

# The Art of Mental Training

## Chapter 5

### On Self-Belief

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I remember once up in Washington State, Leo-tai and I were hiking along part of the Pacific Crest Trail. Leo-tai loved the beauty of those mountains. There we met a strange guy, possibly a young hermit, who bent our ears with wild-eyed warnings of aliens and UFO's all around the local wilderness after dark.

That night at camp, after joking and laughing about the guy's spooky alien stories, Leo-tai and I sensed the presence of . . . someone. We both stood up at the same moment and looked out into the dark. All around us at the edge of the darkness were many pairs of unblinking, yellowish eyes. I couldn't figure out what sort of creatures those eyes belonged to, but they were all around us in the dark, reflected by the light of our dying fire. I'm not going to lie: I felt a little nervous as I counted eight separate pairs of eyes.

Leo-tai was very calm; but I immediately started hurling rocks—hard. I figured if they were aliens, I was going to knock at least one of them out by cracking his skull with my rock-solid fastball.

Meanwhile, Leo-tai fanned the fire back to life.

“You better help me out here,” I urged him. “They're not going away!”

Leo-tai turned from the fire and started throwing rocks with focused accuracy. Not bad for an old guy, I thought. Still, we were so outnumbered it was scary, and the silence of the creatures all around us was very unnerving. Then, suddenly, we caught a glimpse of whom we were facing.

A pack of huge, fearless, marauding raccoons! They were wild; they were mean; and they were coming in—clearly wanting some food. We fought hard as they repeatedly charged us and tried to intimidate us into running. They seem to have absolutely no fear of us at all. I wondered if they had rabies.

After several minutes of charges and counter-attacks, Leo-tai somehow sensed who the leader of the pack was. And paying no attention to several closer raccoons, he caught

him right between the eyes with a rock travelling at the speed of sound. It was the most accurate shot anyone could have asked for.

Bang! “Who wants some!?” Leo-tai exclaimed. The leader rocked back, stunned, and then quickly took off running, with his entire pack behind him.

“Great shot,” I said, breathing hard. “But what was that all about? Since when did raccoons run around behaving like that?”

Leo-tai smiled shaking his head. “A very fearless group they were.”

Then he asked me a question, “Danielsan, did you ever think that we weren’t going to win?”

I thought back.

“Not really,” I said. “All I knew was that this was darn serious, that it was time to fight, and that fighting was exactly what I was going to do.”

My teacher smiled.

“Very good, Danielsan. Self-belief. You must always begin by believing that you have what it takes. When the pressure is on, the more you believe in yourself, the better your performance will be. Without strong self-belief, the warrior winds up nowhere. You have to believe that you can win; then that self-belief puts you in a position to win.”

“Are you’re talking about confidence?” I asked.

“Not completely. Confidence is a by-product of strong self-belief. The more powerful his self-belief, the more confidence the warrior is able to summons up when the pressure is on. And the stronger his self-belief, the better his performance will be.”

“So self-belief brings on a confidence that can empower us?”

“Indeed. When you really believe that you can win, Danielsan, something extremely powerful is set into motion. So in order to help build the strongest self-belief system he can have, a Warrior/Champion learns to use imagination to see himself in his mind’s eye accomplishing his most desired success while in a deep relaxed state of awareness. This is the key to improving self-belief, the foundation of which lies deep inside the mind.”

What Leo-tai meant was that while our self-belief system is formed over the years by experiences, memories, and outside influences—anyone can still refine and build up his own self-belief system by using the tools of relaxation and imagination. The champion sees and feels himself succeeding in his mind’s eye, many times over, long before he actually arrives for the competition. This is how he improves his self-belief from inside.

“Teach them, Danielsan, that the Warrior/Champion goes within.”

And with that Leo-tai disappeared behind the flaps of his tent.

*Hmmm, I thought. That's kind of dramatic. What's he thinking? He must be very sure that I have no questions to ask—and that the pack of raccoons aren't coming back.*

“Hey, does that mean you're done for the night?” I asked him.

“Hasta mañana,” said the voice from inside the tent. “I am much older than you my friend—and I'm tired.”

I couldn't help but asking him just one more question.

“Okay,” I said, “but what if the raccoons come back again?”

Without hesitation, came the reply, “Why — the answer is quite clear, Danielsan. If they attack again . . . then they shall lose again.”

**Remember: It's self-belief that gets everything going.**