

TENNIS

MENTAL TOUGHNESS WORKBOOK

By Jorge Capestany, Master Professional, and Steven G. Hamming, Psy.D. Sports Psychologist



TABLE OF CONTENT		Page
>	Foreword by Dr. Jack Groppe	3
>	About the Authors	4
>	How to Use This Book	5
1	Introduction: The Four Areas of Tennis Training	6
2	The Mind is the Battlefield	10
3	Developing Your Inner Coach	16
4	Conquering Your Fear of Losing	23
5	Developing a Positive Mental Attitude	27
6	Surviving a Slump	33
7	Developing Your Fighting Spirit	39
8	Mental Toughness with Your Doubles Partner	44
9	Taking Responsibility for Your Own Game	48
10	Understanding Why Tennis is So Tough	55
11	Core Values That Tennis Can Teach	60
12	A Chapter for Tennis Parents	63
13	eBook Summary	67
14	Jorge's Letter of Gratitude to Tennis	67

FORWARD

By Dr. Jack Groppe – Human Performance Institute.

I have known Jorge Capestany for many years, and throughout all these years, I have observed him as one of the most student-oriented teachers I have ever met. In two words, he cares. His life has been one of devotion to his students and helping them strive for excellence in all they do.

He is involved in the game of tennis and is considered a leader in the tennis-teaching industry. He has been deeply involved in teaching tennis for over 40 years.

Jorge has been recognized as.

- Six-time Michigan Pro of the Year
- Two-time Midwest Pro of the Year
- PTR National Pro of the Year
- RSPA National Pro of the Year

Jorge's vast experience and desire to learn have enabled him to write this booklet.

Designed for players, parents, and teachers of all ability levels, this booklet will take you on a journey. The journey involves understanding who you are as a player, evaluating your strengths and weaknesses, and then starting down the path to improvement.

In my mind, tennis imitates life in many dimensions. The key to becoming a great tennis player is process. Jorge has done a masterful job of developing a process that benefits tennis players of all ability levels. The process he has created could be a big step in your development as a tennis player.

Enjoy your journey on the path to excellence! Tennis is the game of a lifetime!

Jack Groppe, Ph.D.
Vice-Chairman and Co-Founder
Human Performance Institute

About the Author – Jorge Capestany

RSPA Master Professional and PTR International Master Professional.

Jorge Capestany: Jorge is one of only 14 people worldwide who hold the Master Professional distinction with the Racquet Sports Professional Association (RSPA) and the International Master Professional distinction with the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR). He founded Capestany Racquet Sports Inc., which operates a tennis and pickleball website for coaches and players alike. Jorge lives in Holland, Michigan. Originally from Havana, Cuba, Jorge has taught more than 65,000 hours of tennis lessons over a nearly 40-year span.

Jorge has coached hundreds of highly ranked juniors, including over 195 Michigan high school State Champions and 3 USTA National Champions. His players have received scholarships totaling more in the millions.

Jorge is an internationally renowned speaker at all the world's largest tennis conventions, including the USTA Tennis Teachers Conference at the US Open, the USPTA World Conference, The PTR International Tennis Symposium, the International Tennis Federation's (ITF) worldwide coaches conference, Asia PTR Tennis Week in Shanghai China, the Australian Open Grand Slam Tennis Coaches conference in Melbourne, and the Norwegian Tennis Federations seminar weekend.

Jorge has appeared on several shows on the Tennis Channel as part of the ***OnCourt with USPTA*** show series and may be best known for creating two successful tennis industry websites... www.TennisDrills.tv for coaches and www.JorgeCapestany.com for tennis players.

About the Author – Dr. Steve Hamming

Psy.D. Sports Psychologist

As a licensed clinical psychologist with over 25 years of experience, Dr. Hamming is practicing in downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan, specializing in performance coaching, utilizing EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing) psychotherapy techniques. In working with competitive and amateur athletes and creative individuals, Dr. Hamming has been able to optimize mental readiness, helping them perform to their fullest potential.

He received his Doctorate of Psychology from George Fox University in Portland, Oregon. He is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing International Association (EMDRIA), the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress (AAETS), and the American Group Psychological Association (AGPA).

He personally continues to compete athletically and utilizes all the concepts and practices he teaches to others. The development of his mental game has proven to be successful. He competes nationally and has been recognized as an All-American multiple times in fast-pitch softball. He also competes in the United States Track and Field Masters division, where he won two gold medals. He has coached and trained athletes in many different sports. Through his practice, his focus is to help others reach their fullest potential.

Dr. Hamming is also the founder of OP Sports, which specializes in sports performance coaching. He trains minds to optimize their performance every single time they compete. Dr.

Hamming can teach athletes how to deepen their concentration, sharpen their focus, and roll with the emotional roller coaster accompanying any performance-related activity. Visit the website www.op-sports.com.

Dr. Hamming has a unique perspective on tennis because he is a tennis player. He played singles for his high school team in Hudsonville, Michigan. This was the same team co-author Jorge Capestany played on, and the two played together in 1976-1977.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This booklet was written for adult players, junior players, coaches, tennis professionals, and parents alike.

Each chapter is set up in the same way:

- 1) The first part of each chapter contains 2-4 pages of information specifically addressing the chapter's topic.
- 2) The second part of each chapter is a workbook-style "exercise" section where you will answer questions about the chapter and yourself.
- 3) The third part of each chapter is a straightforward section where you can write down the top three most helpful ideas you took from that chapter. This will allow you to write your book review as you go through the book.

If you are a junior or adult **player**, I hope you can learn many ways to improve your mental game and become a more mentally tough and relaxed player. I hope the skills you discover by reading this book will also serve you outside of tennis.

As a coach, I hope you will develop a passion for teaching your players about all aspects of tennis, not just how to hit the ball better. I hope this book can help you and your players/teams better understand the advantages of mental toughness training and that you can successfully use these new skills on the court.

If you are a **teaching professional**, I hope you can help the students in your classes and private lessons become more mentally tough. I also hope this booklet can be an endless supply of lesson topics for you and your junior and adult players.

If you are a **parent** of a junior tennis player, I hope this book can provide you with ideas for helping your son or daughter. I especially recommend that parents read chapters 10-12, as they are specifically insightful to tennis parents, whether they play the game or not.

I encourage you to write notes, underline sections that interest you, and tear into this book as you read it.

Lastly, as the owner of this book, I encourage you to have an open mind when it comes to your tennis mental toughness training. Many younger players have difficulty seeing the benefits of mental training and avoid doing any, only to regret it later.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction – Four Areas of Tennis

I've been playing tennis since 1974, and I cannot tell you how often my mind has worked against me while I competed. The result was more and more negative thoughts swirling around my head, leading me to become an exceedingly negative thinker on the court.

I grew more disgusted with myself over my inability to win matches that I should have or to close out matches when I was ahead. For years, I could only win matches where I was the obviously better player. I rarely won matches against opponents of a similar level, and I could never beat a person who was even moderately better than I was, even if I had a great day. I would often be happy to have a close score with someone I perceived as better than me. Sound familiar?

Luckily, I was able to reverse this problem and eventually became mentally tough enough to win matches against better opponents, even opponents that I should not have beaten on paper. I can't honestly tell you that I overcame these problems with a concerted effort or plan to do so. Instead, it was a long, sometimes painful, process that took several years. I realize now that I was lucky to stumble upon some methods that worked for me, but it was certainly not an intentional thing that I had set out to do. What I want to share with you in this book are the many things that I learned over a long period and present to you in a concise program that will hopefully lead you to a place where your mind works **with you** instead of against you as you compete on the tennis court. I want to show you a road map on how to succeed and not just hope you someday stumble upon some useful information.

Another reason I decided to write this book is because I know there are millions of tennis players in the world who suffer from the same mental struggles that I did. I am especially interested in helping recreational players learn to listen to how they speak to themselves and pay attention to their thoughts.

I have been a tennis teaching professional since 1980 and have taught more than 65,000 hours on the court with my students and club members. During these hours, I have witnessed my students' many failures and successes.

Here are some things that I know for sure:

- 1) Most players today would say they are not as mentally tough as they would like.
- 2) All players could greatly benefit from mental toughness training, but very few ever do.
- 3) Today's players suffer from an inordinate amount of **negative self-talk** and cannot control their thoughts while they compete.
- 4) The world's best players have figured out the importance of training themselves to be mentally tough. Almost all the players on the professional tour are actively working on this area of their game!

The Four Areas of Tennis Training

For years now, the best players in the world have known to train for tennis in four specific areas which are:

1. Technique	2. Mental	3. Strategy	4. Movement
---------------------	------------------	--------------------	--------------------

My first book, [STRATEGY, How to Beat Every Style of Player](#), was dedicated solely to the strategy side of the game and detailed several tactics that work best against a variety of styles of players. This book will deal with the mental aspects of the game.

One of my biggest hopes is to convince you that most elite-level athletes have already learned that they must train in all four areas mentioned above to reach their full potential. However, I have found that many tennis players still struggle with this concept. Both adult and junior players seem to have a long list of reasons why they do not want to train in all the areas. I believe it is because they have fallen into the trap of thinking that the only reason they ever lose is because their opponent's *strokes* are better. They incorrectly assume that if they are to beat that same opponent, they need to have better strokes. The result is that they over-train in the technique area and ignore the other areas.

I have experienced this firsthand many times on the court as players have asked me what they did wrong after they made an error. They almost seemed disappointed if I replied that the error was due to poor footwork (movement). They were waiting to hear some great “**technical tip**” that they could easily incorporate into their games and their errors would magically disappear.

All errors can be traced back to one of four areas. **Technical** errors are common in tennis and are usually the result of poor techniques, grips, or swing patterns. **Mental** errors are when you lose concentration or focus or use poor eye control, resulting in a missed shot. **Strategy** errors occur when you make poor choices on what shots to try or tactics to implement. Lastly, **movement** errors are the most common and can be traced back to poor footwork or loss of condition.

The chart below shows that as players become more advanced, they should train less in technique and more in the other three areas. The chart represents the percentage of a player's practice time that should be spent in each of the four areas.

	Technique	Mental	Strategy	Movement	Totals
Beginners	80	5	5	10	100%
Intermediate	50	20	20	10	100%
Advanced	30	20	25	25	100%
Professional	10	30	30	30	100%

Exercises

- 1) Below is the chart that was covered in this chapter. In the last row, you should insert the percentages representing how **you** spend your practice time and compare them to the level that best describes your ability. If you are way off from this chart based on your skill level, you are not training as effectively as possible.

	Technique	Mental	Strategy	Movement	Totals
Beginners	80	5	5	10	100%
Intermediate	50	20	20	10	100%
Advanced	30	20	25	25	100%
Professional	10	30	30	30	100%
YOU					100%

- 2) What area do you think you need the most work in right now in your game?
- 3) What have you done to train in Technique in the past six months?
- 4) What have you done to train in Mental Toughness in the past six months?
- 5) What have you done to train in Strategy in the past six months?
- 6) What have you done to train in Movement in the past six months?
- 7) Based on your answers above, what is your weakest training area now?
- 8) How will you address this weakness in the next few weeks?

- 9) Private lessons are best for training in which four areas? (list all that apply)

- 10) Tournaments are best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 11) Practice matches are best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 12) Group lessons are best for training in which four areas? (list all that apply)

- 13) Strength training is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 14) Speed and agility training is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 15) Hitting off a wall is best for training in which four areas? (list all that apply)

- 16) Practicing your serve *on your own* is best for training in which of the four areas? (list all that apply)

- 17) What might your answers above indicate about how you spend your time training?

CHAPTER 1: Wrap Up

Below, write down the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 2: The Mind is the Battlefield

“What you are thinking, what shape your mind is in, is what makes the biggest difference of all.”

Willie Mays, major league baseball legend

“You have absolute control over but one thing, and that is your thoughts. If you fail to control your own mind, you may be sure you will control nothing else.”

