

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

INNER EXCELLENCE

TRAIN YOUR MIND FOR
EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE
AND THE BEST POSSIBLE LIFE

JIM MURPHY

Copyright © 2020 by Jim Murphy. All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

All trademarks are trademarks of their respective owners. Rather than put a trademark symbol after every occurrence of a trademarked name, we use names in an editorial fashion only, and to the benefit of the trademark owner, with no intention of infringement of the trademark. Where such designations appear in this book, they have been printed with initial caps.

Inner Excellence is a registered trademark.

Published by the Academy of Excellence - New York – Rome - Tokyo

ISBN: 978-1-7346548-0-6 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-7346548-1-3 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-1-7346548-2-0 (e-book – kindle)

ISBN: 978-1-7346548-3-7 (audiobook)

The contents of this book are for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for personal, professional psychiatric or psychological advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your medical professional or other qualified mental health practitioner with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

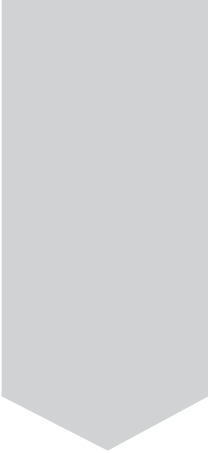
Interior design by Irena Kalcheva

Author photo by Jen Fellows/Aqua Photo

Cover design by Diren Yardimli and Vesna Tisma

Diagrams by Armin Hekic

Drawing of pipe by Vladimir Arabadzhi



PRAISE FOR INNER EXCELLENCE

“Inner Excellence changed how I see the world, how I think, and how I play golf.”

—Vaughn Taylor, Three-time PGA Tour winner

“Inner Excellence transformed my life—as a caddie, a father, and husband. This book is a masterpiece.”

—Brandon Parsons, PGA Tour veteran caddie

“Inner Excellence has had a dramatic impact on how I approach my life and how I play hockey.”

—Kevin Connauton, Defenseman, Arizona Coyotes

“Inner Excellence is an instruction manual that will teach you how to perform under pressure and live the best possible life. It’s something I’ll refer to the rest of my life.”

—Teddy Scott, 20-year PGA Tour golf caddie, 14 years with Bubba Watson

“I read the first edition of ***Inner Excellence*** ten times. I’ve practically memorized it. Incredibly, this revised edition is even better.”

—Jonathan Michael, Adjunct Professor, Trinity Western University, Governor General’s Gold Medal award winner

“Inner Excellence changed my life.”

—Ryan Dodd, World No. 1 ranked water ski jumper and current world record holder

“Jim is an expert in his field. ***Inner Excellence*** transcends athletics and will have a profound effect on everyone who applies these methods in their life.”

—John Kehoe, author of *Mind Power into the 21st Century*

“***Inner Excellence*** has profoundly influenced every area of my life.”

—David Bentall, President, *Next Step Advisors*, Adjunct Professor, University of British Columbia

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret:
It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;
what is essential is invisible to the eye.”
—**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince***

Above all else, watch over your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.
—**Solomon, 3rd King of the United Monarchy**

For my father, Donald C. Murphy

To the one who greatly influenced me to
think deeply about what to love and what to let go of.

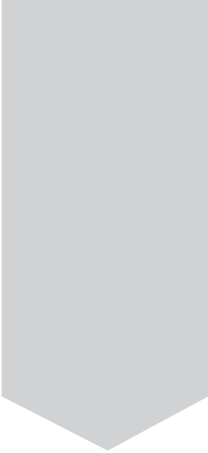
I love you. See you soon.

For my mother, Michiko M. Murphy (nee Koyama)

To my role model. I love you.

For Naomi T. Murphy

My sister, my inspiration



CONTENTS

Preface xi

Presuppositions xv

Introduction xxv

1 Maslow and the Maserati
The Pursuit of More1

2 Where the Wild Things Are
Pride and Fear and the Center of the Universe... 21

**3 The Greatest Opponents
You'll Ever Face**
The Critic, Monkey Mind, and the Trickster. 35

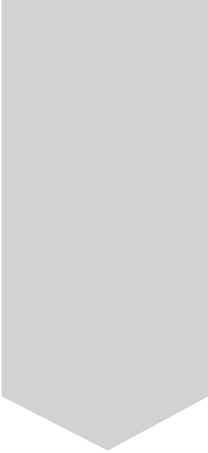
4 The Daring and the Twilight
Three Pillars of Extraordinary Performance 47

