

1. In your first book, *Snap Out of It, Now*, you outlined your philosophy for applying the mental techniques of pro athletes to help overcome life's goal oppositions. What can we learn in *Back in Charge!* that we didn't learn in the first book?

Back in Charge! is an every-person's guide to rewiring the brain to support all they want to do, be and have in life. This second book not only provides an understanding of how the brain works, but the reader is guided in applying the science using experiential exercises (also recorded on 2 accompanying CDs) to change their life by re-wiring the conditioning of their brain.

I review what specifically makes a conditioned limiting belief so powerful, then using these same qualities, *Back in Charge!* guides the reader through a step by step process of rewiring new more self-affirming beliefs into their brain and physiology. For instance, to become as powerful as your old negative belief, your new conditioned belief – the message you want in your brain -- must have the same qualities: it must be clear, detailed and often repeated; it has to get all your senses involved to become imbedded in your physiology; and it needs a strong emotional component—strong feeling attached to a story.

2. How do thoughts become “hard-wired” into our brains? Did our parents do it to us? How can we prevent these things from happening to our children?

Our conditioned thoughts are absorbed throughout our lives through comments made...or, not made. They come from the interpretations of our young minds as we hear, see, and experience what goes on around us. You may have etched into your memory your father saying, “You don't want to try out for the school play with that lisp, honey.” Parents may affectionately label their children, “he's just a klutz,” “she's the shy one,” or “he's the brains in the family.” Regardless of their accuracy in reflecting who we have become as adults, our thoughts are seen as “truths” because they have been hardwired into our brains. People become what they believe themselves to be.

The way we prevent these things from happening to our children is through acknowledging the negative and limiting beliefs that have been hardwired into our own brains. As a parent—you can examine your own negative conditioning. Begin to work with it—acknowledge it as it comes up, cleanse it from your system and begin wiring in more positive messages that work for you.

By being the role model, you'll find your children learning how to work with their negative conditioning. Believe it or not—if you work with your negative conditioning, even your most negative teenager will change.

Help your children understand how the brain works, because your kids will get it! Once they understand that they're in charge of the beliefs their brain holds, they won't want to hang on to thoughts that make them feel bad.

3. In a society obsessed with self help books – how is your book and methodology different from every other book written to overcome obstacles and attain goals?

First of all, many of these books or self help programs are valid and could really be effective. Except for one critical point that is the central theory of my work: your brain will reject them. Similar to the way a body will reject a donor organ that is not compatible, your brain – the most powerful muscle you have – will reject thoughts, ideas, or possibilities that are incompatible or foreign to it. Because your brain is "conditioned." And, that conditioning holds the key to your success or failure. *Back in Charge!* is a step by step guide to acknowledging negative conditioning and rewiring the brain with new neuropathways that will support what you want to be, do and have!

4. Many self help books offer affirmations and positive thinking as keys to attaining goals? Why does this not work for us?

I often get some heat from clients when I say that repeating affirmations is a self-improvement tool that doesn't work! There are ways to make affirmative

statements effective. But just plopping a happy, fluffy, shiny thought over grimy, nasty, negative one does not work.

The brain has five times more negative emotions than positive emotions—it's biased towards the negative. The negative belief lives in our physiology—our body and our brain. Most people are not aware of the negativity that exists within them. You can't just plop a new "positive" belief on top of the old "negative" belief and pretend it isn't there. That's like using strong air freshener in a really stinky bathroom—the combination is almost worse! First you need to clear the *stinky story* and get it out of your system before you can be successful at re-wiring your brain with positive thinking.

5. It is interesting that your new book, *Back in Charge!* comes with an interactive CD. How should the consumer use the book and cd? Does one act as a workbook to the other?

I created the 2 CDs to accompany *Back in Charge!* and ask that before listening to the CDs the reader read at least the chapter the CD refers to. The book gives the background the reader needs to make the exercises effective.

As I say on the CD, it's great to understand how the brain works, but just **understanding** the science of the brain can't change your life. My intention with the CDs is to help the reader begin applying the science, through the experiential exercises and in daily life. A consistent practice of working with the exercises **will** change one's life by re-wiring the conditioning of their brain.

6. It seems like our society has more and more life pressures laid upon us – from our jobs, finances, family obligations, daily stressful decisions. How can your tools help us handle stress with better release and results?

Yes, stress and anxiety seem to be in the very air we breathe these days.

Here's a very simple, incredibly powerful exercise to help you stay in a place of choice – not a place of anxiety. I call it, "The Facts. Period."