Napoleon Hill, author

You may not realize it, but everyone who comes into a performance opportunity has been there before... Your anticipations and desires about performing well come from a rich and complex history of earlier performances in life. Beginning as a child, you **perform** "on stage" for others. Learning to walk, eating your food, drawing your first pictures, and many other experiences mark your first opportunities to function as a performer. How your first audience (parents) responded to your first attempts at performing still impacts how you view yourself as a performer today. Were you enthusiastically praised? Critically condemned? Ignored? Or perhaps compared to someone who did it better or earlier than you? The confidence or reservations you have now as a performer have their roots in your earlier performance opportunities.

These early life experiences shape a performer's view of himself/herself. Some come through childhood confidently, willing to take risks, and believing the audience will surely approve and applaud. Many come through these early life experiences with doubt, hesitation, and carefulness, fearing criticism, rejection, and shame.

Your mind is filled with so much information about performing and about yourself. These are what are known as "**self-beliefs**." Beliefs you now have about your abilities, values, and responsibilities were formed well before you stepped onto the tennis court. These "self-beliefs" can be positive and motivating, or they can cause self-doubt and may limit how you see yourself, limiting your success and performance. To reach your full potential now, you must recognize your "self-beliefs" and modify them if they do not fit your reality.

Mental toughness plays out in a player's mind. Consider the poem below.

Watch your **Thoughts**, they become your Words

Watch your Words; they become your Actions

Watch your Actions; they become your Habits

Watch your Habits; they become your Character

Watch your Character; they become your Destiny

It all starts with a person's **thoughts**, which occur in their mind. Our actions are a direct result of our thoughts. Our thoughts result from how we have come to understand ourselves through the eyes of our parents and other influential people in our early life experiences. Although you initially did not have the chance to accept or reject these ideas/thoughts about yourself, now is the time to decide what is true about you.

We cannot have a negative thought life and expect to be mentally tough and exude confidence. So, if we want to succeed at being mentally tough on the court, we must first clear our minds of any limiting self-belief and see ourselves accurately and thoroughly.

If our thoughts are mostly negative, we will have a negative outlook and rarely beat an opponent unless that opponent is considerably weaker. But I want you to be able to win against opponents who are equally as good as and even better than you. That is when tennis is genuinely the most fun.

Unfortunately, while falling into negative thought patterns is easy, we must intentionally choose the correct thinking. It is not always easy, but it is possible.

This chapter aims to get you to understand that your thoughts play an important role while you compete on the court. I hope you see that you need to **start thinking about what you are thinking about.**

So... how does a player control their thoughts? Aren't thoughts just things that pop into our minds that we have no control over? I have heard many students pose questions like this one. Usually, they have listened to me speak about this topic, and it makes sense to them logically, but they just do not seem to know how to control their thoughts.

The first step is realizing that you can and need to control your thoughts, not vice versa. While we may be unable to keep specific thoughts from popping into our minds, we do **not** have to dwell on them or believe them. This is what I call "undoing the lies of childhood."

Here are several steps for learning to control your thoughts:

- 1) **Be aware of your thoughts.** Usually, thoughts will come and go, and you will hardly notice. Watch for feelings of inadequacy or stress, doubt, and worry. Awareness is the first step to gaining more mental control.
- 2) **Use the "opposite thoughts" method.** One of the hardest things to do is to NOT think of something. If I say to you, "Don't think of a yellow ball," you will immediately think of the yellow ball. One effective technique to use is the "opposite thoughts method." When you have a negative thought pop into your head when you are on the court, immediately replace that thought with its opposite. It is beneficial if you can speak the opposite thought *out loud*. Even if it is loud enough to hear, say it to yourself several times. If you think your serve stinks, say aloud, "My serve is good." Saying it several times helps drown out the negative thoughts.
- 3) **Be armed with "replacement thoughts."** Having several positive thoughts in the bank before you compete is helpful. Many players have difficulty developing something positive about themselves as competitors, but this is critical. I recommend you have at least four positive statements you believe about yourself as a player that you can use as replacement thoughts for when the negative thoughts inevitably come into your mind. For these positive thoughts to be powerful and effective, they must be ones you believe about yourself. Take the time to slow down and discover what positive ideas and thoughts you truly believe about yourself.

- 4) Properly phrase your thoughts.** Many tennis players try to stay positive and unknowingly sabotage themselves simply by negatively phrasing their thoughts. If a player says to himself, “Don’t double fault,” he gives himself negative instruction. This negative instruction produces a negative mental image. These negative mental images only *increase* the likelihood of making the error he is warning himself about. You cannot have an intense focus on what NOT to do. It will not allow you to focus and energy on what you want and need to do.

In the example above, instead of saying, “Don’t double fault,” the player should say, “Swing faster, hit more spin,” etc. Players must ensure that the “instructional statements” they make to themselves are phrased positively.

- 5) Avoid thoughts about past failures.** Many tennis players use the **movie screen** of their minds to replay past failures. They lose the match once on the court, then torment themselves and lose the same match another 20 times in their heads by revisiting it repeatedly. No one likes the feelings involved with revisiting a lousy performance. However, many players justify it by saying, “It is the only way I can learn from that loss,” or because they want to play a *victim* for their friend, family, or coach. It is extremely important to limit this kind of thinking. Give yourself a limit on how long you will “mourn” a past match, learn what you can from it, and commit to looking forward.... not backward.
- 6) Create a list of your best wins and performances.** Most players can tell you about their best wins, but we think about these best wins far less frequently than we do our bad losses. It is helpful to create a list of your best three wins and think about them often. If you begin to think about your past failures, replace those thoughts with ones from your best wins. For this to work, you must have these thoughts readily available. You cannot do this without first listing them out.

Exercises

- 1) Positive beliefs are simple statements that help ward off anxieties and build confidence. They should be simple, positive, and accurate, worded in the present tense. Rehearsing these beliefs many times daily makes them powerful and effective in psyching up before competition. Write three positive beliefs about yourself that will strengthen you.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- 2) Break down your self-talk into these three categories:

1. BEFORE Competition
2. DURING Competition
3. AFTER Competition

BEFORE Competition:	
Negative belief, I say to myself	Positive alternative belief

DURING Competition:	
Negative belief, I say to myself	Positive alternative belief

AFTER Competition:	
Negative belief, I say to myself	Positive alternative belief

3) Take a “**thoughts audit.**” In the space below, write down as many thoughts (positive or negative) that you can remember popping into your head during your last match. You may have to play a match with this in mind so you can write the thoughts down as you go (on the switchovers).

-
-
-
-
-

4) Come up with several “**replacement thoughts**” to these common negative thoughts players have while they compete.

Negative Thoughts	Replacements Thought
I'm such a choker!	
I never play well in the wind.	
I can't stand playing pushers.	
My backhand (or any shot) sucks.	
I'm moving like a cow.	
This guy is such a hook.	
I can't believe what a bad draw I got.	

5) Come up with three instructional statements that you tend to tell yourself and list them below in a *positive* phrase. These should be things specific to **you** and things that you know you need to remind yourself to do during a match.

(Example: If you know you need to “hit out” on your second serve.)

Negative instruction = “Don't miss this, don't push it, don't miss it.”

Positive instruction = “Swing hard on this, crank the spin on this one, spin it in.”

-
-
-

6) Create below a list of your best three wins.

-
-
-

7) Once you have a list of your best wins/performances, **choose one** and deepen your memory. Remembering all the details can help to set it in your mind, resulting in a more significant positive effect on your future performance. Start with closing your eyes; remember the setting where this win took place. See the complex where you were competing; focus on the court you played on. See the details of the surroundings, who was there, where people were sitting, where you set your bag, rackets, water bottles, etc. Notice yourself in the warm-up, how you looked, what you wore, and how your shots looked and felt. Now, please move to the match itself. Remember, see, and feel your best shots. Notice the ease with which your body flowed and how loose and relaxed your muscles were when you hit your winners. Slow down now and notice your body in this moment. Remember in your body how it felt as you were hitting the ball. (Your body holds memories of how this was for you.) Notice where in your body you feel the most relaxed right now. Focus on that area of your body for a minute. As you remember your next winning shot, notice the look on your face. See the confidence, calmness, and focus on your face. Stay there for a moment and take in that memory. The more you rehearse this memory, the deeper it will get stored in your brain, and the more you can take yourself there when you need to restore your confidence.

I want to end this chapter by reviewing the essential high points. What goes on inside your mind affects your ability to perform. These inner realities are best defined as your **self-beliefs** about yourself. The more aware you are of your inner truths, the more you can work to modify or deepen them if they are positive. Not only does your mind hold memories, *but so does your body*. By taking yourself back to successful moments or matches, you can recall on a body level how it felt to be "in the zone" and how your body was responding at its best. By rehearsing these key moments through imagery, you can deepen your memory of those times and learn to utilize the memory at times when you need it. None of this mental training happens automatically! It takes as much work as practicing your forehand or serve. Commit yourself to working on your game *between your ears* as often as you do your physical training.

CHAPTER 2: Wrap Up

Below, write down the top three **most helpful ideas you** gained from this chapter.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

CHAPTER 3: Developing Your Inner Coach

"You are really never playing an opponent. You are playing yourself, your own highest standards, and when you reach your limits... that is real joy." Arthur Ashe, tennis legend

"We should never speak to ourselves in a manner or tone that we would not tolerate from someone else." Jorge Capestany, tennis master professional

This chapter is about developing your **inner coach**. This is the inner part of you that will assist and motivate you throughout the rest of your life... if you develop it! Achieving a significant lifestyle change is like a good old-fashioned rope tug. While a piece of rope does not hold much interest for most of us, rock climbers would undoubtedly disagree, as it is their lifeline. The rope is an excellent metaphor for the work you are doing here, and I am sure you will agree that it takes a lot of personal power to pull lifestyle change permanently into your life.

Part of me has always fantasized about having my own private coach—someone who would tell me exactly what I should do to achieve my goals, motivate me, and take me down the road to high achievement of some sort. This kind, loving coach was part of many glorious images I had of myself. However, the reality is that most of us cannot afford that kind of coach. Therefore, we must develop our **inner coach** to serve in this role.

One of the first steps to developing an inner coach is to listen to how you talk to yourself, your private voice. If you cannot do that, your inner coach will not develop. Instead, an inner critic will develop in its place. Most of us know that we have a running dialogue with ourselves, but very few of us pay attention to that dialogue. Failing to monitor this dialogue can be very damaging to your mental toughness.

Our **inner coach** is best defined as *that private voice you hear while you are playing that responds to your aces, unforced errors, victories, defeats, etc.*

Our **inner critic** is best defined as *the collection of all the negative messages we have heard over the years, both from outside sources and from our internal dialogue.*

Your inner dialogue can be described as your running conversation with yourself. We all have an inner dialogue running in our heads all day long. As we compete, this dialogue can become very negative as we struggle through a tough match. As a teaching pro, my experience has been that about 70 percent of players who ignore their inner dialogue will slip into a negative dialogue that can best be described as having an inner critic.

A simple test is this: if a stranger was on the sidelines watching your match and he said the same things to you that you say to yourself, and you would not tolerate it, then you have a problem. We should never speak to ourselves in a manner or tone that we would not accept from someone else. That just makes sense.

As we become increasingly frustrated during a match, our inner dialogue often becomes our outer dialogue, and others can hear what we are saying to ourselves.

As a junior player, I was so unaware of my inner (and outer) dialogue that I would often not believe others when they told me what I was saying to myself. Consider this true story.

When I was about 17 years old, I played a practice match against one of my friends at the club where I trained. I was not playing particularly well, and I was losing the match, so consequently, what started as a very negative inner dialogue turned into a negative **outer** dialogue that others could hear. My coach was moving from court to court as we all played our matches, and I was unaware that he was writing down what I was saying to myself. The match ended, and I lost. I soon forgot about the match and moved on.

The following week, while we were playing our practice matches, I was winning the match and had no outer dialogue, and my inner dialogue was pretty good. Then, out of the blue, my coach walked past and said, *"Gosh, your serve stinks!"* He just kept walking. I was sure I could not have heard him right, so I played on a bit confused. A few minutes later, he walked by again and said to me, "Move will ya, you're such a cow." Now, I was sure I had heard him and was utterly taken aback by what he said. I was a bit scared and wondered what was going on. A few minutes later, he walked past me again and said, *"You suck! Hit it, you wuss."* Now, I was utterly freaked out and unsure of what was happening. I thought for a minute I must have been on some reality show with hidden cameras. A few minutes later, I finished the set, and the coach called all 12 of us over for a huddle. He first said, "Jorge, how did you like how I talked to you out there?" Of course, I did not know what to say, so I mumbled and said that I didn't like it very much.