5 Code of the Samurai
How a Group of Warriors Mastered Their Ego. 79

6 Change Your State, Change Your Life
How to Control Your Emotions. 111

7 The World Is Flat
How to Develop Beliefs
in Line with Your Dreams 139

8 A Clear and Present Beauty	
The Five Most Powerful Ways to Be Fully Present	157
9 Unstoppable	
How to Overcome Mental Blocks, Fears and Phobias.....	185
10 The Hero and the Goat	
How to Have Poise Under Pressure	211
11 Maslow, Michael Jordan, and the Navy Seals	
Three Hallmarks of Extraordinary Leaders	245
 Conclusion	
A New Way of Life	263
About the Author	269
Inner Excellence FAQs	273
Appendix A	
12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.....	281
Acknowledgments.....	283
Notes	287
Glossary	303
Index.....	317



PREFACE

Koyama Bunpachiro had a difficult decision. Was he prepared to die? Was he ready to sacrifice comfort and pleasure and devote everything he had to the selfless way of the warrior? Would he honor the code?

To be a samurai in feudal Japan was to command honor and respect, embodied from a lifetime of training in moral leadership, duty and grace. Bunpachiro's life, like every other samurai, included daily training for battle and swordsmanship as well as calligraphy, poetry, art and tea ceremony.

The code of the samurai required total commitment. It would involve putting his country and master above himself, to the extent of imagining he was already dead. It meant waking up every day ready to die.

Bunpachiro chose the samurai way of life—and the acceptance of death that came with it. But in 1867, his entire lifestyle came to an abrupt halt. When two and a half centuries of samurai rule ended during his lifetime, he went from having incredible power to feeling powerless. His elite status, and everything he'd sacrificed for, was gone. His heart was crushed. Without a purpose for his life, the bottle became his unsympathetic friend.

If only Bunpachiro had learned what I've discovered, which is that every human heart has the potential for deep contentment, joy and confidence, and training it is the most important thing you'll ever do. Your heart is where all your hopes and dreams, fears and anxieties fade or flourish. It's the source of mental toughness and inner strength. If your heart is built around something temporary

that you cannot control, your life will be unstable. Bunpachiro's self-worth was attached to his role as samurai and when he lost it, he lost everything.

As you read this book and examine your heart, what you'll find is that your greatest dream is not realized in having millions of dollars or perhaps a house overlooking the ocean. Your dream is how you think these things will make you feel. Perhaps those things will bring happiness as you imagine people complimenting you on your success, or will bring great experiences as you have your friends over to enjoy your waterfront home. But maybe they won't. Besides, money and material possessions aren't actually what you're *really* after.

If you search your heart, beyond the desire for any measure of success, you'll discover, I believe, that what you really want is to feel truly alive, filled with vitality, purpose and meaning—absolute fullness of life. For most of us, perhaps unknowingly, life has been one long search for this fullness. We want deep, enriching experiences and meaningful relationships, a life where we're not constantly shrinking back in fear. We want to live courageously, learning and growing, fueling a fearlessness that awakens the lives of others.

That life is available to all of us, but we so easily get caught up chasing symbols of success rather than the real thing, sidetracked in busyness, losing sight of what we truly want. Rather than seeking fearless authenticity and personal growth directly, we pursue an illusion and get emptiness instead.

The direct pursuit means developing a new mindset and new skills, ones that lead to inner strength, peace, and confidence, independent of circumstances (the details of your life situations.) Your heart may need to re-orient its bearings and redefine success by prizing something that's more stable and powerful than your feelings or status, letting go of how society measures your life.

You can learn how to perform extraordinarily, under extreme pressure, *and* live a life of deep contentment, joy and confidence. In fact, you'll find that this re-orientation of the heart is the most efficient and powerful way to do so.

Yoshitaka Koyama, (Bunpachiro's son), watched his father, once a great warrior, lose his prominence and become an alcoholic. He saw that his father's identity was wrapped up in status and things he could not control. Yoshitaka began to think deeply about his own life, about what he truly wanted, and what was most important. He realized that what he craved was not power or prestige—he wanted fullness of life. As a result, Yoshitaka changed the course of his life, from one focused on power over others, to one focused on empowering others. Through this shift he gained deep contentment, joy and confidence and lived an extraordinary life.

This book was written by his great grandson.

PRESUPPOSITIONS (ASSUMPTIONS)



The quality of your *life* is based on three elements:

1. Your inner world of thoughts and feelings, beliefs and desires.
2. Your frame of reference (mindset) from which you see the world.
3. Your relationships.

How you think and feel is the result of the assumptions and beliefs that have formed in your heart (and subconscious, which we'll get into later). These assumptions and beliefs create a certain mindset that impacts how you relate to yourself, to others, and to everything in your life.

The quality of your *performance* is also based on three elements:

1. Your *belief* about who you are and what's possible for you.
2. Your ability to *focus* and be fully engaged in the moment: heart, mind and body (note: heart and spirit will be used interchangeably).
3. Your *freedom* to play like a kid, curiously exploring possibilities, excited for challenges that may arise.

