

In order to be successful You must first define what is success for you.

You can't hit a target unless you have it defined and identified.

You can't get "*there*" unless you know what or where "*there*" is. You must establish your destination before you set out on a journey. **You must have your desired objectives in your sport and in your life firmly fixed in your mind before you proceed with your mental fitness training.**

Target or Goal setting is a hugely powerful technique that can yield strong returns in all areas of your life.

Each of us is born with a set of particular inner desires that may or may be apparent. Whether or not we are aware of these, they are the guideposts for life.

At its simplest level the process of setting goals and targets allows you to choose where you want to go in life. By knowing what you want to achieve, you know what you have to concentrate on and improve, and what is merely a distraction. Goal setting gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation.

By setting sharp, clearly defined goals, you can measure and take pride in the achievement of those goals. You can see forward progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind.

By setting targets or goals you can:

- **Achieve more**
- **Improve performance**
- **Improve the quality of your training**
- **Increase your motivation to achieve**
- **Increases your pride and satisfaction in your performance**
- **Improve your self-confidence**



Research (Damon Burton, 1983) has shown that people who use target/goal-setting effectively:

- **suffer less from stress and anxiety**
- **concentrate better**
- **show more self-confidence**
- **perform better**
- **are happier with their performances**

Target Setting Helps Self-Confidence

By setting targets or goals, and measuring their achievement, you are able to see what you have done and what you are capable of. The process of achieving goals and seeing their achievement gives you

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the confidence and self-belief that you need that you will be able to achieve higher and more difficult goals.

Providing that you have the self-discipline to carry it through, target setting is also relatively easy. The following section on goal setting will give you effective guidelines to help you to use this technique effectively.

The target that you have for yourself should be based on your true desires, not those other people have for you.

GOING FOR THE GOAL

An article by Robyn D. Clarke

Forget half-hearted resolutions. Here's a surefire plan to help you meet your objectives this year.

EVERY NEW YEAR'S EVE, The ritual is the same. Loved ones and strangers come together to usher out the old and ring in the new. Some don their elegant best and step out to partake of lavish buffets and free-flowing champagne in festively decorated surroundings. As the clock chimes midnight and the band strikes up, guests raise their glasses and toast: "This year, I'm really going to ...!"

OK, those may not be the exact words. But for many of us, that phrase--more than the confetti and familiar strains of "Auld Lang Syne"--is what truly signals the beginning of a new year. With eager hearts full of good intentions, we vow to finally make good on the pledges of years past--and present. But by the time spring rolls around, these promises are all but forgotten.

"Most people don't realize their objectives because they don't take planned steps to achieve them," says Hyrum W. Smith, chairman of Salt Lake City-based Franklin Covey Co., a training and consulting firm specializing in life management and personal productivity. "They try to tackle a goal head-on rather than break it down into manageable parts. When it becomes too overwhelming, they get discouraged and abandon ship altogether."

Undoubtedly, setting goals is relatively easy. But if you have trouble getting them to be more than just items on your wish list, don't despair. There's practical advice to help you get in gear for the new year--so that you can plan your goals and see them through to the end.

STEP 1

Determine what you want. *"It's pretty difficult to set a goal if you have no idea what you want to accomplish,"* says Michelle Passoff, a clutter consultant and author of *Lighten Up/Free Yourself From Clutter* (Harper Perennial). *"Take the time to focus on what you want to get done and the steps you'll need to take in order to get there."* She suggests the following visualization exercise:

* **Close your eyes and relax.** Let go of any tension and forget about the activities of the day.

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* **Acknowledge and accept how you have lived up to this point in your life.** Congratulate yourself on being ready to move forward to pursue your dreams.

* **Imagine how you want to live and how your life would change after you make the desired adjustments.**

* **When you are comfortable with that image, open your eyes.**

Samuel Jones, co-founder and managing director of the Mercator Group, a Chicago-based strategic advisory firm, has mastered this mental drill. While working on Wall Street as an investment banker for Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, he began to tire of the New York City rat race. *"I gained great resume-building skills, but I knew I'd be happiest working for myself,"* says Jones, 27. In 1993, he enrolled in Harvard Business School, **where he envisioned his ultimate goal:** to head his own company.

The first step in setting your targets is to determine what your true desires are. Identify what you want to achieve, do, be and have. Clearly identify what you wish to achieve in your life.

Of course, what you want will depend on what's important to you, states Smith. *"You can't set a goal without first acknowledging your governing values,"* he says. Now that you have a better idea of how you want your future to look, sit down in a quiet place with minimal distractions. Write down the things of professional and personal value that you've gathered from the first exercise, and list them in order of importance. You now have the foundation for every goal you'll ever set.

"It also helps to think of this process in terms of a clock pendulum," says Jones. *"To help keep correct time, it must swing to the right before it can swing to the left and vice versa. Likewise, for a goal to become reality, you have to know what you want before you can attempt to act."*

STEP 2

Set long-range goals. Myra Panache's childhood dream was colorful and not much bigger than 11-by-17 inches. "I've always wanted to have my own magazine," says the 32-year-old founder and editor-in-chief of Pop Life, a San Francisco-based quarterly entertainment publication. "Expression through writing has long been a passion of mine, and I couldn't think of a better way to get my ideas out to others." But as Panache had no journalism or publishing experience under her belt, her goal was lofty indeed.

In this stage, it's OK if your objectives are large-scale projects. *"However, they should still be 'SMART': specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and timely,"* says Smith, who suggests the following:

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* **Specific:** Make sure you state exactly what will be accomplished. Try, for example, *"I will land a promotion to senior sales manager or change careers from public relations to law,"* instead of *"I will have a more fulfilling professional life."*

* **Measurable:** Set a definitive time or date when your goals will be completed. For instance, "I will have completed a course on career management by this spring."

* **Action-oriented:** Focus on action ("I will not raise my voice in meetings"), rather than qualities ("I will be a kinder team leader").

* **Realistic:** Allow for personal and professional constraints in accomplishing your goals. For example, *"I will make \$1 million this year"* is less realistic for most of us than *"I will learn about mutual funds and invest my first \$1,000."*

* **Timely:** Allow yourself a reasonable amount of time to complete a goal. For example, giving yourself 40 years to earn a law degree is too long, while one year isn't enough.