Then my coach said, "Well, Jorge, all I was doing today was repeating the same things you said to yourself last week when you played against Lee and lost." To which I immediately replied, "I never said those things to myself." Then, all my buddies set me straight and reminded me that I had indeed said all those things and a few more.

The purpose of this story is to show you how easy it is to be unaware of how we speak to ourselves. Not monitoring your inner dialogue can lead to the development of your inner critic rather than your inner coach. Unfortunately, many players today are experiencing the same thing.

The result was that I played many matches in a state of negativity and wrong thinking. It was like having a verbal terrorist out there on the sidelines berating me about my every mistake and never getting off my back. Only that terrorist was ME!!

Look back into your own life and bring up memories of POSITIVE role models who helped to form your current self-discipline. Perhaps you have many, or maybe you have few. Even though your mentor may have been "difficult" or "challenging," as some coaches have been for me, look closely at that individual and decide if he was a powerful influence. If you were to meet him today, would you thank him? And what precisely would you thank him for?

This will help you to know who and what was truly valuable. Whenever we remember this way, we bring the memories forward and "re-etch" the particulars into our subconscious. Since we are discussing "past happenings," remember that we all have had individuals who were not well-meaning, and it is time to let them go. These individuals or the memories of these individuals can often BLOCK our desire for self-discipline.

Our inner coach will be a composite of the positive characteristics of many individuals who have touched our past and others we might have observed. We do not need to know these individuals personally. Having admired them and the characteristics they represent makes them eligible to be a part of our inner coaching system. It is essential to take time with this part of our work. It took me a lot of effort to develop and deepen my awareness of my inner coach, and to

this day, I keep adding additional characteristics. Keep in mind that each time something new is added or updated, the subconscious mind makes a note of this and re-etches.

I suggest you keep a section of your journal for building your inner coaching system. This type of journaling opens the mind to locate even more opportunities for self-growth.

So now that you know the difference between your inner coach and inner critic, how can you learn to silence your inner critic? Below are several valuable tips.

1) Be aware of “polarized thinking.” This is the thinking where everything is black and white, good or bad, success or failure, all or none. Instead, you should use “percentage thinking.” This type of thinking is more realistic and better reflects reality and how things are in our lives. For example, you might say that you played 60 percent of your potential in your last match instead of saying it was the worst match you ever played.

2) Avoid over-generalizing. This is when we look at only one piece of evidence and assume it explains everything. If you use words like never, always, everybody, nobody, every, and all, you may be a person who tends to over-generalize. Instead, we should replace that inner dialogue with words like some, most, might, and sometimes.

3) Avoid “magnifying.” This is when we take something small and blow it out of proportion. We may exaggerate the problem and use dialogue like “This is the worst I’ve ever played,” “I’ll never be able to learn this new grip,” or “I always choke in the third set.” Instead, we should take an honest look at the reality we are facing. Things are rarely as bad as we make them out to be.

Another effective technique for developing your inner coach and silencing your inner critic is the ACE (Aware—Challenge—Expand) method.

A. Be aware of your inner critic's style, what he sounds like, and his tone of voice. In short, start thinking about what you’re thinking about.

B. Challenge the limiting beliefs of your inner critic. Don’t just believe them or buy into them.

C. Expand your limited thinking through positive self-talk. These statements must be things you believe about yourself, not just a wish list. They are most effective when they are based on your actual experiences.

Conclusion: Developing your **inner coach** involves developing an internal support system, a positive inner coach, positive self-talk habits, and an attitude toward yourself that brings out the best in you. If you are having trouble silencing the internal critic and developing your inner coach, consider getting help from Dr. Steve Hamming at <https://op-sports.com/>.

Some obstacles may prevent you from seeing yourself positively, keeping the internal critic's voice loud and influential. You can take a free online self-test by visiting the website listed above, and Dr. Hamming will respond with your results.

Exercises

- 1) Close your eyes for a minute, try to go back in time, and think of the most **positive** and encouraging coach you have ever had. (If you are new to sports, think of the most positive teacher or relative you have ever had.) Think of the kind of person that brought out the best in you, the person who knew just what to say and that you loved being around because they were so encouraging. Take at least a minute or so and get a picture of that person's face in your mind.

Write down the person's name in the space below.

- 2) Now think about what precisely that person did or said that made you feel so good. Was it **what** they said? Was it **how** they said things?

Write below a few thoughts about why you felt this person was so encouraging.

- 3) Now close your eyes and try to think about the person again, paying attention to your **physical body** this time. Does thinking of this person make you physically feel different? Are you happy, smiling, calm, etc.?

Write down your feelings about your physical body as you thought of this person.

We will repeat the same three steps above but for a **negative and/or discouraging** coach or person in your past.

- 4) Close your eyes for a minute, try to go back in time, and think of the most **negative** and discouraging coach you have ever had. (If you are new to sports, think of the most negative teacher or relative you have ever dealt with.) This person always brought out the worst in you and made you worry that he was going to yell at you or "go off" on you. Take at least a minute or so and get a picture of that person's face in your mind. Write down the person's name in the space below.

- 5) Now, think about what *precisely* that person did or said that made you feel so bad or tense. Was it **what** they said? Was it **how** they said things? Write below just a few thoughts about why you felt this person was so discouraging to you.

- 6) Now close your eyes again and try to think about the person again, and this time, pay attention to your physical body. Does thinking of this person make you physically feel different? Are you tense? Are you smiling? Are you calm? Do you feel a knot in your stomach? Etc.... Write down your feelings about your physical body as you thought of this person.

The lesson of the above exercise is that we all respond better to our positive inner coach than to a hostile inner critic. Decide right now that you will turn the volume up on your inner coach and down on your inner critic.

- 7) Does your current inner dialogue lean more towards being an inner coach or inner critic?

- 8) On a scale of 1-10, how **aware** have you been of your inner dialogue in the past? (circle)

Unaware									Very Aware
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- 9) Describe an experience where you have had to silence your inner critic during a match.

- 10) List at least two **mental** attributes (not technical attributes like strokes or footwork) that you think the best players in the world possess that make them stand out from the rest of the tour players.

-

-

11) Give an example of when you have been guilty of “polarized thinking.”

12) Give an example of when you have been guilty of “over-generalizing.”

13) In the spaces below, expand your limited thinking and develop at least three positive self-beliefs about yourself *as a player*. Fill in the blanks below.

(Example: I am a fighter; I am a good athlete; I make things happen)

*I can _____

*I am _____

*I _____

14) Give an example of when your inability to silence your *inner critic* cost you a match you could have won.

15) Give an example of when your *inner coach* helped you win a match.

16) Write down the name of a player you know with a strong inner coach.

17) What kind of reputation does that player have as a competitor?

CHAPTER 3: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 4: Conquering the Fear of Losing

“Take chances, make mistakes. That’s how you grow. Pain nourishes your courage. You have to fail in order to practice being brave.” Mary Tyler Moore, actress

“Failures are expected by losers and ignored by winners.” Joe Gibbs, NFL coach

The **fear of losing** almost always comes from thinking about outcome-based results rather than performance-based results. I like to use the following definitions when describing these two types of results.

- **Outcome-based goals** are, by definition, things that are **not** totally under your control. The most common **outcome** goal is to *win a match*. Another outcome-based goal would be to make all your second serves.
- **Performance-based goals** are, by definition, things that **are** totally within your control. A performance-based goal would be to “swing hard” on all your second serves.

Looking at those two examples, it is easy to see that the outcome-based goal will cause the player more stress and be more challenging to accomplish.

Over the years, I have seen many players who were so struck with fear before a match that they made themselves physically ill. I know they did not *want* to feel that way, but they had no idea how to eliminate those feelings. Many of these players just resolved that they were somehow inferior and did not have what it takes to be a tough competitor.

However, just simply ignoring these fears only makes matters worse. Going into a match with fear is like going into a battle against two opponents, the one on the other side of the net and the one *within* you. Your goal should never be to get rid of all the butterflies in your stomach before the match but rather to get those butterflies to *fly in formation*.

Resetting your goal for each match is the best way to reduce your fear of losing. I like to use the concept of the **personal promise**. I define a personal promise as a performance-based goal that you set for yourself before each match you are about to play.

If these personal promises are defined and clear in your head, you can measure your success by how well you stick to your promise instead of winning or losing. And since personal promises are all performance-based, there is no way you can fail unless you simply decide not to do it. They are, by definition, 100 percent within your control.

Logic would say that your promise should be something that will give you a better chance of winning a particular match and/or make you better in the long run. For instance, if you know that when things get tight, you tend to ‘push’ your second serve, then a great personal promise would be to “swing hard” on all second serves. That should be the new goal you set for yourself for that match. Then, even if you lose the match, if you can succeed at keeping your personal promise to yourself, you can enjoy the fact that you have begun to resolve one of your game’s deficiencies.

Once you have a personal promise identified for your match, you will find that as your match unfolds, you will have a significantly reduced fear of losing because you have switched your thoughts away from winning (outcome-based) to keeping your personal promise (performance-based). This technique has worked very well for me and many of my students. The very best win I ever had in my career was directly due to this technique.

Sometimes, after a match begins, you may start to feel nervous or experience the fear of losing creeping back into your mind, especially if the match is close. That means you have allowed your mind to wander from your personal promise back towards winning. You may have to fight this habit a lot initially, but as you reap the benefits of playing for your personal promise rather than to win, you will begin to master this skill so that it becomes second nature to you.

Your personal promises will fall into two categories:

- 1) Specific to your next match and opponent.
- 2) For your long-term development.

Personal promises can also be:

- **Technical**, like swinging low to high on all your forehands or using a specific grip.
- **Mental**, like resting your eyes on your strings after a point so your mind does not wander.
- **Strategical**, like serving your opponent's weaker side.
- **Movement** in nature, like split stepping every time your opponent strikes the ball.

Below are some examples of my most common personal promises for myself and my players.

- Swing hard on my second serves.
- Come to the net on all short balls (service box)
- Hit all my serves to their weaker side.
- Rip topspin on my backhand. (no slices)
- Take the full amount of time between points.
- Look at my strings between points so my mind & eyes don't wander.

Exercises:

- 1) On a scale of 1-10, how much do you *fear* losing when you play? (circle one)

Not at all
Fearful

Totally
Fearful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- 2) Describe in the space below what an **outcome-based** goal is.
- 3) Describe in the space below what a **performance-based** goal is.
- 4) Can you list any performance-based goals that you have used in the past?
- 5) List three possible *personal promises* specific to a particular player you want to beat (a rival). These promises should be designed for you to use against this opponent. Make sure these promises are written as positive and not negative statements.

Insert a rival's name here: _____

-

-

-

- 6) Create a list of three possible personal promises that are for your **long-term development**. You may want to consult your coach about what promises he thinks would be best.

-

-

-

7) List two personal promises to help you with **technique** (grips and swing patterns).

-
-

8) List two personal promises to help you with the **mental** aspects of tennis.

-
-

9) List two personal promises to help you with **strategy**.

-
-

10) List two personal promises to help you with **movement**.

-
-

CHAPTER 4: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 5: Developing a Positive Mental Attitude

"Most people are about as happy as they make their minds up to be."

Abraham Lincoln, American president

"A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities; an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties." **Harry Truman, American president**

Most of us can quickly identify a person's attitude and what thoughts are prevalent in his mind.

Consider the following story, which has been circulating for some time now. It is about an old Cherokee chief teaching his grandson about life.

"A fight is going on inside me," he told the boy. "It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil: anger, envy, regret, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, superiority, and ego."

He continued, "The other is good; he is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, generosity, truth, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it briefly and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "**The one you feed.**"

If you think honestly about your inner dialogue, which of the two wolves do you feed the most?