The three elements that determine your quality of life, and three elements that determine the quality of your performance, are deeply interwoven.

I started writing the first version of this book in 2004 after moving to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona to live a life of relative solitude. I got rid of my television and over half my possessions, with Winston Churchill's words endlessly floating across my laptop's screensaver:

Those destined for greatness must first walk alone in the desert.

I went to the desert to live deliberately, in solitude, so I could live out Churchill's words. Words that also penetrated my heart were from Henry David Thoreau, who went into nature as well. Like Thoreau, I wanted to...

...front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when it came time to die, discover that I had not truly lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms.

I ended up spending five years in full-time research, interviews, and writing, two and a half years of it in the desert. I was obsessed with learning how the best in the world performed with confidence and poise under the most pressure. The main question I studied—and posed to sport psychologists all over North America—was this: How can an Olympic athlete train for four years, for an event that may last less than a minute, and have peace and confidence under that kind of pressure?

As I dove into research, I realized that helping athletes win a world championship or Olympic gold medal would be meaningless unless it improved their quality of life—their inner life. So I started to study two main concepts:

1. How to have extraordinary poise and mental toughness under extreme pressure.
2. How to live the best possible life, one with deep contentment, joy and confidence.

In the desert I had an astonishing insight. I realized that the pursuit of extraordinary performance and the pursuit of the best possible life are the same path.

This realization changed my life.

I only wish I had learned it when I was playing in the Chicago Cubs organization. I could have performed with so much more freedom and confidence. I was playing the wrong game, but didn't know it.

Most of us have been playing the wrong game our entire lives. We've been focusing on short-term wins, temporary happiness, and surface-level achievements, when we were created for so much more. We've been playing a zero-sum, finite game, with a winner and a loser, a beginning and an end, when it's really an infinite one. Life is meant to be a journey connecting with others, growing together, discovering new and amazing things, rather

than a game of constant comparison and competition, always trying to fit in or be successful. We've been setting our sights too low, going for the low-hanging fruit on a single bush, when entire orchards await.

Which game have *you* been playing?

The best possible life—absolute fullness of life—is one with extraordinary experiences, deep, meaningful relationships, and, most of all: love, joy and peace. These three “resources” lead to an abundance of fruit that multiplies into so much more: peace becomes patience, patience becomes kindness, then goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and, ultimately, self-control.

Whatever dream you may have, I believe that in the end, what you really want is to be filled with love, joy and peace and all the other powerful resources that come with them. It's an extraordinary life and it's available to all of us, but the cost is high. It takes clear intention and devotion, and the willingness to be vulnerable in order to develop your inner world.

To develop your inner world is to transform your heart, so that what it loves most is powerful and meaningful. This enables you to grow in *belief*, *focus* and *freedom*, the three key elements of extraordinary performance. It enables you to direct your thoughts and create mental patterns around extraordinary possibilities and what you're most passionate and excited about—what you were born for—rather than being caught up in worry, stress or anxiety.

Most of us have had it backwards, trying to be successful in order to be happy. If we focus on improving our inner world, however, we'll achieve far more. We can have joy and peace, purpose and power—which will maximize our performance as well. But we need to get the order right if we want extraordinary performance over the long term—and an amazing life: heart first, performance second. Inner world first, outer world follows.

Besides, an extraordinary outer world is worthless without a meaningful inner one, is it not?

The journey toward the best possible life starts with adjusting the lens through which we see the world. According to Dr. Darrell Johnson, PhD, Teaching Fellow at Regent College:

Every human being has a vision of reality; every one of us looks out at life from a frame of reference. We all have deeply held presuppositions about the nature of reality. We may not be able to name those presuppositions but they're there. They're reflected in the way we treat people, the way we spend time and the way we spend our money. Or to put it more simply, every single one of us wears a set of glasses. These glasses were given to us by our families, by our childhood experiences, by the books we've read, by the experiences we've had, by the movies we've seen. These visions of reality affect the whole of our lives.

The most extraordinary performers and individuals who ever lived perceived their circumstances in remarkably similar ways. They had a lens through which they viewed the world that was similar to each other's but very different from everyone else's.

This book will help you understand how those amazing individuals trained their minds (and oriented their hearts) so that they were always learning and growing, and how you can train your mind and heart to do the same.

In order to have both sustained peak performance and fullness of life, we must examine who we are, how we're put together, and what drives us. In my five years of full-time research (post-Master's degree) the same component stood out for both peak

performance and having an extraordinary life: the heart. Learning that the heart (or spirit) is the key driver for both was the turning point in my research.

