressiveness in life. When I teach this lesson to athletes, it is important for me to distinguish *motivational buttons* from *aggressiveness buttons*. If I want to get motivated and inspired, I might listen to the theme song of Rocky, Rudy, or Chariots of Fire. If I want to get aggressive, I might listen to louder and harder music. Motivation and aggressiveness are complementary but different. Think about the most helpful stimuli for you in the context of your sport.

## Alter Ego

I tried everything with this one wrestler I taught. He had a very clear mental block against the best competitor in the country. I did every mindset exercise I could think of to build his confidence. *Is there any area where you are better than him? Are you stronger? Are you faster? Are you more technical? More flexible?* Nothing seemed to work. Even after thinking of small competitive edges he had on his opponent, he still would say "I still don't think I can beat him." Finally, I changed gears with him, unexpectedly saying something I had never said before: "maybe you can't beat him, but your alter ego can!" Finally, there was a flicker of hope. Many athletes have a mental block like this. Hope is the first step to pulling off a miracle win. Because we get so absorbed with ourselves and our perceived limitations, we sometimes need to fire up our imagination with some creative thinking.

This is not something new. Some of the top performers and competitors do this without even realizing it. One of the most memorable 30 for 30 episodes on ESPN was

on the “Boz.” Steve Bosworth transformed himself into one of the most feared players in the NFL by using this alter ego. Deion Sanders did the same thing as “Prime Time.” Chad Johnson became “Ocho Cinco.” And almost every UFC fighter has a nickname: Chuck the “Iceman” Liddell, the “Immortal” Matt Brown, the “Notorious” Conor McGregor. Creating an alter ego allows you to create a new persona with new, empowering beliefs. This will help you accomplish more than you ever thought you could on your own. And it is not just a strategy for athletes. Look at many of the top stage performers; Eminem, for example, uses “Slim Shady.” Here is a rapper who seems kind of quiet. But he has to deal with being on stage in front of tens of thousands of people. How does he do that? An alter ego helps reduce the stress. Beyoncé on stage is “Sacha Fierce.” I was probably one of the few kids who enjoyed flipping through the World Almanac to learn random facts. One of my favorite tabs was: Original Names of Selected Entertainers. Elton John’s name at birth was Reginald Dwight. Tom Cruise was Thomas Mapother III. Marilyn Monroe was Norma Jean Mortensen. Of course, one of the reasons they created new personas was to make their names sound more hip. But I bet that the name-change also allowed them to put on a sort of armor of invincibility – to shield themselves from rejection and fear, and to perform at their best.

In the book *The Game*, the top pick-up artists in the world did this strategically. The men in this book were often shy and very scared to meet someone they were attracted to. They were instructed to mentally create a kind of alias when they went to bars or clubs, looking to meet someone. This was not done to lie or be deceptive. The point was that their alias would absorb the blow of any painful rejections. They wouldn’t be rejected; their alias might be rejected. This gave them more courage to approach women, which was otherwise a paralyzing fear.

This may all sound like make believe, but it really is powerful. We were created with vast imaginations, which we often stifle and, in many cases, throw out as we become adults. But the strategy of creating an alter ego during competitions or other performances works. It is also fun! You get to play make believe again.

King Solomon wrote “there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). And that is true for the alter ego. Name changes in the Bible symbolize a new identity or a change in a role. Abram, which means “Father,” became Abraham when he was promised to be a Father of Nations. Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, which means “he who wrestles with God” after his epic struggle with an angel. Simon was changed to Peter when he was told he would be the rock on which Christ built his Church. And Levi was changed to Matthew as he went from a tax collector to an apostle. When I made my confirmation at the age of thirteen, I had to pick a confirmation name, not really

realizing why at the time. At confirmation, one is now a “soldier for Christ” with the ability to defend the faith. The new name represents a full maturity of faith- a new identity.

A way to advance this idea of the alter ego and take it to the next level is to name your inner “wuss voice.” We all have a negative voice in our head that tells us that “we can’t” and that “we are no good.” Giving this voice a name will give you authority over it. Harvard professor Dan Gilbert has explained that, psychologically, we respond better when people are a threat to us than when the environment is a threat to us. We are highly evolved social beings. Saying “I have negative thoughts in my head” is taken far less seriously than telling yourself “there is a negative person named Soft inside my head.” This isn’t reality. But it is a useful strategy.