When I think about this story, it reminds me of all the times I have seen players on the court beating themselves up, constantly saying one negative thing after another to themselves. Considering this story, it is obvious which wolf is prevalent when they play a match. I want to make people aware of this concept so they can stop feeding the wrong wolf. These players seem addicted to negative thoughts when simply feeding the *wrong* wolf.

Does it seem to you that sometimes the whole world is complaining?

I believe that we all have a natural tendency toward a certain amount of negativity. We all fall somewhere different on a scale of 1-10 regarding how negative we are. The hardest part of becoming more positive is admitting how negative we can be. A negative person never enjoys anything; he is no fun to be around.

Remember that our thoughts can affect not only our attitudes but also our moods. Negative people often say, "**Yeah, but...**" when speaking. They have an uncanny ability to see the negative side of things. **They can light up a room — when they leave!**

I have found that negativity is one of the traits most passed down from parent to child. When I had an exceedingly negative junior player, I found that the parents would also be classified as negative people by most standards. Although this is a complex problem to address, I think it is essential for both players and coaches to recognize this trend so that they can best develop a strategy for reversing it.

One dictionary defines **attitude** as *a complex mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values, and dispositions to act in specific ways.*

The best athletes know that **attitude is a choice**. The most successful athletes can follow the essential guidelines below.

- 1) They view their sport as an opportunity to compete against themselves.
- 2) They learn from their successes *and* failures.
- 3) They pursue excellence, not perfection.
- 4) They balance their sport and the rest of their lives.
- 5) They have predominantly positive beliefs about themselves.

If you can live by these guidelines, you will certainly develop a positive and helpful attitude. Players who violate one or more of these guidelines almost always create a negative attitude.

Many players understand the need for and desire a positive mental attitude. The problem is that no one has ever taught or shown them how to develop one. You can't just go to the store and buy a pill to take. The five steps below are a great way to start down the road to developing a positive mental attitude.

- 1) Make it a habit to look for the good in life (and others) rather than the bad.
- 2) Identify the people in your life who tend to make you negative or often lure you into negativity or complaining. Limit your time with them.
- 3) Identify the people who make you positive and upbeat. Be intentional about spending more time with them.
- 4) Keep balance in your life; a hurried and hectic life will always make us unhappy and negative.
- 5) Try to do something that makes you happy regularly. We often get bogged down in life and experience very little joy.
- 6) Remember that studies show the best way to experience happiness is by doing positive things for others.

Exercises

Below is a quick test to assess where you might fall on the **negative scale**. However, YOU should not take this test. Instead, I want you to have your coach, close friend, or parents take it and answer the questions **about** you. Taking the test yourself usually results in a false score because we tend not to be good judges of how negative we are.

Negativity test: (Scale: 1= Never / 2 = rarely / 3 = occasionally / 4 = usually / 5 = always)

Q1	Does he tell himself that he “sucks” when he plays?	1	2	3	4	5
Q2	Do his opponents think he is a bad sport?					
Q3	Does his coach/parent have to warn him about his attitude or behavior?					
Q4	When he plays a lousy match, does he think it is the start of a slump?					
Q5	Does he think the advice he gets from his coach is “not going to help anyway?”					
Q6	Does he often complain about his ranking, the seeding lists, or tournament draws?					
Q7	Does he think the coach/pro mistreated him with the court assignments or in the line-up?					
Q8	Does he assume he will lose if he plays a player close to or slightly above his level?					
Q9	Does he shake hands differently when he wins than when he loses?					
Q10	Does he often say “yeah, but...” when he speaks?					

Now total your scores and refer to the chart below to see where you fall: _____

10-19 points: Very positive outlook. Your inner dialogue is consistently strong, and you should now work on developing the other areas of your game because this area is strong.

20-29 points: Positive outlook. Your inner dialogue is usually positive. You do not get overly down on yourself.

30-40 points: Caution. Your inner dialogue tends toward negativity, which could affect your performance.

41-50 points: Warning! Your inner dialogue is hostile to the point where it can profoundly affect your performance, self-esteem, and reputation.

Below are five of the ten questions from the above test. For this next exercise, read each question and list a time when you succeeded in that area and another time when you failed in that area.

Q1) Do your opponents think you are a bad sport?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q2) When you play a terrible match, do you think it's the start of a slump?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q3) Do you think the advice you get from your coach is "not going to help anyway"?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q4) Do you think a coach mistreated you with the court assignments or in the line-up?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Q5) Do you shake hands differently when you win than when you lose?

Succeeded:

Failed:

Below are a few more questions for this chapter on developing a positive mental attitude.

1) When you play tennis, which one of the wolves from the story in this chapter do you think you feed most often?

2) Being as honest as possible, where do you feel you fall on the negative scale when playing a **close** tennis match? It's a match that could go either way. (circle one)

Very
Positive

Very
Negative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) Describe your parents' influences in developing your positive and/or negative attitude.

4) Earlier in this chapter, we discussed five essential guidelines that successful players follow when developing a positive mental attitude. Prioritize these items to how you feel they are critical to your development. (Rank from 1-5)

_____ They view their sport as an opportunity to compete against themselves.

_____ They learn from their successes and failures.

_____ They pursue excellence, not perfection.

_____ They balance their sport and the rest of their lives.

_____ They have predominately positive beliefs about themselves.

5) Describe in a few sentences how you want people to think of you regarding your attitude.

6) What part of the description in the above question (#5) are you the farthest from attaining?

7) The five steps below help players develop a more positive attitude. Please rate each of these skills. (1= doing poor, 5= doing great)

- Make it a habit to look for the good in life (and others) rather than the bad.

1 2 3 4 5

- Limit your time with the people in your life who tend to make you negative or lure you into negativity or complaining.

1 2 3 4 5

- Be intentional about spending more time with the people in your life that tend to make you positive and keep you upbeat.

1 2 3 4 5

- Keep balance in your life; a hurried and hectic life will always move us toward being unhappy and negative.

1 2 3 4 5

- Try to do something that makes you happy regularly. Many times, we get bogged down in life and experience very little joy.

1 2 3 4 5

CHAPTER 5: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 6: Surviving a Slump

“If you can react the same way to winning and losing, that is a big accomplishment. That quality is important because it stays with you the rest of your life.” **Chris Evert, tennis legend**

“Failure is only the opportunity to start again, only more intelligently.”

Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company

A real challenge for every serious player is the problem of being in a **slump**. Slumps are prolonged periods (a month or longer) when your physical and mental skills are considerably lower than your average performance.

When we look closely at a slump, we find that a slump is often just an extended downturn in performance. As you know, your performance is always moving either up or down. Even the most consistent of pros is not all that consistent. Everyone has a level of play that ranges from fantastic to bad. The bad days are when you think you should sell your racquets and take up bowling. Slumps can begin with a drop in either your physical or mental ability.

There are two other essential things to understand regarding slumps. The first is that slumps happen to all players, from the world-class to the novice level. Second, players should not expect to play at their “peak” year-round. If you are a player who tends to think this way, then you are more likely to interpret a decline in performance as the beginning of a slump rather than the natural “dip” in the improvement cycle.

It may be helpful to understand that the expected level of improvement for most players follows a similar path described in the table below.



You can see that the most improvement comes in the beginning, right after we start playing. However, as time passes, our improvement rate slows considerably because it is harder to continue improving as we become proficient. This chart shows that most players' improvement happens in the first third of their careers. You can also see that players do not improve at a steady rate. We all have little dips and valleys on our specific improvement charts. Think of it this way: Would the best professional players hope to double their tennis abilities? The answer is NO. These players realize that given their current high level of ability, the most they should expect is just a few more *degrees* of improvement.

Failing to recognize this trend and assuming that your improvement rate will be a steady upward climb that never ends is a common way that many players sabotage their efforts. If you think that way, you are setting yourself up for a major disappointment in the long run. You may also think you are in a slump when you are just at the end of your game's improvement cycle.

Even professional tour players do not expect to play at their peak during every match. I read a survey recently that asked the winners of the past several grand slams how many matches out of the seven they had to win to be crowned the champion were matches where they felt like they played good or great. The answer was only three to four of the seven matches. That means that for the other half of the matches, they played *less* than their best; they had to find a way to win ugly. Yet few considered those "bad matches" the beginning of a slump. If they had thought like that, they would have never been able to rebound and win the tournament.

Slumps are caused for a variety of reasons. Below are some things that can *trigger* a slump.

Some of the most common **physical** triggers to a slump are:

- Injury
- Technical changes (grips)
- Equipment changes
- Too much practice
- Too little practice

Some of the most common **mental** triggers to a slump are:

- Burn-out
- Lack of goals
- Fear of failure or other negative emotions
- Playing for the wrong reason
- Problems in other areas of your life
- Negative thoughts

In short, slumps are triggered by a player's response to one bad performance. Many players have a single bad outing and immediately assume it is the beginning of a slump. Once a player believes that is the case, the slump is almost impossible to avoid.

If your goal is to avoid never having a slump in your entire career, then you are aiming at the wrong target. We must realize that slumps are a regular, inevitable part of competitive sports. The important thing is how you **react** to them and if you can keep *one* lousy performance from leading to another and another.

The way to bust out of a slump is to understand tennis's natural ups and downs. Know that your mind is trying to move out of the slump if you will let it. It is also important to commit to your fundamental game for three months. Do not try radical changes to make things better. Commit to your equipment, your coach, and your style of play.

Below are several specific tips for busting out of a slump:

- 1) Talk to your coach and get their input on whether they think a physical/technical reason caused your slump or if it stems more from a mental/psychological reason. That way, you know how to get out of your slump.
- 2) Talk to a coach or fellow player who has overcome a slump in the past. Ask him what he did to overcome his slump and what worked and did not work for him.
- 3) Be aware of your inner self-talk. It can easily slip into the negative, putting you in a state of mind that will be difficult to break out of and causing you to stay in a slump longer than necessary.
- 4) Recognize that even the best players in the world must endure slumps; they don't just happen to you.
- 5) It is also often helpful to organize your practice. Have specific goals for practice and work to reach these. Remember, the whole is made up of lots of little parts. If you get the little parts right, the big picture will fall into place
- 6) You should also resolve any personal or non-tennis problems. Perhaps the most important thing is to recall **why** you played tennis in the first place. Play for good reasons: to have fun, to meet a challenge, to socialize, or just for the love of the game. Find other physical activities to go along with your sport. For example, if you are a tennis player, try playing basketball for a couple of hours each week or take up softball once a week. This type of cross-training will help recharge your tennis batteries.
- 7) Begin to focus on a completely different aspect of performance. For example, look at your focus, independent of how well you hit the ball or win or lose. For example, you might aim to improve your focus over the next two weeks. Start by rating how focused you were throughout your last match on a 1-10 scale. Each time you perform, you try to raise your focus. By the end of two weeks, you have succeeded in mental skills development if you consistently achieve a 9 or 10 in focus. This is entirely within your control, as opposed to matching the result, which is not. Your focus should be on focus, not on outcome!

- 8) Change your training routine. This might include a new practice court, new hitting partners, or a change in the amount that you are practicing. The main thing is to inject freshness into your sport. Change clothing, grip tape, or shoes. These minor adjustments often contribute to renewed enjoyment of the sport.

- 9) Take all the pressure off by forgetting about winning and losing for a while—set goals to perform better rather than to win or lose. Change your focus to skills and effort while letting the outcome take care of itself.

If none of these ideas work after a few months, consider sports psychology counseling! This never indicates weakness; it is simply a search for excellence.

Why does a slump happen in the first place? There are many possible answers to this question. Competition is very delicate and complex, and momentum plays a huge role. You may lose to a better opponent six times in a row and delude yourself into thinking you should have won each match. Then, when you should win, you lose! Momentum takes over. Another problem is being distracted by off-court issues.

Expectations also significantly impact performance. The reverse holds as it helps to remain confident (always expecting the best). Expecting the worst usually gets you there. Negative self-talk always leads to negative performances and results.

The mind cannot stay focused on the bad and the good simultaneously. The natural balance that is supposed to help you let performance happen gets disrupted. You start trying too hard and overcompensate or give up out of despair. Athletes need to remain optimally focused and energized. Too much fluctuation in any direction over a short period leads to lapses in attention and problems with consistency. It's hard enough to play a solid tennis match without having mental skills disrupted, too. Throw in the inner turmoil caused by frustration, and you will have a tangled mess!

