



Carrie Maldonado

Mindset for Consultants

Create a Champion Mindset
Within Yourself and Your Clients

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Congratulations! If you're reading this, it means you're ready to start investing in yourself and your consulting skills. I'm confident that you will find this book a highly valuable resource in your journey, and I'm excited for you!

First, a bit of background.

Applied Behavioral Sciences have been of immense benefit for the last forty years. Primarily evolved as a tool for managing various health conditions, several noteworthy scientists began to explore whether the techniques they were using clinically could be of value elsewhere.

These scientists and clinicians asked whether the basic principles of learning and motivation, could be applied to influence and shape work performance within companies and organizations. The answer was yes, and how!

I was mentored directly by Dr. Anderson, a pioneer in Organizational Behavior Management, for six years after obtaining my psychology degree from the University of British Columbia and together we applied OBM in multiple organizations across Canada and the United States, until his passing in 2003.

Since then, I have continued to study organizational change, leadership and coaching. One thing that never changes about organizations is that at their heart, it's all about the people, and people are surprisingly simple in all our delightful complexities.

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Although OBM remains my ‘secret sauce’ for effecting massive and sustainable organizational change, I realized that it’s missing a key component necessary to achieve breakthrough change, and that’s mindset.

We can look back to Social Psychologists of the past starting with Dr. Albert Bandura to learn the key components for individual change – self-efficacy.

Believing a goal to be attainable by anyone, and by oneself in particular is a necessary requirement for goal accomplishment. Beliefs and mindset create our concepts of ourselves and our abilities. The bad news is these are hardwired into our brains at an early age. The great news is this can be overwritten!

New discoveries into cognitive psychology and neuroplasticity have enabled clinicians and coaches worldwide to help people reprogram their minds for success, goal achievement, and (perhaps most importantly) happiness!

I’m thrilled to share this information with you and hope you are able to use it as your prepare to start your consulting adventure. When you are ready to take the step of launching your own business, consider scheduling a breakthrough session with me to see if the New to Consulting Program is a good fit for your business. You can schedule here: <https://go.oncehub.com/NewtoConsulting>.

Here’s to your success!

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Close your eyes and imagine this.

You're a competitive athlete and this is it, the semi-finals. The winning team goes on to the championship, and the losers go home. Your team is up next; and Coach steps forward. "Okay guys, we've gotta do this. Are you with me?"

"YES!" You and your teammates shout, and give each other high fives.

"Melinda!" (that's you). "Yeah, Coach"? "We've been through this a bunch of times. We've reviewed your training videos. What's your weakness?"

He's right, you have been through this. Just thinking about it makes your stomach clench, but you answer anyway. "Inside left. Don't choke. Watch the pitcher. Don't let her fake me out." You know the answer, just like you know how many times you've failed in the past. This time, there's no room for error, no room for failure.

"Don't let us down, kid. You can do it."

You want to believe him. You don't want to let anyone down. This game is the most important one of the season. No matter what, you can't choke.

You choke.

First inning, and sure enough the pitcher throws a hard one inside left, and you strike out. You cringe, because you know what's coming.

"What were you thinking?" Coach yells. "We've been through this, Melinda. You've got to focus. FOCUS!"

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You're focusing all right. You're focusing on how bad you've screwed up, and how important it is you not lose the game for your team. You're focusing on all the hours you've spent practicing, all the things you've given up, how much this game means to your parents. What were you thinking? Don't choke. Don't choke. Don't choke.

Your team loses. You go home. You think about what a failure you are, and how much you hate playing ball and how much you used to love it. You wonder what else you're going to fail at, and why you just can't get it.

You're thirteen

Wow. There's a lot going on in this story. We have a coach doing what a lot of coaches do: trying to motivate the team, make sure the players are aware of their weaknesses so they can overcome them, and win the game. And like a lot of coaches with the best of intentions, Melinda's coach said and did all the right things to make sure Melinda not only failed in this game, but was set up to fail far into the future. And not just in softball, but in many areas of life.

Coaches, parents, leaders, and consultants; we all play a pivotal role in the lives of the people we're leading and unfortunately, it's not our intentions that count. It's what we say and what we do that has lasting impact on hearts and minds and can provide a springboard to victory after victory, confidence, and success, or can doom our charges to a life of mediocrity, dissatisfaction, guilt, and failure. The fact that you're here means you want the former.

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So what does that look like? I want everyone to think about the best leader they've ever had. Or the best team they've ever been on. Without knowing any of the details, I bet I can describe it for you. Your team and you faced an incredibly tough challenge; one you couldn't have conquered alone. Your leader recognized in each of you your greatest strength and pulled that out of you so you could contribute your highest and best in support of the mission. You, your team, and your leader had each other's backs, and you knew you were better as a result of being on this team. During your time with the team you felt like you could do anything, and you didn't mind the sacrifices that were necessary because the experience of working together to hit a goal was so powerful.

As a consultant or entrepreneur, you can be *that* leader, and you can give that team experience to the teams you work with. The purpose of this book is to teach you a system of coaching, tools, and exercises that will empower you to lead yourself as well as an organization to its highest and best performance. I've curated the best and most current research from sports psychologists, physics, leadership, beliefs, behavior, cognitive, positive, and social psychology, learning, and goal-setting, and have combined it into a premier personal development program. This course is designed to elevate your leadership to a new level, and to provide you the information you need and how to apply it to elicit the highest and best performance from yourself and from your clients.

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As a coach or consultant, you are first and foremost a leader, so we're going to start with some leadership fundamentals. We'll teach you to define and describe your 'Why', your purpose, and to cast a vision for yourself or your clients that will do more than motivate, it will inspire. We'll talk about the role of values, and why values are so important to a business, and we'll introduce the concept of flow, or being 'In the Zone'. This framework will allow you to build cohesive teams, with a unity of purpose that will allow everyone to work together in pursuit of a goal, to support one another, to embrace positive accountability, and to ultimately remember their time on this team as a defining moment in their lives.

As a consultant, you're often entrusted to help each employee (and work team) discover and perform to their own personal best; to develop their character, and to achieve goals. The goal of this book is to teach you that the ultimate determinant of our success or failure in any endeavor is our system of beliefs, and how what we believe about ourselves shape our behaviors and our performance in every area of our life. We'll learn how beliefs are formed, and the difference between limiting and empowering beliefs. You'll learn about scotomas (blind spots) and their role in limiting our potential.

From there, we'll talk about techniques, solutions, and approaches you can use to help people retrain their brains to be open and receptive to supportive and empowering beliefs. We'll review critical concepts such as mindset, mental toughness, and grit, and their role in shaping positive beliefs. By the end of our

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session, you'll understand how self-talk, optimism, body language, and pressure directly impact performance. You'll also learn how to overcome performance blockers and comfort zones, how to readjust your self-regulation to your advantage, and how to utilize effective breathing and visualization to reach new levels.

So let's get started.

PURPOSE

When we think of inspirational, world-changing leaders, men like William Wallace (Braveheart), Abraham Lincoln, Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr may come to mind, and rightfully so. Each of these figures established a place in history because of their ability to inspire others and thus make a lasting difference in the world. While much can be accomplished with a goal and a lot of determination, it's a compelling vision, and a strong purpose, or 'why' that transforms us, and leaves a legacy.

Consider Terrance Stanley Fox. Terry was born in a small town in Western Canada and from his early days, he showed talent for athletics. In university he excelled in long distance running and basketball. Although an accomplished athlete, there was nothing about Terry that indicated he would change the world. And then, when he was only 19 years old, Terry was diagnosed with a bone cancer, and his right leg was amputated. During his darkest hour, a purpose was

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birthed in Terry. He could let his circumstances take him down, or he could channel it to a greater purpose.