Next, you want to develop your alter ego and identify how it differs from your inner wimp. As discussed, both your alter ego and your inner wimp should have names. Then, you want to describe how they are different. For example, I’ll name my alter ego “Fantastical” and my inner wuss “Soft.” Then I can even create a chart:

| <b>SOFT</b>                            | <b>FANATICAL</b>                               |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Cares what others think of them        | Doesn’t give a crap what others think of them  |
| Runs from difficulty and the spotlight | Volunteers and is indifferent to the spotlight |
| Fearful of taking chances              | Accepts and actively seeks out all challenges  |
| Takes life too seriously               | Has fun and enjoys life                        |
| Hates competing                        | Competes with others                           |

When I describe the alter ego/inner wuss, I remind others that it is your choice whether you want to be the victim or the victor, the whiner or the winner, the worrier or the warrior, the goat or the G.O.A.T, and the only difference between Champ and Chump is “U.”

The next step is getting into character. You need a switch or a trigger to accomplish this. Olympic champ Mark Shultz has said that when he takes his hoodie over his head, he feels like a different person. That is his switch. In the movie *Over the Top*, Lincoln Hawk said that before arm wrestling matches, he turned his hat backwards to feel like a truck. So, the truck was his alter ego and the switch was turning his hat backwards. If you watch Tony Robbins in the documentary *I'm not your Guru*, you will see that before he gets on stage, he bounces on a trampoline, runs up steps, pumps his fist, does a twirl, and finishes with another hand gesture right before he gets on stage. If you think this is all done randomly, you'd be way off. This is how he flips his switch before getting on stage. More on the pre-performance routine later.

Let's think more about getting into character. You might consider an alteration to your hair while competing. Perhaps make it slightly shorter than usual on the top or sides: think of the Mohawk natives, the U.S. Armed services, police officers, and many athletes who dye their hair during the season. Think about people who, after a break-up, change their hair style to signal a new beginning. This does not need to be a radical change! You still want to be yourself.

If possible, you may want to cover your eyes. Some of the most aggressive football players wear visors. Think of Ray Lewis. You'll notice a lot of singers on stage wear sunglasses. Maybe it is partly for the spotlight in their face. On the other hand, maybe it's like the Adam Sandler movie *Big Daddy*. When his adopted son Julian, aka “Frankenstein,” put on his sunglasses, he felt invisible. If you have a cover for your eyes, you will feel more anonymous. And studies show that if you feel anonymous, you will do more damage. This is part of the reason soldiers wear uniforms. When you blend in, you often behave more aggressively. Think about the last time you wore a mask (perhaps for Halloween) or simply put on a pair of sunglasses. You probably felt a bit different.

FINALLY, MARK THE DATE! HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOUR ALTER EGO. YOU WANT TO MAKE YOUR COMPETITIVE PERSONA AS REAL AS POSSIBLE SO THAT YOU CAN USE IT EFFECTIVELY WHEN YOU ARE PERFORMING OR COMPETING.

# CHAPTER 4

## PART II: TOP MINDSET LESSONS



Now you will begin to TRAIN YOUR BRAIN! These mindset exercises give you the mental training necessary to succeed in Wrestling and all areas of life. Please be sure to complete all of them. One of the biggest mistakes in mindset training is stopping at reading. Remember the learning retention rates:

| <b>TEACHING METHODS</b> | <b>AVERAGE RETENTION RATES</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lecture                 | 5%                             |
| Reading                 | 10%                            |
| Audio Visual            | 20%                            |
| Demonstration           | 30%                            |
| Group Discussion        | 50%                            |
| Practice                | 75%                            |
| Teaching Others         | 90%                            |

If you stop at reading, you will likely only retain around 10% of the information. This is because reading is a more or less passive process. We encourage more active modes of learning. The mindset exercises represent practice, which improves retention to 75%! We encourage all our athletes to take it to the next level and teach the lesson to someone after they learn it (spiking your retention to 90%!). We encourage you to do the same. Each lesson will help you build a different, “mental muscle” transforming you into the total package! When you complete these lessons or if you are having a hard time completing them, please be sure to reach out to us about redeeming your free trial 1-1 mindset session that you are entitled to from purchasing this book!