In early 1995, Panache reached into her past as a former entertainment agent to develop a general content format and set a launch date for the end of the year. "I also sought support from friends and other entrepreneurs who could help me along in the start-up process," she recalls.

Passoff believes a *"cheering section"* can actually help you reach your goal more quickly. "Those people can help you stay true to your mission, as well as provide an outsider's perspective when necessary," she says. Keep in mind, however, that you should only share your plans with those you trust. This will help protect against any negative people who may directly or indirectly try to thwart your efforts.

"An unrecorded goal is merely a wish," says Smith, who recommends solidifying your goals by writing them down. "You'll have a hard time knowing whether or not you've reached it unless you do."

Buy a sturdy journal or notebook that you'll use exclusively for this purpose. *"You can also place goal reminders on frequently used items, such as your computer screensaver and your refrigerator,"* says Passoff.

STEP 3

Break goals down into manageable parts. Now you're ready to execute the plans you've created. This step is perhaps the most crucial in the entire goal process, says Smith, because "if you can't break your objectives down, they won't get accomplished." For example, it's not enough to say you want to lose weight. You must go on to create intermediate steps--such as an exercise and diet plan--that will help you reach that end.

"Laying out monthly and weekly goals helps me see what I've accomplished en route to my long-term ambitions," says Jones. After tossing around some ideas with classmate Mark Hadding, the two decided to form a partnership. *"We gave ourselves three months to design the company and write the plan."* In early 1996, they launched the Mercator Group and later that year closed their first deal--a \$12

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million contract with a manufacturing company. In 1998, the company's projected earnings were \$2.5 million. "It's important to approach a goal as a learning process that must be tackled one step at a time," says Jones.

STEP 4

Create a prioritized dally task list. Time management is essential in the final stage of the goal process, says Virginia Bass, a corporate trainer and founder of By Design Training Design and Delivery Specialists in Exton, Pennsylvania. She recommends working from a to-do list, a daily laundry list of all tasks to be completed. These tasks should directly correspond to the long-term goals you've established.

While your list doesn't have to be overly detailed, it must be thorough and organized. Bass suggests:

* **Write down tasks in a prioritized order.** *"This helps you avoid overloading your list with unimportant items," she maintains.*

* **Assign a realistic finish time.** Don't forget that your regular work schedule--including meetings--will affect the amount of time you have to work with.

* **Include phone numbers and other pertinent information.** This will help you avoid wasting time looking them up later.

* **Check off each item as you finish.** This helps you reprioritize your list as you go along.

Jones takes 15 to 20 minutes every morning to create his list, which he reviews again at the day's end. Bass believes this review is as important as the list itself. *"As you reflect on what you accomplished," says Bass, "you can determine the hours when you work at your peak, and figure out how much time you typically have to work with."*

Panache also believes it's *"important to eliminate distractions and distance yourself from people trying to deter you from meeting your objectives."* Her single-copy circulation more than quadrupled from 10,000 in 1995 to 50,000 today, and she is preparing to take Pop Life--which had revenues of \$70,000 in 1998--online exclusively this year. *"Although meeting goals isn't something that comes easily for me," she admits, "I've found that an unwavering focus has helped me make my dreams a reality."*

And while it's important to be ambitious, don't forget about yourself, says Passoff. "Bask in the beauty of each step of the process, but don't let it drain the life from you."

**When writing you goals always use the present positive tense.
Make your statements read as if your goal already exists in your
physical world.**

Teach Your Mind How to Win

By Jeri Edwards

Reprint from August, 2000 Issue of *Bowling Digest*

Just as you work on physical techniques like your steps and your delivery, you also need to work on mental skills that will strengthen your game

YOGI BERRA ONCE SAID OF BASEBALL that "90% of this game is half mental." While the math is questionable, the importance of the mental game is not. And bowling certainly mirrors this philosophy.

Developing and strengthening your mental approach to bowling will help you attain greater success in scoring and in enjoyment of your game. There are many areas that merit attention, including self-talk, mindset, focus, goal setting, visualization, and your pre-shot routine.

If you work on these areas, not only will your bowling improve, but so will your mental approach to life. Bowling is just a microcosm--the skills that you develop to deal with challenges in your game can also help you deal with challenges in life. You learn to identify areas that need improvement; you handle joy and sorrow; you are asked to make decisions and find balance.

Sounds like a lifelong journey--so let's get started.

We all constantly experience an internal "dialogue" with ourselves--called "self-talk"--in every aspect of our lives, but how you talk to yourself during competition is very important. It takes discipline to manage your mental comments.

If you have a personal coach, the communication between you probably has a certain respectful nature, but when you step up onto the lane you are, in the grand scope of things, your own coach, and you must rely on yourself to "talk" to yourself with that same respect. If your coach talked to you disrespectfully or disparaged you, would you want him for a coach? If not, you shouldn't talk to yourself that way, either, and you may need to work on your self-talk.

When you first start paying attention to what that internal "voice" is saying, you may be surprised. In fact, you may have to practice some thought-stopping techniques in order to generate a more positive stream of thoughts. Imagining a big red stop sign with flashing lights, or hearing a voice loudly saying "Stop!" are ways to get your own attention and guide yourself into more positively stated thoughts.

You also can use affirmations to reinforce these positive ideas. Team USA members came up with a list of affirmations to use personally and as a team. These may be helpful in designing your own set of affirmations.

Taking control of your mind can go a long way in generating feelings of confidence and positive thinking, and you don't even have to be bowling. When you're traveling to your bowling event, start talking to yourself and make a decision about how you will react during your competition. For

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instance, tell yourself that no matter what happens, you'll give 100% on each shot. No matter what distractions, disturbances, or arguments may occur, you'll focus on each shot, and if you miss a few spares or fail to carry well, you'll still continue to make each shot with your full effort.

When you do this, you've made a pact with yourself before you even step foot in the building, and you have a game plan. This kind of discipline isn't easy to achieve, but once you've done it you have your mindset determined.