The heart is where we store our hopes and dreams, beliefs and assumptions. Out of the heart comes good or evil, love or fear. It's the source of our deepest motivations and greatest power. If we want to develop confidence and poise under pressure, as well as deep contentment and joy, we need to challenge the assumptions and beliefs we have in our hearts—to see if they are really true. We all have a story we've been telling ourselves over our entire lifetimes, based on assumptions and beliefs that have formed in our hearts. Some of these are empowering and true, some are not. We also have beliefs that allow us to see possibilities and beauty no one else can.

When your life is based on the Truth with a capital T, it expands every day—like the sun's rays filling a welcoming sky—revealing unknown beauties. On this powerful journey of *Inner Excellence*, we're going to direct what you think and how you think towards what's powerful and permanent.

First, however, we must let go of the assumptions (we'll call them presuppositions) that may have limited our lives without our knowing it. A life with unlimited possibilities is only possible when the assumptions that guide our lives are also free from limits.

Here are some old presuppositions we're going to drop (and the reasons why):

- I am my thoughts.
 - Sometimes terrible or shameful thoughts flash through our minds that are not true and have nothing to do with who we really are.
- My value is based on my results.
 - You may have grown up in a culture or family that

has instilled this in you, but your self-worth does not increase or decrease based on your performance.

- The best performers were born that way.
 - Whatever abilities you were born with can be improved far beyond what you've imagined, largely through hard work, deliberate practice on specific skills (that I will teach you), and learning to direct and control your desires.

Here are ten new empowering presuppositions that will form the basis of the mindset you'll develop as you read this book:

1. Every circumstance and every person you encounter is here to teach you and help you—it's all working for your good.
 - You were created for glory (infinite, inherent worth).
 - The life you've been given is meant to develop your character and prepare you for that glory.
2. Your life is a reflection of your beliefs.
 - The foundation for extraordinary performance, joy and confidence—and the primary skill to learn—is how to believe.
 - Beliefs are the control panel of your life, a subconscious thermostat, keeping your life in line with your comfort levels. To improve performance (and your life) in a consistent, powerful way, you must change your beliefs about who you are and what's possible.
3. Self-centeredness is the root cause of fear.
 - It leads to self-consciousness (concern about what others think of us), overanalysis, and ultimately, self-rejection.
 - Our greatest obstacle is getting in our own way through arrogance or self-rejection, both of which come from self-centeredness.

4. We all have the same deep needs and same deep desires.
 - Every human heart desperately wants to be loved and accepted; most of what we do is done in order to meet this need.
 - Our deepest need is for unconditional love and our greatest desire is to be fully known and fully loved.
5. Everyone does the best they can with what they have (in their hearts).
 - That is... according to their background, their understandings, their beliefs, their fears, their wounds, and their voids.
 - Whenever someone (including yourself) acts in a way that is painful or hurtful, it is because they lack resources such as love, joy and peace, looking through a self-centered lens of fear or pain.
6. The map is not the territory.
 - The world you see and interact with isn't reality; it's the one your mind created, based on the way you've interpreted and processed the events in your life so far.
 - The pipe you saw at the beginning of these presuppositions is not actually a pipe. It's a picture of a pipe. That may seem like a silly distinction, but actually it's quite important (as Rene Magritte shared with us in his 1929 painting, *The Treachery of Images*).
7. You are not your mind.
 - Your mind is a part of you that you need to train. You can learn to direct and control your thoughts, just like you learn to control your body.
 - The greatest freedom you have is where to place your thoughts. As you realize that you are not your mind, you will be less attached to the useless, negative

thoughts that come every day, and direct your mind towards empowering ones.

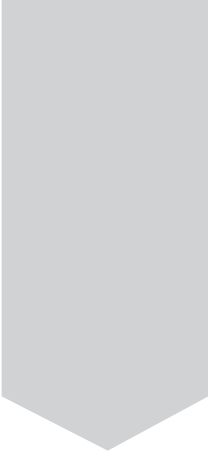
8. The problem is not the problem, the problem is the way you're thinking about it.
 - You're not happy or sad because of your circumstances, but rather because of what you *think* about your circumstances.
 - How you feel originates almost entirely from what you think; the state you enter caused by how you think about a problem is the real problem.
9. There's no failure, only feedback.
 - Success and failure are highly interrelated, equally important, and labeled as opposites by our culture.
 - Your ability to learn and grow and maximize your potential is directly correlated to your ability to embrace failure.
10. The person with the most control of their inner world has the most power.
 - Mastery of the ego is the great challenge (and greatest opponent) in every competition.
 - Selflessness—complete surrender—of the attachments, concerns and fears of the self, is the central component to extraordinary performance and cornerstone to creating beliefs that lead to absolute fullness of life.

Note: Inner Excellence definitions for some of the terms throughout the book are provided in the glossary.

