

*“If you want to move beyond challenges, access more possibilities, shift your mindset and invest into your personal and professional success, then “A High-Performing Mind” is a must read! This empowering book is full of real-life stories that illustrate and re-enforce incredibly useful insights and strategies that can be applied to your life immediately to manage adversity, build resilience, and experience a more fulfilling life.”*

***Jill Hewlett, Brain Fitness Expert***

**Author: Common Sense Uncommonly Practiced**

*“The lessons Andrew has shared have helped me navigate challenges in athletics, academics, and life in general. Andrew is an outstanding coach, who is without comparison in his understanding of how to build mental strength and a resilient mind. He helped me believe that anyone could succeed on any given day in sports or otherwise. Additionally, Andrew helped me develop the tools to recover from challenges and setbacks and realize my potential. I would highly recommend A High-Performing Mind to anyone looking to excel or to build resilience to navigate life’s challenges.”*

***Dr. Alexi Gosset, MD***

**Harvard Squash Team, 2019 National Champions**

*“A High Performing Mind is an amazing book!!!! Everything flows so well both in the writing and the logic. It’s very light and approachable, easy to read, but weaves in important points seamlessly. I felt really inspired just reading it.”—J.K.*

*“I finished your wonderful and insightful book last week and want to tell you that it was a ‘learning experience’ for me and reminded me of the true value of focus back in the days when I was running marathons. Congratulations on your ‘work of art’. I have ordered 5 copies of your book on Amazon - one for each of my sons! More people need to read this. You are a wonderful writer and certainly have a way of getting your message across.”*

—**N.P.**

*“When taking the time to work with a coach, there are a range of best practices that make a significant difference in getting results that last. Andrew knows coaching methods and processes that bring out the best performance from those he works with.”*

**Jacoline Loewen, MBA, ICD.D**

**Author: Money Magnet: Attracting Investors to your  
Business**

*“You will laugh as you’re taken through some of the most valuable knowledge in the world...worth many thousands of dollars. This book will likely be the best investment you’ve ever made. Andrew was the key to my sports success at the World Junior Championships and Division 1 NCAA level.”*

**Julien Gosset, Former Canadian #1 Junior Squash Player**

**Two time NCAA National Champion with  
Harvard University.**

*“A High-Performing Mind stands out for its authenticity and relatability. Thompson shares his own journey with vulnerability, making it clear that the path to high performance is not linear but is accessible to anyone willing to commit to personal growth. The book serves as a powerful reminder that with the right mindset, strategies, and dedication, living your best life is within your grasp.”*

—A.N.

*“I loved this book. It’s clear, easy to read, and implementable. It’s filled with simple yet profound concepts, that when actioned, lead to obvious performance and life enhancements. A highly recommended read.”*

—C.Z.

# **A HIGH- PERFORMING MIND**

**STRENGTHEN YOUR MIND  
AND LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE**

**ANDREW D. THOMPSON**

The information in this book has been carefully researched by the author and is intended to be a source of information only. While the methods herein can and do work, readers are encouraged to consult with a physician or other professional advisor to address specific medical or other issues that may be preventing them from achieving A High-Performing Mind. The author assumes no responsibility for any injuries, losses or damages as a result of the information contained herein.

Names and identifying characteristics of some individuals have been changed to protect their privacy.

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ISBN 978-1-7390210-9-2

*This book is dedicated to  
My father for teaching me to always  
do my best and to my mother for  
being a constant source of love,  
support, and wisdom. To my wife Katie  
for her continued love & patience and my  
two beautiful children.*

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# INTRODUCTION

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## From Weakness to Strength

My eyes sprung open. The room was pitch dark. Something wasn't right.

I glanced at the clock on the nightstand; it was 2AM. It took me a minute to get my bearings and remember I was at a mediocre hotel, not far from where I would be coaching a bunch of junior athletes at a national tournament the following day. But more importantly, something definitely didn't feel normal. I had this strange vibrating sensation in my chest, and I felt unusually weak—I could barely lift my arms and legs. A wave of fear gripped the pit of my stomach.

I slowly sat up in bed and immediately decided to abandon the three-day fast I'd started just a day and a half earlier. I had fasted a handful of times over the years—simply because I felt it was healthy for the body—and I had coordinated this fast to coincide with my drive to the tournament. I had only done 36-hour fasts in the past, but this time decided to go for it and see if I could make it a full three days. Clearly, life had other plans.

My mind fixated on the feeling that I should eat something as soon as possible. I crawled out of bed and looked around the

room, only finding a bag of almonds and some water. I grabbed a handful and started chewing away, but it was quickly obvious the almonds weren't going to cut it.

Feeling lightheaded with a pounding headache and still profoundly weak, I got dressed, which was a colossal effort. I headed outside to find more to eat and spotted a fast-food restaurant across the parking lot, thankfully, it was open 24 hours.

I sat down at a table, my head spinning. The dining room seemed somehow darker than it should have been, and it was hard to focus. *What is going on?!* I sat down at a table and waited for what felt like an eternity for my egg and cheese sandwich, all while wondering when I would feel better.

The sandwich did little to help, so I headed back across the parking lot to my room, hoping I could sleep it off.