Exercises

- 1) How many slumps have you had in your playing career?

- 2) How many of those slumps were **technical** in origin (grips, swings, etc...)?

- 3) How many of those slumps were **mental** in origin (confidence, etc...)?

- 4) Have you ever been guilty of looking at one lousy loss as the beginning of a slump instead of a typical dip in your improvement cycle? Explain the circumstances of that loss.

- 5) For each of the following **physical** triggers to a slump, write an action plan that you will act upon to prevent it from happening to you.

Physical Trigger	Your Action Plan to Avoid It
Physical injuries	
Technical changes	
Equipment changes	
Too much practice	
Too little practice	

- 6) For each of the following **mental** triggers to a slump, write an action plan that you will act upon to prevent it from happening to you.

Mental Trigger	Your Action Plan to Avoid It
Burn out	
Lack of goals	
Playing for the wrong reason	
Problems in other areas of your life	
Negative thoughts	
Fear of failure or other negative emotion	

CHAPTER 6: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

CHAPTER 7: Developing a Fighting Spirit

“What is the single most important quality in a tennis champion? I would have to say desire, staying in there, and winning matches when you are not playing that well. It comes down to the mental aspect. All champions have that quality. They don't give up; they dig into something extra. People can sense that and see that. That is necessary if you want to be considered a champion.” **John McEnroe**

“Even when I went to the playground, I never picked the best players. I picked guys with less talent but who were willing to work hard and wanted to be great.” **Earvin "Magic" Johnson**

A **fighting spirit** is one of a competitor's most critical assets. I believe that we all have differing amounts of natural **fight**. Some players naturally tend to be feisty (Rafa Nadal) and seem never to give up, no matter how bleak the situation may be. Others seem to throw in the towel at the first sign that things might be tough for them in a match.

I have learned that players who always need someone else pushing them rarely accomplish great things. Motivation must come from the inside, not from the outside. That does not mean that a good coach or motivator is not an essential asset in jump-starting a player's motivation, but this kind of motivation can only last so long and push a player so far. Not to mention, the external motivator will certainly not be able to be with the player during all the many long hours it will take to become a great player, so eventually, players need to be able to motivate themselves from within.

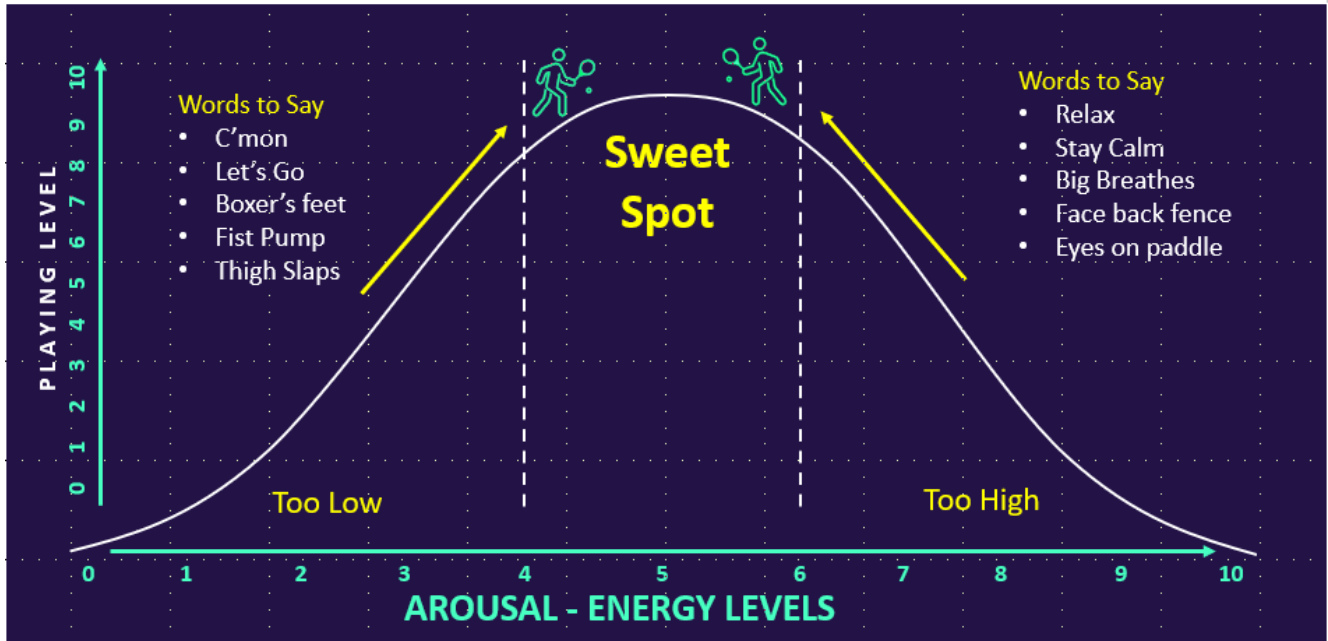
Each sport has its own unique **optimal emotional energy chart**. For example, it is easy to see that there would be a difference between tennis and football.

On the next page is a chart showing that tennis's optimal emotional energy level is between 4 and 6 on a scale of 10. It is important not to confuse “emotional energy level” with hustle or effort.

You always want a high level of physical effort and hustle in tennis. By emotional energy level, I mean how pumped up or aroused the person is with his emotions and state of mind, not his level of hustle and effort.

In tennis, your goal should be to attain a very high level of effort and hustle while maintaining a medium level of emotional energy and feistiness.

Optimal Emotional Energy Chart for Tennis



Below is a test you can take to assess where you might fall on this energy scale.

Grading Scale										
Never		Rarely			Sometimes		Usually		Always	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

1) Do you like to spend time alone?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) Do others say you are a private person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3) Do others think you are a *high-energy* person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4) Do others tell you that you act hyper?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5) Do you think you are an outgoing person?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6) Do you try for balls that others would **not** go for?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7) Do you pump your fist and say "*c'mon*" often during a match?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8) Do you encourage yourself **out loud** when you play?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9) Do you question your opponent when you think he makes a bad line call?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10) Do you often slap your thigh or pump your fist when you play a match?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please add up your total number and divide it by ten to get an average. Now place an “X” on the energy chart on page 40, where **your** average is. Now you have a basic idea of where you might fall on this chart. If the number you came up with differs from what you thought it would be, you should adjust your “X” to where you feel it belongs on the scale. Your friends, coaches, and parents can be great people to check with to see if they think you are in the correct spot.

Now that we have established your spot on the scale, you will have fallen into one of three categories:

If you score between 1 and 4, you are naturally a low-energy person. This usually means you have difficulty getting fired up and showing emotions when you play.

If you score between 5 and 6, you tend to have stable energy while competing. This is good news for you since you naturally tend to be in the best state of energy and arousal to play the best tennis.

If you score between 7 and 10, you tend to display too much emotional energy. Some may view you as very agitated, obnoxious, or misbehaved on the court.

Regardless of where you are on the scale, the goal is to enter (or stay) in the range of 4-6 to have your best shot at a good performance. A good technique for moving yourself in either direction on this chart is to use “word triggers” and/or “physical triggers.”

- **Word triggers** are things you say to yourself to change your emotional energy level. An example would be “stay calm” or “c’mon.”
- **Physical triggers** are actions you perform to change your emotional energy level. An example would be to slap your thigh or pump your fist. (Think of Rafael Nadal)

Exercises

Please list two triggers for each area below. Fill in all the areas, not just the area where you fall on the chart.

1) Scores between 1 and 4: Low emotional energy

Word triggers

-
-

Physical triggers

-
-

2) Scores between 4 and 6: Appropriate emotional energy

Word triggers

-
-

Physical triggers

-
-

3) Scores between 7 and 10: Excessive emotional energy

Word triggers

-
-

Physical triggers

-
-

4) On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest), at what level should your **hustle** and **effort** be when you play a match?

5) Why is it important not to link our hustle and effort levels to our emotional energy levels?

6) List a player you know who tends to be **too low** on the optimal energy chart.

What is his reputation as a competitor?

7) List a player you know who tends to be **too high** on the optimal energy chart.

What is his reputation as a competitor?

CHAPTER 7: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 8: Mental Toughness in Doubles

“Be polite, modest, honest, friendly, sign autographs, and available. It is the most important thing for a champion to be a good human being.” **Alberto Juantorena (Cuban Olympian)**

“As long as I can focus on enjoying what I'm doing and having fun, I know I will play well.”
Steffi Graf, Tennis Legend

Mental toughness is not typically discussed when discussing doubles partnerships. I propose that mental toughness must be considered when it comes to a doubles partner regarding **how you interact with that partner**. Since this is a mental toughness book, my goal in this chapter will be to focus on the *relationship* side of doubles.

Many doubles teams fail to determine what they want from each other as partners. They expect their partners to be able to read their minds, and when things do not go as planned, it can take the enjoyment out of the game.

Most players like to be encouraged, but some partners would rather have their partner remain quiet during the match. I have always felt that when a partner is looking for encouragement and does not receive it from his partner, he will interpret it as discouragement. Sometimes, even delayed encouragement feels like discouragement to some partners.

Regarding doubles partners, I like to talk about **traffic patterns**. Traffic patterns refer to *where* the partners walk on the court with each other. This is all observed in the **time between points**. If the traffic pattern is simply the server going from side to side along the baseline and his partner doing the same along the net, then that team probably has a problem. It could be that one of the partners is upset with the other.

In contrast, the best doubles teams use a distinct traffic pattern with four distinct phases that occur immediately after each point.

- 1) The partners find each other visually.
- 2) The partners come together and have some physical touch. (high five, etc.)
- 3) The net partner walks the server (or returner) back toward their baseline position, strategizing along the way.
- 4) The net partner releases and jogs (not walks) back to their net position.

This traffic pattern is very evident when you watch pro doubles teams. The Bryan Brothers are experts at doing this and even have a chest bump as their signature move in part 2 described above.

Of course, you should always try to partner with someone you like as an individual. This will make your tennis experience the most fun. However, what do you do when your coach assigns you to a partner you do not care for or dislike? This scenario plays out all the time on club teams, high school teams, and college teams.

Again, the answer is communication. Most coaches know the best pairings for their team, and most coaches give it considerable thought. Remember that coaches want to win as much as the players do, and they are not likely to try pairings that they know will not work or that they think are doomed to fail. **It could be that it is best for the team for you to have that partner, but it is not necessarily best for you.** If you cannot handle this concept, team tennis may not be your best option. Instead, consider entering tournaments where you can decide who you will play with.

You must also understand what your partner wants from you regarding coaching and/or advice while you play. This can be a sensitive subject for partners and is one of the most significant sources of frustration. In contrast, *you* may like your partner to explain why you missed your last shot; not all players want that information from their partners.

Some would rather accept coaching advice **only** from the coach or pro, and some may not even want to hear it from them. Still, others want to hear as much as possible during the match, while others are open to it but prefer to listen afterward. Either way, you must talk to your partner about his expectations. Failing to do so may set you both up for miserable matches and bad experiences.

The last area I would like to address regarding doubles partnerships is the necessity of agreeing on a style of play or tactics. I have witnessed many partners getting frustrated with each other because they have not decided on how to play against certain players. The worst thing you can do is act like two singles players out on the court, each trying to win the match in the best way he sees fit and getting more frustrated with their partner as the match progresses.

If you play on a team, your coach can assist you in selecting the best game plan for each opponent. The key is to be on the same page! Having a list of plans A, B, and C would also be a good idea. This can help you transition smoothly from plan to plan during a match.

Doubles can be a great deal of fun. I enjoy playing doubles more than singles. As players get older, it is common for them to play only doubles. If you keep the lines of communication open between you and your partner, there is no reason that doubles will ever have to be anything but a ton of fun.

In summary, successful doubles partners realize they are part of a more extensive system that includes their friends, teammates, coaches, and others. They learn to communicate their feelings and thoughts effectively and listen carefully to others. They have also learned valuable skills for dealing with conflict and challenging opponents and others who may be negative or oppositional.