These presuppositions are a crucial part of the mindset you'll be developing the rest of your life. You'll be learning a lot of new information and because much of this is new to you, it

may seem overwhelming at times. Don't worry, my professional athletes have achieved extraordinary success through this process, and most have felt the same way at the start. Remember, this is a lifelong journey. This is a manual you will refer back to many times.

As you go through the book, mark this section to keep these presuppositions and principles in mind. Commit them to memory and take notes, especially in the first few chapters as we analyze the challenging obstacles that we all encounter. As you do, you'll begin to notice how these perspectives will help you gain mastery over your greatest challenges. This will set the foundation for the tools and skills you'll learn throughout the rest of the book. Ok, it's go time. Let's do this!



INTRODUCTION

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.

—C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

In the early hours of June 27, 2011, Ryan Dodd woke up in an alley outside a bar in a rough part of town in Flint, Michigan. He had a fractured skull. Only hours before, he had been standing on top of the podium after one of the biggest victories of his life, holding the “King of Darkness” gold medal high in the air.

Professional waterski jumpers hit the ramp at 70 miles per hour and fly over 200 feet. Ryan was used to facing danger, but never so much as that night. At the hospital, he was diagnosed with a fractured skull and bleeding in the brain in three areas. He was rushed to the trauma center for emergency surgery to alleviate pressure on the skull. Twelve hours later they were able to stop the bleeding.

After a miraculous recovery, Ryan not only skied again, but he excelled. He won his first event back on the water in May the following year. Several weeks later he then won the next (and biggest) event of the year, the Masters, which he’d never won before. He went on to have the best year of his career.

Ryan continued to improve and in 2017 he broke the world record, became world champion, and number one in the world.

Over the past four years (2016-19) Ryan won 87% of the tournaments he entered. In August 2019, on a Sunday afternoon just outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he won his third world championship in a row.

How did Ryan go from waking up in an alley with a fractured skull, to getting back on the water and achieving things he never dreamed possible?

Interestingly, his workouts and training volume stayed about the same. Yet, there was a fundamental difference between Ryan pre-head injury and Ryan post-head injury, one that helped propel him to the top of the world rankings and the world record. Ryan found a different way of living in the world – one that changed how he thought about his performance and entire life.

This book is about that difference.

It's a completely different way of seeing the world, one that transforms not just how we think, but what we think about. It's a different lifestyle, one that revamps our hearts from seeking temporary, surface-level goals to seeking powerful, permanent ones. It completely reverses how we pursue peak performance.

Ryan's life and performance dramatically changed by changing one thing in his life: he learned *Inner Excellence*. This book will teach you what Ryan and other world-class athletes have learned: how to train your mind for extraordinary performance and fullness of life.

Whether we're athletes or not, we're all performers. We all "compete" to have good days, handle adversity well, get in a rhythm that flows with peace and purpose, and get great results. We also all have a certain mindset from which our performance—and daily life—flows.

Your mindset is your overall attitude and way of thinking that comes from how you perceive yourself and the world. These perceptions create certain attitudes and ways of thinking that

become habitual. It orients your heart around what you believe is important and possible in your life. Your mindset sets the tone for everything you do.

The mindset of *Inner Excellence* is this:

I compete to raise the level of excellence in my life, to learn and grow, in order to raise it in others.

We don't pursue peak performance for the trophy or adoration, but to discover something within us and experience something we've never experienced before. We compete for the competition itself, to fully experience the moment and feel fully alive. We do this to help others—including our opponents—do the same thing, so we can all learn and grow and raise the level of excellence in our lives. We crave adversity and challenges as a means of seeing the truth about who we are in that moment and therefore who we can become.

We don't climb mountains to get to the top—we climb to see who we can become in trying to get there. The peak gives us a goal and focus for our behaviors, but the reason for climbing or competing is far more empowering than an expansive view and social media posts.

Consider the journal entry of Olympic speed skater Clara Hughes after winning a gold medal:

In my heart it is clear to me why I go to the line time and again. I can assure you it's not a medal hanging around my neck I'm after. Medals are things I send to my mom in Winnipeg, which she in turn shares with friends and family. They are not what provide the deep sense of accomplishment, which fills my sense of self, in turn teaching me how to live.

Hughes skates so she can learn how to live. The most powerful way to live is to raise the level of excellence in your life, to learn and grow, in order to raise it in others.

Here's a comparison of how the world sees competition and performance and how *Inner Excellence* views them:

The world's mindset	<i>Inner Excellence</i> mindset
Winning is everything.	Developing inner strength, fully experiencing the moment, and continually growing are far more lasting and empowering.
You are your results.	Results are an inconsistent measure of success and failure – you can perform poorly and win, just as you can perform well and lose.
The opponent is the enemy.	The opponent is our partner in the dance.
Failure is not an option.	Failure is the key component to growth. There is no real “failure”, only feedback.
Fierce competitors get mad when they lose.	The best competitors develop emotional control and use mistakes to get better.