When I woke up a few hours later, it was finally light out, but I still felt terrible. An innate sense that I needed to eat something gnawed at me again, but I couldn't figure out what. I eventually decided some orange juice might do the trick. *Maybe my blood sugar is low or something?*

I got into my car, still feeling awful, and drove in a random direction. I found a local convenience store nearby, stumbled in, and bought some juice and a couple of other snacks hoping this would reset my energy levels. But when I returned to the car and drank the juice, nothing changed. I still felt weak and completely out of it. Now I was seriously concerned. As I got in the car and started back toward the hotel, I didn't get far before that vibrating sensation returned with a vengeance. This time,

though, I started to feel it throughout my arms, and my fingers began to cramp and uncontrollably curl into fists. I could barely open my hands. Panic rolled in like a wave hitting my chest; *what the hell is happening to me?*

Any vestige of denial that something was seriously wrong evaporated, I needed help and I needed it immediately. I managed to pull over, but by now I was having immense trouble concentrating. Hunched over with my head pressed against the steering wheel, I dialed 911.

They arrived quickly, put me on a stretcher, and took me to the local hospital, just a few minutes away. In the hallway waiting area, I lay curled into a ball on a gurney, lightheaded and unsure if I would lose consciousness. My breathing was labored, and I felt like I couldn't get enough air—I had no idea why.

The doctors didn't seem to be any more clued in than I was to what was going on. They ran a bunch of tests, including some blood work, while I lay there in intense distress. I couldn't believe how weak I felt.

After a few hours alone, focused on my breathing, and willing myself through this unexpected nightmare, the doctor returned with a report: one of my blood markers—phosphate—came back unusually low. While they couldn't figure out why, they placed a phosphorus drip into my vein to bring me back to normal levels as quickly as possible.

After monitoring me for the next 12 hours to ensure I was stable, I was finally released. Given no history of anything similar, the doctors and I chalked it up to the fasting. They were quick to

tell me that starving myself for 36 hours was a terrible idea and not to do anything like that again. I didn't need any convincing and silently vowed my fasting days were over!

The next day, I woke up relieved to feel more or less normal. I spent the day coaching and figured the doctors were right, the fast was to blame and the situation was behind me. I hit the road at the end of the day and made the three-hour drive back home. I assumed the whole thing was a bizarre one-off incident. But I was wrong. What I experienced was just the beginning of the worst year and a half of my life.

The next day, I woke up and went to work as I would have on any regular Monday morning.

Within an hour or two though, after walking up a flight of stairs, I started to feel incredibly weak again, only this time, the symptoms I'd experienced before were even worse.

My heartbeat was weak, and the intense vibrating was back in my arms and chest, spreading up into my face this time. My hands began curling uncontrollably inward again, and the world darkened and receded. Again, I struggled to breathe normally, and my co-worker, who could see that something was catastrophically wrong, asked me what he should do. I told him to call an ambulance.

It was ten terrifying minutes before they arrived, and it felt like an eternity. Again, they took my vitals and again I was strapped onto a stretcher and taken to the hospital.

By the time I was finally seen, I could barely gather my thoughts. My speech was slurred as I did my best to relay the events

from the last couple of days. They ran similar blood tests, which came back with an alarmingly low phosphate level of .19 mmol/L. It was a life-threatening drop the doctor said he'd never seen before in his ten years of working in the emergency department.

Fortunately, they started taking things a lot more seriously from then on, and I was quickly administered another phosphorus IV. When my breathing finally evened out and the sense of imminent danger had begun to fade, I learned that the low phosphate levels put me at risk of sudden heart and respiratory failure.

Worst-case scenarios raced through my mind. I worried this was the end for me and I'd never see my family again.

The doctors admitted me to the Intensive Care Unit to monitor me more closely. I called my wife to tell her what was going on. Despite phosphate pills and the IV drip, I still had numerous episodes of life-threateningly low phosphate levels.

It turns out that phosphate is one of the most essential elements in our bodies. It controls all energy production, and when it gets low, vital organs like our kidneys, heart, brain, and lungs start to shut down.

The next few days in the ICU were an emotional roller coaster ride. I was so weak most of the time I couldn't stand without assistance. My family took shifts, staying with me to help me through my days. I had repeated waves of breathing difficulties, and I remember lying there willing and praying my heart would keep beating. I was put through a battery of tests, but nobody seemed to know what was going on or, more importantly, *why*.

I was confused and afraid. How could this be happening? Just a few days before, I had been doing 400-meter sprints at the track, and now this! Even though I was in my early forties at the time, I was still in extremely good shape. I regularly exercised one to two hours a day—a long-standing habit from my younger years as a professional athlete. My mind couldn't comprehend how I could go from that to feeling like I might die at any moment in such a short span of time.

I oscillated between feeling like I was at death's door and being sure I'd wake up the next day feeling completely normal. As far as I was concerned, this whole thing shouldn't be happening.

After about four days in the ICU, armed with pills and containers for tests, I was sent home.

Rather than being a relief, getting back home was a massive reality check that painted a picture of a bleak future. I had to crawl up the stairs to reach my bedroom because I was so weak. When I finally made it to the top of the stairs, I lay there panting. It took over 20 minutes to catch my breath from the effort as if I had just run a series of 100-meter sprints.

Despite all this, my denial held firm. I was sure my recovery would just be a matter of time. But this couldn't have been further from the truth.

I spent the next four and a half months lying in bed upwards of 22 hours a day. I remember being so weak that I couldn't handle someone raising their voice at me or having an intense conversation without needing to lie down for a few hours to recover. I also remember feeling so terrible that I couldn't make it downstairs

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to celebrate my son's third birthday. It was devastating to miss something so important.

Over those first few months, depression set in hard, and I wallowed in the fear that I'd never recover. I cried almost daily over everything I'd lost; afraid I would never be physically active again or be able to support my family financially. I felt imprisoned in the shell of a body that was incapable of functioning normally.

I saw a dozen different specialists and heard as many theories, but none seemed to definitively explain why my body wouldn't absorb phosphate properly anymore. I eventually gave up on the medical system and decided I'd have to find my own way out of this health crisis. I began reading everything I could on low phosphate conditions, including the latest scientific research papers.