Below is a questionnaire that I have developed that each partner can fill out to learn the best way to interact with each other. I highly recommend spending at least 15 minutes reviewing these questions with your partner.

- 1) Do you like playing the ad or deuce sides?
- 2) What would you like me to say or do after you miss an easy shot?
- 3) What would you like me to say or do after you make a double fault?
- 4) Do you want to use signals or not? If yes, what will they be?
- 5) Who do you think should serve first when we play?
- 6) Do you like a loud, intense partner or quiet and reserved?
- 7) Which one of us should be responsible for questioning bad calls?
- 8) What should our plan "A" be when we play?
- 9) What should our plan "B" be when we play?
- 10) What should our plan "C" be when we play?
- 11) How much time after a loss would you like to wait before we discuss the match?
- 12) How can I help your confidence stay high on the court?

- 13) Who should serve facing the sun if it is in a bad spot?
- 14) What kind of pre-warm-up rituals (before we get in the court) should we do?
- 15) Do you like to hear advice and coaching from me while we play?
- 16) Do you want me to walk to the baseline between points when you are serving?
- 17) What is best for me to say when you get mad or frustrated?
- 18) Should we always elect to receive when we win the toss?
- 19) Are there certain people that will make you play **better** if they are watching?
- 20) Are there certain people that will make you play **worse** if they are watching?

CHAPTER 8: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 9: Taking Responsibility for Your Own Game

“Champions take responsibility. They don’t blame others when their games have not evolved to the level that they should have.” **Billie Jean King, tennis legend**

“I have learned that players who always need someone else pushing them rarely accomplish great things. Motivation must come from the inside, not from the outside.”

Jorge Capestany, Tennis Master Professional

Your **first** responsibility as a player is to take responsibility for your own game. This means following a proper practice regimen. Below, I have defined some general guidelines for what it usually takes to reach various levels of tennis competency. Please note these are not guarantees that you will get to a certain level; instead, they are to be used as guidelines in determining your practice regimen.

Adult - USTA NTRP = 2.5-3.0	Junior - JV or low Varsity player
<p>These players usually drill once per week but not year-round. They typically do not take private lessons regularly. They play less than five USTA tournaments a year and rarely play practice sets on their own. These players do not have any off-court training program nor practice their serves on their own. They typically drill once a week on a seasonal basis. These players usually do not specialize in tennis and often play other high school sports.</p>	
Adult - USTA NTRP = 3.0-4.0	Junior - Low to high Varsity player
<p>These players typically drill 1-2 times a week and may or may not take a weekly private lesson. They play between 5-10 USTA tournaments a year and rarely play any practice sets on their own. Most do not have any off-court training program, nor do they practice their serves on their own. These players usually take drills year-round and play 2-3 days per week.</p>	
Adult - USTA NTRP = 4.0-4.5	Junior - High singles on Varsity
<p>These players typically drill 2-3 times per week and take 1-2 private or hitting privates weekly. They play roughly 10-12 USTA tournaments per year and play 2-4 practice sets per week. About 50% of these players are on an off-court training program and practice their serves on their own. These players usually take drills year-round and play 3-5 days per week.</p>	
Adult - USTA NTRP = 4.5 & above	Junior - High singles - State Champs
<p>These players typically drill 2-3 times per week and take 1-2 private or hitting private lessons weekly. They play about 15 USTA tournaments yearly and 6-8 practice sets per week. About 90% of these players are on an extensive off-court training program, including strength, speed, and agility training. Almost all practice their serves independently and play about 5-6 days per week.</p>	

There are two critical lessons from the four levels on the previous page.

- 1) It is essential that the parents have the same goals for the player as the player has. Often, frustration sets in when the parent's expectations are higher than the player's.
- 2) Players must be aware of the above information and avoid aiming for a certain level while performing the "workload" of a lesser level. It is not uncommon to see players who say they want to be nationally ranked go through their entire junior career performing the workload of only a sectionally ranked player.

The second area of responsibility a player should take on is for their **practice matches**. This is often the missing link in a player's overall practice regimen. Many players like to take lessons and drills or even private lessons and never add **match play** to their practice regimen. After a while, they become great "ball strikers," but they cannot win many matches because they are not "match tough." They are only tough when they drill or practice.

A common mistake players make when scheduling their practice matches is playing the wrong kinds of matches. Often, they will play with a friend because there is less pressure in that situation. These "friend matches" usually become just a hitting session, with the players playing only a few points, and then they stop keeping score altogether. If you want to be a tough competitor, you must compete.

I have categorized matches into five types:

- The opponent is very much worse than you (**one-star** match).
- The opponent is a little worse than you (**two-star** match).
- The opponent is very even with you (**three-star** match).
- The opponent is a little better than you (**four-star** match).
- The opponent is very much better than you (**five-star** match).

To get the full benefit of match play in your regimen, you must play matches of all types, not just four-star and five-star matches. Insisting on only playing these matches is one of the biggest reasons players fail to play *enough* matches.

Answering the following question is a quick test that can help you assess whether you are getting enough quality match play into your practice regimen.

Which of the following three statements best describes how you feel about your game?

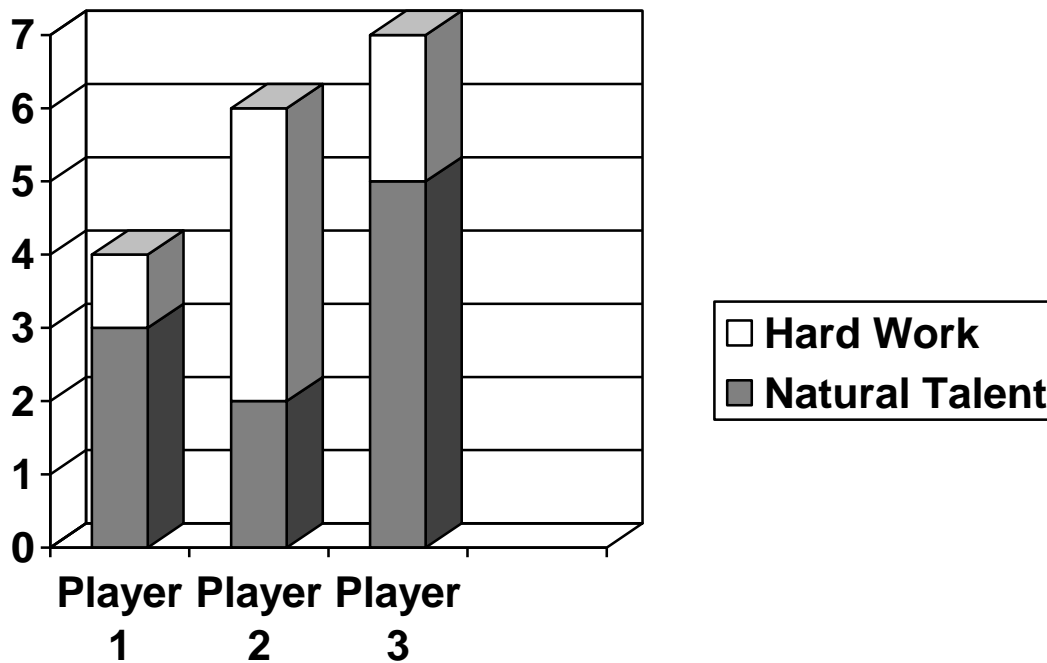
#1 – For the strokes that I have, I win **more** than I should.

#2 - For the strokes that I have, I win **about as much** as I should.

#3 - For the strokes that I have, I win **less** than I should.

Unfortunately, many people answer yes to #3. If you have answered yes to #3, commit to scheduling more of the proper practice matches for yourself. You may have to create a list of potential opponents to call for practice matches. You should take care of this job, so do not delegate this to your parents or coach.

The last area of major responsibility is your own **hard work and effort**. We all come to tennis with varying degrees of natural talent, but it is not always the most naturally talented players that make it the farthest. The table below shows three examples of what players may look like.



The table above shows that:

Player 1 has a good amount of natural talent, but his hard work is relatively low, and he consequently tops out as a mid-range player.

Player 2 has minimal natural talent, but he works hard and achieves a high level of play, primarily because of his hard work habits.

Player 3 has a ton of natural talent and adds only a tiny amount of hard work, but he still gets to a high level of play because he comes to tennis with so much natural talent.

The conclusion is that *both* your **natural talent** and your **hard work** will determine how far you go as a player.

Since we have little control over the amount of natural talent we possess, we need to ensure that we excel in the one area that *is* within our control—**hard work**.

Exercises

- 1) From the levels discussed on page 48, what tennis level would you say you are currently striving for? (circle one)

Adult Player

- 2.5-3.0 level
- 3.0-4.0 level
- 4.0-4.5 level
- 4.5 & above

Junior Player (High School)

- JV or low Varsity player (HS)
- Low to high Varsity player (HS)
- High singles on Varsity (HS)
- High singles - State Champs (HS)

- 2) From the levels discussed on page 48, what level of “workload” would you say you are currently doing? (circle one)

Non-Ranked Player

District Ranked Player

Sectionally Ranked Player

Nationally Ranked Player

- 3) Is there a misalignment in the level you are striving for and the workload you are doing?

- 4) How many practice sets are you playing a week?

- 5) How many “stars” is your typical practice match that you play? (circle one)



- 6) List the last four people you played a practice set or match against, excluding tournaments or league play. To the right of the player's name, list how many stars that match was worth.

<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Stars</u>
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-

- 7) Do you rely on other people to set up your practice matches?

Who?

Why?

- 8) It is essential to have a call list of players you can call for practice matches. Although you want most of your matches to be two, three, or four star rated matches, you need to have a list that contains all types of opponents. Below, fill in the names of possible opponents for practice matches. Try not to pick only friends or people you like.

Opponent	Phone Number
1 star: _____	_____
2 star: _____	_____
2 star: _____	_____
3 star: _____	_____
3 star: _____	_____
3 star: _____	_____
4 star: _____	_____
4 star: _____	_____
5 star: _____	_____

9) Which of the following three statements best describes how you feel about your game?
(circle one)

#1 – For the strokes that I have, I win **more** than I should.

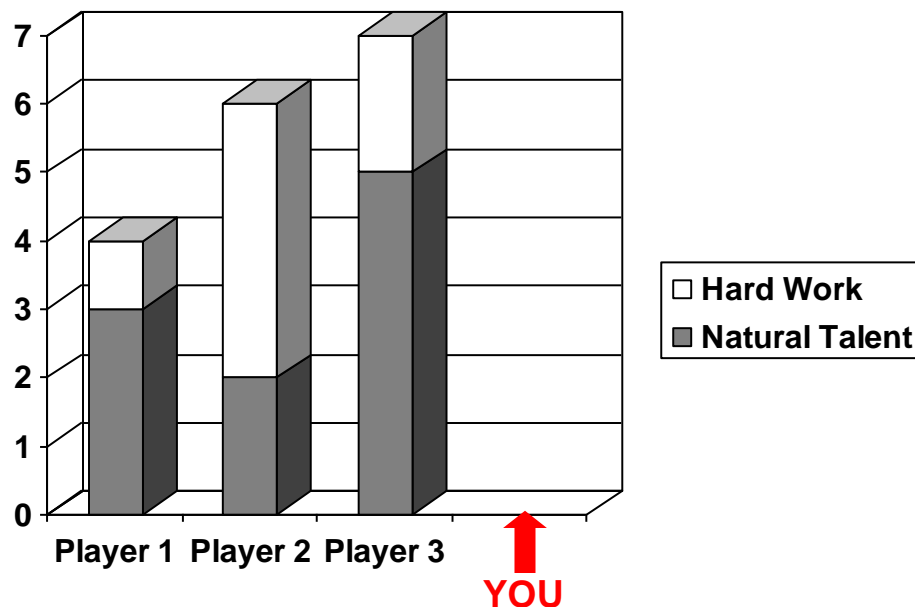
#2 - For the strokes that I have, I win **about as much** as I should.

#3 - For the strokes that I have, I win **less** than I should.

10) What might your answer to the above question mean regarding **how many** practice matches you are playing?

11) Would you say *your* overall level in tennis is primarily because of your natural talent or your hard work?