Terry chose the latter, and from that moment on, it became his mission to bring awareness to the disease of cancer, and to show people with physical disabilities that anything was possible. Against all odds, Terry began the Marathon of Hope in 1980 to spread awareness. He ran for 143 days and to date over \$650 million has been raised in his name. Terry Fox became a symbol of hope for over 60 nations, and showed the world that limits are only in our mind. Terry Fox had a big ‘why’ – to eliminate the disease that cost him his leg and ultimately his life, and when your why is big, you can overcome any obstacles.

START WITH WHY – Simon Sinek

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPYeClXpxw>

Simon Sinek, a prominent thought leader, and the author of the book *Start with Why* explain that your Why, or your purpose is what people really care about. For example, suppose you launch your consulting business. You can talk all day to your clients about your consulting process, the tools you use, and your coaching model, and it’s all true and valuable. But your clients won’t be moved by that as much as they will be by a defined why. They’ll hit their revenue goals! They’ll stop wasting time and money on unnecessary turnover! They won’t be afraid at the end of every month that they didn’t make a profit! These are the whys.

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We all have why's, but the difference between the high performers and everyone else is that high performers are dialed in and playing for their why.

What is your why as a consultant? What compels you to take on this role? If you were coaching at your highest and best level, what would the outcome be? Why would it matter?

Your clients have a why? What is the purpose of their company? Why do they want to hit \$50 million (or 100 million)? Why does it matter to them if they expand into a new market? What is the impact on the employees and the community of this company? Defining these are well worth your time and your clients' time, because these are the things you'll turn to when times get tough.

VISION

Why is tied closely to vision. One you are connected with your purpose, the vision is a mental picture of what it will look like when the why is accomplished. So in the Terry Fox example, the vision is a world where cancer is eradicated, and people enjoy long and healthy lives. In the example of your consulting business, the vision is a business where operations are running smoothly, employees are happy, and the business is a vibrant contributor to the community.

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So how do you create a vision for yourself or your clients? Start with some questions: What does success mean to you? If your business is successful, what does that look like? Moreover, how does it feel? What does it look like when you or your clients are functioning at their highest level? When that happens, what will the impact be on the team members, on you, and on the community?

Why are purpose and vision so important?

There are a couple reasons why it's so important to have a solid understanding of your purpose and vision. First, it's what you use to draw people to you and to inspire them. No one is going to sign up for consulting when the big pitch is "well, it can't hurt," or "you might not actually perform better, but it will be really interesting". Not compelling. No, you want people excited about working with you, and your client wants people to be excited about working for them. You want to plant a seed right from the beginning of victory and of possibility. That's your job as a leader. But it's not enough to plant the seed, you need to nurture it.

Consider farming. You start with these tiny seeds, a bunch of dirt, and no small amount of bull...manure. Not unlike a brand new organization, I might point out. You plant it, water it, wait for the sun, hopefully remember to keep watering it, and eventually you'll have a tree, or a vegetable, or something. So what's the purpose? The end result – the fruit, or vegetable, or mature plant. The point of the process isn't the actions required to make it happen, it's the fruit.

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If you've ever grown anything, you'll know that in perfect conditions it's pretty easy. It's not exactly magic, but great conditions take a lot less effort than hardship. What about when there's a storm? You have to go out there and make sure the little plants are protected from the wind and the rain. Sometimes there's a drought, and you have to spend a lot of time watering them so they don't dry up and die. Sometimes you won't feel like it. Maybe you're sick of watering plants, or keeping them dry, or what have you. It's during those hard times that the purpose is so important.

The same is true of your coaching or leadership. There are going to be times when it's easy; when your team members are eager, and willing to apply what you're teaching them, and when they're winning. There will be other times when it's not easy. Loss after loss, sneaky competitors rebellious attitudes. All these are the storms that you and the team will weather, and it's during these time that you have to remember your why. The what and the how are hard to see in a storm, but you can always navigate by the why, and reach your destination.

As a leader, you keep your team inspired, by painting a crystal clear picture of the vision. What will it look like when you achieve your purpose? What will you see, taste, smell, hear, and feel? How will it impact your team members, their families, the community, and the people who look up to them. The more clearly they can imagine it, the more strongly they'll hold onto it when conditions get tough.

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VALUES

The last important facets of leadership are values and character. These are key component of your why. There are probably not too many organizations whose why is “win at any cost”, and for good reason. Consider the movie Rudy, based on the life of Rudy Ruettiger, a young man in the 60’s whose dream in life was to play football for Notre Dame. Rudy has to overcome incredible obstacles, including dyslexia, poverty, and physical limitations to pursue his goal. It’s clear that our hero is never going to make the pros, but we love him for his grit, his tenacity, and his perseverance. He’s a loyal friend, and he doesn’t quit. These are the character traits and values that make a hero.

Imagine if Rudy, fearing he’ll never get to play and frustrated at being overlooked, hid in the bleachers and proceeded to leap out and disable player after player by smashing their kneecaps with a baseball bat. Would we applaud Rudy for finally achieving his goal at playing for his team? Not unless we’re former figure skating would-be’s with questionable character. Your purpose and vision are your why, and your values are your how. Your values dictate HOW you will achieve your goals. Every company has its own unique set of values, but some include: Integrity, honesty, fair play, honor, bravery, equality, humor. A great coach clarifies the values, and will not compromise. We can all think of a famous person team that got caught cheating (twice). Diehard fans can try to defend dishonorable tactics, but a victory without values ceases to be a victory.

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As a consultant, you have the delicate job of helping an organization build a culture based on the company's values. You may certainly bring influence to bear, but ultimately, the values must become part of the team culture. To preserve the culture, an organization must live its values. Companies need to make hard decisions based on the values. For example, if integrity is one of your values, there's no way you can keep your best salesperson if they have behaved unethically with a client or vendor – no matter what the impact is on your company. On the flip side, if you've been living these values all along, hopefully it will never come to that because the star salesperson will internalize these values and believe themselves to be a person of integrity and act accordingly.

What are your values? What are one or two behaviors associated with these values?

FLOW

We've talked about how important vision and purpose are to a strong organization, so next we'll transition into individual performance. This is one of the most researched subjects in multiple disciplines, because every significant human accomplishment requires people to operate at their highest and best level of performance.

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Think about something you love doing, and that you're really good at. It will be something different for everyone. Swimming, playing a musical instrument, running, being outdoors, carpentry, writing, computer programming. Now imagine that you have a whole day to do nothing but what you're best at. You can wake up at your leisure, have your breakfast, and start doing whatever it is you do. Just soak in the emotions of that experience. What would it be like? I bet a few words come to mind.

- *Peaceful*
- *Joyful*
- *Exciting*
- *Rewarding*
- *Amazing*
- *Productive*

For some of you, this might be a bittersweet exercise if you rarely get a chance to indulge in your passions. Think about what this might mean in your life.

When you're using your gifts to their fullest potential in pursuit of a higher purpose, with clear goals, it feels amazing. There's nothing like it. We call this being "In the Zone", or "in Flow". This term was named by a leading positive psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, and refers to the state where someone is engaged in an activity and experiences a feeling of enjoyment, energized focus, and full involvement. People in flow report feeling fully absorbed in their activity

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to the sense that they lose track of everything else. Studies continue to show that peak performance is a result of being in flow.

There are three characteristics required to be in flow:

- There must be clear goals and progress associated with the activity. This is the purpose and vision.
- There must be a good balance between the perceived challenge and one's perceived skills. This is where all of our work in beliefs, mindset, mental toughness, self-talk, and optimism comes in.
- There must be clear and immediate feedback so that the person can adjust to changing demands and adjust performance to maintain the flow state. This is related to self-regulation, goal setting, and comfort zones.