**Call us now at: 1-800-215-3179**



# LESSON 1: Understanding Yourself

**Objective:** to notice the thoughts and feelings you have when you wrestle at your best & worst.

Olympians and Professional Athletes always talk about one word when it comes to performance- Consistency. You cannot have consistent performances without consistent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Here, we will determine differences in your thoughts and feelings before & during (not after) your best and worst performances. The next step is to identify the common themes/patterns between your best matches compared to the themes and patterns of your worst matches. You will likely notice a completely different thought process.

Note- This exercise works best if you dig deeper than surface level. Keep asking yourself “what exactly was I thinking” and “why exactly did I have those thoughts.”

## COMMON THOUGHT PATTERNS

| BEST MATCHES                                             | WORST MATCHES                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| MY moves                                                 | OPPONENTS moves (what might they to do me?)        |
| Treat all opponents the same                             | Over/under estimate an opponent                    |
| Consistent intensity                                     | Up and Down Intensity                              |
| No special matches                                       | This is a “big” OR “small” match                   |
| I’m going to make him tired                              | What if I get tired this match?                    |
| I don’t care what anyone thinks of me/Wrestle for myself | Thinking about letting own parents/coaches/friends |
| It’s just live wrestling/I have nothing to lose          | Significance of this match                         |
| I don’t care who is in front of me                       | What’s he ranked/his record/who has he wrestled    |
| This is a new match                                      | What happened the last time we wrestled            |

**Bible Quotes:** Mt 6:33, Mt 16:26 (foundations)

# Best Matches

Thoughts/Feelings before & during (detailed & specific) & **1-10 energy level (10 highest energy)**

Match 1

Match 2

Match 3

Common Themes/Patterns & optimal energy level

# Worst Matches

Thoughts/Feelings before & during (detailed & specific) & **1-10 energy level (10 highest energy)**

Match 1

Match 2

Match 3

Common Themes/Patterns & optimal energy level:

# LESSON 2: Focusing on Controllables

**Objective: to determine action qualities to focus on in matches**

Wins/losses are deceiving. Often, we win but wrestle poorly. Other times we lose, but wrestle well. DON'T judge performance based on outcome (wins/losses) like most people. Judge performance by *how well you compete*. **Go through this every match!**

## MATCH EVALUATION

### Before Match

| WARM-UP                                                                      | YES | NO |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Good warm-up physically                                                      |     |    |
| All Pre-Match elements: Dynamic Stretch, Fun element, Deep Breaths, Drilling |     |    |

### During Match

|                                                  | YES | NO |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| NEUTRAL                                          |     |    |
| Took the 1 <sup>st</sup> Shot (draw first blood) |     |    |
| Moving forward all match                         |     |    |
| Aggressive- several full shot attempts           |     |    |
| Your tie or No tie                               |     |    |
| TOP                                              |     |    |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> move every time                  |     |    |
| Aggressive- Looking to turn/pin, not just ride   |     |    |
| Mat returns attempted when opponent stands       |     |    |
| BOTTOM                                           |     |    |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> move every time                  |     |    |
| Constant movement to get out                     |     |    |
| Finished no periods on bottom                    |     |    |

### Overall

| EFFORT                                                                       | YES | NO |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Never Quit                                                                   |     |    |
| Worked hard during match (not lazy: no hands-on knees, no standing straight) |     |    |
| Wrestled hard by out of bounds & end of periods                              |     |    |
| ATTITUDE                                                                     |     |    |
| Great body language- positive- Up beat (bounce in step; pop in attacks)      |     |    |
| Composure- stayed calm; no arguing with ref, looking for a call              |     |    |
| Not "clock watching" or "keeping score"                                      |     |    |

Go through everything & circle your 3 biggest areas to improve & review with coach

Bible Quote: Rev 3:16 (all in, not half-hearted)



# LESSON 3: Dealing with Adversity

**Objective: to pre-plan how you will refocus during adversity**

Several adverse conditions will be stated and you will pre-plan how you will refocus- the thoughts you will think and emotions you will feel to overcome distractions. In parentheses are my answers. You can use mine or come up with answers that work better for you personally. You will also write 2 adversity scenarios that you would like to better deal with, and how you will refocus.