12) On the chart below, fill in what you think **YOUR** bar should look like for your current game level. Draw in your box in the area provided on the chart below.



13) Have you ever been told you have a poor work ethic or don't hustle as much as you should? By whom?

14) Name a player from the pro tour known for their hard work.

15) Name a player from the pro tour known for their natural talent.

16) What two things could you do to become known as a player who really works hard?

-

-

17) Name a player you dislike playing against because you know he will just hustle and try like crazy until the last point of the match.

18)

CHAPTER 9: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 10: Understanding Why Tennis is So Tough

“Tennis can be exceedingly frustrating as a sport.”

Dr. Jim Loehr, sports psychologist, author

“It’s one-on-one out there, man. There ain’t no hiding. I can’t pass the ball.”

Pete Sampras, 14-time grand slam tennis winner

You have chosen tennis as your sport, and I think it is the best choice in the entire world. I love tennis because I know that it helps my players develop so many valuable traits as a person that will help them succeed later in life. No other sport is as great as tennis for teaching life lessons.

Let me give you just one simple example. Take the life lesson of **honesty**. No other sport even comes close to allowing its players to learn and practice this critical value. In tennis, we serve as the umpires; we are the ones who call our opponent’s shots in or out. It is all up to us! Considering how other sports handle the same topic, that is a staggering responsibility. In most other sports, the players are not expected to be honest. If you “trap” a ball in baseball and do not catch it, the umpire says that you *did* catch it. What do you think most players, teams, and coaches would expect you to do? Tell the umpire the truth!? No way, in most cases, that would get you in a lot of trouble. Now compare that with what we are expected to do in tennis.

Below are ten reasons why tennis is the most psychologically demanding sport.

(Adapted from USTA Sports Psychology guidebook for coaches)

1) TENNIS IS AN INDIVIDUAL SPORT.

In tennis, you are all alone on the court—no one shares in the glory or blame. There is no teammate to pass off to if you are playing poorly, and you cannot be taken out of the game for a while to recuperate from your poor play.

2) NO COACHING IS ALLOWED.

Tennis is one of the only sports in which young players are not allowed to receive coaching. Except for a handful of exceptions, like high school tennis, Zonal teams, or the Davis Cup, nearly all tournaments do not allow coaching. This restriction is unusual in sports and forces young competitors to deal with the pressures and problems of playing independently.

3) THERE ARE NO SUBSTITUTES / NO TIME-OUTS.

Many sports allow players to regain their composure or get back on track using substitutions and time-outs. This is not the case in tennis. Players must stay in the game, regardless of how bad or uncomfortable things may get. This is particularly difficult because matches can last two or three hours.

4) ONE-ON-ONE COMBAT

Tennis is like boxing. You have a *real* one-on-one opponent that you must defeat to emerge victorious. A match can quickly become a personal confrontation between opponents, especially if one resorts to gamesmanship tactics. Such direct competition can fuel intense rivalries and threaten friendships in powerful ways among young players.

5) THE ACCURACY OF LINE CALLING

Completely objective, professionally trained linesmen make mistakes all the time. And they are motionless and concerned only with one line. Expecting players in a match to call the lines with the same accuracy is, at best, unrealistic. Balls traveling over 50 miles per hour with fractions of an inch separating “out” from “in” provide distinct opportunities for conflict and controversy. Recent studies show that players are actually legally blind at the moment they land on the court when running. This is added to the fact that many matches can be dramatically changed with only one bad call, and it is easy to see why tempers can flare. (Imagine what would happen if the batters in Little League baseball were responsible for calling balls and strikes for themselves!)

6) CONSTANTLY CHANGING CONDITIONS

Changing temperature, wind, intensity of light, court surfaces, balls, altitude, indoor/outdoor play, and equipment add to the depth of the competitive challenge in tennis. Players are forced to deal with changes such as these many times within the same match. Players’ responses to these situations can indicate their level of mental toughness. Those who are not affected by changes in conditions are often the ones who win.

7) LENGTH OF THE BATTLE

Few sports require young players to concentrate and perform for as much as three hours at a time. It is not uncommon for 12-year-old players to be required to compete in two singles matches and two doubles matches on the same day. Mental toughness and physical fitness become critical if a player is to become successful.

8) THE UNIQUE SCORING SYSTEM IN TENNIS

The scoring system in tennis adds to the pressure a young player experiences. Unlike many other sports, there is no overall time limit. Play continues until one of the players wins two out of three sets. Consequently, there is no room for coasting on a lead or waiting for time to run out. Each player is always just a few points from a complete turn-around, and the lead is never safe. In contrast, if a basketball team is ahead by 30 points, they will almost certainly win because their lead is too large to overcome within the time of the competition. In tennis, a player can be ahead 5-0 in the third set, lose two games, and immediately have reason to fear a loss and a massive comeback on their opponent’s part.

9) “BIG vs. LITTLE” and “YOUNG vs. OLD”

Another dimension of tennis is that a nine-year-old child can successfully compete against a 14 or 15-year-old teenager. A young girl of 14 may be capable of beating a seasoned veteran on the pro tour. Small can beat large, and young can beat old. A 12-year-old boy losing to a 9-year-old or a 6’3” boy losing to someone half his size can be highly stressful.

10) TENNIS TRAINING CAN BE EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE

Tennis training for competitive players can be a significant family expense. The pressure from these expenses can often stress the young player, who feels guilty if he is not winning because of all the money his parents put into his tennis. Parents can quickly lose sight of what is important and begin to expect a “return” for their investment. This issue is one of the most frequently mentioned by families with players competing at high national levels.

Despite all these difficulties, tennis is still the best sport for a child. It is the only sport that physically, strategically, and psychologically challenges players. It is no coincidence that so many junior tennis players are the best students in their classes. The goal setting and work ethic needed to succeed in tennis are life skills that will help all players as they age and enter society.

Even the difficulties experienced in junior tennis (like dealing with an abusive or cheating opponent) are opportunities to learn life skills that will be an essential advantage later in life. Few other sports offer as many of these types of learning opportunities.

Parents and coaches often want to get involved or “fix” on-court problems when they happen. The best thing to do is recognize those episodes as opportunities to learn essential life lessons. Children who develop the skills to deal with difficult people at an early age are usually far more successful in life than those who do not.

“Each time one prematurely teaches a child something he could have discovered himself, that child is kept from inventing it and consequently from understanding it completely.” -- Jean Piaget.... Tennis can help players achieve this better than any other sport.

Exercise

For the exercise portion of this chapter, please write about your own experience with each of the difficulties that were listed in this chapter.

- 1) Tennis is an individual sport.

- 2) No coaching is allowed (USTA tournaments).

- 3) No substitutions or time-outs are allowed.

- 4) There is a one-on-one type of combat.

- 5) The accuracy of line calling.

- 6) There are constantly changing conditions.

7) The length of the battle.

8) The unique scoring system in tennis.

9) Little people can beat bigger people, and younger people can beat older people frequently in tennis.

10) Tennis training can be so expensive.

CHAPTER 10: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 11: Core Values That Tennis Can Teach

Taking the emphasis off of winning and putting it on things you have 100 percent control over only makes sense in tennis. Today, many players feel like failures because they do not win as often as they think they should. One reason is that players do not play enough matches as part of their training regimen.

The other big reason is that players have been taught by peers, parents, and coaches that winning is the ultimate goal. Instead, we need to realize that tennis is a nearly perfect vehicle to teach players the many life lessons that are so important for all champions to learn. Below is a list of these core values.

- 1) **Character:** Through the responsibilities each player has to call the lines on their side of the court, to keep score accurately, and to give the opponent the benefit of the doubt, tennis offers a great opportunity for players to build character. A player's character can also be seen in how he keeps score during a drill or even by his line calls while he drills. Good coaches can be invaluable if they can get the players to realize that their self-worth has nothing to do with how well they strike a little yellow ball.
- 2) **Courage:** Tennis allows players to play through tough times. The one-on-one competition style requires the moral fiber to put it on the line. Few other sports require as much courage from their youngest athletes as tennis does in this area. Another example is when players find it necessary to confront or question someone who is cheating them. How often have we seen players avoid that uncomfortable job, only to wait until the match is over to tell the world how their opponent was the biggest cheater on the planet? Think of it: aren't those skills the exact ones that best serve the players in their adult lives? It's all about how you look at the situation. Some parents will think this is an awful burden that no young player should endure, while others recognize it as an excellent opportunity to teach an important life lesson and skill.
- 3) **Honesty:** Tennis is one of the only sports where the players make calls on each other's shots. Can you imagine a Little League game where the batter calls the balls and strikes? Although this massive responsibility in the hands of immature competitors can and has caused problems, no other sport allows for the development of honesty like tennis does. Parents and coaches can facilitate the development of this core value if they seek opportunities to compliment players when they get it right.
- 4) **Sportsmanship:** Like in other sports, tennis players will play opponents that are jerks and try to cheat. In the short run, this is uncomfortable for players and parents, but it allows young players to develop coping skills with these people. I know many competitive junior players who are mature beyond their peers in this area simply because they have had more chances to practice these skills than their non-tennis-playing friends. Parents should view these episodes as *opportunities* and resist the urge to get involved and "save" the child.

- 5) **Integrity:** More than any other sport, tennis has the potential for “retaliatory” calls because it allows your opponent to make calls that directly affect you. Sometimes, people get cheated, whether on purpose or by honest mistake. How a player **reacts** to these times offers the player a chance to test and prove his integrity. Despite the opponent's actions, will he get even or do the right thing? Refusing to retaliate will teach players to avoid *situational ethics* by refusing to get even “because he did it to me first.” Players who succeed in this area can feel profound satisfaction even if they lose the match, but only if a coach or parent is dedicated to looking for and rewarding their successes.

- 6) **Commitment:** Reaching the highest level of tennis requires much commitment on the player’s part. The lessons of self-discipline and delayed gratification are great life lessons that will serve the player later in life. Even within a player’s game, he will need to decide to try new techniques that may hurt him in the short run. Commitment to these new techniques is critical for future tennis success and teaches a valuable life lesson that players will surely benefit from as adults.

- 7) **Humility:** Through competition and partaking in drill classes, players soon realize people do not look upon arrogance very highly. Tennis offers players the chance to learn the difference between arrogance and confidence. Team and class settings are the best arenas for players to learn this. Parents and coaches cannot shun their responsibility to tell players when they are acting arrogantly.

- 8) **Excellence:** I believe the practice court is the best arena to teach players to strive for excellence. Many players find it challenging to practice with the proper level of intensity after a long day at school. These challenges are like the ones they will have in college and ultimately when they enter the workforce and become parents. The ability to work hard when you do not feel like it is a significant life lesson in striving for excellence.

Suppose we can produce players who strive to excel in these areas and look at tennis as a vehicle to become a better person. In that case, they will have learned valuable life lessons and, in the process, experience less stress in competition. They will no longer view the “win” as the ultimate goal. Instead, they will be aiming at a more important target. Almost every tough loss in tennis can be a victory if the player is tuned into the life lessons that tennis offers.

Exercise

For the exercise portion of this chapter, I would like you to write down and elaborate on three of the Core Values in the preceding list you would most like to develop yourself. List them and then write 1-2 sentences on how you can create this value through your involvement in Tennis.

1) **Core Value:** _____

How Tennis can help you develop this value:

2) **Core Value:** _____

How Tennis can help you develop this value:

3) **Core Value:** _____

How Tennis can help you develop this value:

CHAPTER 11: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

CHAPTER 12: A Chapter for Tennis Parents

Stan Smith's Quiz about Tennis Parenting

By Stan Smith with Cindy Hahn - TENNIS / July 1990

I've met a lot of parents in my life. As a junior player, I knew them as friends' moms and dads. As director of coaching for the USTA, I work with fathers and mothers of our nation's top juniors. And, as the father of two racquet-wielding children, I am a tennis parent myself.

Jim Loehr, the sports psychologist who oversees the USTA's sports science program, says, "When I work with kids, the relationship with their parents and how it affects their tennis is always my number one concern."

