

THE BIG IDEAS

Mistaken Identity

A case of.

Curse of Perfection

Failure, rebound days, etc.

Compete

Strive WITH not against.

The Ultimate Contest

Make a PROMISE. Keep it.

Fear

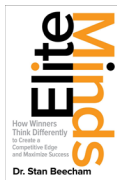
Your ultimate opponent.

To Go or Not to Go?

GO!!!

"If you plan on being anything less than you are capable of being, you will probably be unhappy all the days of your life."

~ Abraham Maslow



Elite Minds

How Winners Think Differently to Create a Competitive Edge and Maximize Success

BY DR. STAN BEECHAM · MCGRAW-HILL EDUCATION © 2016 · 224 PAGES

"The debate continues, whether it's in business or competitive sport: How much of one's performance is based on physical ability, and how much of one's performance is based on mental acuity? Perhaps Yogi Berra said it best when he explained, 'Baseball is 90 percent mental, and the other half is physical.' From where I sit, the view's a little different. I believe the degree to which one performs and the level of success one achieves is 100 percent mental.

Why? Because the mind is in control of the body.

This is not my opinion—it is scientifically verified by those who have studied the brain-mind complex for decades. Your brain is your software, your body the hardware. Simply put, your body does what your brain tells it to do or what your brain thinks your body is capable of doing. ...

In fact, talent and experience alone will never lead to a sustained high level of performance—especially at the elite level in any given field.

The problem with this approach is that everyone is talented and has years of experience at the elite level. Who then performs the best when the advantages of talent and experience are mitigated?

The answer is simple: the person whose mind is an asset, not an obstruction. The competitive advantage at the highest level is overwhelmingly mental, not physical. I see this every day."

~ Dr. Stan Beecham from *Elite Minds*

I absolutely love mental toughness books by sports psychologists and peak performance coaches.

I mean, it's pretty much impossible *not* to be fired up after reading one of their books.

For example: If this kind of quote doesn't make you sit up straight and pay attention to what you believe about yourself, I don't know what will: "*What you believe about yourself and your world is the primary determinant of what you do and, ultimately, how well you do it.*"

One of our members recommended this book. It's fantastic.

Stan Beecham is a sports psychologist who has worked with many of the world's elite athletes. As per the title of the book, he tells us that it's their MINDS that make the difference in sustained high levels of performance—creating a competitive edge and maximizing success. (Get a copy of the book [here](#).)

As always, the book is packed with Big Ideas.

And, as always, I'm excited to share a few of my favorites we can apply to our lives TODAY, so let's jump straight in!

P.S. Check out our collection of Notes on some of my favorites, including: [How Champions Think](#) by Bob Rotella, [The Champion's Mind](#) by Jim Afremow, [Unbeatable Mind](#) by Mark Divine, [The Rise of Superman](#) by Steven Kotler, [Overachievement](#) by Jon Eliot and [Chasing Excellence](#) by Ben Bergeron.

"There are three musts that hold us back: I must do well. You must treat me well. And the world must be easy."

~ Albert Ellis

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

"Consider this: What if you suffer from a case of mistaken identity? Who you *think* you are is not actually who you are. What you *think* you are here to do is not actually what you are here to do. What you *think* you are capable of is actually only a hint of your true ability.

Consider for a moment that you are totally wrong about yourself—and wrong about this infinite universe in which you live. What if that's true? What if most of us live our entire lives and never know who we actually are, why we are here, and what we are supposed to do while visiting this planet? What if we have amnesia and we forgot who we really are right before we left our mother's body and entered the world? I think this is exactly our state.

Who we think we are is not who we are. We are much, much more than our perceived selves.

The Buddhists have a saying: 'Don't mistake the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself.' We think our ego—our persona—is who we really are. But this is only to the same extent that your clothes, your hairstyle, and your personality are who you are. In order to reach your full potential—your greatness—you must first admit that you are wrong about yourself."

Those are the final words from Chapter #1 called "Mind Over Matter" in which we explore the power of our unconscious minds and beliefs.