**Exercise: Go through these scenarios. Have 1 Reset Button (Physical Gesture) & know exactly what you will say to yourself in each situation.**

**Your 1 Reset Button:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(i.e. Head nod, deep breath, clap, head shake, hands shake)

|                                                                                                                                                   |  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>If the Referee makes a bad call:</b><br>([1 deep breath] Just keep going, I don't expect calls to go my way, I'll get the next one)            |  |
| <b>If the crowd is loud and/or negative:</b><br>(just keep going, who cares about them, I play for myself [head shake])                           |  |
| <b>If I make a mistake:</b><br>([quick head shake] let it go, get the next one)                                                                   |  |
| <b>If my opponent does something really good/scores on me</b><br>([quick head nods & smile] my turn now)                                          |  |
| <b>If my opponent does something dirty:</b><br>(Beat them on the scoreboard)                                                                      |  |
| <b>If my opponent starts/continues taunting/mouthing</b><br>(Get creative, find a way)                                                            |  |
| <b>If I lose or play badly in a match/tournament</b><br>(Bounce back, get the next best thing, put all bad thoughts in an imaginary "black box.") |  |
| <b>Getting scored on first</b><br>(plenty of time; get it back)                                                                                   |  |
| <b>You have a lead late in the match</b><br>(get one more; keep scoring)                                                                          |  |

Go through everything & circle your 3 biggest areas to improve & review with coach.

**Bible Quote: Pr 24:10**



# LESSON 4: Build the Predator Mindset

## Objective: to develop the PREDATOR Mindset

The animal kingdom is made up of predator animals and prey animals. To succeed in wrestling and life, you must have the mindset of a predator. Predator animals have eyes that are located in the front of their head. This is because they are focused on what is in front of them- solely on their objective. Think of lions, tigers, bears, and even humans. Yes, you are a natural born predator! Prey animals have their eyes on the sides of their head. Prey animals need to see almost entirely around them to avoid being eaten. Think of chipmunks, rabbits, and squirrels. Predator wrestlers are focused on what THEY are going to do, their technique, etc. Prey wrestlers are focused on the things going on around them- preoccupied with who their audience is, what other people think about them, etc. It is easy to see that there are many ways to think like a Prey, but only a few ways to think like a Predator. Predator's vision is much narrower and specific. Remember, you can tell if a snake is poisonous if you see vertical pupils instead of rounded. This of course is for laser focus on their mission/victims.

### Exercise 1: List your most common “Prey thoughts” and change them to new and EMPOWERING Predator thoughts in Sports, School, and Life

## Wrestling

[illegible]