On top of this, I also started monitoring my diet and looking for patterns across days when I felt better or worse. Slowly, over many months of intense scrutiny and documenting everything I ate, I started to develop an eating protocol to manage my condition.

During this time, I drew heavily on my many years of competing in sports. Through sheer determination, I was able to return to work for one to two hours a day after about four and a half months of being mostly bedridden. I slowly built on this as I gained more insight into what food choices helped and which caused me problems. Two hours a day eventually turned into three, then four, and so on. I was very fortunate to have a place of work that was so supportive to me during this challenging time.

By the year and a half mark, I was back to regular eight-hour days; however, I still had to contend with alarming and random drops in my phosphate levels, occasional seizures, and routine trips to the ER. My phosphate lows became so familiar to me that I could accurately predict what my blood levels would be before my results came back from the lab.

The doctors still had no solutions, but over the next three years, I found more ways to manage my condition through my diet.

I still had terrifying energy lows, but I identified certain foods that were rich in phosphate, which helped me stay more stable.

I wouldn't be able to exercise or exert myself much beyond a resting heart rate without severe symptoms for another five years, but thankfully I could work again and support and care for my wife and kids.

While I wouldn't have wished anything like this on my worst enemy, having a life-altering health experience did have its positives—even if they weren't apparent for a long time.

Before this experience, I'd never have thought of myself as mentally weak—and I don't think anyone else would have either given the self-discipline and determination I'd always found to achieve my goals, but managing through a life-threatening health condition, made me a better, stronger, and more capable human being.

Over time, I developed more resilience and discovered new levels of personal discipline I didn't know I possessed. I became more adept at managing the emotional lows from my now regular setbacks. I learned to do my best, even when I was far from



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feeling optimal. I became more resourceful because I was forced to continuously find ways to adapt.

The extremely strict diet I used to maintain my energy levels radically improved my health over those first few years. It included no sugar consumption (because of the inflammatory effect), other low-inflammatory considerations, and eating what might be considered dinner for breakfast and something light for dinner. I had more energy this way.

I also no longer drank alcohol, and everything I ate had to be plain to avoid unexpected reactions from unknown ingredients in seasonings and sauces. I learned to sleep propped upwards to help my organs metabolize nutrients; otherwise, my body wouldn't get the phosphate it needed, and I'd feel awful the next day. It turns out that gravity plays a big role in making it easier to break down food into the required elements.

For the longest time, watching TV or playing video games made me feel terrible. It's hard to appreciate when you feel normal, but these things elicit emotional reactions, stress, and body tension that impact our energy levels. When you are as weak as I was, this type of emotional exertion could leave me feeling exhausted for hours.

I became incredibly attuned to my body because it was so sensitive and reactive to everything. This vigilance was required for many years, but all of it contributed to reestablishing a relatively normal life as my body slowly started to function more efficiently.

My expectations of how good life should be and what I should be able to do were completely reset. I went from feeling it was my right, in a sense, to have the ability to be physically active and

exercise to simply being grateful for being alive, making it through a day without debilitating symptoms, and being able to put in a full day of work and support my family.

Even though my next five years were punctuated with life-threatening energy lows, hospital stays, intense bouts of chest and kidney pain, mental fog, difficulty concentrating, burning sensations throughout my body, frequently feeling like I might pass out, and often feeling like I couldn't take in enough oxygen, over time I started to develop a quiet confidence that I could handle pretty much anything that came my way.

If it hadn't been for the healing diet I carefully developed over the years—designed to optimize energy production and cleanse my body of toxins—I might still be bedridden. I have become a big believer in Hippocrates' famous words: "Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food."

From the time I was a teenager, I had been obsessed with always performing at my best and finding mental approaches to excel in my life. Yet here I was, far from high performing, but determined to recover and relying on the many life lessons I'd learned in my sporting and coaching days to get me through the most challenging period of my life.

My health crisis made it clear that life is rarely easy, and there's usually no straight line to success. It can throw unexpected challenges at us and we might lack the skills and know-how needed to succeed and have to find new ones. There can be a host of obstacles that can stop us in our tracks, like negative thinking,

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self-sabotage, hurtful words from others, fears, setbacks, failures, and the occasional disaster to just name a few.

I came to see that getting through a prolonged health crisis wasn't much different from what I learned and lived as a high-performance coach and athlete. Life wasn't cooperating with my plans and had hit me hard. I was confronted with a bunch of unexpected hurdles that I had to overcome to continue living the life I imagined. Similar to when I wanted to excel in sports, I had to develop the skills and know-how I needed to reach my goals, only this time my goal was recovery.

It was easy to get caught up in my fear and feel discouraged from all the setbacks and failures I endured—and I did get caught up in them repeatedly. Negative thoughts and emotions haunted me daily. I struggled to see how I would ever be able to extricate myself from the quagmire I found myself drowning in. I was determined, though, to eventually recover and not let the illness define or convince me that there wouldn't be some light at the end of the tunnel.

I knew that there were steps anyone could take to not react negatively or self-destructively in the face of challenging circumstances. I understood how to do this in sport, but I had to learn to do this in every area of my life, including in this very personal aspect of my health.

It took years. I failed often along the way, but fortunately, made it to a better place in the end. Whatever your goal, even if you're facing overwhelming odds, it's my hope the insights, lessons, and mental tools in *A High-Performing Mind* will help you through as well.

## The Problem

The world we live in today is full of impressive technological advances aimed at enhancing our lives in a multitude of ways and allowing us to enjoy a variety of modern-day conveniences. There have been extraordinary leaps in many areas of society, including medical advances, which have contributed to eradicating many diseases and extending the human life span. There are others, though, that we may enjoy immensely but also come with unintended consequences that negatively impact our strength of our mind, emotional resilience, and our ability to work productively toward improving our lives.