So as a consultant, if we want to bring out the best in ourselves or our clients, and help them get the most satisfaction and fulfillment possible from their performance, we need to provide clear and consistent purpose and vision, ensure their perception of their skills (and their skills) are aligned with the challenge, and provide mechanisms for them to receive feedback, and give themselves feedback, that support improvement.

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THE SECRET TO RECORD-BREAKING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE

Let's take a poll: What do you think is the single most important factor in achieving record-breaking performance?

Contrary to what you might have been told or sold, your performance will never exceed what you believe it to be. This can be a hard fact to wrap your brain around, because most of us find it very hard to differentiate between beliefs and facts. The thing is, whether something is true or not, if you believe it to be true, it will be true for you. You are hardwired to regulate your performance to be in alignment with your beliefs. What's more, this happens at the subconscious level.

It's our beliefs – more specifically, it's our subconscious beliefs – that determine everything!

Once you believe, deep down, consciously and subconsciously, that you can do something, every cell, every neuron, and every muscle will work together, often without your will, permission, or effort, to bring this about. This is true whether you believe you will succeed or fail.

This is not new information! When Henry Ford said “Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right” he was not inventing a new concept. We see examples throughout history, and even in the Bible, that reinforce the truth that your experience is determined by your beliefs. The thing that so many of us get

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wrong is thinking that it's simply a matter of perception...that our reality won't change, but we can adjust our emotional reaction to our level of success or failure.

To the contrary, our beliefs determine whether we fail or not, and our attitude determines how we respond.

Everything else we'll be doing in this course is centered around beliefs. First we'll talk about how beliefs affect our body, our biochemistry, and our behavior. Once you understand how important beliefs are, we'll talk about how beliefs are formed, and how we can ensure we're fostering empowering beliefs.

In 1968, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, a public school teacher named Jane Elliot conducted an experiment that proves how powerfully our beliefs impact our performance. Elliot divided her class by eye color, and told the class that blue-eyed kids were better than brown-eyed ones. She segregated them at recess, and at the drinking fountain, and gave longer recesses to the blue-eyed children.

Within fifteen minutes, a class system had broken out, and the blue-eyed children were actively trying to oppress the brown-eyed ones. The next day Elliott turned the tables and made the brown-eyed kids the superior ones and the same thing happened. And while this has important implications for race relations and societal constructs, listen to what happened to the performance of the kids. On the

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first day, the blue-eyed children, who had been told they were the better kids, completed a phonics card back in only 3 minutes, while the ‘inferior’, brown-eyed children took more than five -and-a-half minutes!

The next day the kids were tested again. This time, the brown-eyed children, who were deemed ‘superior’, completed the test in two-and-a-half minutes. You would expect the score to be better the next day, just from having taken the test, right? Then explain how the now-inferior blue-eyed group got worse – and took four minutes and eighteen seconds!

These astounding performance differences happened after only one day of being told one was superior or inferior. Imagine what a season or lifetime of beliefs could do to performance!

As a coach, mentor, parent, or leader, you need to continuously set the stage for the development of empowering beliefs. This is not something you can start doing when the pressure’s on and you need to turn things around. Instead, you must foster a mindset of growth, mental toughness, grit, and optimism so that under intense pressure and adverse conditions, you simply need to re-ignite the positive beliefs, and then let biology, behavior, and biochemistry kick in. It presents like magic, but once you know the science behind it, you’ll see that it’s not magic at all, and you’ll be able to use this to instill confidence, high-performance, and self-esteem in those following your guidance for years, if not decades, to come.

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To better understand the impact of beliefs, it's helpful to have a basic understanding of the components of our brain. This subject has been studied for as long as humanity began and thanks to advances in physics, quantum physics, and biology, we now have a clearer understanding than ever about the workings into that fascinating realm.

Before we dive into it, let's have another story.

Alex was a very bright and talented business owner, who from a very young age showed an affinity for innovative engineering. His parents were Russian immigrants, who grew up in a period where children with exceptional ability were frequently recruited in to state-sponsored schools, where they often suffered severe physical and emotional abuse. Alex's father had been forced into a government engineering position, and his experience there was a driving force behind his defection to the US in the mid-eighties.

Although Alex consciously is working towards success as an entrepreneur, he has internalized his father's subconscious fear that exceptional accomplishment will lead to dangerous and painful consequences. Alex works hard, and wants to win, but every time he comes close something happens; whether he mishandles an important meeting, comes down with a cold, or simply shuts down. Alex doesn't know it, but his subconscious programming is dictating his performance, and is constantly overriding his conscious desire to win at business.

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YOUR BRAIN 101

Our minds are amazing and complex creations. To use computer terminology, there are two systems at play. We have our subconscious, which is our operating system, and which is constantly running in the background. Our subconscious has an amazingly high capacity, and operates at the speed of light – literally. The job of this processor is to take in all of the information about our surroundings and ensure our survival.

We are not aware of any of this taking place. Think of the subconscious as our ‘animal’ brains. A lion or tiger in the wilderness performs countless actions necessary for survival, but even the most ardent animal lover cannot conceive of a lion thinking of itself by a particular name, wondering what its friends are thinking about it, and planning what to have for dinner. The subconscious is always in the present, ensuring survival, and filtering out anything not necessary for survival.

The conscious mind, on the other hand, is a higher order processor, that operates much more slowly. This is the software that we are running. The thoughts that we are aware of are our conscious thoughts, and they are transmitted chemically through neurotransmitters. If someone were to throw a baseball at your face at 90 miles an hour (hopefully they won’t, but you get the idea) your subconscious would blink and send fear chemicals coursing through your body long before the thought “I’d better duck” went through your head.

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Our subconscious controls what we notice, how we respond to it physiologically, and our conscious tells us what we think and how we feel about that. A great way to understand this is to look at the phenomenon of hypnotism. When someone is effectively hypnotized, their subconscious minds are given instructions about how things are. This determines what they see and how their bodies respond, and cognitively we experience this.

For example, if you tell someone who is effectively hypnotized that they're in the North Pole, they will feel cold, they'll get goose bumps, and they will tell you that they're cold. This has nothing to do with the temperature of the room and everything to do with what their subconscious believes. Note that the flow of events is first the subconscious believes something, then the physiological responses occur, and finally our cognitive processes (thinking) kicks in. This is how it works regardless of what the subconscious belief is. If we believe that we play outstandingly well or outstandingly bad, this is what will occur.

Have you ever driven on a familiar road while singing along to a song you love or chatting to a friend, and realized that several minutes have passed that you were completely unaware of the actions of driving? Sometimes we'll even find ourselves driving a familiar route instead of the one we should have taken because we were so distracted. This is an example of how the conscious and subconscious mind can operate together completely independently. Your conscious mind is focusing on the conversation, or the song, while your subconscious takes the wheel.

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Fortunately for you, and everyone else on the road, your subconscious is able to do this, and you didn't careen into oncoming traffic.

Beliefs are held subconsciously. Although we can think positive thoughts consciously, if our subconscious has a negative belief about us, then our behavior and thoughts will fall into accordance with that belief. Our subconscious is far more effective at regulating our behavior than our conscious is because it's working all the time, at the speed of light. A key concept to remember is that your subconscious is neutral as it relates to 'you' and that it is based on 'beliefs'. This is important because you can believe something that is not true and you can also believe something very negative about yourself. Not all of your subconscious beliefs about yourself work to serve you. In fact, many times it is just the opposite, and that is where the problem can come in.

Where we get into a pickle is when our subconscious holds beliefs we're not aware of, that are in opposition to our conscious goals.