Inner Excellence is an entire lifestyle and training system designed to help you, whether you're a professional athlete or everyday citizen, perform extraordinarily and be your true self so you can live with absolute fullness of life.

In this book, we'll look at how top Olympians and world-class performers train for years for an event that may last less than a minute. Despite not having full control over their results, these athletes perform with peace and confidence under incredible pressure. We'll then look at how you can do the same, whether you're an athlete or executive, baker or blogger.

In my experience talking to and working with world-class performers and leaders, I've learned that what we really want, beyond our tangible goals and pursuits, is to feel totally alive. We crave great experiences and meaningful relationships and we long to reach our full potential. We want to be challenged and creative. We want to grow. We want freedom to live with passion and pursue our dreams regardless of what people think, how much money we make, or what level of status we acquire. Ultimately, we want the best possible life—absolute fullness of life.

Fear takes all of that away. Fear lives in the painful memories of the past and unknown experiences of the future, taking us out of the unlimited possibilities in the present. Instead of challenges, we see obstacles; instead of opportunities, we see setbacks. Instead of experiencing growth, we live in the past. If we want to truly live, we need to embrace our fears and find the courage to be our true selves.

As an outfielder in the Chicago Cubs organization, my sense of worth and identity revolved around my performance, mostly my batting average. When I hit well, I walked tall and felt great. When I hit poorly, my shoulders slumped and my outlook was dark. Life was a roller coaster of emotions. I was a slave to results and it stifled my performance. I was afraid of failure and that fear kept putting my mind in the past and future.

When I started coaching professional and Olympic athletes, I saw this over and over again: athletes had lost their joy and

passion for life as they struggled under the pressure to perform. The fear of failure engulfed their lives.

This book will share with you how some of the best athletes in the world have learned *Inner Excellence*, how it propelled them to extraordinary performance even when they were filled with doubt, and how you can excel in the same way in your life. But far more than that, you'll learn how to live with deep contentment, joy and confidence in your everyday life.

We'll see how the basic principles are the same, whether you're an athlete or an executive, an Olympic team or corporate group. We'll explore the concept of selfless-actualization and the ways in which the study of extraordinary people teaches us to perform our best and truly live.

The first concept to learn is this: This book, this lifestyle, is based on a presupposition:

The biggest obstacle we face, in performance and in life, is self-centeredness.

It's not the morality of it that I speak of. The main issue is that in our preoccupation with ourselves, our vision narrows, our growth is limited, and our failures are amplified. Curiosity and excitement for challenges gets replaced by anxiety and fear of failure. The potential for self-rejection grows.

How you see the world, and therefore what you believe is possible, comes from the beliefs you've created and the story you made out of it about who you are. That story comes from your mind's continual assessment of your past, to which you've become attached. It's that attachment that limits us. Our biggest obstacle is in our mind, or, rather, the program our mind runs based on who we've subconsciously programmed ourselves to be.

The solution is one that has empowered world-class performers, Olympic and professional athletes, and some of the best teams in the world. It's a model based on three simple words: love, wisdom, and courage. Love is to lead with your heart, wisdom is to expand your vision, and courage is to be fully present. In this model, love becomes passion, wisdom becomes purpose, and courage becomes poise.

If in the pursuit of the extraordinary, you devote your entire life to learning and growing in love, wisdom, and courage, you'll find, I believe, that your heart will slowly transform to value experience more than results. You'll gain belief, focus and freedom (BFF). Soon, fully experiencing the moment will move up in priority over winning or the bottom line, which ironically, will allow you to win more often. Where it once focused on temporary, surface-level goals and desires, your heart will lose self-conscious concern for self and become devoted to what's powerful and permanent. Your performance will take off. Your life will change. Let's go. Amazing awaits.

1

MASLOW AND THE MASERATI

The Pursuit of More

Seduced by the siren song of a consumerist, quick-fix society, we sometimes choose a course of action that brings only the illusion of accomplishment, the shadow of satisfaction.

—George Leonard, Aikido master

If you want freedom, you might consider going into the wild. There's no mortgage, bills, or lawn to mow. If it's stability and security you're after, you might consider the three meals a day offered within the four walls of prison. But if you want a different freedom, the freedom of a life of vision and courage, peace and joy, it's going to cost you. Real freedom is costly.

In order to be truly free, we must have the courage to conform to certain disciplines, face our fears, and connect with our true selves. The path toward real success and long-term fulfillment is a risky one: obstacles of materialism, consumerism, and instant gratification confront us every day. They create a seductive numbness and a false reality that inhibits a powerful life, a life of freedom. As we gradually conform to society's expectations and its definition of success, we become defined by our day-to-day performance (and our results), we lose our freedom, and eventually, we lose our selves.