It's no secret that social media robs us of our free time because it's so compelling to our brains and has been shown to lower self-esteem and create unrealistic perceptions of other people's success and happiness. Inventions like AI, the Internet, and GPS are remarkable. They bring nearly the sum total of human knowledge to our fingertips, providing nearly any answer and can do our work for us. But they also reduce our capacity to figure things out for ourselves, our ability to remember details, and atrophy our independent, creative, and critical thinking skills.

I can think of countless times when I elected to spend excessive hours watching TV, browsing the web, or getting lost in social media instead of choosing something that would improve my life experience. There's nothing wrong with these things of course, but it's all about moderation. Exercising, working on a hobby, passion, or skill, going for a walk to think and clear my head, spending time with someone I cared about, or putting more time into

finding ways to make some extra money are all choices, amongst others, that would have been life-enhancing instead of depleting when taken to excess.

The world has become far easier for us physically as well, we often don't have to walk as much or climb stairs, and so much of our work is now automated. These things have their undeniable benefits, but unfortunately also lead to the decline of our physical health and well-being.

There are even subtler impacts on our strength of mind from our devices, which eliminate our need to wait, endure the discomfort of boredom, and occupies our attention to the point where we ignore loved ones and opportunities to do meaningful things. This leads to the desire for instant gratification, which erodes our personal will and self-discipline and increases our preference to choose ease and entertainment over activities and pursuits that truly enhance the quality of our lives.

Technology represents incredible advancements in elements of the evolution of human society. At the same time however, there is a profound cost to the strength of our minds and the happiness of our hearts and spirits —if we're not vigilant and careful.

*A High-Performing Mind* is about finding this balance and reclaiming our inner strength, resilience, and personal power.

## **How This Book Can Help**

I wrote *A High-Performing Mind* to empower and help you to exercise and increase your mental strength, emotional balance and resilience, and to expand your ability and understanding of

what it takes to overcome any challenge or setback and achieve any goal. It is intended to help you excel and live your optimal life, no matter your circumstances.

My goal is to share the insights, lessons, and mindsets I've learned over my lifetime as an athlete, high-performance coach, executive in the hospitality industry, and fellow human being who has had to battle through some intensely challenging times.

My experiences have helped me understand that it's possible to find our best responses during our most difficult times and, as a result, to achieve better experiences in the areas of our lives that matter most to us. When we have the right mindset, no matter the external circumstances, we can improve how we feel and keep ourselves focused on the outcomes we're striving for so we can thrive in our lives.

If you've ever had something important not work out the way you hoped, failed to reach a goal, performed below your expectations, struggled with your health or relationships, been stopped by fear, blocked by nerves, pulled down by negativity, or sidelined by unexpected, life-altering setbacks, then you're in the right place.

In the chapters ahead, we'll progress through a series of simple steps to give you the mental tools, life-changing habits, and mindsets needed to expand your capabilities. These steps are designed to help you develop your inner strength and understanding of what it takes to access your best and find your resilience and emotional balance when it matters most.

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## How It All Started

My first lesson on how to succeed came from my dad whose main message when I was a kid was to always work hard. Thanks to this lesson, my natural desire to excel, and a willingness to put in whatever time and effort was necessary to get the results I was looking for, I had some initial successes.

While my dad's advice helped me to a point, I still struggled with setbacks, failures, and an inability to achieve certain outcomes I wanted. It became clear that hard work wasn't the whole equation. I needed something more to consistently perform at my best and find the success I wanted.

I became passionate about finding ways to excel. I also wanted to get to the root of what was holding me back. When I started coaching, I found the same obstacles that held me back also kept my athletes from achieving the success they wanted. I wanted to know what people who excelled in their lives did to consistently get the most out of themselves. What did they do differently than everyone else?

This line of questioning led to my fascination with peak performance. I wanted to achieve my goals and help others do the same. So, I read every book, article, and scientific study I could get my hands on about the science of change, personal transformation, and peak performance.

This research expanded beyond sports into any pursuit where I noticed someone accomplishing extraordinary things. I wanted to understand how the minds of high-performing people worked

and how they adapted their particular circumstances to achieve success. What were their thought processes? How did they navigate through their fears, failures, and moments of doubt? How were they able to find positive responses to adversity and change themselves—and sometimes even the world around them—in profoundly beneficial ways?

Through this lifelong dedication to achieving excellence in my own pursuits, research, experimentation, and working with high performers in sports, business, and life in general, I came to identify the most common characteristics they all shared. This process also led to discovering the most effective mental tools, mindsets, and approaches people could use to face their doubts and fears, overcome adversity, and expand their capabilities so they could achieve their goals and live their most fulfilling lives.

In addition to the above, going through my own personal and health related challenges, I came to see that many of these insights, mindsets, and approaches could also be applied to areas outside of sports and business. When I started applying these mental tools in my own life, my interactions with others gradually improved. I became less insecure and more confident, and I spent more time finding creative solutions rather than fixating on whatever problems I was facing. I felt more emotionally resilient and spent less time feeling unhappy and stuck in negative thinking patterns. In addition, I started to consistently access my best more often and enjoyed better results in my pursuits.

It became clear to me that what holds us back from getting the most out of ourselves, in any area of our lives, is our minds.



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The principles we'll explore in *A High-Performing Mind* can be applied to anything we experience and wish to improve—from sports, to business, to our health and personal lives. We'll find out how to strengthen our minds and build our emotional resilience, which we'll need to get through life's biggest challenges, achieve our goals, and live our optimal lives.