The key to developing your potential and functioning at your highest level is functioning to what's actually possible, and not to your own limitations. In great performers, these are one and the same, but for many of us, the limit we place on ourselves are far more constricting than any actual limits. Once we have accepted

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these limits, they become truth for us, and the way our brains work is to continually ensure reality aligns with our understanding of truth.

We are flooded with stimuli constantly, and if we were to consciously try to evaluate it all and make decisions accordingly, we'd go insane – literally. To prevent this, our minds help us by filtering information for us based on what we need to know. And what do we need to know? The things which we have been told are important – by others or by ourselves. Processing data this way is extremely efficient. Until it's not. The problem is that we develop blind spots, where we just don't see things if we're not looking for them. This is good if we're listening to a speaker's voice in a crowded presentation, but very bad if we're looking for new ideas or ways of solving a problem.

In order to perform at our highest and best level, we often need to access data that is not relevant to us at our current/normal state but is relevant at our desired state. As long as we are operating in our blind spots, based on our limiting beliefs, we will remain oblivious to the cues and data we need.

Suppose you have started working with a new client. Your conscious mind is on board and ready to go. Your subconscious, however, does not believe that you are the type of person who can successfully bring solutions to companies. Or maybe the employees of your client don't believe they're the type of people who consistently succeed.

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Whenever there is a conflict between the conscious and subconscious, our minds will resolve that conflict by either adapting our beliefs or adapting our behaviors. We are efficient creatures, so our minds always choose the path of least resistance for which is, you guessed it, our behavior. So if you 'decide' you're going to acquire 3 new high value clients, but your subconscious 'knows' you're 'no good at sales', guess how many clients you're signing on?

How did limiting beliefs get in there?

There are multiple ways we acquire beliefs. The most common are:

- We experience something
- People we trust tell us something
- We read something
- We imagine something
- **Negative self-talk**

We don't tend to concern ourselves overly much about how affirming, supportive beliefs entered our subconscious (although we should, and we'll get to that later), but when we believe something negative about ourselves or our performance, then it becomes a big problem very quickly.

Negative beliefs may have been formed by one significant negative experience, by something we read, or by something someone we loved and trusted told us. It's difficult to tell what birthed a negative belief in our subconscious, but we know

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what keeps them there – negative self-talk. Negative self-talk is the running dialogue of things we tell ourselves about ourselves. Often we're not aware of it

or of how destructive it is, but becoming aware of your self-talk is vital to changing your beliefs.

If you make a mistake, do you tell yourself you made a mistake or that you ARE a mistake? If you win, do you tell yourself it's because your hard work paid off, or because you're lucky? Your self-talk cements your subconscious beliefs.

Here are some examples of positive and negative self-talk

	After Positive Occurrence	After Negative Occurrence
Positive Self Talk	My hard work paid off I knew something good was going to happen I can repeat this Good things are ahead	I'll have to try harder next time I know what I can do different I did the best I could This won't happen again Good things are ahead
Negative Self Talk	That was just luck Now something bad is sure to happen I'll never be able to repeat this Bad things are ahead	It's all my fault I'm just not cut out for this I'll never succeed This is always going to happen Bad things are ahead

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Self-Talk Exercise

Set a time to go off every 30 minutes. When the timer rings, record what you were thinking at that moment. Do this for three days to reveal whether your self-talk is supporting or undermining your efforts.

Do you need to change your mind?

If you've identified that you consistently engage in negative self-talk, or if your performance is below what you'd like it to be and the technical ability is there, then you likely need to reprogram your subconscious. Your performance is always exactly how your subconscious thinks it should be. This is not meant to antagonize you or blame you if you don't like where your performance is today. Rather, this should give you hope. If things are not how you want them, this means you have a dysfunctional subconscious program operating, and your trick is to find it and reprogram it.

Coaches and Leaders: The singular most important thing for you to know about performance and the key to unlocking the potential of every individual you work with is that each person is currently operating to the level their subconscious believes them capable of. Sometimes this is a good thing. Sometimes more technical training is required to elevate performance, but all too often we apply

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technical training to a subconscious problem. To quote Bruce Lipton, author of *The Biology of Belief*, that's like kicking a jukebox and expecting to change the playlist! Not gonna happen! To be a life-transforming consultant, you need to learn how to reprogram the operating systems!

COMFORT ZONES AND THE PHENOMENON OF 'FINE'

Have you ever run into an old friend that you haven't seen in a while? Maybe you reconnected with them on social media, or happened to see them at a sports game? The first thing one of you probably said was 'How's life?' And the answer was probably something like 'fine', 'good', 'doing alright'. Possibly 'great', with little elaboration. The truth is, unless we're in the middle of a severe hardship, we tend to label our life as fine.

Did you know there's a scientific reason for fine? Fine means not so bad that any action is required of us to change our circumstances (which is not bad in and of itself). Fine also means not so great as to require one or more exclamation points. Fine is the opposite of extraordinary. Believe it or not, we are wired for fine, and not for extraordinary.

Imagine yourself living thousands of years ago. Your name is Og, and you live in a small tribe occupying the plains of the Serengeti. Life is not easy for you, Og. You and your tribe must hunt and gather every day to survive, and there's always a sabre tooth tiger or wooly mammoth ready to eat or stomp you respectively. You

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and your tribe have learned that it's safest to stick together to avoid being eaten, stomped, or starving to death. You don't spend much time wondering if there's more to life than you've got because you're too busy surviving the life you have. In

your life, Og, to stand out means death. The very act of separating from your tribe, standing out, or deviating from your script creates a wave of chemicals in your body signaling extreme danger, and allowing you to engage in whatever action are necessary to ensure your survival.

Fast forward until today, and despite the advances made in medicine, technology, and agriculture, we are still Og-wired for fine. Our brains and bodies will fight the extraordinary to the death because to our subconscious brains and our bodies, it really is a matter of life and death to maintain status quo.

What does this mean for you? First, it means you can stop beating yourself up for not being able to change or maintain change. You're fighting upstream against a lot of biology. Your mind will always fight to stay fine. What we can do is help your mind accept a new level of fine that's where you want it to be, not where it is now. That's how the magic happens.

Most of us have seen the TV show the Biggest Loser. Whether we loved or hated the contestants, we followed their journey as they sweated on live TV to reverse years of abuse, food addiction and a sedentary lifestyle. Some of the stories were

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heartbreaking, and we genuinely wanted these people to achieve their goals. And they did, and we were happy for them. It wasn't until recently that we started seeing the stories pop up of what happened next. Nearly all of the contestants not only gained all the weight back, but some of them ended up even heavier than when they started.

We could chalk this up to metabolic disorder, or the inherent evil of Jillian Michaels and Trainer Bob, if this phenomenon were isolated to weight, but it's not. The Biggest Loser is an extreme example, but if you've ever tried to lose weight you've probably noticed an interesting phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'Set Points'. The idea is that you have a 'natural weight' a number that try as you might, you'll never truly deviate from. If you get too far above this weight, you'll be able to relatively easily get back to it. Conversely, if you lose much weight you'll also rebound. This is great if your Set Point is also your goal weight, frustrating as all get out if it's not.

The reality is it's not a point, but a range. You have a range of performance that is in accordance with your subconscious belief about what is true for you. The common term for this is a **comfort zone**, and we stay firmly within the boundaries of our comfort zone in all areas of our life.

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What about all the lottery winners who are right back to where they started after a year? Or people who get a promotion beyond their wildest dreams, who manage to sabotage it before they break into their comfy new chair? Or the tragic children of abusive parents, who end up abusing their own children or marrying abusers? On the other side, there are the people who seem to be ridiculously lucky in life. They almost supernaturally discern the latest trends, start businesses at just the right time, marry well, and have pleasant children who never seem to throw temper tantrums in the middle of the Target (okay, nobody's that lucky, but you get the idea).