Focus is an important aspect to your mental game, and there are two specific types to discuss. When you're working on developing physical skills or replacing an existing bowling habit with a new habit, your mind is very active. You need to think about the skill you're working on, or you won't execute the motion correctly. In this mode your focus is inward or internal: Your eyes may be open and looking at your target, but you may not "see" it because your focus is elsewhere. It's much like talking with someone who is looking directly at you, yet he's a million miles away and doesn't hear a word you're saying.

The important thing to realize is that when you're in this state of focus, you usually don't have your best performances. You may have experienced this in practice or playing in a league, when you're thinking about your pushaway, armswing, and release--and you cannot hit your target twice in a row. This type of internalized, self-aware focus helps you develop new or modified skills, but use it only in practice.

Additionally, when you're working in this mode, do not keep score. For most bowlers the temptation to judge what you're working on by the score is great, but it can be detrimental to your progress. When you're working on technique, be patient with your progress. Don't keep score, and acknowledge that you're focused differently than you would be in competition.

When athletes in any sport are asked about their best performances, many say they weren't thinking about much--they were just playing.

In competition you need to react to what you see the ball do as it goes down the lane. Your eyes should be on your ball reaction, interpreting what the lanes are doing by that reaction. All of this is happening outside of your body and is referred to as external focus. Your eyes "see" your target and then pick up the ball as it travels down the lane to the pins and all the way through the pins. This gives you a "read" on what the lane is doing and what your ball is doing also. This focus allows you to make decisions faster in respect to how you're lined up and which ball you've chosen to use.

This is not to say that you wouldn't have a physical key when you play, but choose one and keep it simple. Michael Jordan's focus on the basketball court was intense and external. He saw the floor and all that was going on around him. There was probably never a time when he literally thought, "OK, I'm going to take three steps, jump off of my left foot, spin 180 degrees, and let the basketball roll off my hand, leaving my middle finger last." He just reacted to what he was seeing on the floor, just as you need to react to what you see happening on the lane.

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Setting goals can be another important area of your mental game. Most bowlers have felt like they could get better if they only knew how or what to work on.

Writing things down helps you maintain focus on the aspects of your game you're trying to remember. When you get it in ink, it's more permanent and the picture begins to get clearer. You can go back and refer to things you noted weeks earlier, and remains clear in your mind.

Goal setting can also help you plan your work and work your plan by giving you a series of steps to follow. It can help you identify important performance keys, and it can help you establish and experience quality practices.

When you begin to set some goals for yourself, you may want to remember the acronym "S.M.A.R.T.," which summarizes helpful cues in developing your goals.

* "S" stands for specific. Is your goal specific enough? If it's not specific enough, restate it. A goal that states "I want to be the best bowler in my league" may be specific, but there are many steps that would lead to that end result, so break it down into smaller steps. For instance, your spare shooting may be suspect, so you could say, "I want to be a better spare shooter."

* "M" stands for measurable. In this example you could say, "I want to average nine out of 10 single-spares conversions."

* "A" stands for attainable. Setting a goal of averaging 300 is not attainable. Make your goal one that is possible.

* "R" stands for realistic, which is very similar to attainable. If you're a 130-average bowler, the goal to make nine out of 10 single-pin spares may be a bit high. You may start by saying, "I want to average seven out of 10 single-pin spare conversions" and as you attain your goal, move the standard of measure higher. If your goal isn't attainable or realistic, then it may lead to discouragement that may keep you from progressing.

* Finally, "T" stands for timely. Put a time frame on achieving your goal. You can have short-term goals--even as short as a particular day's practice session --and you can have long-term goals that span more than five years. If you have a five-year plan or goal, use short-term goals to plot your course to your ultimate destination.

Goals can be the inspiration and the motivation to keep you moving forward. Keep them fresh and keep visiting them to make the most of your journey.

There are two different types of goals when you're planning: process goals and outcome goals. Simply stated, a process goal focuses on an action, such as "getting a consistent start matching my footwork and armswing tempo." An outcome goal focuses on a result, such as "shooting my first 300 game."

Both types of goals have a place in your mental game plan. Process goals are best used in practice and in competition. They allow you to keep your mind centered on the actions that will result in good,

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clean shots. Outcome goals are great motivators. Imagining yourself accepting the league champion trophy or winning a big tournament helps keep you working through the practices and the hours it takes to get there.

Outcome goals typically are used outside of the center, but they may add a zing to your practice--"I need this shot to win the 2001 U.S. Open title." During competition, though, it's a good idea to leave thoughts about outcomes at the front door of the center. Aside from adding extra pressure, focusing on the outcome while you play can take your focus away from a process or acting goal that would help you execute your shot cleanly and smoothly.

Another helpful mental game tool is visualization, which can be very helpful when used during your preparation. Basically, it's simply using your "mind's eye" to picture yourself executing a shot or seeing a ball go down the lane.

Visualizing yourself performing successfully can make you execute better--and you can use it anytime, even when you can't get to the bowling center. It allows you to see yourself win before it ever happens, which can put you into a great frame of mind. It can help clear away distracting thoughts when you're competing by helping you focus on the movements or action you want to execute.

It also can help you develop adaptability and versatility by mentally rehearsing things you haven't done yet. For instance, if your ball is hooking too much, you can make the move in your mind and "see it" before you step up to make your next shot. You can also imagine playing a line you've never played before--before you ever attempt it.

When you use visualization, it can be either internal or external. An example of internal visualization would be "seeing" the movement of your body to the line from the actual perspective of your eyes watching your target as you move. External visualization, on the other hand, would be imagining watching yourself move to the foul line from an external perspective, the way a video camera would record your movement. You may develop a favorite method, or you may use a combination of the two; as with any skill, you'll become better with practice.

Practice each day and get into a relaxed state prior to your visualization exercise. As you get better at imagining your game, incorporate as many of your senses as you can. I'd suggest that you spend 90% of your time picturing yourself execute and dealing with expected situations, and spend just 10% of your time imagining how you would respond to unexpected situations. And be creative--have fun with it.