## What to Expect

As the title suggests, the phrase “high performing” is used often throughout the following pages, but what does it truly mean?

At its core, it's about tapping into our inner strength to achieve the best results possible from ourselves in the areas of our lives that matter most. Despite being unable to control what happens to us, we can still develop the ability to make the most out of every situation.

As you integrate the lessons and mental tools in *A High-Performing Mind*, with a little time and effort, you will notice yourself living a more fulfilling life.

Each chapter in this book can be thought of as part of a path up a nearby hill. At the top, you'll achieve a high-performing mind that is strong and capable of making your life better instead of inadvertently worse.

We start off at the base, each section gradually taking you higher and providing the mental tools necessary to reach the next milestone along the way. I suggest reading the chapters in order and becoming familiar with the lessons and mental approaches offered in each by practicing and using them before moving on.

There's no need to rush. Take breaks as needed and make sure to integrate the new lessons and tools as you progress into the next segment of the climb.

One of the core lessons in *A High-Performing Mind* is that anything worthwhile usually takes time and effort to achieve, and there will likely be challenging moments along the way. Reading this book will be no different. You will encounter ideas and concepts that will take time and repetition to understand, integrate, and apply. Those who persevere will make it to the top of the hill and benefit the most.

*A High-Performing Mind* will also challenge your critical thinking skills. While nearly every lesson and tool in the pages ahead is supported by a wealth of scientific research and the latest innovations in peak performance and psychology, they are also founded in common sense thinking. It's my hope that you will vet these tools, habits, and mental approaches personally, and determine if they work for you or not.

People tend to decide if something is valid based on who has suggested it before considering the quality and accuracy of the information being delivered. I suggest switching this around as you read *A High-Performing Mind*. Take in the information, consider if it has value, try it out and see if it works for you. Keep it if it does. Throw it aside if it doesn't.

Every story in *A High-Performing Mind* is true. The only deviation from this is in the occasional line or two of dialogue that I didn't recall exactly or in an attempt to inject a little flow or humor.

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I have also changed the names and identifiers of the people referenced in the stories ahead to protect their privacy. The stories, however, are etched in my memory the way I have related them.

It's my sincere hope that you'll find something of value in the pages ahead that help you on your journey to a better life experience. At minimum, you'll find an honest account of a lifetime of coaching and exploration of the mind, aimed at helping people find their best in any situation.

The first step of our journey naturally begins in the first section of the book "Building the Foundation." We're not going to get far without a few important tools like determination, a little discipline, some mental strength and resilience, an empowering attitude and willingness to try our best, open-mindedness to improve a little bit each day, a willing heart, and a positive perspective.

We'll start building some of these right away in Chapter 1, which will begin by introducing you to two very important and powerful mental tools that you will already be familiar with but may not use in an optimal way. They are meant to inspire you and ensure your success on your journey by strengthening your mind and your will to succeed.

Get ready to harness the power of your desire, then we'll find out exactly what "Dirty Discipline" is and how it can improve your life.

Let's get started!

# **PART I**

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– THE FOUNDATION –  
STRENGTHENING THE HEART

# CHAPTER 1

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## Desire, Dirty Discipline, and Warrior Mentality

### Empowering the Will

**D**esire can make us accomplish extraordinary things. I have observed people, who seemingly without the know-how or required skill, spontaneously improvise in unexpected ways to achieve remarkable results—all born out of an intense determination to succeed.

Desire is a high-octane fuel for our bodies that can turbocharge our energy and enable us to completely immerse ourselves in anything we are focused on. Desire brings many great benefits, including passion, the ability to work daily toward an important goal, concentration, energy, and engagement, to name a few.

It also comes in varying degrees of intensity, depending on what we have our sights set on. When our desire is high, it can move us with great speed and intensity towards the outcomes we are aiming for.

Without genuine desire, we aren't going to get very far in achieving our goals. On the other hand, when we follow our

heart's desires, the world seems to fall into alignment with us, and awe-inspiring things can happen in our lives.

When I graduated from university, I landed a job in a pharmaceutical marketing research firm in Montreal. Admittedly, I wasn't particularly excited about it, but I needed to work; I had student debts to pay.

Truth be told, in the back of my mind, all I wanted to do was play squash, a sport I loved and competed in on my school's varsity team.

Anytime I considered my circumstances, my lack of enthusiasm for my marketing job was obvious, but intellectually I saw it as the responsible choice—something I should do. At the same time, however, my heart had other opinions. Every time I thought about playing squash, I got super excited, and my heart clearly and wholeheartedly agreed with this idea. I swear I could practically hear it shouting “squash, squash, squash,” with every beat. It probably helped that I have a good imagination.

When I was honest about what I truly desired, playing squash was the answer. All I wanted to do was train and play in every free moment I had—I couldn't get enough of it. I had an intense yearning to keep improving so that one day I would be good enough to play on the professional world tour.

There was just one big problem with my plan. I may have done well at the varsity level, but I was nowhere near good enough to play on the world tour and make enough money to support myself or the significant travel expenses this plan would entail.

Part of the equation I also had to consider was the unfortunate fact that squash was a low-profile sport in the grand scheme of things—there wasn't much money in the game. This was particularly the case for anyone outside the top 50 or so players in the world, which definitely wasn't going to be where I started. Given all this, I had no idea how I would make my heart's unrealistic, ill-advised dream, a reality.

This was the state of affairs until about a week before I was supposed to start my new pharmaceutical marketing gig.

I was playing squash one day with a pro friend of mine named Joe. Once we finished up, we sat around stretching and chatting and Joe casually mentioned that they were looking for a squash teaching professional at a local racket club, not too far from where I lived. He asked if the position was something I'd be interested in.