Some parents do a wonderful job. Others make me wish there were remedial parent training courses. But all struggle with the pressure junior tennis places on tennis players: Has our son outgrown his coach? Can we afford airfare for the nationals? Is our daughter burning out?

There's no online course to teach you how to handle this enormous financial and emotional investment, nor is there any tried-and-true answer for even the most common questions. However, I can share some guidelines that may help based on sports psychologists' research, USTA studies, and my own experience. First, to understand how you rate as a tennis parent, take the quiz below based on one in Loehr's book, *The Parent/Players Tennis Training Program*. Use the scale below for your answers.

5 = Always / 4 = Almost always / 3 = Sometimes / 2 = Almost never / 1 = Never

- 1) Do you coach your child? _____
- 2) Do you watch all your child's matches? _____
- 3) Do you look nervous on the sidelines? _____
- 4) Do you treat your child differently when they win? _____
- 5) Do you ignore your child's bad behavior on the court? _____
- 6) Do you tell your child he's being unrealistic when he talks about a pro career? _____
- 7) Do you believe your family's standard of living has suffered because of your child's tennis expenses? _____
- 8) Do you think your child should give up other sports to concentrate on tennis? _____

Total up your score and refer to the chart below:

8-16 = Good job; as a tennis parent, you are a pro.

17-32 = Slight problem; work on your strategy and consistency.

33-40 = Problem parent - re-learn the basics fast.

Read On for some thoughts on improving your performance in each situation.

1. Be a parent, not a coach.

Initially, it is great to be your child's "coach" and introduce him to tennis. He will be more interested in tennis if the initial exposure comes from you because kids naturally want to do what their parents do. However, eventually, the parent needs to hand the coaching duties to someone else. Most parents do not have the technical knowledge to instruct their children. But more importantly, the roles of coach and parent are so conflicting that it is nearly impossible for one person to play both.

A coach's job is to build strong tennis players; the coach must criticize and compliment based on performance. A parent's job is to create a strong person; they must provide unconditional love that instills self-esteem in a child. For one person to tackle both jobs is a formidable task, and the results are often disastrous.

2. Watch no more than 75 percent of your child's matches.

Your child needs to learn that he is the only person who can control the events on the court. Knowing he can compete without his parents watching will also give him confidence.

Parents should watch 0-30 percent of their child's practices. Practice is the coach's domain, and he needs your absence to develop a relationship with your child. Your absence will also promote your child's on-court independence. Parents who watch too many practices send a subliminal message to their children that tennis is so important that they must be at everything about it. It can also show a lack of trust that the parents may have in the coach's ability to get the job done.

3. Always look positive during a match.

Your child will inevitably look at you, and your body language can make or break his confidence. Always maintain a calm, confident air, even in the third set tiebreak. If your child sees you with your head in your hands or pacing nervously, his feeling of pressure will only become more intense.

I know it's difficult because all parents are nervous about their children. Charting your child's match can help (we recommend momentum charting). This will give the parents something to do with their hands and something constructive to take their minds off the on-court drama. The charted results may also be helpful to the coach.

4. Keep an even keel.

You may feel elated by your child's win or deflated by his loss, but don't show either emotion too much. This will help him realize that losing is not the end of the world and that winning is not everything. Always say something positive (that's easy if he wins), but even if he loses, avoid the temptation of becoming the coach. Let the coach do that job at the next practice session. Something like "Bad luck, you competed well, or you can get him next time" would be good to say after a loss.

5. Reprimand your child for on-court misbehavior.

If cheating, racquet throwing, or abusive language becomes a habit, then take dramatic action. Pull the child off the court and reprimand him. Make it understood that under no circumstances is that acceptable behavior. If you ignore this misbehavior, you are condoning it, and that is failing your responsibility as a parent.

6. Let your child dream.

Never take away your child's dream, no matter how unrealistic. Dreams are the fuel that keeps young people striving, learning, and exploring.

If your child says he wants to be a pro someday, and it is obvious that he does not have what it takes, do not say, "You're just not athletic enough." Instead, say something like, "That would be great, but first, you must work hard to get a national ranking. Andre Agassi, John McEnroe, and other pro players competed on the national junior level before making it to the pros."

By helping your child realize what he needs to achieve to reach the goal, he will gradually see that pro tennis is not the right track. He will revisit the dream, finding alternatives that can be just as fulfilling and more realistic.

7. Explore financial options.

Loehr recently talked to a woman who took a second mortgage on her house to pay for her child's tennis. That is too much of a financial sacrifice. When a family's standard of living is eroded because of tennis, it places enormous pressure on the child, even if the subject is never discussed. The child is likely to feel responsible for winning because of the significant sacrifices the family has made for his tennis.

If your child is very talented, there are two ways to support their tennis. Families, friends, or local businesses are often willing to sponsor a talented junior, but check out any possible NCAA rules before accepting money. The USTA is another avenue of potential financial assistance. Check with your USTA sectional office about assistance programs for talented juniors.

8. Encourage your child to play other sports.

Usually, when junior players get older (around 14), they will have to forgo other sports to reach their full potential in tennis. Until then, they should play all the sports they enjoy.

In 1987, when the USTA analyzed other countries' tennis programs, it found that nearly all their best players played other sports until the age of 12 or 13, and many until 14 or 15. A child will only develop half to three-quarters of his athletic potential by playing only tennis. Also, distractions from tennis can help keep burnout at bay.

My 11-year-old son, Ramsey, has played baseball (he is a pitcher) for the past three years. This year, my wife and I thought maybe he should not play so that he could concentrate on tennis. Eventually, we decided that he should continue playing baseball. The benefits of playing a team sport, the hand-eye coordination that baseball promotes, and the pressures of being a pitcher will ultimately help his tennis.

CHAPTER 12: Wrap Up

Write down below the top three most helpful ideas **you** gained from this chapter.

1)

2)

3)

eBook Summary

I hope that you have found this workbook helpful and valuable.

As a coach, I have decided to improve myself and am committed to being a lifelong learner. This will help me coach my students to the best of my abilities.

Working through this book shows you are committed and competent enough to understand that not all tennis improvement happens on the court. The best players in the game have often made massive improvements while working on off-court things.

You may not have considered using a tennis workbook to achieve real improvement, but I am glad you did.

Please be sure to take it easy on yourself. Tennis can be highly frustrating, and I have seen many people suffer needlessly as they compete.

A dangerous question to ask yourself is *what kind of person you are becoming because of your tennis*. Are you a more goal-oriented, disciplined person capable of delaying gratification, or are you becoming more of an angry, frustrated person who is challenging to be around? The truth is that I have been both at different times of my life.

My last recommendation is that you write a letter of gratitude to the sport of tennis. When I became certified as a mental toughness coach through the Human Performance Institute, I was challenged to write such a letter, and it was very moving for me.

As a final gift to you ... I have decided to share my letter of gratitude to tennis. You will see it in the following few pages, and I think you will find it highly personal and honest to me. It details my successes and failures and how far I have come as a player and a coach. I hope you will use it as a model to craft your own letter.

Please Enjoy...

Gratitude Letter to Tennis – by Jorge Capestany (March 2014)

Tennis... I just wanted to share what you have meant to me since I've known you for 38 years. We were introduced on a court at my elementary school in Hudsonville, Michigan, in 1976. Little did I know that through you, I would meet my future wife, have a job, and be allowed to travel worldwide as a coach and speaker. But we both know that it has not always been easy for me; when I first began to play, severe bouts of insecurity hampered me. Although I loved to practice and train, I often struggled when I competed.

Early on, I felt so insecure as I played with all these other kids that I knew had played much longer than me... after all, I did not get serious about you (or even meet you) until I was almost 15 years old. I loved the idea of tournaments and competing against others, but it was in that competitive arena that some serious self-confidence issues I had inside could surface. Being in

an immigrant family and not being able to speak the language when I started Kindergarten had laid a deep-seated insecurity in me that only competition was exposed.

I remember going to my first tournament with a group of players from my club. I thought they were so much better than me, and I lost 6-0 6-0 in my first match... I was embarrassed. My coach tried to console me and told me I still had to play in the back draw, which I didn't even know was a thing. He explained how it would be easier for me because it was full of people who had already lost in the first round (sweet, I can beat scrubs...). I was excited to have still another chance to compete. But within a couple of hours, I lost 6-0 6-0 **again**, only this time I felt even more humiliated because I had just been crushed in the "toilet bowl." After that, we parted ways for a couple of weeks, which was the first (of many) times I "broke up with you."

Our relationship for the next several years (my late teens and my early 20s) was mostly volatile. I am not proud of how I acted on the court nor of my apparent inability to "get it together" on the court. I always seemed to find a way to lose. Honestly, I was pretty immature, and my only view of success was if I won or lost the match. It was not until I became a coach that I saw the potential that you, tennis, have for teaching life lessons. Thinking back, I see that my junior coach had tried to teach me these lessons, but at the time, I had no interest in developing as a person; I only wanted to win, which, for me, meant acquiring better strokes.

During this time, tennis was only about winning for me, and developing myself as a person of character was not even a thought in my head. My endless pursuit of **results** had put me on my way to **winning the race to the wrong finish line**. There were many days when I was becoming a worse person because of tennis... more impatient, angry, cynical, and challenging to be around (especially if I lost). It is a dangerous question to ask oneself... **what kind of person are you becoming because of your tennis?**

As I transitioned from a player to a coach, I had the opportunity to help many kids with the same struggles I had as a competitor. All those heartbreaking losses, struggles with self-doubt, and anger issues that I had experienced as a **player** would now come in handy as I helped students deal with those issues themselves.

So, I want to thank you, tennis, for the many things you have taught me to make me a better person, dad, husband, and coach. It has taken me way longer than it should because I spent so much time only concerned about results and the scoreboard, worried about what others would think of me based on my results. What I have learned specifically is...

1) Now I know that only chasing results is **fool's gold**, never satisfying or justifying the immense work I put into getting better as a player.

2) There is danger in measuring one's self-esteem by how well we strike a little yellow ball that only costs \$1. I have matured to the point of understanding that if I don't have a **clear purpose for competing** in my head, I will never have peace as I compete... you brutally taught me this.

3) I learned that my **private voice** was often an internal terrorist, a source of constant criticism, and spoke to me in ways I would never allow others to. This is perhaps the most critical area where I can help players as a coach.

4) I learned that as a teaching professional, I spent way too much time on the court abusing my body and way too many weekends away from my family watching my students play in tournaments. I regret the time I missed with my family during those years.

5) All those hours I taught on the court (65,000) took their toll on my body and evaporated my desire to get back and practice for myself. This led to my increased weight and consequent injuries that kicked it over the top for me so that I stopped hitting and competing altogether and can now barely demonstrate shots to my players. My diet had become very unhealthy.

6) I have learned that the **story** I was telling myself about my body and diet was detrimental. I would say to myself that since I worked so hard and worked so many hours and was always available 24/7 to students and my job, I DESERVED to eat whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted. I had made a poor diet my reward for being so unselfish with my time. The stories we tell ourselves shape our lives.

7) I have learned that in every case I am aware of, reaching the pinnacle of results leaves one feeling empty and unsatisfied. From Luke Jensen to Andre Agassi, I have seen firsthand that playing tennis without an **ultimate purpose for competing** that is more transcendent than results (wins/losses) is the only way to be happy and fulfilled while at the same time making the competitive experience more enjoyable.

I feel blessed that in my sixties, I'm still learning about life through tennis. I love the fact that I can help other players navigate the minefield of competitive tennis in a healthy way. Despite all my challenges as a coach, the difficult parents and unreasonable members... I still love you, Tennis - I would not want to do anything else for a living.

As I enter my last decade of teaching tennis, I desire to be a better example for others and help more players find their real purpose for competing—not for their friends, not for their parents, not for their coaches, but **as a means to GROW UP**. Thank you, tennis, for helping me grow up and become a better and more balanced person, even if it did take a long time.

The End.... I wish you the best on the courts.

If you want to see more of my content and coaching, please check out my websites listed below.

Learn more from Jorge at his websites below:

TennisDrills.tv – for tennis coaches

JorgeCapestany.com – for tennis players

PickleballDrillsHQ.com – for Pickleball players AND Coaches