Whenever you hear news or experience something that usually throws you into reaction (anxiety, anger, uncertainty, guilt, etc), pause, restate the facts, and add a forceful "period" to the end of it. Don't allow your brain to speculate or follow its normal path of anxious thoughts. Just state the facts neutrally, then say "period."

Even without understanding the neuroscience of the brain, you can experience how to harness its power through this simple, practical exercise. Try this out for yourself: "The stock market is faltering. Period." "I didn't go to the gym this week. Period." "I can't afford to go out to eat. Period." By cutting off your brain's typical dialogue, you reclaim your place of choice. You'll find yourself responding to life's situations more creatively and positively. And you'll feel better!

7. With a financial crisis happening almost daily, how can already stressed people come out of this crisis in a better way? How can I apply the exercises in *Back In Charge!* to my daily life?

We can often find a good rationale supporting our tendency to react with stress, anxiety or anger to life's circumstances, but does this reaction truly serve you? Is it helping you find a solution to your crisis? Probably not!

When I suggest trying my exercise, "The Facts. Period." – (i.e., pause, restate the facts of your situation, and add a forceful "period" without letting your brain follow its normal path of worried thoughts) some people take issue with it— "Okay, so the *fact* is that I've been laid off! I've got a right to feel worried and panicked." "The *fact* is that my 401K has been stripped of more than 40% of its value so I can't retire. I'm totally justified in being angry." "The *fact* is that my co-worker always leaves me holding the bag. Who wouldn't be frustrated about that?!?"

But wait: Does your response really serve you? Is your righteous anger helping you figure out a resolution? Probably not.

One of the most important aspects of freeing ourselves from negative

conditioned reactions is making the decision to do so. Because the truth is that we have choice about how we respond to *every* situation. It doesn't matter whether our response is "justified" or not. The only question to ask is: **Does this response truly serve me and my purpose?** And once you've honestly answered that question, it is totally up to you whether you choose to hang on to the reaction or release it. Your choice. Always.

So, try it for yourself. Next time you find yourself reacting negatively to a person or situation, stop, take a deep breath and ask, "Does my response to this really serve me?" If the answer is no, take several deep breaths. Allow yourself to feel your unwanted reaction on the inhale, then release it on the exhale. Inhale and feel; exhale and release. (Make sure to stop yourself from re-telling the story connected to this reaction by using "The Facts. Period.") If the negative reaction is deep-seated, it will take more than one breathing/cleansing session to clear it completely. But even a few breaths and the acknowledgement that you have a choice about how you respond will soften your reaction enough so it no longer controls you. By creating a moment of choice, you'll find yourself responding to life more creatively and positively. And you'll feel better!

8. What is the difference between reacting from "feelings" and reacting from "emotions?"

The distinction between "feelings" and "emotions" can be tricky. Emotions are always accompanied by a story: "I'm angry because. . ." "I love her because. . ." "I'm anxious because. . ." The origin of the emotion's story is usually a conditioned belief which gives the emotion a sense of solidness. A strong emotion almost *demand*s that you react in a certain way, and sometimes that reaction is inappropriate or not in your best interest.

Feelings on the other hand can be subtle. They are fluid and have no story attached that keeps them in place. Feelings have been described as "gut instinct" or intuition. A feeling may *suggest* a certain action, but it never demands, and its counsel is invariably wise. Because we aren't trained to pay attention to our

feelings, many of us have cut them off or become numb to them. But both emotions and feelings are valuable tools when it comes to re-wiring the brain.

9. You emphasize breathing, especially for handling stress. What's the difference between our regular breathing and the breathing you recommend? How is breathing connected to my emotional state? How do I consciously notice my breathing?

I recommend belly breathing. Belly breathing is entirely different from the shallow chest breathing that most people do during the day and certainly different from the tight breathing that people do when under stress. Breathing the right way—slow deep belly breathing where the oxygen fills all 3 lobes of the lungs pressing the diaphragm down and popping your belly out—can literally reset your nervous system. Your deep belly breath signals your brain to enter the relaxation response. In fact, it is the only mechanism you can consciously use to make that happen!

10. How can we use visualization to counteract the toxic chemicals released during a stressful day? How can a person use visualization and mental training to have peak performance during any given day?