I initially scoffed at the idea. "Teaching pro? That's ridiculous; I could never do that."

My heart wasn't buying this answer though, and the idea stuck in my mind like a splinter. *I just can't see myself being a teaching pro*, I'd say to myself. My heart wanted nothing of it; "squash, squash, squash" was again its reply. But I eventually caved. My curiosity was piqued and I wanted to hear more about this opportunity.

A couple of days later, after a phone call with Joe, I found myself at a large and prominent tennis and squash facility, seated across a large desk from the club manager interviewing for the position.

I'll never forget that interview. It lasted about two hours, and at the end of it, given that nobody else had applied, I was

offered the job. I would be working about 20-25 hours a week, which included teaching a bunch of lessons to club members who wanted to improve their games. This would leave me plenty of daily training time to get my game up to world tour tournament levels. It was the perfect solution, and ironically, it paid better than that marketing job I was holding onto so tightly.

I left the interview ecstatic. I couldn't believe my luck and more importantly, I couldn't wait to start!

I had followed my heart's desire and things were working out in unexpected ways. This path eventually led to a move to Toronto, where I landed a fantastic job and over time, worked my way up the ranks into a senior leadership position in a very successful organization.

More importantly, I met my would-be wife not long afterward. Fast forward several years, and we have two amazing kids and a wonderful life together in a fantastic community. I could never have predicted that a simple, single decision to take a job could lead to all this. And it all began with desire.

## **Tool #1: Desire**

As you embark into the pages ahead, you will also need to be clear about what you really want. What does your heart tell you?

Let's perform a quick check right now and find out. Are you clear about what you truly desire? Pick one thing right here and now to focus on and write it down. Once you've done that, put it somewhere you can't miss so that you'll see it every day. Can you feel your desire for that one thing right now in your gut or



heart when you think about it? If not, pick something else you want and care about until you're sure.

Consciously acknowledging this desire, will lock it in. If you get excited and can feel it somewhere in your body when you think about it, you've successfully used the power of your desire; the first tool in this chapter.

You've now completed your first step up the hill to a high-performing mind, which gives you a little more mental strength than you had before. Being aligned with your desires makes you stronger and more unified in your mind and actions.

Step two? Let's make sure that you're also armed with some discipline to follow through on that desire.

## **Tool #2: Dirty Discipline**

Now that you've harnessed the power of your personal will, you've already started strengthening your mind. This second tool will ensure that you continue to improve your capabilities and start enjoying your life a little more right away.

I like to refer to this next tool as "Dirty Discipline." To be fair, the word discipline, by itself, doesn't have the best reputation. It's often associated with pain and punishment, which sounds the opposite of fun, but there's no denying its usefulness. Admittedly, it can be easy for some to adopt, but not so much for others. The good news, though, is that any amount of discipline above and beyond what you currently have will be an improvement and serve you in powerful and helpful ways.

But let's back up. Discipline in this context simply refers to doing something on a regular basis. No punishment required! Discipline is also much easier to find when it's supported by having intense passion for whatever it is that you're pursuing. In this case, you rarely need to think about discipline because the daily habit takes care of itself—you just can't wait to do it.

At other times, however, it can be challenging to focus, particularly when you haven't strengthened your mind enough yet or established the habit of doing something on a regular basis. This is where "Dirty Discipline," comes in, because it will improve your ability to build a regular habit to make changes in your life in exciting new ways.

So, what's the "dirty" part in "Dirty Discipline?" It simply refers to the concept of giving yourself a little latitude in creating the habit of doing something on a regular basis to move you closer to achieving your goals.

Using the "dirty" approach to discipline is a great starting point. It means you recognize and acknowledge that you will be clear about what you want. However, you will likely have good days and less productive days when building and sustaining a somewhat regular habit of putting in time and effort toward achieving your goals. Of course, we all wish we had the self-discipline that some people exhibit—where they decide what they want to achieve, set their mind to it, and then take daily actions to make it happen. This is ideal, but for most of us, achieving our goals is a lot "dirtier," and there's nothing wrong with that. It might just take a little longer.

Using the “dirty” approach, means it may take you a bit of time to get going, you may get knocked off track for a few days before stopping entirely for a while, but then you pick up again where you left off.

Every time you pick back up, you try to do a little more, go a little longer, and slowly build up your discipline muscle until you are stringing several uninterrupted days in a row together. So, It may not be as clean or fast a process as doing it daily without missing, but you will still get there and constantly improve along the way.

If you already have the discipline to do something regularly, you are on your way. You just have to decide what you want to achieve, set your mind to it, and then specifically plan your daily actions to make it happen. We’ll dive a little deeper into this in chapter 6.

If ever you get discouraged about your progress or ability to be consistent, remember, “Dirty Discipline” is a very good starting point and without a doubt, far better than having no discipline...

### **Tool #3: Empower Your Personal Will- One Small Step at a Time**

As I described in the introduction, I was in good shape throughout my life due to my passion to excel in the sports I played. This abruptly ended in 2016, when I was first stricken with the phosphate related illness, which left me bedridden for months. It was the beginning of a long and slow decline in my physical health and, obviously, any semblance of fitness.

This, unfortunately, lasted a long time. Although I attempted to gently exercise on numerous occasions in those first few years,

the resulting debilitating symptoms meant that I had to give up exercise completely for several years.

Finally, around the beginning of 2022, my body seemed to have recovered to the point where I could exercise gently again and not notice any symptoms unless I overdid it. If, on a given day, I did push myself too hard, I would feel terrible, but it would pass in a few hours. This was a huge improvement over the past, where I would have been bedridden for days due to similar levels of effort. It became apparent that I was making progress and could tolerate exercise better than at any point in the previous six years. My return to some semblance of regular exercise marked a significant milestone in my journey to recovery.