It's a daunting view, the risky path of our true dreams. It's much more comfortable to follow the easier, wider route of less risk, less failure, and more self-indulgence. We don't like to look at that unknown path of possibility; it's too scary. It's easier to

give in to that part of the mind that wants instant gratification and temporary pleasures, to cover up the bigger, scarier picture of what we really want: the sacred moments that come from feeling truly alive. So we end up using our God-given talents in pursuit of false idols—chasing money or status or numbers or approval—in an attempt to quench our deep thirst to be grounded and fulfilled.

We've all had times when everything came together in perfect harmony: sacred moments, when we were totally immersed in the experience and felt fully alive. When these moments occur, we wish, even for a split second, we had the courage to pursue this risky path with all our heart.

And we can! Often, though, we're so hard on ourselves, amplifying all our failures and regrets, that we neglect to see what's still possible—a life of freedom, filled with deep contentment, joy and confidence, independent of circumstances. We're all human, with the same deep desires and concerns. We all want great experiences and meaningful relationships; we want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We want to love and laugh and be successful. It's human nature.

But each of us also has a mind that has judgmental thoughts, produces desires that hurt us, and creates beliefs that limit us. This all occurs because our minds have not been trained to manage the one component on which everything hinges: *our thoughts*.

In the pursuit of extraordinary performance, it's easy to succumb to anxiety and pressure, because so much is out of your control. When you learn to live a life that is fully engaged, however, then you can perform your best *and* love the challenge. Every performance, presentation, or problem you face is an opportunity to learn and grow and vividly experience each moment. You will find, as you take this journey with me, that your best moments always come from a clear mind and unburdened

heart. This allows you to take the risks necessary to be everything you were created to be.

The Narrow Road of Selfless Actualization

Don't aim at success—the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side-effect of one's dedication to a cause greater than oneself, or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself.

**—Dr. Victor Frankl, holocaust survivor, author,
*Man's Search for Meaning***

In the quest for a life of freedom, there are two basic paths: the popular road, spacious and inviting, offering praise and admiration; and the narrow one that, though difficult, less glamorous, and often rocky, leads to deep contentment, joy and confidence. It's the latter path that sacrifices much but holds the key to extraordinary performance. There you'll find the freedom of an undivided heart, one not attached to your results or what people might think or say.

Psychiatrist Abraham Maslow studied this path in an interesting way. He analyzed the characteristics of successful people, such as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein: how they thought, what they dreamed of, how they lived. In doing so, he found that they shared a number of common traits, including a strong sense of self, a close connection to others, and both the curiosity to solve problems and the resourcefulness to do it. They had high self-acceptance and were motivated to have peak

experiences. He called these people, who not only changed the world but also lived fulfilling lives, *self-actualizers, fully human*.

Self-actualizers, Maslow noted, with their greater vision, shared a unique ability to engage in moments in which they felt truly alive, creative, and integrated. Maslow's high achievers selflessly pursued a purpose beyond themselves. In light of this, we'll refer to these high achievers as *selfless* actualizers, or people who saw the world through a lens beyond self, and thus had the freedom to live fully. Here are nine characteristics Maslow used to describe them:

1. **Total absorption** They learn to experience key events fully, vividly, and selflessly, with complete concentration.
2. **Personal growth** They don't get hung up on lower level needs or desires (i.e., approval from others), but seek to learn and grow. Their goal is to experience the moment, more so than anything tangible they can get from it. For them, the means *is* the end; the journey is the enjoyment, not the result.
3. **Self-awareness** Selfless actualizers do the work to uncover their true motives, emotions and abilities. They are guided by their own code of ethics, which often makes them feel like aliens in a foreign land.
4. **Gemeinschaft** This German word means fellowship and community. Maslow felt that belonging is a fundamental human need and that connecting with others was an essential part of self-actualization.
5. **Gratitude** Selfless actualizing people have the wonderful capacity to appreciate again and again, freshly and naïvely, the basic goods of life, with awe, pleasure, wonder, and even ecstasy, however stale these experiences may have

become to others. Thus, for such a person, any sunset may be as beautiful as the first one, any wildflower as breathtaking even after viewing a million wildflowers. For such people, even the casual workday, moment-to-moment business of living can be thrilling.