One of the most important aspects of the mental game is a pre-shot routine. Most bowlers have a sort of pre-shot ritual that they go through without even knowing it--as you take your game to the next level, however, pay attention and plan your pre-shot routine so it helps you settle in for each shot and perform well. If your routine is rehearsed to the point of being a habit, it will help you stay calm and focused when you get into stressful situations, so that you can execute with minimum stress.

Your pre-shot routine will use some of the skills that we've just discussed. When you're bowling, you're dealing with constant distractions; these focusing skills will help you let all of the distractions

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go when you step up to the ball return, narrowing your scope to the shot at hand. Use your breathing to settle into a calm intensity. Take a deep breath in through your nose and let it out through your mouth. Keep your focus external and imagine the path of the ball before you step up on the lane.

Repetition also helps you focus. If you use a towel, use it the same way each time. Since you have already loaded the information into your mind and body, when you step up on the lane you should be set and ready to go, moving into your approach with the energy and motion you desire.

When you have worked on these areas and the fruits of your labor have become a part of your life, there will come a time when you can reflect on a performance with satisfaction. The feeling may not come from your score, but from your mental performance. It may be as small as feeling proud that--despite being tired or "lost" on the lanes--you didn't give up. It's a gratifying and wonderful feeling to fight the good fight. Enjoy that personal moment, and keep preparing so that you can experience more of them.

Affirmations like these are a form of "self-talk" that reinforces the attitudes and concentration you need to keep improving.

Affirmations (also see page 16)

Personal

- I've practiced enough and I'm ready for this competition.
- I'm ready to give it my best.
- I am a winner.
- I respect myself and my opponent.
- No lane beats me. I can always figure them out.

Team

- Whatever we do, we'll do together.
- I always encourage and support my teammates.
- My teammates are helpful and beneficial to my game.
- Positive is the only energy source we know.
- Our greatest successes are those we share.
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A goal ladder helps you track your progress and continue to challenge yourself.

1. Write down where I currently start, look, and slide for each of my single-pin spares.
2. Look at my bowling books and get some new ideas on spare shooting.
3. Test some different spare systems in practice and evaluate.
4. Make sure my body stays in line with my target line throughout my approach.
5. Shoot at least seven 10-pins and seven 7-pins at the start of each practice. Record my progress.
6. Make a plan for shooting each pin --the 1-pin through the 10-pin--and do it during each practice.

Playing Mind Games Pays Off

The Medical Post, June 6, 1995

SEATTLE - Don't just do it, think about it.

New research suggests mental practice of a motor skill may actually improve physical performance. While it's not as efficient by itself as physical practice, the combination of mental and physical rehearsal produces an even better result than physical practice alone.

"It appears that mental practice has some priming effect on the benefit of physical practice," said Dr. Alvaro Pascual-Leone, a neurologist at the Unidad De Neurobiologia, Universidad De Valencia, in Valencia, Spain.

The effects of mental practice also appear to follow the same rules as physical rehearsal in that improvement is limited to the specific movement or skills practised.

Dr. Pascual-Leone and his colleagues have been studying the changes in cortical organization required for acquisition of new skills. In other studies, now in press, they've shown the changes induced by mentally visualizing successful completion of a skill are exactly those induced by physical practice.

Athletes and musicians have believed for a long time that visualizing successful performance can enhance execution.

"When we looked at the literature, we found a lot of anecdotal evidence and psychological reports saying mental practice enhances performance to some degree, but nobody has actually looked at why," Dr. Pascual-Leone said in an interview. *"We started to look for a physiological basis that would allow for mental practice to really improve acquisition of skills or improve performance, and how that compares to physical practice."*

At the recent meeting here of the American Academy of Neurology, he presented results of two experiments. In the first, 10 people - all chosen because they not only didn't play basketball or any other game with balls, but didn't even watch basketball - practiced free throws for an hour a day over five days.

They were randomly assigned to three groups. The first practiced physically. The second group practiced mentally simply by standing in front of the hoop, imagining a successful throw as though from an overhead camera.

The third group broke up their practice period into 15 minutes of physical and 45 minutes of mental practice.

At the start, all made about three throws out of 20. After five days, those practicing mentally improved to five, those practicing physically improved to eight, and those combining mental and physical practice hit nine throws of 20.

In a separate experiment, 20 subjects practiced both mentally and physically throwing overhead or underhand baskets. Improvement was seen only in the skill they'd been assigned to practice.

Mental Gymnastics

By James Chapman, Science correspondent. *Daily Mail*. Nov. 22nd, 2001

"It sounds like a couch potatoes dream. According to research, just thinking about exercise can increase the strength of your muscles"

Volunteers were first asked to visualize exercising one of their little fingers, which was enough to increase its strength over several weeks. Then the research team tested the techniques on a larger, more frequently used muscle, the biceps.

They asked ten volunteers aged 20 to 35 to imagine flexing one of their biceps as hard as possible in training sessions five times a week. The researchers, whose findings are reported today (22nd November 2001), in the magazine *New Scientist*, recorded the electrical brain activity during the sessions.

To make sure the volunteers were not unintentionally tensing or moving their arms, they also monitored electrical impulses of their arm muscles. Every two weeks, the scientists measured muscle strength. The volunteers who thought about exercise showed a 13.5 per cent increase, and maintained that gain for three months after the training stopped. A separate group, who did not do the mental workouts, showed no improvement.

Dr. Guang Yue, an exercise physiologist at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Ohio, unveiled his research at the Society for Neuroscience meeting in San Diego. He explained that muscles move in response to signals from nearby nerve cells called motor neurons. The 'firing' of these cells, in turn, depends on the strength of electrical impulses sent by the brain.

"That suggests you can increase muscle strength solely by sending a larger signal to motor neurons from the brain", said Dr. Yue.

The scientists are stressing that the discovery should not be used as an excuse to stop taking exercise in favor of just thinking about it. But they believe the technique could help patients who are too weak to exercise, to start recuperating from a stroke or injury. If it is shown to work in older people, they could use it to help maintain their strength. The researchers are repeating the experiment with volunteers aged 65 to 80 to see if they can get the same results.

