

THE BIG IDEAS

Vigor, Vitality & Activity

A matter of activity.

The Fear of Failure

A vicious circle.

Rockin' It

Baby-style.

The Moment of Truth

Is NOW!

Backing Up

To get a running start.

Relax & Stay Focused

On constructive action.

Instant Satori

Be here now.

Law of Accommodation

Need both to get it done.

Building New Habits

Starting now.

Masters

Shine everywhere.

"Nature's way is simple and easy, but men prefer what is intricate and artificial."

~ Lao Tzu

Body Mind Mastery

Training for Sport and Life

BY DAN MILLMAN · NEW WORLD LIBRARY © 1999 · 208 PAGES

"Whether you are a world-class competitor, weekend athlete, or fitness enthusiast, this book will help you overcome self-created hurdles and reawaken the natural athlete—the body mind master—inside you. Body Mind Mastery provides a clear map to a less stressful, more meaningful approach to practicing sport and life. It's not about dedicating your life to your training but dedicating your training to your life."

~ Dan Millman from *Body Mind Mastery*

Dan Millman is a former world-champion athlete and gymnastics coach at Stanford and UC Berkeley. He's also a really cool, wise guy.

If you've read his classic, semi-autobiographical book, *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* (that was recently made into a cool movie starring Nick Nolte as Socrates), you know how Dan brilliantly weaves Western and Eastern thought into a practical philosophy for our modern lives.

This book is all about integrating our Body and Minds to create a deep sense of wholeness.

As Dan says: "You are a dynamic whole greater than the sum of your parts. By integrating your body, mind, and emotions through training, you reshape your life."

You don't need to be an athlete to dig the wisdom and I trust you'll enjoy the Big Ideas I've selected to help us get our Body Mind Mastery on!

VIGOR, VITALITY & ACTIVITY

"Remember that vigor and vitality is a matter of *activity*, not necessarily formal exercise. I'm always amazed to see cars driving around and around, looking for the closest space to the health club so they can get on a treadmill and walk three miles! Park the car at the farthest point from the store. Use the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator. Carry your groceries, garden, and do other activities that *keep you moving*. You will add more years to your life and more life to your years."

Smiling at the vision of peeps waiting for the closest spot to the door at the gym. (And laughing at myself b/c I think I've done that at least once or twice back in the day. :)

This book is packed with wisdom. AND, if you've read any of Dan's work, you know that he *always* comes back to the simple stuff.

So, we'll start there.

What little things can you do in your day-to-day life to increase your activity level to enhance your vigor and vitality?!?

THE FEAR OF FAILURE

"Ultimately, fear of failure generates a vicious circle that creates what is most feared. To break this cycle, you need to make peace with failure. It isn't enough to merely tolerate it; you need to

"Competence breeds confidence."

~ Dan Millman

appreciate the failure and use it... Body mind masters have made peace with failure, treating it like an old friend playing a practical joke. The greatest inventors, artists, and athletes have all failed many times. Babe Ruth was the home run king of his time, but also the strikeout king."

Ah, the fear of failure.

Here's what Michael Jordan, one of the greatest athletes *ever* has to say about failure: "I've missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." (That's from a Nike commercial. It's strong. Check it on the site.)

Robert F. Kennedy tells us that: "Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly."

And David Viscott tells us that: "In the end, the only people who fail are those who don't try."

What's YOUR relationship to "failure"?!?

Have you made peace with it and gone so far as to see it as a necessary part of doing anything, let alone achieving greatness?

Sweet. :)

ROCKIN' IT BABY-STYLE

"If babies held the same tendency toward self-criticism as adults, they might never learn to walk or talk. Can you imagine infants stomping, 'Aarggh! Screwed up again!' Fortunately, babies are free of self-criticism. They just keep practicing."

I love that.

Looking to babies as an example of how to learn is SO powerful.

Throw yourself back into your diapers and then imagine learning how to walk or talk from your *current* mode of being. It's an amusing and frightening thing to imagine! And the simple fact is that most of us would PROBABLY NEVER LEARN TO WALK if we treated ourselves then the way we do now.

As we move into the domain of the unknown and pick up a new skill—whether it's physical in sports or emotional in relationships—let's be a little kinder with ourselves and have FUN, celebrating the tiny improvements and laughing when we fall on our diapers. :)

As Dan says: "So be gentle with yourself; show yourself the same kindness and patience you might show a young child—the child you once were. If *you* won't be your own friend, who will be? If, when playing an opponent, you are also opposing yourself, you will be outnumbered... You probably would find it cruel and unnecessary to say to someone, 'You are really stupid; you keep making the same mistakes; you should give up; you'll never be any good!' Yet we think it's okay to say the same things to ourselves."

So, get your baby on the next time you're bold enough to learn something new!

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH IS NOW!

"Freedom from mental distraction equals power. Olympic champion weightlifters not only have powerful bodies; they have powerful minds. The same quality of attention frees us, in the moment of truth, from any thought of self-concept, criticism, or fear. Body mind masters eventually come to the realization that this and every moment, on or off the field, is the moment of truth."