- 6. Authenticity/resistance to enculturation** Selfless actualizers are motivated to fulfill their own inner potential rather than society's external rewards; they have greater autonomy and resist passively becoming like everyone else.
- 7. Solitude** Selfless actualizers are able to be alone with their feelings. They desire solitude to a greater degree than the average person. Selfless-actualizers enjoy time for quiet reflection and do not always have to have people around them. They are able to be near someone and have no need to communicate with them; being in their presence is sufficient in and of itself.
- 8. Purpose beyond self** Selfless actualizers have some mission in life, some task to fulfill, some problem outside themselves which enlists much of their energy, for the good of mankind.
- 9. Lack of ego defenses** Maslow felt that we build walls we think will protect us but instead they hem us in. Selfless actualizers are able to identify their internal defenses and then find the courage to give them up.

In the pages that follow, you'll learn how self-centeredness leads to fear, and similarly, how selflessness leads to fearlessness. For selfless actualizers, their natural concern for self - and all its limits and petty quibbles - were overshadowed by a much bigger vision with farther reaching possibilities than a self-centered mind can envision.

For Maslow, these characteristics and the behaviors associated with them, reveal what's already within you, or, more accurately, what's already you.

Imagine Michelangelo chiseling away the marble block as he sculpted David. He cut away everything that wasn't David to expose this magnificent human form. Likewise, we are the rock with the potential to emerge into something incredible, but we're constrained by expectations, worries, and fears. We've been socialized to value the fame and popularity of success, however fleeting, over the experience that drives it. In this we lose our joy. We get so locked into winning that we become afraid of losing.

Attachment to something you're not in complete control of makes you needy and brings with it the fear of not getting what you want. Concern for self and self-consciousness kicks in, scattering your energy and dividing your power. Back and forth it goes, between the quest to win and fear of losing; tension rises as the pressure mounts. But beneath those constraints lies an undivided heart—the heart of a warrior—your true self. Remove what isn't you and like Michelangelo unveiled David, you'll discover tremendous strength and poise.

The Affluenza Virus

The true worth of a man is measured by the objects he pursues.

—**Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor, 161-180 AD**

To chisel away what's not you is difficult. It is easy to get sidetracked, seduced by the facade of what looks like your true dream. Western culture exposes us daily to the “affluenza” virus (the most dangerous type of virus—one that can steal your soul). This virus idolizes five things:

- **Possessions**
- **Achievements**
- **Looks** (physical appearance)
- **Money**
- **Status**

Merriam-Webster defines palms as (among other things) symbols of triumph or superiority. These five symbols of success can steal your true dreams by getting you to focus on them instead of what's truly meaningful, empowering, and permanent. The affluenza's virus injects you with the constant desire to gain more and compare yourself with others, and it's never satisfied. This phenomenon divides your heart and distances you from your true self.

Ironically, it's our fixation on the symbols of our dreams that takes us further from the real dream inside us. A nicer car. A bigger house. A million followers. Our natural attraction to things that make us look and feel good is where the road diverts from that which is powerful, fulfilling, and permanent.

According to Maslow, if we spend our life in pursuit of nicer places to live and fancier cars to drive (even if they are really cool), we're meeting only low-level needs. The problem isn't the components of the virus in and of themselves—the money, achievements, and so forth—but rather putting your trust and identity in something transient and unstable.

The real problem occurs when those external things become your ultimate treasure, because your heart will follow. The focus of your highest desires molds you to have the characteristics of that which you desire. Possessions and achievements, looks, money and status are all fleeting, and a heart built on temporary things will have insecurity as a constant companion.

As others praise or covet your symbols of success, you get a momentary sense of pride and false sense of worth, which

spurs you to chase after more of what you were praised for. The more you get, the more you want, and the more you have difficulty enjoying what once was really exciting. That striving becomes a sickness that leads to despair as your identity becomes characterized by what you have, what you've achieved, how you look or how others perceive you. When those things come, you see that they're hollow. It leaves an emptiness.

In Western culture, the affluenza virus is everywhere. When everyone around you has the cold or flu, it's hard not to get it yourself; you must take measures to strengthen your immunity against it, or you will succumb as well. Your immunity, as you'll see as we go along, is strengthened by a strong sense of identity, a purpose beyond self, and a powerful system for managing your thoughts, feelings and desires.

In my visits to other cultures, I've found life to be much simpler. In Costa Rica, for example, lawyers and cab drivers, shoppers and shop owners, all seemed socially equal. A dentist may socialize with a tow truck driver and invite the driver in for dinner after having his car towed, as my host family did while I was there coaching. I still recall my host asking him to stay during the meal—as if this was a normal thing—and getting so excited over dinner when the driver showed him on a map where he was from. The Costa Rican culture seemed far happier and more content than my own. They work. They eat. They play. In their developing country, they needed little and appreciated much.

YOU'VE REACHED THE END OF THIS FREE EXCERPT

Keep going.

Get the full book, Inner Excellence,
and continue the journey.

Buy the Book

innerexcellence.com/jim-murphys-books