Adrian Taylor, professor of physical activity and health at De Montfort University in Leicester said the results were interesting and had been backed up by other research projects. He added: *"There's a limited amount of strength gain, but there is evidence that mentally rehearsing a movement or an exercise can be of use. For the elderly, going through in your head the movement such as stepping up*

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over a curb, or what you would do if you fell, can only help. But it would be unfortunate if people took this as a reason to not exercise".

One of the more frequently faced challenges experienced by athletes is that of how to improve their performance. They express frustration that they often possess identical, if not superior, physical attributes to their competition, yet they're consistently being outperformed by that competition. In many of these cases the factor that separates their performance from the competitions has been found to be rooted in their belief as to their ability to outperform the competition. In other words they are operating with a limiting belief as to their athletic ability and level of performance they are capable of achieving. Yet it is well documented that an individual's core beliefs in any given area of their life will ultimately determine the reality they draw into their life--positive, negative or stagnant.

So how does one go about changing a limiting belief to a positive one -- one that will result in improving your performance? It has been established by psychologists and neuroscientists that every person in the world carries on an ongoing dialog, or self-talk, of between 150 and 300 words a minute. This works out to between 45,000 and 51,000 thoughts a day. Most of our self-talk is harmless thoughts that serve our daily activities like, "I need to stop at the cleaners." The danger is when inner dialogue takes on a negative connotation such as, "I'll never be as good an athlete as he is," "I don't have the mental toughness to compete at this level," or "I'll never be that fast." The ongoing negative reinforcement created by habitual negative self-talk results in the creation of a limiting belief(s) that goes on to become self-fulfilling prophecy.

Beliefs -- positive or negative -- are literally etched into our brain in comfortable grooves or neural pathways. Incoming data from our senses travel on these neural pathways on the way to interpretation in the brain. Therefore, if you desire to change an unresourceful/limiting belief into an empowering belief, you must rewire the negative neural track created in the brain.

This can be accomplished in precisely the same way the tracks were created: by using self-talk or, more specifically affirmations. An affirmation is a statement of fact or belief -- positive or negative -- that will lead toward the end result you expect. Anything that follows the phrase "I am," such as "I am a peak performance athlete" or "I am quick and agile," is an affirmation. The simplicity of affirmations often causes them to be overlooked. Nonetheless, affirmations are regularly used by professional athletes and successful business people.

The process for changing a limiting belief to a resourceful belief using affirmations is a simple one. First, identify the areas of your life which are not working to your satisfaction.

Next, write out the affirmations that represent things the way you desire them to be, they will be the vehicle for creating new resourceful/positive pathways.

Basic to formulating a new self-suggestion is that your affirmation is short and to the point -- simple enough that a five year old child will understand it -- and is always stated in the positive. Further, your affirmation should be stated in the present tense -- as if it has already happened, for example, "I am a strong athlete."

Belief, Self Talk And Performance Enhancement

by Joe Kolezynski. M.B.A., M.A.

One of the more frequently faced challenges experienced by athletes is that of how to improve their performance. They express frustration that they often possess identical, if not superior, physical attributes to their competition, yet they're consistently being outperformed by that competition. In many of these cases the factor that separates their performance from the competitions has been found to be rooted in their belief as to their ability to outperform the competition. In other words they are operating with a limiting belief as to their athletic ability and level of performance they are capable of achieving. Yet it is well documented that an individual's core beliefs in any given area of their life will ultimately determine the reality they draw into their life-positive, negative or stagnant.

So how does one go about changing a limiting (negative) belief to a positive one -- one that will result in improving your performance? It has been established by psychologists and neuroscientists that every person in the world carries on an ongoing dialog, or self-talk, of between 150 and 300 words a minute. This works out to between 45,000 and 51,000 thoughts a day. Most of our self-talk is harmless thoughts that serve our daily activities like, "I need to stop at the cleaners." The danger is when inner dialogue takes on a negative connotation such as, "I'll never be as good an athlete as he is," "I don't have the mental toughness to compete at this level," or "I'll never be that fast." The ongoing negative reinforcement created by habitual negative self-talk results in the creation of a limiting belief(s) that goes on to become self-fulfilling prophecy.

Beliefs -- positive or negative -- are literally etched into our brain in comfortable grooves or neural pathways. Incoming data from our senses travel on these neural pathways on the way to interpretation in the brain. Therefore, if you desire to change an unresourceful/limiting belief into an empowering belief, you must rewire the negative neural track created in the brain.

This can be accomplished in precisely the same way the tracks were created: by using self-talk or, more specifically affirmations. An affirmation is a statement of fact or belief -- positive or negative -- that will lead toward the end result you expect. Anything that follows the phrase "I am," such as "I am a peak performance athlete" or "I am quick and agile," is an affirmation. The simplicity of affirmations often causes them to be overlooked. Nonetheless, affirmations are regularly used by professional athletes and successful business people.

The process for changing a limiting belief to a resourceful belief using affirmations is a simple one. First, identify the areas of your life which are not working to your satisfaction. You should have already established this in the creating of your list of targets or goals

Next, write out the affirmations that represent things the way you desire them to be, they will be the vehicle for creating new resourceful/positive pathways. **In most cases this will be a rewriting or copying of your targets or goals**

Basic to formulating a new self-suggestion is that your affirmation is short and to the point -- simple enough that a five year old child will understand it -- and is always stated in the positive. Further, your

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affirmation should be stated in the present tense -- as if it has already happened, for example, "I am a strong athlete." **This is called the present positive.**

Now you are ready to begin your daily (minimum) reprogramming process:

- **Sit upright in a comfortable chair.**
- **Close your eyes.**
- **Then do a breathing exercise for relaxation.**
- **Next, do a progressive relaxation – imagine your muscles relaxing in order from your head down through your body and on down to the tips of your toes.**
- **Release your body's tight sharp focus on the physical world by taking yourself to an even deeper level of relaxation. Do this by imagining that you are walking down a staircase or riding an elevator down to a much lower level.**
- **Speak your affirmation aloud from five to twenty times (depending on the time you have and the number of beliefs you are reprogramming).**

By speaking your affirmation aloud you are down-stepping your thoughts to the brain's electrical network to speech, and you are involving more of your brain by including two more of your senses: auditory and kinesthetic. It is important that you trust this process and give your affirmation(s) time to achieve their desired outcome. Worry or self-doubt as to whether your affirmations are working only conveys to your subconscious worry and the belief that your desire may not come to pass or the affirmation may not succeed. Be patient, success is on the way.