There are too many examples of this to chalk it up to a bunch of random laws or coincidences. The truth is, paradoxically, more simple, and more complicated. Your subconscious ALWAYS regulates your performance to what it believes to be true about you, and it happens without your permission! No matter what you may consciously desire, if it's not in alignment with what you think you should have, then your own mind will work against you.

The process is neutral regarding what is actually good or desirable for you. If you have less than your subconscious thinks you should then you will regulate up, and if you have more then you will regulate down. Think of your subconscious as a thermostat, with a range of 'acceptable'; above and below which you may not go. Our lives, as they are right now, are at their Set Point, and our brains will use our

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neurotransmitters, chemistry, rational processes, and unconscious reaction – basically all the tools at its disposal to keep us right there.

The trick to high performance is tricking your subconscious to change the setting on the thermostat, elevating your comfort zone to a new level. If your batting average comfort zone has been .200 - .275, you'll stay there. But, if you can convince your subconscious that your comfort zone is .250 - .300 guess what? That's where you'll be. You understand by now that it's not just a matter of thinking positively, though. You have to get that information past the conscious through to the subconscious for it to take root and change your behavior.

How do you change the range?

Scientists agree that in order to achieve a change in behavior, two things must occur. **First, you must believe that the change in your behavior will lead to a desired outcome, and second, you must believe yourself capable of engaging in the behaviors.** After that, your subconscious and conscious will work together to achieve your new normal. Simple, no? So why haven't you changed?

Let's look again at the two requirements for change:

You need to believe that the change in behavior will lead to a desired outcome.

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Let's look at your consulting for an example. Suppose your goal is to sign on five new clients, and you believe that in order to do this, you need to reach out to 20 new companies to talk about what problems you solve. In order for you to change (reach out to more prospects), you must first believe that this will lead to your goal.

There are different ways for you to acquire this belief. You may have observed other consultants reaching out to prospects and closing deals. This is called vicarious learning. Or, you may be told by an expert that hits leads to wins. This is called verbal persuasion. Best yet, you might started conversations with potential clients and converted them to actual clients. This is performance achievement. The actual, hands on experience of the result after the behavior is the strongest reinforcer, but the main point is that you believe the behavior will bring the result. (Bandura).

As a consultant, you sometimes need to teach companies the behaviors that will lead to the outcome. These are the fundamentals of the game (the what's) as well as the how's. These are necessary for success, but not sufficient.

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Self-Efficacy

The second part is making sure you or your clients believe they're capable of successfully engaging in the behavior. This is called the *expectation of self-efficacy*, and this is really what lies at the core of everything we're going to teach you next. ***Self-Efficacy is the degree to which you believe you are capable of a behavior, and it is one of the most important keys to all growth and change.***

Albert Bandura was one of the pioneers of self-efficacy and social psychology in the sixties. He defined self-efficacy as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situation or at accomplishing a specific task. Social cognitive theory postulates that our self-concepts are learned through observation and attribution, and our self-efficacy is determined by factors such as:

- Our perception of whether events are within or outside of our control
- Whether we attribute our success and failure to stable or changing circumstances
- Whether we view causes as internal or external

Individuals tend to take on tasks where self-efficacy is high and avoid them where it is low. As coaches, it's important to understand that people with high self-efficacy tend to see obstacles as challenges to be overcome, but people with low self-efficacy tend to avoid obstacles, and to react unpredictably when they encounter them.

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Increasing self-efficacy

Clearly, it is important to increase one's self-efficacy in order to improve performance and benefit from training and practice. Bandura recommended 4 steps to increase self-efficacy:

1 – Experience, or active attainment. Successfully mastering a task leads to greater self-efficacy. This can't be understated. Simply telling people they are great does not improve performance, but giving people a chance to practice and master skills increases self-efficacy. Give people opportunities to rise, and they will.

As a consultant, what can you do to allow yourself or your clients to successfully master tasks?

2 – Modeling – When we see someone else succeeding, we are more likely to believe that we, too can succeed. The more people identify with someone's improvement and victory, the more their own self-efficacy will grow.

How can you use modeling to increase your clients' self-efficacy?

3 – Social Persuasion – This refers to encouragement from another person. Bandura noted that discouraging another person lowers self-efficacy more than encouraging raises it, so be careful about applying 'negative peer pressure', as it is likely to backfire.

How will you use social persuasion to increase the self-efficacy of your clients?

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4 – Physiological Factors – Physical symptoms of stress tend to be interpreted by people with low self-efficacy as a sign of lack of ability and pending failure.

People with high-self efficacy interpret stress as normal and unrelated to ability.

Remember when you or your clients experience stress, that this to doesn't mean anything is wrong, or that their ability will be affected.

How can you help your clients understand the physical symptoms of stress and relabel them?

As a coach or consultant, you must equip your players to increase their self-efficacy because here's the ugly truth...if you don't believe you can change something, you aren't likely to try, and you won't get the change (Bandura). In other words, if your subconscious only believes you are capable of so much, then rightly or wrongly, you will not do better. Not because you are not able, but because you won't even try.

Most of sports coaching takes place in this arena, and for good reason. Players need to master the technical fundamentals of their game. Drills and practices are necessary for the acquisition of skill, and you likely already use techniques like modeling, encouragement, and physical repetition to instill these skills.

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Simulations

Simulations are important components of mastery and self-efficacy, and also are part and parcel of the visualization required to succeed. Simulations in consulting take the form of role play, or dry runs. The value of simulations is that they place people in as close a situation as possible to the actual one. This allows them to apply their technical skill, experience the stress and pressure (although not at quite the same level) and to get a clear picture of what they will go through during a game, so they can visualize their victory. Simulations allow you, the consultant, the opportunity to help reframe setbacks, adjust to stress, and to go through similar situations so that they are more comfortable when they are actually in the moment.

Redefining possible

Have you ever had an experience where you did not know you were incapable of something and so you did it, only to find out after the fact that you ‘should not’ have been able to accomplish it?

Ussain Bolt

The study of sports performance has revealed a phenomenon that hopefully won't surprise you by now, and that's that our concept of what is possible is not static, but that we have an expectation, or a belief, about what is possible, and 99% of athletes perform to that expectation. Then, occasionally an exceptional athlete will enter the scene and exceed that expectation. This is what happened in 2009 when Ussain Bolt set the record for the 100 meter sprint at 9.58 seconds. When

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this happens, the floodgates open and we see people breaking the former record regularly. Did all of a sudden, athletes become better...or did proof of the impossible becoming possible expand the windows of the collective subconscious?

CREATING POSITIVE, EMPOWERING BELIEFS

Your subconscious basically believes what it is told, and how you talk to the subconscious is through words, pictures, and symbols. **We can use symbols and imagination to create new and better alternatives for ourselves.** Scientific research has revealed that when the brain is operating at a certain wavelength, we are much more easily able to take in information. **We also know that you can through visualization, repetition, emotional attachment and time create impressions in the subconscious** (Bandura, Seligman).

Neuroplasticity is the scientific term for the development of pathways in the human brains, which are developed as a result of your daily interactions, neural processes, emotions, and behavior.

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Visualization

As we've mentioned, visualization plays a critical part in reprogramming your subconscious and creating new beliefs. If you can't picture it, you can't become it. Almost every professional athlete will tell you that they spend a significant amount of time visualizing the game ahead and how they will play it. Seeing yourself in a position of success is as important to getting there as physically practicing.

Visualization is critical in rewiring our brains for success. Because of the neuroplasticity, and our ability to learn symbolically, going through hypothetical challenges and solving them creates new pathways to success we can employ in real situations. It's part of the reason why practice games are more effective than drills, and why simulations are used in military and tactical training. Putting ourselves in as close as possible to the actual situation will allow our brains and biological responses to acquire the necessary responses.