## School

COMMON PREY THOUGHTS

NEW PREDATOR THOUGHTS

## Life

COMMON PREY THOUGHTS

NEW PREDATOR THOUGHTS

**Bible Quote:** Mt 14:22-23

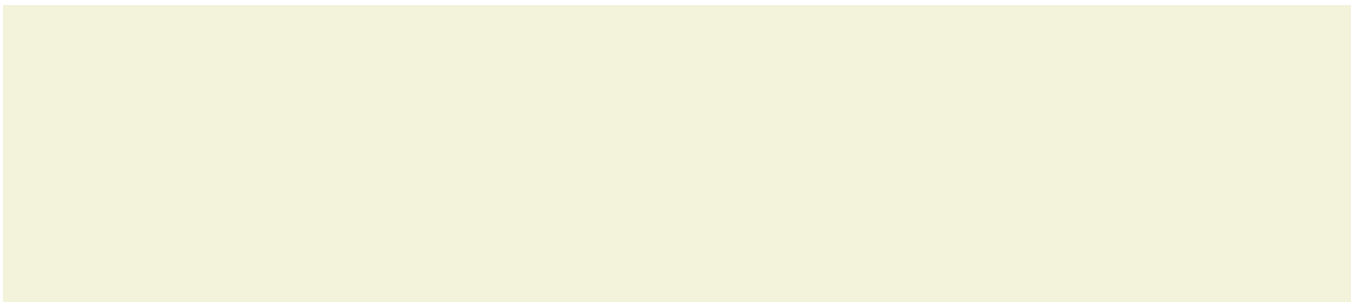
# LESSON 4: Ditching the Fan Mentality

**Objective: to stay in the present moment by avoiding the “hype” & “fan mentality”.**

As an athlete, you cannot approach the sport as a fan. Fans get involved in “the hype”- the importance of the competition, streaks, wins, losses, box scores, slumps, records, predictions, rankings, and stories of individuals. Fans spend countless hours gathering information about their sport on television, listening to radio, reading articles on the internet, participating in forums, debates, gambling, etc. The “fan mentality” and “the hype” pull athletes far from the present moment.

**Exercise: Identify “fan mentality” and “hype” that you engage in. Strong examples include: checking the rankings frequently, checking opponents box scores, reading forums, spending excessive time looking at brackets, watching too many of your opponents’ matches. Writing down the fan mentality within yourself and hype you get involved in, will give you a good idea what you will avoid.**

**Fan mentality and hype you frequently engage in:**



It is important to know how you will deal with circumstances when other people begin to talk about the hype in front of you. Sometimes you can walk away, but other times it's right in your face.

**Exercise 2: Identify people and situations that bring about the fan mentality and hype and how you will respond to seeing newspaper articles, interview questions, and people around you talking about records, rankings, and predictions in front of you.**

---

Hype around you

How you'll respond

---

---

**Bible Quote:** Gal 1:10



# LESSON 5: Competing for Yourself

**Objective: to stay in the present moment by committing to wrestle for yourself**

When you think about letting other people down, it becomes difficult to focus on the task at hand. Any sign of potential mistake or loss could cause your mind to drift away from productive actions for you to take in this present moment. Become honest with yourself with anyone you are afraid of letting down. Often, this means our parents, families, coaches, teammates, & friends. The fear of letting other people down is a strong negative motivator. Fear of letting others down causes us to become afraid of going for moves, making more attempts, and taking chances. All these attitudes are necessary to compete at your best. Also, fear of letting others down often causes us to engage in behaviors that make us “look good” instead of behaviors that actually make us good like running away from challenges and difficult competition.

**Exercise 1: Write down the people you afraid of letting down:**

You will find wrestling and competition much more enjoyable if you compete for yourself, and not for the praise, recognition, or pity of others. Having more fun competing will translate to greater success.

**Exercise 2: You will write a strong statement that you will wrestle for yourself and not fear of other’s reactions or expectations. (A strong example would be, “I wrestle for myself! I don’t give a crap what anyone thinks of me! I don’t have to prove anything to anyone in this world. I compete for myself and because I love the sport. It’s none of my business what other people think of me.”)**

**Your “wrestle for yourself” statement:**

**Bible Quote: 1Th 2:4**

# LESSON 7: Overcoming Negativity

**Objective: to overcome negative thinking & complaining with positivity & gratitude**

Negativity kills performance in every area of life. Excessive negativity & complaining is a primary contributor to stress, which can literally kill you (over time). As humans, we catch ourselves complaining on a regular basis. Complaining is easy to do and is usually lazy thinking. Instead of shutting our mind down, we want to wake it up. We wake up our minds being positive thinkers- specifically with an attitude of gratitude. The opposite of depression is not happiness, but thankfulness. When we are thankful for something, we are implicitly acknowledging that we have or will have something. You cannot be thankful for something you do not have or will not have. A great way to train yourself into being a positive thinker is to practice gratitude. When you catch yourself complaining about something, force yourself to name at least 3 positives/things you're grateful for in that situation i.e. "it's a gloomy day outside" -> I'm thankful for my family, I am thankful for my health, I'm going to get a lot of work done today so I can enjoy nice days in the future.