In conclusion, remember that your beliefs are what produce your life's experience, not the other way around. Orchestrate your beliefs using affirmations to create a life filled with successful experiences that reinforce the beliefs that created them.

The Power Of Affirmations

By Carolyn Leighton-Tal

The most powerful words in the English language are those that follow the words "I am ---."

Whatever you tell yourself that you are is what you become.

About 15 years ago, early into the development of my third company, I started working with a business coach, Dr. John Bullaro, who combined spirituality, philosophy, and concrete business skills in helping me strengthen and develop a solid foundation for my new company.

One morning, John walked into my office and asked me if I wrote affirmations. I told him I didn't know what he was talking about. He decided to dedicate that morning to teaching me the value of writing affirmations. He began the session by warning me to think carefully about the affirmations I wrote, because his experience was that all the affirmations he made came true.

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He proceeded to teach me the art of writing affirmations, and the power attached to that process. For example, one of the affirmations I wrote a couple of years ago:

"I am living in a house with beautiful views, in a clean environment, temperate climate, and closer to nature."

Without exaggeration, that was the first step toward living where I am now -- in San Luis Obispo County, in an octagon-shaped house, views from every perspective, in a clean environment, and temperate climate.

Was this a coincidence? After practicing this (not as regularly as I should) for many years, I can tell you with personal conviction, that I now begin all major journeys with affirmations. The key is not just writing it down, but reading it every evening before you go to sleep and every morning when you wake, so it becomes part of your subconscious and conscious focus, moving you into action.

So I thought it particularly appropriate, given the philosophy of WITI and the focus of this issue, to ask you to join me in writing affirmations for the new leadership, the new millennium, given the fact that all change begins with a thought, an affirmation.

We are now experiencing a new leadership moving into the mainstream of corporate America. Here is what it looks like:

The Good Ol' Boy network is being replaced by teams of people with diverse backgrounds and different genders.

New work environments support everyone, extending respect, encouragement, and outreach to everyone with whom they interact, with the purpose of helping each individual realize their fullest potential.

Leadership has changed; we are seeing more women and men assume co-CEO leadership positions. Executive boardrooms are more interesting and balanced, and new leaders are encouraged to look at the impact they are making on society as a whole, not just the bottom line.

Everyone is regularly reminded that their company benefits most when they contribute to an environment that nurtures individuals, ideas, and a range of perspectives.

Society is experiencing more harmony and less family abuse; individuals are healthier -- physically, mentally and spiritually.

Last but not least, narcissism and arrogance are no longer tolerated. They have been replaced by a spirit of wanting to make our work a contribution towards a better society, a better future

In the Zone: The Zen of Sports

By Andrew Cooper

Athletes are often reluctant to talk about it, but profound experiences are common on the field of play. "*The zone is the essence of the athletic experience,*" says former NFLer Dave Meggyesy, "and those moments of going beyond yourself are the underlying allure of sport."

Right away, you could see the streak was over. As he turned and headed back upcourt, Michael Jordan looked over at network announcer Magic Johnson and shrugged, as if to say, "It's beyond me. It's just happening by itself!"

It was the first game of the 1992 NBA finals, the Bulls against Portland. His Airness had just sunk his sixth consecutive three-pointer, and in that moment it appeared as though even he was overwhelmed by the immensity of his gift.

And that was the giveaway. He had become self-conscious, and so he had lost that edge, that intensity of concentration in which limitations are forgotten and the spirit is set free to soar. Even for Michael Jordan, visiting hours on Olympus are limited.

Michael Jordan is no common athlete, and his shooting display was certainly no common feat. But for all its spectacle, his experience—its nature, its inner life—is not that unusual, after all. Several miles and countless worlds away from Jordan's Chicago home court, a University of Chicago psychology professor, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, had recently gathered the results of twenty-five years of research into a book that sheds more light on Jordan's performance than you are likely to find in any sports column.

In *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihalyi identifies a self-surpassing dimension of human experience that is recognized by people the world over, regardless of culture, gender, race, or nationality. Its characteristics include deep concentration, highly efficient performance, emotional buoyancy, a heightened sense of mastery, a lack of self-consciousness, and self-transcendence. Csikszentmihalyi calls the experience "flow"; today's athlete calls it being in "the zone."

The zone. All athletes know it, strive for it, prize its attainment. It is that realm of play in which everything—skill, training and mental discipline—comes together, and players feel themselves lifted to a level of peak performance in which limits seem to fall away.

The zone is the essence and pinnacle of the athletic experience, for it reveals that, at their root, sports are a theater for enacting the drama of self-transcendence. Athletes and fans alike, focused as we so often are on the game of winning and losing, miss the deeper significance that is right before our eyes. But in the zone, the extraordinary capacities that lie within each individual are made manifest. To grasp this hidden dimension is to transform the very meaning of athletic play.

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Perhaps, because moments in the zone are too compelling, too uncanny, too verging on the mystical, most athletes and sports journalists have been reluctant to address the experience in depth. But while those at the center of sports culture are reticent, a growing number of researchers are investigating the zone for what it can reveal about human motivation, development and potential. Sports psychologists draw upon visualization and meditation techniques in order to help athletes cultivate the concentration and calm that are prerequisites of the experience.

Sports psychology demonstrates that consciousness plays an essential role in athletic training. But the zone is about much more than the goal of peak performance. It provides a touchstone for approaching athletics as a spiritual path. Though largely forgotten in contemporary culture, this understanding has been part of sports throughout history, from the Olympic games of ancient Greece to the marathon runners of Native America to the Ways of the martial arts.

The zone. The term is a fairly new development in the lexicon of sports culture, perhaps ten or twelve years old. It denotes a place, as in the dictionary definition, but much more than that. It calls up imagery of the supernatural ("the twilight zone") and carries an implicit connection to altered states of consciousness ("zoned out" or "lost in the ozone"), a connection made explicit by less popular related terms: "He was playing *out of his mind*." "She went *unconscious*."