Telling your subconscious what to believe

This is far more than just 'thinking positive' – think of it as weight lifting for the brain. By building the 'success pathways', you're allowing yourself to perform at your highest level. When you've completed your affirmations, you should review them daily, several times a day preferably. It's important to see the achievements in your mind's eye and feel the emotions you are anticipating. The best times of

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day for your affirmations are right before bed and first thing in the morning, because that's when your brain is most open to developing new pathways. Reprogramming the subconscious is simple, and once you have done this, you will not need to exert massive amounts of conscious thinking and willpower to create change in your life. Here are the steps

- 1) Your 'Ideal' outcome – what is it?
- 2) Why do you want this outcome?
- 3) What is at stake if you don't get this outcome?
- 4) What is at stake if you do get this outcome?
- 5) Imagine this ideal outcome, incorporating as many of the five senses as you can. Create a visual image.
- 6) Evoke an emotion of what it will feel like when you achieve this outcome
- 7) Create a new belief about the outcome. It's very important that the new belief be:
 - a. Present tense
 - b. Positive focused
 - c. Believable
 - d. Action oriented
 - e. Emotional
 - f. Results-focused (what, not how)
 - g. Specific
 - h. Personal (I statements)
 - i. You should avoid comparisons, or publicizing these.

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One of the most important things you can do with yourself and your clients is to reprogram your/their subconscious to believe in your/their strength, victory, ability to overcome obstacles, and the other values of the organization.

The big takeaway from this section is that the conscious can become subconscious. What we initially need to exert so much effort for can become habit. We can use words and symbols to learn and experience vicariously. We can reprogram our subconscious and once we do we will stop working against ourselves. We will stop wanting to do one thing but doing another. We'll stop making short term changes.

Optimism

Optimism, a mental attitude that things will turn out for the best, is strongly correlated with self-efficacy. Like the folks with high self-efficacy, optimists also tend to assume that positive performance is a result of a stable, internal quality and negative performance is a result of a temporary, external quality. It's important to focus on optimism with yourself and your clients so that no one gets hung up on setbacks and lose their focus. Like all the other components of high performance, optimism should not second nature by the time you 'need' it.

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Optimists can get a bad rap from pessimists (who prefer to call themselves realists, have you noticed?). People practicing an optimistic attitude will often be accused of being naïve, unrealistic, foolish, and not aware of the direness of the situation. As a coach, it is not your job to ensure that your team understands just how slim their chances are, how narrow their chance of victory, and how statistically small their chance of winning.

As we've shown again and again, belief is the strongest determinant of success, so if you're continually finding it a challenge to believe in a victory, maybe it's your subconscious that needs expanding, and not your team's expectation that needs lowering.

The fear of raising one's hopes

Many times anti-optimists will cite their reluctance to adopt an optimistic point of view to the fact that they don't want to get their hopes up. You may be one of these people, or you may be working with one. These people feel that by keeping their expectations low they are reducing their chances of being disappointed if things don't go their way. There is a vulnerability associated with admitting one's hopes and dreams that many, if not most, people actively avoid because of the pain and perceived humiliation associated with failing.

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What anti-optimists fail to take into account is that setbacks and failures are an inevitable part of any life where challenges are being undertaken. Keeping your excitement and hope low doesn't avoid any pitfalls, or even dull their negative effect. Rather, it simply reduces the overall positivity quotient available to you overall. No one ever died from being disappointed, but people frequently die from lack of hope.

GOAL-SETTING

As a coach or leader, you probably already know that goal-setting is a major component of success. There has been a lot of good information produced about how to set effective goals, but to really get the most out of goals, it's helpful to understand why they work. The function of a good goal is to create a gap between where you are and where you want to be, as well as the path to get there. The whole purpose of a goal is to create discomfort in your mind by forcing a realization that what you have and what you want are not the same thing. Your mind hates discomfort, so when this happens the first instinct will be to reduce your want (commonly known as settling). If you are insistent, consciously, about what you want, then the only other option is to get it. Voila!

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Limitation of traditional goal-setting

Goals, therefore, are the bridge between your new beliefs about yourself and your current level of performance. Where a lot of people fall short in goal-work is failing to take the subconscious into account, even if they do some work around it. For example, they define their goal (vision), and what they would like to be true, and create visualizations and affirmations around it. The problem is that they then construct goals from where they are now to where they want to be. This is better than nothing but is not how one achieves breakthroughs.

Building breakthroughs into your goalsetting process

A far more effective goal-setting technique is to get intimately acquired with the vision of where you want to be. Do the visualization exercises to imagine exactly what it will be like when you've achieved the vision. See it, hear it, smell it, taste it, touch it. Imagine your team, or your workplace after the goal has been achieved. Imagine how your finances, relationships, team, work are all affected by achieving the vision. Once you have this vision set, you then work backwards. If you know what you want in a year, what has to have happened in six months, three months, tomorrow to make this come true?

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If you don't know, or there's no clear path, then it means a breakthrough is needed. If that's what has to happen to end the discomfort of not being where you want to be, rest assured your subconscious WILL make a breakthrough happen for you! Approach goals this way, allows your subconscious to achieve breakthroughs you otherwise can't achieve working from point A to point B.

After you've engineered your goals, you can use some best practices from the applied sciences to make sure you're reinforcing progress towards goals effectively. Using the principles of behavioral psychology can help you make sure you set up goals and consequences to reinforce skill acquisition and mastery.

Very simply, behavioral psychology tells us:

- Behaviors that have a desirable consequence are repeated
- Behaviors that have an undesirable consequence are extinguished
- Behaviors with no consequences are slowly extinguished

The literature is full of details about contingency, reinforcement schedules, and types of reinforcers, and more recent drive and motivation theory has added some complexity by suggesting that internal reinforcers may carry more weight with some tasks than external. For example, if you reward someone with a point that they can exchange for goods of some sort for every widget they produce in a factory, they will produce more widgets.

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However, this reinforcement process can actually inhibit other types of behaviors such as ‘creativity’. For example, if you give artists a token for every piece of art they create it actually inhibits their output. Some have argued that this proves behavioral reinforcement doesn’t work for ‘higher level’ processes. A better explanation is that what is considered a ‘desirable’ consequence is simply more variable than originally presumed. Coaches already know this intuitively. Some players love nothing more than to be publicly recognized for their performance, while others do much better with private congratulations. Good coaches are master detectives at uncovering what types of reinforcement is most desirable for each individual.

When it comes to changing behavior, *a desirable result will serve as the consequence for your continuing the behavior. If you experience the expected positive result from your behavior change (or the result is even better than you expected) your behavior is likely to continue.* If the result does not meet your expectation, your behavior change will not continue!

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Expectation is a big deal when it comes to reinforcing behaviors. You may have heard the saying ‘an unmet expectations equals a frustration’. As a coach, you need to be very careful about creating expectations. Once you provide a consequence for a behavior, after three consecutive times that consequence becomes an expectation. If that consequence doesn’t occur after the behavior, then it becomes a negative experience...even if the consequence was something you considered a ‘bonus’.

For example, suppose you add a bonus group coaching session after a leadership workshop as a value-add. If this is unexpected, it is perceived as excellent value. However, if you provide this ‘bonus’ three consecutive times, it will forever be considered an entitlement, and failing to provide it will be perceived as a huge negative. There truly is no good deed being unpunished!

Another way you need to manage expectations as a change agent is by focusing on behaviors, not results. You certainly want each person you work with to have very lofty beliefs about what they can do, and you also want them to understand the link between practice and result. What you don’t want to do is create a fixed mindset that practicing X amount of times will yield Y results in Z days.