This line sums it up pretty well: "*Who we think we are is not who we are. We are much, much more than our perceived selves.*"

And, know this: "*In the battle of mind versus body, mind always wins!*"

Therefore, we'd be wise to step back and realize that we're a LOT more than just the little version of ourselves that's pointing at the moon.

[Campbell](#)'s wisdom comes to mind: "*What am I? Am I the bulb that carries the light, or am I the light of which the bulb is a vehicle?*"

So does Walter Russell's wisdom: "*Early in life I found that to achieve greatness one had to go only one inch beyond mediocrity, but that one inch is so hard to go that only those who become aware of God in them can make the grade, for no one can achieve that one inch alone.*"

Then there's [Eric Butterworth](#): "*You may say, 'But I am only human.' This is the understatement of your life. You are not only human—you are also divine in potential. The fulfillment of all your goals and aspirations in life depends upon stirring up and releasing more of that divine potential. And there is really nothing difficult about letting this inner light shine. All we must do is correct the tendency to turn off our light when we face darkness.*"

All of which brings us back to you. Do you suffer from a case of mistaken identity? :)

How would you live if you REALLY got the infinite power within yourself?

Is NOW a good time to start being that version of you?

P.S. Recall the etymology of the word *identity* that we discussed in our Notes on [Atomic Habits](#). It means "repeated beingness." So... Go be that best version of you. Repeatedly!)

"There's no such thing as 100 percent effort. Even 100 percent is extremely rare. But 90 percent? That will guarantee tremendous success."

~ Dr. Stan Beecham

PERFECTION, FAILURE AND REBOUND DAYS

"We must accept that every now and then, we will have a bad day. When I talk with elite athletes,

"If I were dropped out of a plane into the ocean and told the nearest land was 1,000 miles away, I'd still swim. And I'd despise the ones who gave up."

~ Abraham Maslow

I ask them the following question: 'If you were the best athlete in the world at your event, how frequently would you have a bad day?' Surprisingly, many great athletes believe they should get to a point where they no longer have any bad days (or failures). But in reality, the best and most self-aware of those athletes report that during the course of a 30-day month, they have somewhere between 3 and 6 bad days. They understand that having a bad day is simply part of the process. The ability to accept these fluctuations in performance allows athletes to remain fully engaged in their training and keep their goals high.

How you function during a good day does not define your character. It's how you function during a bad day that is the true test... In order for you to reach your potential, you must know how you respond to poor performance. It is critical information you simply cannot move forward without.

If perfect is not the goal, what is? It's simply *Do your best*. That's it. Each and every day, make it your intention to do the very best you can with what you have that day. As I said earlier, in your daily journal, give yourself a W [for Win] or an L [for Loss] for each day. If you did the best you could that day, you get a W. If you did not do your best, you get an L. The goal is to have six or fewer Ls in a month. And you never want to have two consecutive Ls in a month. It's okay to have a bad day, but you must make yourself recover quickly and get back on track. Remember: The goal is not to be perfect. It's to do your best and recover quickly from failure."

That's from a chapter appropriately called "The Curse of Perfection."

There's a TON of goodness in there. First, are you, like me, a recovering perfectionist? If so, check out *Conquering Perfectionism 101* and all those Notes. For now, let's quickly recap the goodness up there and connect it to some other sources of wisdom.

We'll start at the top: Do YOU think that you'll magically get to a place where you no longer have bad days? Where you no longer fail? If so, GET RID OF THAT notion. It's your biggest obstacle to crushing it. We need to KNOW that we'll NEVER be exonerated. In fact, as we evolve and our standards get higher and higher and we take bigger and bigger risks, we WANT to experience more "failure."

As Seth Godin says in *The Icarus Deception*: "If you become someone who is uncomfortable unless she is creating change, restless if things are standing still, and disappointed if you haven't failed recently, you've figured out how to become comfortable with the behaviors most likely to make you safe going forward."

I love the way another mental toughness guru, Jim Afremow, puts the same wisdom in his classic *The Champion's Mind*: "Take a minute right now to think about your performance when you did not believe a good or respectable outcome was possible but you still found a way to make it happen. There is beauty in being ugly but effective (UBE) or having a good bad day (GBD) while you are not at your finest. Keep your head in the game and grind it out."