But *the zone*, with its rich ambiguity and layers of meaning, says it best. It is indeed a place, but a map won't get you there.

While the term is recent, the experience it points to is not. In his autobiography, *Second Wind: The Memoirs of an Opinionated Man*, Bill Russell evokes the "**mystical feeling**" that would on occasion lift the action on the hardwood to the level of magic:

“At that special level all sorts of odd things happened.... It was almost as if we were playing in slow motion. During those spells I could almost sense how the next play would develop and where the next shot would be taken. Even before the other team brought the ball in bounds, I could feel it so keenly that I'd want to shout to my teammates, "It's coming there!"-except that I knew everything would change if I did. My premonitions would be consistently correct, and I always felt then that I not only knew all the Celtics by heart but also all the opposing players, and that they all knew me”.

As compelling as these experiences were, Russell says he never spoke about them: "I felt a little weird about it, and quite private." The subject was taboo, and he knew that breaking that taboo would invite the mockery of his peers.

The situation has changed since Russell's playing days, but not all that much. Today, athletes and sportswriters will frequently allude to the zone, but rarely will they pursue its implications. San Francisco sports writer Scott Ostler says he has tried on occasion to pursue the subject with athletes only to be met with blank stares, "like I was weird for asking." Perhaps the weirdest thing about the zone is the reticence that surrounds it.

Former NFL linebacker Dave Meggyesy echoes Russell's view that the sports world is simply not a very hospitable place to talk about something so intensely personal and out of the ordinary.

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Nonetheless, he says, "the zone is the essence of the athletic experience, and those moments of going beyond yourself are the underlying allure of sport."

Meggyesy is now the West Coast representative of the NFL Players Association. The cramped bookshelves in his San Francisco office attest to the workings of a searching intelligence, whose interests range from contract law to Jungian psychology. Meggyesy regards the term "the zone" as a general one, referring to a spectrum of exceptional experiences-perceptions, states of consciousness and levels of performance-with varying degrees of intensity. Taken together, these experiences exemplify an innate tendency to surpass one's limits. For Meggyesy, sports are, at their heart, a way to

As a culture, we have come to associate epiphanies, revelations, and the like with poetic revelry, profound introspection, or communion with nature. But, it is a fact that profound and extraordinary experiences are extremely common in athletics, perhaps more so than in any other field of endeavor. The passions that athletics arouse, the physical demands they make, and the mental focus they require bring to bear our most exceptional abilities.

Despite our skepticism, athletics provoke us to magic. This is the hidden dimension of sport, its secret culture. The philosopher Michael Novak wrote that, "This is one of the great secrets of sport. There is a certain point of unity within the self, and between the self and its world, a certain complicity and magnetic mating, a certain harmony, that conscious mind and will cannot direct.... The discovery takes one's breath away."

But it is not really that well-kept a secret. Most anyone who has worked hard in some field of play can recall a moment of astonishment, when all of it-body, mind and the skill that runs through both-came together and the boundaries of possibility seemed to open wide before one's eyes. In these moments of pure and effortless intuition, everything you do seems to turn to gold. I still savor a few such long-ago moments-on a basketball court, a soccer field, a ski slope-with the same vivid detail as I recall my first kiss.

One does not have to be a player to sense this. As a writer Larry Shainberg observes, *"Our fascination with the zone, and indeed with sport in general, may be due, in part at least, to the possibilities it reveals, the energy and strength and flexibility of the organism when liberated from its ordinary neurological and psychological constraints."* As spectators, we are drawn irresistibly by the thrill of witnessing the drama of self-surpassing play. Athletics awaken and invite us to our own exceptional possibilities. We recognize our own surpassing self in the actions of another.

Years ago, Yogi Berra observed, *"Ninety percent of hitting is mental, the other half is physical."* Today, it appears the rest of the sports world is catching up to the wisdom of the Bronx sage. For many of today's athletes, psychological preparation has become as necessary a part of training as physical conditioning, perfecting one's skills, and learning strategy. Among the long list of high-profile athletes who have worked with sports psychologists are tennis greats Martina Navratilova and Jim Courier, pitcher John Smoltz, gold medal speed skater Dan Jansen, and boxer Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini.

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For many, like figure skater Nancy Kerrigan, the benefits of sports psychology are something to swear by. (And one can't help but wonder what a little time on the couch would have done for Tonya Harding's career.) Others have no use for it, like Olympic champion swimmer Summer Sanders, for whom the therapist's couch was nothing more than a place to catch up on some z's.

While the techniques and insights of sports psychology may not be for everyone, the growing recognition in the athletic world is that they can enhance players' skills and help them work through the obstacles to peak performance. As the chairman of the sports medicine committee for the U.S. Figure Skating Association, Dr. Craig McQueen, says, ***"Practicing in your mind is as valuable as practicing on ice."***

Of course, for coaches and athletes the idea of psychological preparation-getting motivated, getting ***"psyched"***-is not altogether new. But the approach has generally been lurching and intuitive, based on personal idiosyncrasy and tradition rather than a testable, shared body of knowledge. Coaches use discipline, cajolery, intimidation and inspiration to encourage their players, but their effectiveness is largely hit or miss. Even the best motivational speech has a brief lifespan if it fails to grasp the nature of the person to whom it is addressed. It is not that traditional techniques of motivation are wrong; they are just incomplete.

As any visit to a pre-game locker room will attest, players know instinctively the importance of mental focus, and they employ all manner of methods for getting psyched up. According to Dave Meggyesy, for those athletes playing at the highest levels the ability to put oneself in a state of heightened concentration is as essential as physical ability, technical mastery, and knowledge of the game. Warm-up drills are not just for loosening the body but also for focusing the mind.

This helps explain the often bizarre pre-game rituals of top-level athletes, such as former Stanford basketball star Val Whiting, who before each home game would have a friend stand in the exact same spot in front of her dorm and wish her good luck. Or Meggyesy, himself, who would tie and untie his shoelaces twenty or more times prior to kick-off. ***"If you had asked me why, I'd have said that it just didn't feel right."*** But this sort of ritual activity is part of the process of mental preparation. It helps induce a state of consciousness. It might also have been a good way of "binding" the anxiety of pre-game jitters.