I have to admit that even as someone who previously trained over four hours a day, it was shocking how challenging it was to build a regular exercise routine from scratch. My body had become very accustomed to not exerting itself, and it was difficult to break past this physical and mental barrier.

Determined to get back into some form of good shape, with modest goals to lose a few pounds around my midsection and be able to keep up with my wife and kids on nature hikes, I decided to begin with weight-lifting because, at that point, I was still quite nervous to inadvertently over-exert myself with cardiovascular exercise like biking. The consequences of overdoing it with cardiovascular exercise were still quite terrifying at that point, so weights it was.

As mentioned, it was hard to get past the complacency I had built over the previous five years as I recovered from my illness. I began by resolving to lift weights three times per week and started

small, choosing weights about a quarter of what I would have done in the past. For example, if it was a bicep curl, I started with a 10lb dumbbell and only did one set in those early weeks. I slowly built from there. Two exercises my first time became four after the first two weeks, then five, and six after two months, and so on. I continued this until I reached about ten exercises for each workout, which took a few months.

The bottom line? I started very small in every aspect to ensure I would and could do it. I committed to those three times a week, and on days I didn't feel like doing much, I still did something, even if my workout lasted only a few minutes and consisted of one exercise. I chose to "touch it" regularly, even for a minute or two, to honor the habit instead of skipping a session.

It was about building up the habit of working out again and making sure I made it easy to repeat my three times a week until I got to the point where the habit sustained itself, and it felt easy to get my workouts in. Since then, I have reduced the weights, but can now do forty-five-minute cardio sessions three times per week, something I couldn't have imagined just a few years ago. I'm happy to report, I can keep up with my wife and kids on hikes again.

## **Prioritizing Long-Term Gain Over Short-Term Pain and Discomfort**

It can be challenging to break through that initial complacency, but by initially resolving to do those three workouts a week, and slowly building a habit one small step at a time, I eventually got

to a healthy routine that strengthened my body, my mind, and most importantly my inner resolve.

Making that first effort can seem like a daunting prospect. It can take a little extra will power to break through the inertia of *not* having tried for a long while or the tendency to procrastinate. By keeping our mind's eye on the long-term benefit we will accrue, instead of focusing on the short-term discomfort or pain we think we'll have to go through, it can really help us get going.

By also starting small and gradually increasing, you make the effort regularly and are now on your way to having something to build on. With each thing you do, day by day, your inner resolve grows in strength and capacity. Before you know it, you are attempting and accomplishing things you never would have tried previously.

If you're still finding it difficult to get started, try making a list of all the ways you will benefit from getting it done, including how you will feel over the long term. Try to list out five or more benefits if possible. Then, list some ways your life will stay the same or get worse if you don't start. Use this as motivation and take that first small step to overcome the inertia of complacency. Remember to choose something small and easily obtainable that moves you closer to completing your task.

From there, continue to set easy, achievable next steps and complete them one by one on a comfortable timeline until you have finished the entire objective. You are now creating positive momentum and strengthening your resolve. Keep it going, don't let that inner muscle atrophy or your phone distract you. Build steadily from here by finding little challenges each day to complete.

Start with the easiest things first, build slowly from there, and before you know it, you'll be tackling big goals and big tasks without hesitation.

## **Tool #4: Use The Momentum of Daily Habits**

Habits are exceptionally powerful and a fundamental building block for obtaining your desires and goals. By establishing daily habits, you can create a self-sustaining momentum that pulls you along in the direction you want to go.

This can be the case even when you wake up some mornings and don't feel like putting any effort into achieving your goals, which can happen to anyone for any reason. Sometimes, we feel tired, unmotivated, sick, or worried about something that consumes our mental resources. Or we can also get side-tracked, distracted, temporarily into something else, or tied up with other responsibilities. It happens to the most disciplined of us, and sometimes taking a day off is necessary.

That said, daily habits that we have been building for a long time, can provide us with a powerful momentum to help us power around the obstacles that get in the way of our success. I have woken up countless times over my lifetime and not felt like exercising on a given day, or uninspired to get an outstanding task done. It again, happens to all of us.

More often than not, though, I get back to working on my goals because of a long-standing habit of working toward them daily. That is the power of daily habits—they generate their own

momentum and drag us along even on those days when we don't feel like doing anything. You often don't even have to think about it; the habit strikes and you just get up and get to it.

Habits take time to build, but once they are firmly established, they can carry us quickly toward our goals and through the adversity of our most challenging days.

There is an older gentleman I know and admire named Fred who, at the time of writing this book, is in his mid-sixties. Fred is unique and decided about thirty-five years ago that he would run every single day of his life. He must have made a serious commitment to himself and developed an impressively powerful daily habit, because he never missed running at least five miles per day—for thirty-five years straight!

It didn't matter if it was extreme heat, rain or shine, snow or ice, or sleet or hail; you would see Fred every day, if you looked for him, with his running shoes slapped on and making his way around the neighborhood on his daily trek.

Eventually, Fred's historical streak of running was interrupted because of an accident that hospitalized him for several days, but he did get back to his routine. His amazing streak was documented in 2019, when he set the Canadian record for running in 34 consecutive Boston Marathons. Not many human beings can say they've surpassed this remarkable accomplishment.

While all that mileage eventually caught up with Fred, and he had to reduce his routine to one to two weekly runs, he still maintains this impressive commitment to running regularly for the rest of his life. Fred personifies the dedication of a warrior's



mentality, and his extraordinary accomplishment reflects the power of desire and the momentum of a deeply entrenched and powerful life habit.