"Everyone should do at least two things each day he hates to do, just for practice."

~ William James

So... We need to EXPECT to have bad days. Then we need to master the art of having good bad days. How do we develop that level of consistency and emotional stamina? By working our protocol and trying to do our BEST.

And, remember: If you have a bad day (/a day when you *don't* do your best), WORK EVEN HARDER to execute your protocol the next day. Remember: [Rebound Days](#).

Here's to letting go of perfection and tenaciously chasing our Optimus best!

COMPETE

"Competition holds the promise to bring out the very best in us, and that's why we should seek it out. The word comes from the Latin root *peto*, which means 'to go out and seek.' The prefix *com* means 'with' or 'together.' Thus, *competition* is a social process that requires others. You can't do it by yourself.

*"Do not pray for easy lives.
Pray to be stronger men."*

~ John F. Kennedy

But what is it that we should seek during competition? [Dr. George] Sheehan suggests that 'competition is simply each of us seeking our absolute best with the help of each other.'

I love that statement. It's one of the best sentences I have ever read in my entire life. It captures the notion that we are not in this competitive world alone. We are all here together struggling for the same things. Sheehan follows that sentence with two more great ones: 'What we do magnifies each other, inspires each of us. The race is a synergistic society where what accrues to one accrues to all, a society in which everyone can be a winner.' ...

Great competitors are assisted, not inhibited, by the competition. Going against the best should inspire us, drive us, and set our souls on fire. Competing against the best will bring out the best in you if you learn how to compete *with* and not *against*.

Those who fail to catch the tailwind of competition do so because they compete *against* each other. Great competitors understand the meaning of competing *with* one another."

That's from a chapter called "The Truth about Winning."

A key idea? Look at the true meaning of the word *competition*.

The best among us KNOW that if they want to express the best within themselves they NEED people with whom they are striving to reach the upper limits of their potential.

Again: Compete WITH not against other people.

All that reminds me one of the all-time great coaches, Pete Carroll. I love his reflections on competition in *Win Forever*: "*The best performers, whether athletes, entertainers, or anybody else trying to do anything well, are the ones who aren't trying to win by playing someone else's game. Each person is made up of a unique combination of strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and talents, and any one of us can only truly maximize our potential in the context of that individual makeup. That's why it doesn't make sense to think about competition in the context of any one opponent: If you are really in a Win Forever mind-set, the only comparison that matters is yourself. Your goal should be to maximize your potential and your performance as a permanent way of being, rather than just in terms of individual victories.*"

Plus: "*What Win Forever means to me is aspiring to be the best you can be, or as I like to refer to it, "maximizing your potential." But Winning Forever is not about the final score; it's about competing and striving to be the best. If you are in this pursuit, then you're already winning.*"

Want to be your best?

Step into the arena.

And remember to celebrate others committed to doing THEIR best as you joyfully give us all you've got.

*"The impossible is done by
those who are willing to risk
it all. Those who risk the
most achieve the most."*

~ Dr. Stan Beecham

THE ULTIMATE CONTEST + PROMISES VS. EXCUSES

"As we mentioned earlier, *contest* begins with the prefix *con*, which also means 'with.' The second syllable, *test*, is the same root as the word testify. When we testify, we speak under oath. We make a promise. When we enter a contest, we should make a promise—not only to ourselves, but to everyone present. Sheehan suggests that the promise should be to do our best.

Whatever you do, make some promise or commitment to yourself. Promise yourself that you will not quit when it gets difficult. Promise yourself that you will not hold anything back. Let the contest be the most important thing in your life at that moment. And make sure you keep your promise to yourself.

People who don't make promises make excuses. Get really good at making and keeping your promises so you won't have to make excuses."

"Fear is keeping you from reaching your potential. Conquering fear should be your primary goal in life."

~ Dr. Stan Beecham

Next to the first paragraph of that passage in my copy of the book, you will find a huge exclamation point and equally large "WOW."

One more trip down Etymology Lane.

Contest.

It literally means "with" a "promise."

Stan tells us to enter each contest with a promise to ourselves TO DO OUR BEST.

Of course, the ultimate contest is the game of life.