One of the mental techniques I use—with athletes, business people, and even the client who is seeking better communication skills—is “visualization.” The brain will be as responsive to a good visualization as it is to something that actually happens. When athletes visualize a race or a golf round or an event to train for peak performance, their physiological response is measurable and looks just like it does when they are actually performing. The brain sends out the very same signals to the body's systems as it would in the “real life” situation. So, for someone wanting to feel more confident at work, he/she can use the tool of visualization to rewire the brain to begin working for them, not against them. This person would practice seeing himself walking confidently into a business meeting, presenting an idea, and answering questions with assurance. Their brain will begin operating to support thoughts of confidence and assurance—carving in new pathways.

And prior to any particular moment—whether you are about to walk on stage to deliver a speech at the National Speakers Association annual conference, preparing for a romantic evening, or just about to enter a very important client meeting—visualize what you want for the experience. As you visualize successful performance you are activating the same mechanism in your brain as when you are actively performing.

11. How do people end up reliving the same old patterns instead of attaining the goals they set out for?

Our repeated thoughts—I'm stupid; I've always been fat; I'm not good in social situations—carve neuropathways into the brain. The thought becomes hard-wired and when a thought is carved in like that, it doesn't just affect your thinking. It affects your entire physiology. Like ruts on a country road, the deeper the pathway or rut, the more likely you are to fall into it and travel along it. So, we are deeply conditioned to remain as we've been whether we want it or not. Unsuccessful? Overweight? Broke? Friendless? We may not like being those things, but the neuropathways carved into our brains bring us back to them over and over. That deep rut in the road.

How can we stop making excuses for our conditioned beliefs and start living the life we want?

By attaining what I call, "aligned focus." Aligned Focus means that your conditioning is aligned with what you want so that any action you take toward that goal becomes effective. You need to re-wire the neuropathways of your brain so that it uses its power for you, not against you.

So, if you want to break the record in the downhill slalom, your brain needs to be aligned with that goal so it will direct the blood flow to the right muscles, deepen your breathing, let you see opportunities for cutting time. If you want to stop yelling at your kid, your brain needs to be on board to keep your adrenalin from flowing to your vocal chords when you find out she hasn't done her homework.

12. You say in your book that we all have a “monster” in our heads. How can we recognize when limiting beliefs are wired into our heads and what ways can we try to sooth the monster within?

We recognize a limiting belief by the negative emotional responses we experience – a belief of “I’m stupid” may provoke feelings of sadness, depression, or self-consciousness. The belief “I’m fat” may provoke feelings of guilt, anger, self-denigration.

The “monster” is that conditioned part of us that emerges when we operate from our subconscious conditioned reactions. And, it is not about “soothing” the monster within, rather it is about “acknowledging” the monster within. In the acknowledgment of our conditioning, we begin to experience the power to rewire our brains with new thoughts that support and reinforce what we want for ourselves.

Our lives would improve tremendously simply by catching and acknowledging our conditioned reactions—the limiting beliefs and the emotions associated with them—as they pop up in daily life, allowing ourselves to experience them, and release them.

13. What tools can a person use to prepare themselves for when they are headed into a situation that activates their old conditioned belief? How can that person take charge of the situation and come out a winner?

A consistent peak performance state takes some practice to realize. But to get a taste of how beneficial such practice might be, try these four steps the next time you face an important project, meeting, or decision:

- 1) **Breathe:** Breathing connects you to your body and clears your mind. If you really want to scare your boss during a salary review, sit facing her silently for several moments breathing deeply! Several deep breaths can connect you to your calm, creative minds, releasing tension and anxiety.

- 2) **Focus on what you want:** Prior to any moment that you want to be a peak performance moment, *visualize* what you want from the experience. Many of us have the bad habit of pre-playing what we *don't* want to happen—the awkward question we might be asked, the potential lack of agreement from another party, the difficulty of getting something completed. Instead, focus on how great, easy, pleasurable the experience will be.
- 3) **Stop analyzing:** Tiger Woods said, “I practice to the hilt while training, so that when I come out here to a tournament I can just have fun.” Basically, all of the planning, calculating, and analysis should come before the experience itself. Once you are on that call or in that meeting, you will be most effective if you allow yourself to be fully present, sensing and responding to what is happening in that moment.
- 4) **Trust your instinct:** If your gut tells you to table a decision for a while, table it. If you feel moved to make a bold statement, make it. If you have a hunch that you shouldn't use your opening joke for the presentation, don't use it. The calm, clear state you are in allows access to the wisdom of your intuition.

When you take the time to align yourself it has a ripple effect on the people around you. Your calm and centeredness can have a tremendous effect on your co-workers, your golf partners, or your spouse and children.