

The Art of Mental Training

Chapter 1

The Three-Minute Lesson

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As the mental-edge trainer for university athletics, it was easy for me to spot which athletes wanted the mental training and which athletes didn't care. This particular kid was one of those who just wasn't interested. While the others were listening and thinking, he yawned and admired his biceps. While the other students raised questions or provoked discussions, he was only concerned with the physical aspects of his sport: wrestling. Only a freshman, he was entering the big leagues now—competing at NCAA level for the first time—but that didn't seem to worry him during our sessions.

When it came to the crunch, however, the pressure proved to be just too much. Just a few minutes before his first match at this level, he rushed over to me, distraught and desperate, and started begging for mental training help on the spot. He'd just learned that he'd drawn the top-seeded wrestler in the tournament, a seasoned senior accustomed to annihilating opponents with comparative ease. As chance would have it, my *unbeliever* was about to learn a valuable lesson.

I looked at him and I couldn't help thinking: what an interesting opportunity. This kid is really scared; he's in a completely disempowered state. Clearly, he's not ready to compete at anywhere near the level of his true potential. A real athletic mental mess stood in front of me asking if I could help him, while, in his mind's eye, he was already suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of his opponent. The kid was very shaken; and we only had a few minutes to turn this thing around. He was up next, and the clock didn't show much time left before the current match would end.

I figured we had maybe three or four minutes. What could we do, I wondered?

Right then, I remembered something that Leo-tai had told me. "Danielsan, one should never look where one does not wish to go . . ." I had an idea.

"Are you ready to trust me?" I asked him.

"Whatever you say, coach."

"Right. Then step over here and let's get busy."

About three minutes later, when his name was announced, I walked with him to the edge of the mat. He hadn't taken his focus from his task for a single second. All I'd done was to provide him with the mental technique; he did the rest inside his head.

Let me tell you, when that kid stepped on to the mat he was a force of dominance, confidence, and technique. Within a few minutes he went from a fearful freshman wrestler heading for a crushing defeat, to an unchained gladiator, a champion who owned the arena. He helped to create one of the most exciting high-scoring, action-packed matches of the tournament. The match went the full distance, and in the end my *unbeliever* had lost the match by only one point. The crowd couldn't believe their eyes. Their champion had barely survived his first match!

What he did is not difficult: no magic, no hypnosis, no smoke or mirrors. I simply guided him through a process with three simple instructions. I gave him one minute to deal with each instruction, before giving him the next one. In that short time **he was able to change his state completely.**

I want to teach you exactly how to do this for yourself and much more, but first let's think about a few things that this real-life experience brings to light.

I need you to recall an occasion when you performed at your best — and then remember a time when you were at your worst. Now when you look at those two performances, I want you to be honest with yourself and ask, what made the most difference between the two? Could it have been your mental state that made the most difference?

Most athletes will admit that a big part of the difference was exactly that, and that the performance difference had everything to do with their mental state. In the case of my *unbeliever*, the difference between what was promising to be one of his worst performances ever, and what had turned out to be one of his best performances ever, was, after all . . . *mostly mental.*

And that's the important point: no matter what your game is, the difference between great performances and average performances is mostly mental. Once you reach a certain level of skill, it's your mental skills that start making all the difference. The better they are, the better you become—and the better your results will be.

Some professional athletes will tell you that they spend considerable time on mental training. They'll tell you how important it is to read books, practice mental techniques, and become accomplished at using relaxation and imagery, because they know from experience how it helps their performance. Champions know that the mental game can teach anyone how to stay focused, goal-oriented, and motivated to succeed, as well as how to better deal with both temporary setbacks and real adversity.

The Mental Warrior understands that time spent on the mental game will pay off with improved performance—sometimes almost instantly. The Warrior/Champion learns to

use techniques that help him get out of his own way, so he can reach the next possible level of performance, not by random chance, but by focused choice, over and over again.

It's not that difficult. Look at what my *unbeliever* was able to do within three minutes of beginning to apply mental training techniques.

Remember: Powerful mental techniques are user-friendly and capable of delivering results very quickly.