Which begs the ultimate question:

-> Have you made your sacred vow to yourself TO DO YOUR BEST?

And the ultimate follow-up question:

-> Are you keeping it?

IT'S ALL ABOUT FEAR

"Fear is your real opponent. ...

It's all about fear. If you kill fear, you win. If you kill fear, you have your best year ever. If you kill fear, you train like a madman. If you kill fear, you go to college for free. If you kill fear, you stand on the podium, you get paid, and you have strangers walk up to you and call you by name. When fear dies, you begin to live."

Meet your primary opponent: Fear.

And, know that this isn't just a jumbo-intense mental toughness coach's opinion.

Aristotle told us basically the same thing 2,500 years ago. Want to be the best version of yourself? Awesome. That's our summum bonum. The highest good.

Aristotle called that eudaimonia. He told us we achieve that best version of ourselves by living with virtue. The #1 virtue we need to cultivate? Courage.

Why? Because fear is your real opponent.

Sharpen your weapons to conquer fear. [Bring it on.](#) [Get excited.](#)

And go do what needs to get done.

P.S. This is pure gold: *"Fear is keeping you from reaching your potential. Conquering fear should be your primary goal in life."*

TO GO OR NOT TO GO? (GO!!!)

"What do *you* want? What do you really want? If you could have it any way you please, what would you pick? St. Augustine once said, *Dilige et quod vis fac*: 'If you are loving and diligent, you can do whatever you like.'

Whatever you like. If you are afraid and undisciplined, which most of us are, you can't do whatever you like because you can't sustain the focus, intention, and energy needed to pull it off.

Do you have something in your life you want badly enough that you are willing to sacrifice everything else in order to achieve it? Keep in mind that if you make this sacrifice, the world will kick your ass. You will be told to 'be realistic' or to 'think about it' or to 'be rational,' right? That's the lie that's killing you right now. Greatness is not about being rational and realistic. It's about irrational and crazy thinking.

"Be careful is the worst advice you can give someone who is trying to do something great."

~ Dr. Stan Beecham

"These then are my last words to you. Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living and your belief will help create the fact."

~ William James

Chances are that almost everyone you know has given up on themselves and their dreams. So why would they encourage *your* dreams? If you succeed, you will make them more uncomfortable. Average encourages average; mediocre prefers mediocre. In the middle of a competition, there will come a time where you will have the choice to go or not go. I am saying you should go."

That's from a chapter called "The Hero of Your Own Journey" in which we learn about Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Including the most important hero: YOU.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

St. Augustine tells us that if we are loving and diligent we can do whatever we like.

Reminds me of [Emerson](#). He tells us: "There's nothing capricious in nature, and the implanting of a desire indicates that its gratification is in the constitution of the creature that feels it."

Followed up by: "Our desires presage the capacities within us; they are harbingers of what we shall be able to accomplish. What we can do and want to do is projected in our imagination, quite outside ourselves, and into the future. We are attracted to what is already ours in secret. Thus passionate anticipation transforms what is indeed possible into dreamt-for reality."

And: "Do that which is assigned to you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much."

Now, of course, when we actually dare to dream big, we BETTER be more diligent/disciplined than we've ever been. Know your protocol. Work it. We'll need all the emotional stamina we can muster to deal with all the inevitable ups and downs AND all the people telling us we're crazy.

Which leads us to [Jon Eliot](#) who echoes this wisdom in his great book *Overachievement*. Here's how he puts it: "You will not do incredible things without an incredible dream." And... "as soon as anyone starts telling you to be 'realistic,' cross that person off your invitation list." :)

So, back to you. What do you REALLY want to do with your life?

Well... What are you waiting for?

Here's to being heroically loving AND heroically diligent as we cultivate the strength for two and give the world all we've got.

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

If you liked this Note, you'll probably like...

[The Rise of Superman](#)

[With Winning in Mind](#)

[How Champions Think](#)

[Unbeatable Mind](#)

[The Champion's Mind](#)

[Flow](#) | [Peak](#)

[Chasing Excellence](#)

[Hero w/a Thousand Faces](#)

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives so they can actualize their potential as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + practical tools. Learn more and optimize your life at optimize.me.