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This type of thinking can result in a failure mindset, discouragement, and giving up, if the improvement doesn't take place within the expected timeframe.

Here's how you can use this as a consultant

You have a company that has been very lax in setting expectations, providing training, and feedback. They like what you have to say about managing performance and agree to work with you. You start with your first intervention and train an employee group. Performance goes up a little bit, but not to where the client wants it. The client is unwilling to tell the employees they've improved because they don't want anyone to get the idea that performance is at an acceptable level.

What could you say to appropriately manage expectations and improve performance?

Rewarding progress while managing expectations

The key to effectively rewarding progress is to be very clear about what you expect as the end goal as well as the mini-goals to get there. Be explicit that you will be temporarily reinforcing progress as a way to get over a particular hurdle, and try to avoid consecutive reinforcement towards the mini-goal. A random, sporadic reinforcement is most effective here. (This is why slot machines are so addictive...you just don't know when you're going to get a reward, so you don't want to 'quit' just in case the reward is right around the corner!).

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The biggest mistake you can set as a coach is to position goals in such a way as to impose new limits on yourself or your clients. Remember the thermostat! Most of the time when people hit goals, if they don't regress then they stop improving.

This is because their subconscious has accepted a new limit. As a coach, you want to be continuously challenging your clients to redefine acceptable limits. If you've been a coach for any length of time, you've probably noticed a goal-fatigue phenomenon. There is a tendency for effort to dramatically increase as proximity to a goal approaches, and then drop off as soon as the goal is achieved. This is why people seem to 'regress' after a big win. To combat this, you should have short term and longer term goals so that every victory is not THE win, it's a step to the bigger end.

You do this through Mindset.

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MINDSET

What happens when you fail?

As we've discussed, we perform to the level our subconscious believes we can perform to. High performing individuals believe they are high performing, and the same for low performing individuals. But skill acquisition and refinement is part of the equation. Have you worked with (or been) someone who seemed to ride almost exclusively on past success to the extent they seemed unwilling or even unable to improve?

We are quick to label these people as arrogant, or prima donnas, but the reality is these players are likely suffering from a fixed mindset.

Carol Dweck detailed growth versus fixed mindsets in her blockbuster book *Mindset, the New Psychology of Success* (first published in 2006). Dweck, a psychology researcher, found that individuals with a fixed mindset tended to view traits such as intelligence or athletic ability as innate and relatively unchangeable. Phrases such as born athlete, or born leader underscore this mindset. People with a growth mindset, on the other hand, view traits as changeable.

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Why this is important is what happens when people with growth and fixed mindsets encounter a challenge. For the people with fixed mindsets, failure is unthinkable. It creates unbearable cognitive dissonance (if I'm naturally talented, and I fail, then maybe I'm not talented) to such a degree that often challenges are simply avoided rather than risk ruining one's self-image. Even worse, people with a fixed mindset often feel like practicing and effort mean they're not talented. People with a growth mindset, on the other hand, view failure as part of learning. They see skills as being acquired, and failure as an important part of the acquisition process.

Coaches, parents, and educators do well to avoid labels and instead focus on growth qualities such as effort, perseverance, and sportsmanship.

As far as our subconscious is concerned, failure is a useful feedback mechanism...*unless we dwell on it* (Maltz).

Our subconscious is fine with us failing as long as we assure it that failing is part of the success process. As soon as we tell our subconscious that failing means we are failures – BOOM – it becomes true. Developing a growth mindset is the single most important thing a coach can do to ensure setbacks truly are just opportunities for growth. This can be tough if you have a fixed mindset yourself, but even if you don't, you need to be intentional about avoiding fixed mindset traps.

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As a consultant, you must be on the lookout for:

- Indicating that talent is something one is born with or isn't
- Expecting things to come easily because of talent
- Avoiding feedback or challenges that threaten one's identity as 'talented'
- Underachievement and avoidance of accountability

All these are symptoms of a fixed mindset and will derail performance and improvement.

Techniques to instill growth mindsets

- Avoid praising talent and instead focus on perseverance and trying new approaches
- Use different coaching strategies with different players
- Teach the value of developing ability
- View setbacks as natural outcomes of the learning process – not an indictment of ability
- Learn from feedback

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So to recap, in order to change you must:

- Have an outcome(or something you want)
- Believe that a behavior will get you to your goal
- Believe that you CAN engage in the behavior (Self Efficacy)
- Experience positive results from your behavior (including rewards and celebration)
- Continue with the behavior

We highly recommend reviewing the concepts of mindset with your clients as one of the first things you do and focus on these during every interaction. The more you can implant into people's subconscious the idea that they are getting better all the time, continuing to improve, and approaching maximum performance, the less likely they are to be derailed by a setback or a bad day. You want to prepare them mentally to overcome challenges, not become panicked.

MENTAL TOUGHNESS / GRIT

Mental Toughness and Grit (and the relationship between the two) are relatively recent constructs that have surfaced in the past few years to explain why some people are able to overcome significant obstacles on the road to success when others do not. The phenomenon of mental toughness is considered to result from seeing challenge as an opportunity, having high levels of confidence, being able to stick to a task (commitment), and believing you control your destiny.

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Grit is similar, and refers to the ability to remain passionate about a goal, and persevere despite the obstacles.

The key takeaway is that both the qualities refer to the ability to face and overcome obstacles while under real or perceived pressure. Most coaches will tell you that this is the game-changer. How many times have we seen someone suffer a setback during a game and turn into a completely different player? Maintaining composure and shaking off mistakes is probably THE defining difference between champions and hobbyists.

By now, you probably have an understanding of what needs to occur in order for people to exhibit grit or mental toughness under fire, but let's review:

- Their goal must be to function at their highest and best level, for a compelling reason
- They must have acquired the skills necessary for great performance
- They must believe that they are capable of great performance
- They must have a growth versus a fixed mindset, so that they don't define themselves by their mistakes or successes, but by their ability to improve
- They must have developed the neural hardwiring to experience a setback and immediately engage in constructive thoughts and behaviors rather than dwell on the mistake and what it says about them

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You'll notice that all of these things have been established well before the trial under fire. In fact, if they're not already in place, no motivational talk will be able to help an athlete who's in full on choke mode recover. Grit and mental toughness are the results of these systems kicking in and overriding the choke.

PRESSURE

We've all known people who can perform under pressure and people who fall apart. Why? When the stakes are lower, we find ourselves functioning much better. Why are you able to comfortably skip across a two by four that is resting on the ground, but wouldn't consider doing the same when it's twenty feet up in the air, let alone fifty? Through the years, humans have developed many processes designed to help us avoid death. But the things that keep us safe are also the things that keep us from achieving at our highest level.

The issue comes down to the chemicals released in our brain when we experience fear. Fear is a very important emotion that keeps us from being killed, eaten, or drummed out of our tribe, and therefore ensures our survival. The problem is that our brains don't differentiate between fear of dying horribly with fear of losing an account to a competitor.

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The same flood of neurochemicals occur in each, and the physiological responses are the same, and although those responses are appropriate for helping us run away from sabre tooth tigers, they do not lend themselves well for decision-making, fine motor control, balance, and precision.

Have you ever noticed a tendency to resort to the familiar when you are under pressure? It's common to hear about people stress-eating, or relapsing back into drug or alcohol addiction due to stress and pressure. This is because those behaviors are deeply ingrained as our comfort zones, and even if we're in the process of developing new, more supportive comfort zones, pressure can override this.

In coaching, we are taught a strategy called game, or play, where we learn to take things less seriously. There are several techniques you can use to reframe your perspective and remove the life or death feel from a situation.