Powerful!

Some strong statements are packed in that little paragraph.

First:—> "Freedom from mental distraction equals power."

*"Obstacles are those
frightening things you see
when you take your eyes off
the goal."*

~ Hanah More

*"What a caterpillar calls the
end of the world, the master
calls a butterfly."*

~ Richard Bach

"Allow rather than resist what arises in the present moment—inside or out. Let it be interesting rather than good or bad."

~ Dan Millman

Do you think an Olympic weightlifter would be an Olympic weightlifter if only his (or her) body was strong? Of course not! It takes an incredibly strong mind to train like an Olympian. And, perhaps, an even stronger mind to shut out all fear/doubt/criticism in the moment of truth—allowing ALL of one's power to come thru in their performance. Amazing.

Of course, the same holds true with us.

Are *you* free from mental distraction throughout your day?

Whether it's at the gym where you can meander thru a workout or intensely focus your energy or in the car driving your kids to school where you can be fully present or distracted or in the office or the golf course or any and everywhere you find yourself.

"Freedom from mental distraction equals power."

... So, how's *your* power?

I love this one, too:—> *"Body mind masters eventually come to the realization that this and every moment, on or off the field, is the moment of truth."*

The moment of truth isn't about the championship game. It's about THIS moment and *this* moment and *this* moment and... Each moment gives us an opportunity to be fully present and fully alive as Body Mind Masters... Or not.

Makes me think of the Greek word *areté*.

The word *areté* (pronounced "are-uh-tay") literally translates as "virtue" or "excellence" but has a deeper meaning—something closer to "striving to do your best moment to moment to moment." The classic Greek philosophers like Socrates and Plato and Aristotle said that happiness was the essence of life and that if we want to live with happiness, we need to live with *areté*.

How?

Make this moment your moment of truth. And this moment. And...

We do that and there's NO ROOM for regret/anxiety/disillusionment/etc.!

So, let's free our mind of distractions, fully show up in this moment and flex our power, eh?!?

BACKING UP TO GET A RUNNING START

"Now that you have a better understanding of the mental mechanisms that influence your performance, you'll realize that although we all find ourselves in slumps occasionally, we don't need to get stuck in them. And when you feel like you're going nowhere or even slipping backward, you may actually be backing up to get a running start."

That's classic.

Dan establishes the fact that we ALL have slumps on occasion. When we can see the dynamics of growth and excellence, we don't need to suffer the slumps.

And, if you feel like you're going nowhere or even slipping backward, remember that you may just be backing up to get a running start. :)

Is there an aspect of your life where you might be able to apply this mojo?

RELAX & STAY FOCUSED ON CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION

"Body mind masters do not deny or repress their feelings but learn to stay physically relaxed even under stressful situations. Even when feeling angry, fearful, and sorrowful, breathe evenly and fully. Keep your body relaxed. You have much more control over your behavior than you do over your thoughts or emotions so paradoxically the best way to master your emotions is to let

*"Those who can have
patience can have what
they will."*

~ Ben Franklin

them be, stay relaxed, and focus on constructive action. So, accept your emotions as natural to you in the moment, without trying to fix them. Know your purpose or goal—not someone else's. And, do whatever you need to reach that goal, whether or not your emotions or moods help or hinder you."

That shows up in a chapter entitled "Emotional Talent" in which Dan talks about the importance of mastering our relationship to our emotions.

He talks about the fact that: "Motivation, like all states, comes and goes, rises and falls. I certainly didn't feel motivated all the time during my gymnastics career. But I trained six days a week, for more than four hours a day, for years, by keeping my eye on the goal. Although motivation comes and goes, you can always rely on your will."

Dan's a HUGE advocate of the fact that, while we don't always feel great or have the ability to instantaneously alter our mood, we DO always have control over our behaviors. He likes to describe our emotions as kinda like clouds passing by and says that just as you can't control the weather, you can't control your emotions. Sometimes you're fired up, sometimes you're not.

As he says: "Life demands much of us, on and off the playing field. Emotional talent is the capacity to stimulate and draw upon our natural fountain of energy—to learn to blow into our own sails. We develop emotional talent not by relying on motivation all the time but by applying our will no matter how we feel."

Amen.

This is a *really* Big Idea

Dan explores more in his great book *Everyday Enlightenment* ([see Notes](#)). Plus, he introduced me to an author named David Reynolds who integrates Zen Buddhism ideals with Western psychotherapy in what has become one of my favorite books: *Constructive Living*. Check out the book and my Notes on it for more mojo.

In the meantime, know this: Wherever you are, whatever you feel, remember your goal and ask yourself this question: "Now what needs to be done?"

(... Well, now what needs to be done? :)

INSTANT SATORI

"Take your keys, a piece of fruit, or any handy object, and go outside. Throw the object up into the air. Staying relaxed and easy, catch it. Be sure to catch it. Then come back inside, and continue reading this exercise.