**Exercise 1: You will write down your 3 biggest complaints and then name 3 positives/things you're thankful for in these situations.**

| Biggest Complaints | Positives (3) |
|--------------------|---------------|
|                    |               |

**Exercise 2: Fill the back of this page with everything you are thankful for.**



# LESSON 8: Automatic Thoughts

**Objective: to stay in the moment by changing your relationship to your thoughts**

Many times, we get caught in the middle of a civil war in our brain when we “fight our thoughts.” The internal thought war is like a downward negative stress cycle often going like this- We have a negative thought, we fight it, the thought fights back, we fight back the thought that fought back, and the stress continues to escalate. A different way to approach our thinking is through mindfulness. We must understand that we all have automatic negative thoughts, doubts, and feelings of stress. It is very natural. Where we often go wrong, is we take our automatic thoughts (and ourselves in general) too seriously. We do not have to choose to take automatic thoughts negative. Automatic thoughts happen to everyone, we want to let them gently pass by us and dismiss them. We do this successfully with scary dreams and movies. We don’t take them too seriously. We get scared and then realize- “it was just a dream/movie.” We experience it, then dismiss it. This is why dreams and movies rarely bother us after the fact. We realize they are NOT reality. The same can be said about our automatic thoughts. In the same way, we can choose to dismiss our negative automatic thoughts after they are experienced.

**Step 1: Notice your automatic thought**

**Step 2: *Discern* whether your thought is positive/helpful/predator OR negative/hurtful/prey**

**Step 3: *Dismiss* (gently & calmly) negative automatic thoughts like a bad movie/dream; and direct your thoughts toward a positive thought/predator mindset**

Our negative automatic thoughts are usually not random. We tend to have regular patterns that we run. In other words, we probably consistently have the same automatic thoughts. A sense of humor goes a long way in not taking ourselves and our negative automatic thoughts too seriously. Use humor to your advantage.

**Exercise: Write negative automatic thoughts you often have & write how you will Notice, Discern, & Dismiss them to break the downward spiral.**

| Typical Automatic Negative Thought | What you'll tell yourself to gently & calmly dismiss the thought<br>(Remember to use your sense of humor) |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                    |                                                                                                           |

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# LESSON 9: Redefining Nervousness

## Objective: to redefine feelings of nervousness

When we feel under threat, our sympathetic nervous system is activated. The sympathetic nervous system has also been described as “fight or flight” mode. Your brain is telling your body, “we need to run away or prepare for battle.” Adrenaline is produced to protect our body, which feels as if it is under threat. Our heart rate increases to improve lung action for breathing. Blood rushes to protect our vital organs, so our hands may become cold. Some athletes interpret these physical signs as fear, nerves, anxiety, or stress. It is important to remember that these interpretations are subjective/arbitrary labels of our response. Many of the best athletes have a much more effective label for these physical signs/emotions: motivated, energetic, spirited, adrenaline, mo-jo, extra strength, etc. Notice, the same exact feelings and physical signs are labeled differently. Mike Tyson’s trainer Cus D’ Amato used to say, “the hero and the coward feel the exact same emotions. The difference is how they act after experiencing the feelings.” Remember, you control the label you put on these feelings/physical signs. Why not interpret reality in your favor?

**Exercise 1: You will write your current interpretation of the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) response and create a new, more effective/empowering interpretation**

| Current Interpretation of SNS | New Interpretation of SNS |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
|                               |                           |

# LESSON 10: Practicing Competition

**Objective: to become relaxed in competitions by making practice conditions as similar as possible**

A big reason wrestlers find it difficult to relax before and during competitions is that they view competition as something “special.” Remember that everything is important, but nothing is special. Often, when someone makes a particular match “special,” performance suffers. The idea is to make live wrestling- live wrestling. You do not want your mind to distinguish practice and matches. There should be no “big” or “small” matches. It is all live wrestling. One way to keep live wrestling as consistent as possible is to create similar circumstances. If you must wrestle live in matches with a singlet and headgear, then do the same in practice. Have a friend or coach referee and time a match with your practice partner after practice. Make conditions in practice as similar to a match.

Also, make match conditions similar to practice conditions. You can do this by doing some hard drilling or hand fighting shortly before a match. Think about it, in practice you drill for a long time before you go live. Before you wrestle matches, there is often a lot of bouncing around without any human contact for a long time. This is completely unlike a practice.

**Exercise: You will make practices similar to matches and you will, make matches similar to practice.**

| Ways you'll make practice similar to a match | How you'll make matches similar to practice |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
|                                              |                                             |

**Bible Quote: Mt 6:25-34**