- Play the tape through: This is helpful when you're at the giving up stage of stress or pressure. Imagine what would happen if you really did give up and play the scene out to the end. This is helpful for realizing that short term solutions will not solve the problem at hand.
- Worst case scenario: This is helpful to put things into perspective. Suppose you do lose the game, then what? Suppose you don't get to work with this client then what? The idea is to play this out and realize that even if the worst possible scenario happened, you'd survive.

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- **Game/Play:** This is a common coaching tool to help reduce the serious feel of a situation and help relax you back into optimal performance. The idea is to consciously think of the situation as a game and not as something life-changing.
- **Is it true:** Often in times of pressure, we can revert to old patterns of thinking and old belief systems without knowing it. When we find ourselves thinking dire thoughts, we can ask ourselves ‘Why do I think this? Is this true? Who told me this?’

MINDFULNESS

Experts agree that winning is 50% - 90% mental, and studies have proven this out. Basic technical skill has less correlation to performance as the ability to focus and not let setbacks derail your performance. Mindfulness is the practice of doing things consciously, and focusing exclusively on the task at hand. This is part of being in flow, when you are so consumed with your current task that you lose focus of everything else. It’s a way of crowding out negative self-talk, distractions, and unproductive beliefs. Mindfulness includes focusing one’s attention only on one’s current surroundings and activities and is a powerful concentration technique.

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Mindfulness is effective for enhancing performance because it prevents you from engaging in negative self-talk, or focusing on mistakes and remain engaged and in the moment instead. Practicing mindfulness has been proven for reducing the stress hormone cortisol.

BREATHING AND STRESS

As a coach and leader, it's important to understand that the phenomenon we know as 'stress' has two components, physical and emotional/mental. When people are in a threatening situation, there are bodily reactions. Remember our friend Og? In Og's world, there were a lot of things that could quickly cause violent death or dismemberment, requiring Og to respond suddenly and definitively, without meditating on the correct response, sketching out a pro and con list on the ground with a stick of possible actions, or having a meeting and arriving at consensus. No, when that dinosaur (or sabre tooth tiger if you're a purist) is charging up the hill, Og needed to be able to run, and run very quickly. Stress is the body's way of making sure we can do what we need to do to stay alive in dangerous situations. It is meant to be a highly beneficial, highly short term response.

And then came the industrial revolution and the whole thing started going to you know where in a handbasket. Basically, we overcame a majority of the physical danger in our world, changing our lives and focus to be on mental and emotional output more than physical. We pour ourselves into technological advances, allowing us more leisure time, and more time to...WORRY.

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Worry and fear stimulate the exact same mechanisms in our nervous systems as physical threats of impending doom with one difference. We don't actually need to be facing actual death to have the same flood of neurochemicals, and since there is no end to the things we can worry about there is no end to the stress. Which, ironically is most likely bringing about our untimely demise in the long run through auto-immune responses leading to strokes, heart attacks, cancer and other diseases linked to stress. We may be tempted to think that the body just hasn't 'caught up' to modern times, but that's probably not the case. We may not face sabre tooth tigers on a regular basis anymore, but would you really want to have to sit and think about what to do if a car was speeding towards you or another physical threat arose? We still need our stress responses, it's just become more important for us to learn to master them that it's been in the past. And fortunately, that's possible.

Breathing is one way that we can slow down and even reverse our stress response. When we are physically stressed our heart races, our blood pressure rises, and our breathing becomes labored to force oxygen to our large muscles. In fact, many scientists believe that we feel the symptoms first, subconsciously scan the environment and assign a cause for the reaction and THEN attribute a conscious cause to it.

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This means we have two ways to deal with stress. The first is to calm our physical reactions, and the second is to relabel them. One highly effective way to control your stress response is by using breathing techniques, such as box breathing. According to the Mayo Clinic, intentional deep breathing regulates the autonomic nervous system, lowers blood pressure and provides an immediate sense of calm and reduction of anxiety.

The Box Breathing Technique is as follows:

Step 1

Sitting upright, slowly exhale, getting all the oxygen out of your lungs. Focus on this intention and be conscious of what you're doing.

Step 2

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to the count of four. In this step, count to four very slowly in your head. Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until your lungs are completely full and the air moves into your abdomen.

Step 3

Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

Step 4

Exhale through your mouth for the same slow count of four, expelling the air from your lungs and abdomen. Be conscious of the feeling of the air leaving your lungs.

Step 5

Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before repeating this process.

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Putting it all together

We've covered a lot during our time together, so let's step back and look at the big picture again, so you can understand what you as a coach can do to bring out the best performance in your players.

Part 1: Provide the context, larger purpose, and values

This should be one of the first things you do, and what you continually refer to. To be compelling, the vision should be about something greater than each individual person. Spend time as a group reviewing the values and what these mean emotionally and practically. Create accountability by talking about what will happen when we don't play according to our values. Create a visual representation of your vision; whether it's a logo, vision board, banner, or something else. Your vision is your rallying point, so it should be big and bold, front and center.

Part 2: Educate yourself and your clients on their thinking.

Before you run so much as type an email, you should be actively developing a growth mindset within yourself and with your clients. This, in fact, should be one of your values. Help your clients understand the importance of not just rewarding skill, but values such as persistence, teamwork, integrity, trying, optimism, and the link. Spend time explaining blind spots, comfort zones, and beliefs. Uncover negative beliefs, and develop visualization and affirmations to support your team goals. Teach your clients about the power of self-talk, and teach them how to detect and shut down negative self-talk in themselves and their team. Develop

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performance goals, and make it clear that each goal is simply redefining the comfort zone, with the intent of continually elevating what's possible, so that goals are not an end point, but a jumping off point.

Part 3: Develop technical expertise

This is when you finally get to work on the technical abilities, only by now you will understand it as developing experiential self-efficacy. Model what you want done and then practice, practice, practice. Provide encouragement and positive reinforcement for progress. When mastery of the fundamentals is developed, celebrate. Once the technical ability is established, create simulations, or role plays to visualize actually performing required functions.

Part 4: Dealing with Pressure and Setbacks

During your simulations, you can help instill and reinforce the traits of optimism, mental toughness, and grit by focusing on the end goal and not getting hung up on failures or the stress of facing difficult challenges. Focus on the physiological symptoms of stress and how to counteract them with breathing techniques and positive visualization. After every session, review beliefs, goals, and new beliefs and engage in positive self-talk. Set goals to practice saying new beliefs multiple times a day.

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Part 5: Performance Tweaking

Believe it or not, success can bring its own set of problems. It's all too easy to slip into a fixed mindset about your skill and position when you've become a champion. After you've experienced the success that will come from using these techniques, it's important to keep doing them. Continue with growth mindset exercises and beliefs in improvement, continue to celebrate success, and have fun.

Keeping things in perspective is important. Go back to your own personal purpose and remember that you're teaching your players concepts that will help them throughout their lives. Forgetting this and focusing on this or that game can seriously undermine the greater picture and the greater good. Implemented properly, you are giving your players a gift of lifelong confidence, fulfillment, and happiness.

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This brings us to the end of this Mindset training. Good luck with your Consulting venture! With a powerful system for effecting change, you are equipped to work with clients in any industry. Get ready to enjoy the freedom and flexibility of working for yourself along with the pride of knowing you are making and impact and bringing value to your customers of choice!!

Please let me know how you're making out, and if you'd like to schedule a breakthrough session to discuss your business, reach out here.

<https://go.oncehub.com/NewtoConsulting>

Please let me know how you're making out!

Carrie Maldonado

Carrie@carriemaldonado.com

Ryan, G. (2017, January 4). Box breathing. Retrieved from <http://www.policemag.com/channel/careerstraining/articles/2017/01/box-breathing.aspx>