Now consider the moment the object was in the air. At that moment you weren't thinking of what you'd have for dinner or what you did yesterday. You weren't thinking of anything else, either. You may have been attending to thoughts before you threw it or after you caught it, but during the throw, you were pure attention, reaching out, waiting for the object's descent. In that same moment your emotions were open, and your body was alert and vitalized—a moment of satori."

As Dan describes it: "Satori is a word from the Japanese Zen tradition that points to a 'sudden awakening' or 'insight into our fundamental nature.'"

*"In a contest between
patience and power, bet
on patience."*

~ Samuel Johnson

And that exercise is one of the coolest, simplest ways I can imagine to guide us to this state of pure awareness and presence in this moment.

Try it out!

And may we live in many of those moments.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

~ Aristotle

THE LAW OF ACCOMMODATION

"Your body is malleable; you can sculpt it over time with daily habits of diet and exercise. The law of accommodation reminds us that the body may change slowly, but it will change."

The Law of Accommodation. Dig it.

It can also be described as "The Training Effect" and basically describes the fact that your body (and mind) will accommodate itself to the load you put on it. So, if you go out and start training for a marathon, although you might not be able to get past the first telephone pole on the first day out, if you consistently show up and go just a bit beyond your current comfortable threshold you will, over time, develop the ability to run that marathon.

Alternatively, if you lounge on the couch all day long your body will accommodate to that. D'oh!

After I sold my first business about a decade ago and first got into living on purpose (largely inspired by Dan's *Way of the Peaceful Warrior* btw, which was one of the key books that set me on this path!), I realized I'd have a hard time living at my highest potential if I had a hard time getting out of bed. So, I became a trainer so I could learn nutrition/exercise physiology/etc.

One of the coolest lessons I learned was the idea of "consistency over intensity."

It's MUCH better to show up at the gym regularly for a basic workout than go off for a couple hours every other week. As Dan says throughout his books, it's MUCH better to do something for a little bit every day than a lot once in a while. It's better to meditate for a few minutes a day than for an hour once a week. It's better to move for fifteen minutes (or five!) a day than it is to train hard for a couple hours once a week.

Another one of my friends and favorite teachers, Robin Sharma, says that the hallmark of great people is very simple: Consistency on the fundamentals.

Our bodies and our minds are malleable.

Over time (!), if we're diligent, patient and persistent, they'll shape toward our ideals and accommodate to meet the demands we place on them. But we've gotta show up!

So, what're your fundamentals? And how's your consistency?

How can you be a little more (a lot more?) consistent? (Starting today, perhaps? :)

BUILDING NEW HABITS

"This initiatory period of change may last from one to six weeks, or even longer. Unless the desire to change remains strong, body and mind tend to return to old, familiar patterns. It takes time—from three to six months—for old habits to become obsolete. By the end of that time, you'll have adapted to a new pattern. In a sense, you'll have found a new way of life."

Reminds me of [Seneca](#), the classic Stoic philosopher born in the Roman Empire about the same time Jesus was born. He says this in his classic *Letters from a Stoic* ([see Notes](#)): "You have to persevere and fortify your pertinacity until the will to good becomes a disposition to good."

Translated: you've gotta put in the time and demonstrate some strong will power so that your WILL to do the right thing becomes a DISPOSITION to do the right thing.

He also says: "How much better to pursue a straight course and eventually reach that destination where the things that are pleasant and the things that are honorable finally become, for you, the same."

So, are you building some new habits? Keep your goal REALLY clear and your will REALLY strong to shape a new disposition.

"When climbing a mountain, define each step in the right direction as success. We learn the alphabet before we write words; it works the same in sport and life. Many small successes add up."

~ Dan Millman

One of my tricks?

I like to say that certain things are “non-negotiable.” For example, eight months ago I committed to meditating for an hour every morning upon waking. I’d done a 10-day Vipassana meditation but when I got back it didn’t stick. Realizing the importance of training my mind and meditation as a powerful vehicle to do this, I decided to build the practice.

Now, in the past, I’d only meditate when I “felt like it.” Hah.

This time around I decided the commitment was “non-negotiable.” I KNEW I’d wake up some morning and not “feel” like it. And I knew that it was on THOSE mornings when the habit would either be installed or thwarted. So, when I had the inevitable, whiney “*But I don’t feel like it!*” mornings (when I was able to conjure up all kinds of really sensible reasons why I deserved a day off, I told that part of myself that the practice wasn’t up for discussion.

It was non-negotiable. And, now, 250+ days into it, I’m groovin’ and excited to effortlessly cross the 1,000+ day threshold and beyond!

Back to *you*: What new habit are you gonna rock?

MASTERS SHINE EVERYWHERE

“Masters of one art have mastered all because they have mastered themselves. With dominion over both mind and muscle, they demonstrate power, serenity, and spirit. They not only have talent for their sport, they have an expanded capacity for life. The experts shine in the competitive arena; the masters shine *everywhere*.”

As they say, one can have no greater or smaller mastery than mastery of oneself and how you do anything is how you do everything.

I say we get out there and shine!

B

Brian Johnson,
Heroic Philosopher CEO

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About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He’s spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.