## **Warrior Mentality**

In general, In general, it's relatively safe to say that the harder you try, the more you do, and the more time you invest, the quicker the results will come and the better they will be. Of course, there can be exceptions, but it's no secret that if you are willing to take on hard things, you will strengthen your resolve, improve your discipline and abilities, and increase your chances for long-term, sustainable success.

Let's borrow a little inspiration from a warrior mentality, which refers to a state of mind that personifies total commitment to a cause, passion, or purpose.

We see it in every walk of life from athletes, to those dedicated to helping others, or in anyone with a goal they find exceptionally meaningful or important. Warriors, in this context, are completely dedicated to what they are working to achieve and there is no serious thought of ever quitting or giving up.

They are mentally tough and strong and expect challenging moments on their road to success. They're willing to endure through pain and discomfort to get where they want to go. They weather the storms, bounce back from setbacks, and use failure as an opportunity to learn, adjust, and keep going. They are relentless in the pursuit of their goals, and they don't let their doubts and fears, or those of others dissuade them. They choose to do things

now instead of later so they stay strong and carry on in the face of adversity.

If you have an “all in” state of mind, dedicated to following your passion and achieving your goals, then you have a warrior’s mentality. The only things that will ever stop you are success (because you’ve achieved your goal) or failure. If it’s the former, you’ll pick up where you left off and establish a new goal, and if it’s the latter, your temporary failure is only going to stop you until you adjust your approach and get back to it—like John did after his accident. We’ll get more deeply into managing failure in Chapter 7.

If you’re interested in building a warrior’s mentality, then start by answering these questions:

- Are you absolutely clear about what you want?
- Are you willing to fully commit to achieving your goal and to give it your uninhibited, 100% effort?
- Do you have such a strong desire to achieve your goal that you are willing to do whatever it takes? (Without, of course, harming anyone in the process)
- Will you continue striving toward your goal in the face of adversity?
- Will you continue striving toward your goal in the face of unexpected setbacks?
- Will you continue striving toward your goal in the face of fear or failure?
- Will you work every day toward achieving your goal no matter what, even if you only have the time to devote a few minutes?

If you can answer *YES* to these questions, then you are well on your way to developing a warrior's mindset. Until then, stick to that "Dirty Discipline" until the time comes when you've established some daily habits aimed at achieving your goals.

## **Four Tools to Build Desire, Discipline, and the Power of your Personal Will:**

**Tool #1:** Have Desire – the more intense the better

**Tool #2:** Dirty Discipline – use it as needed

**Tool #3:** Empower Your Personal Will – one small step at a time

**Tool #4:** Use the Momentum of Daily Habits

Now step back and congratulate yourself. You're now clear about what matters most to you and have empowered your personal will to help you get there. You have the first four mental skills of a high-performing mind and you're ready to move forward.

You'll need a few more tools, though, to ensure you don't get knocked off course by any challenging moments or setbacks on the way to achieving your goals. You'll want to be prepared and powerful enough to get around any obstacles you encounter. Let's find out exactly how next in Chapter 2.

## **Let's Make This Stick**

1. Write down your primary desire or goal from the beginning of this Chapter:

2. What small steps will you begin with to achieve this desire/ goal?

i. \_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What's one thing you can do **daily** to ensure you achieve this desire/ goal? In other words, what habits can you start building today?

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4. If you could choose one attribute of Warrior's Mentality, what would it be?

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## CHAPTER 2

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### Did Someone Say It Was Supposed To Be Easy?

Building Resilience,  
and Overcoming Adversity

I remember being seventeen years old and driving my recently purchased, but very used and rusty black Volkswagen diesel, down a quiet country road on my way to school one day. I couldn't have been more excited—I had recently got my license, and it was my first ever car. I had just bought it from my mom, and I couldn't wait to drive my friends around after class.

On my way down a good-sized hill, not five minutes from home, something caught the corner of my eye. What I could have sworn looked a lot like a car wheel, sped by my driver-side window and bounced down the hill in front of me.

“Wait, it was a car wheel!”

I had the time to think about how strange this was and to wonder where the heck it could have come from before noticing the steering wheel getting harder to move. An instant later, the

# The 12 Attributes of A High-Performing Mind

## The High-Performing Human Being

- #1:** Intense DESIRE to succeed and the discipline to get there
- #2:** The expectation it won't be easy and the willingness to give whatever time and effort needed to succeed
- #3:** The habit of always doing your best—even if you might fail
- #4:** The willingness to improve or change what holds you back
- #5:** The resilience to not let other people's negative words or doubts deflate your enthusiasm to succeed
- #6:** The openness to learn and adjust after mistakes, setbacks, and failures
- #7:** The intent to experiment, improve your skills, and master your craft
- #8:** Focused on the process not the outcome
- #9:** Focused on the positives—even when things get negative or bleak
- #10:** Say YES to fear, use it, and keep going
- #11:** Use present-moment focus to achieve your best performances
- #12:** The courage to try again and follow your heart

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew D. Thompson has spent a lifetime searching for the best ways to empower people to overcome adversity, improve resilience, strengthen the mind, and consistently bring their best

to everything they do so that they can achieve their goals and live their optimal lives.

Andrew shares some of the most powerful habits, mindsets, insights, and lessons from his time as a professional athlete, high-performance coach, hospitality industry executive, and individual who had to overcome some of life's most difficult challenges.

Andrew has been helping people of all ages and all walks of life, including elite athletes, high performers, and business leaders over the last 25+ years, to get past their setbacks and failures, find emotional resilience, and break through the barriers that block them from improving their circumstances and living fulfilling lives.