Ted Williams commented that when he was in the Zone, he felt as if the baseball was stopped at the plate, waiting for him to swing at it.

When Michael Jordan was in the zone, making one of his spectacular leaps, he felt as if he would never come down.

John Brody, the San Francisco 49ers quarterback perceived the opposing line stopped when he was in the zone. He felt as if he had all day to throw the football downfield.

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While psychological preparation is not new, what is new (or at least relatively recent) is the systematic study and development of techniques for doing it more effectively. But the novelty of sports psychology is not just in relation to athletics; it is something of a new twist on psychology as well. The task for a sports psychologist is clearly defined: to enhance the performance of the athlete. Traditional clinical concerns-individuation, building ego strength, integration of repressed material and the like-are relevant only insofar as they affect performance. Athletes can be as quirky and nutty as ever, provided such traits are not interfering with what they actually do.

Yet the psyche is a whole, not just the sum of discrete parts. And so there is bound to be some overlap, as in the case of Oakland A's slugger Mark McGwire, who says of his decision to work with a sports psychologist, "It's the best decision I've made in my life. There are a lot of people who go a whole lifetime without knowing who they are, what they are, what they want.... It took me twenty-eight years to find out who I am and what I want. So I'm very happy about it."

Like their clinical counterparts, sports psychologists work with their clients on two fronts: working through mental obstructions and building up strengths. Bruce Ogilvie, professor emeritus at San Jose State and widely acknowledged as the dean of the field, speaks of the former as going after "*the beast within*":

Elite golfers, baseball pitchers, place kickers, they can go into phases where they can't hit the broad side of a barn. In practice, they can nail the sucker, then it's just gone. Their legs go to rubber. It may be because of a relationship off the field or with the coach, or maybe they missed two shots and have lost confidence. Something gets in their mental computer.

Getting the psychic circuitry back on line is only half the story. The other part is developing the kind of concentration and energy characteristic of the zone.

Keith Henschen of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, himself a leader in the field, addresses this part of the equation in a discussion with Larry Shainberg: "*No one can reach such levels by snapping their fingers, but the purpose of the exercises I use is to help an athlete get to the zone more frequently.*"

Mastery of one's craft and intense concentration are necessary, but they are not sufficient. For if there is one defining characteristic of the zone, a *sine qua non*, it is that it is effortless and unpredictable, a kind of state of grace. You cannot get into the zone through an act of will, **but there is ample evidence to indicate that a post hypnotic equipped with a trigger can reliably create the "Zone" state.**

The zone is not produced by effort, yet without effort nothing happens. So the question becomes, how does one prepare the ground? What *kind* of effort leads beyond self-conscious effort? The answer is subtle, at least to the ego, whose habit is to go directly after what it wants. That approach might work for a lot of things, but it won't work in the case of the zone. Readiness for the zone depends on the cultivation of three components: *skill, devotion and immersion*.

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According to Csikszentmihalyi, the *flow* experience happens "when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits" in pursuit of a worthwhile goal. What makes that stretching possible is the development of the necessary level of skill. Obviously, as in any field, some are more naturally gifted than others in athletic ability. But regardless of one's level of innate ability, without the disciplined cultivation of skill, potential will remain unfulfilled.

With greater skill comes a greater ability both to channel one's energy into the task at hand and to respond fully to the demands for action. In his portrait of Bill Bradley's brilliant basketball career at Princeton, *A Sense of Where You Are*, John McPhee describes the passion for detail that all top athletes share, and for which Bradley was famous:

"There are five parts to the hook shot," [Bradley] explains to anyone who asks. As he continues, he picks up a ball and stands about eighteen feet from a basket. "Crouch," he says, crouching, and goes on to demonstrate the other moves. "Turn your head to look for the basket, step, kick, follow through with your arms."

Once, as he was explaining this to me, the ball curled around the rim and failed to go in. *"What happened then?"* I asked him. *"I didn't kick high enough,"* he said. *"Do you always know exactly why you've missed a shot?"* *"Yes,"* he said, missing another one. *"What happened that time?"* *"I was talking to you. I didn't concentrate. The secret of shooting is concentration."*

This anecdote also hints at the second component to be cultivated: devotion to the game. To play with inspiration, one must give oneself over to the craft of one's game. It is no different for athletes than it is for artists. I am reminded of a story about a famous writer who was approached by an eager undergraduate wanting to know the Secret of being a writer herself. After a few moments thought, the answer came: *"Well, do you love words?"* Just as words are the basic stuff of a writer's craft, so are the body's rehearsed and ritualized movements the stuff of the athlete's craft. To appreciate and take delight in the ordering of mind and body that the game imposes brings one fully into the activity.

You've got to love the sport.

Only when the first two conditions are met can the third one be met as well: immersion in the activity. An archer who is worried about missing the target will miss it. A batter who is thinking about whether he will steal second will not make it to first. The name of the game is to set the busyness of the mind aside and fully bring one's attention to bear on the immediate task at hand. Professional archer Tim Strickland told Shainberg:

"Your conscious mind always wants to help you, but usually it messes you up. But you can't just set it aside. You've got to get it involved. The thing you have to do is anchor it in technique. Then your unconscious mind, working with your motor memory, will take over the shooting for you."

Or as baseball Hall-of-Famer Tim McCarver says, *"The mind's a great thing as long as you don't have to use it."* This is the concentration athletes all seek: anchored in technique, rooted in the body, focused on the task at hand, the conscious mind shuts off, deliberate intent is transcended, and the self seems to fall away. The conditions are ripe for the zone.

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Visualization, meditation, affirmations, counseling, progressive relaxation, and the other techniques of sports psychology can help enhance performance, but they cannot produce the zone.

However, through post-hypnotic suggestion the athlete can trigger the zone at will under certain conditions. A major part of the *MFTI Mental Fitness Training Program* is to create within the athlete the mental and emotional environments so the athlete can and will automatically without conscious effort, but with a pre-determined trigger, move into the zone at the right time and remain there for as long as is necessary.

This does not come instantly. Like anything else in athletics even this requires practice.
