



By Tony Abbattine on December 19, 2018

What if mental skills trainers, peak performance coaches and sports psychologists were the second-best solution to performance issues and dealing with the daily stress of life?

I am currently teaching Sports Psychology at colleges across the country and have worked with high-level amateur and professional athletes for many years. I am coming to the realization that, perhaps, there are better long-term options in the never ending quest to "fix" the mental/emotional/mindset/toughness issues that affect performance.

If your way as a coach or player is working (both on and off the field), then great news—stay the course.

If you are like most athletes I talk to that are still looking for the "magic bullet", then read on.

The Inside-Out movement in sports performance, pioneered by William James and Sydney Banks years ago and most recently by Garret Kramer, appears to be the "new normal" in the crowded space known as performance enhancement specialists. It's a different but novel concept, and its simplicity may be exactly what most athletes need.

It starts with a simple premise: You create your perception and experience life from the inside-out, not the outside-in.

Stay with me. I know it sounds like I'm stating the obvious, but these tricky and fickle objects called our thoughts and feelings are sometimes our greatest enemy when it should be our silent best friend.

Outside-In: The illusion that a person's experience creates his or her thinking or mood.

Inside-Out: The natural fact that a person's thinking and mood create his or her experience.

You ready for this "tool"? The ultimate teacher and source of the best information to athletes might be their own Insight and introspection, and trusting yourself to reboot and settle down naturally.

Simply put, the human mind has this innate ability to self-correct to clarity, if we allow it.

Sometimes the best strategy during performance may be to do nothing. Put another way, instead of trying to plug-in third-party strategies, or make the external world and events real, how about letting your thoughts and emotions reset on their own and don't make the internal "clutter" worse by adding more "things" to do or think?

Consider the following Garret Kramer/Path of No Resistance lines as we all start the offseason and prepare for 2019. Truth be told, the best performers on any stage already own these traits:

- Using techniques to find the "zone" is like using witchcraft to make the sun rise.

- Negative thoughts are not a problem for any of us at any time. Acting on these thoughts—such as trying to manage them—is a different story.

- Employing a mental strategy and then feeling better is called a coincidence. Getting on with life and then self-correcting is called truth.

- Athletes find excellence through the absence of thought. Why aren't coaches connecting the dots? They keep prescribing techniques that require athletes to think.

- Athletes don't miss opportunities because they're too focused on obstacles. They miss opportunities because they are too focused.

- Have you ever noticed that the most stressed-out people are constantly doing "something" to fend off stress?

- There's no connection between performance excellence and positive thinking. Stop trying to find a state of no thought by adding thought.

- Athletes and people who try to control their thoughts will not produce consistency; they will only produce consistently revved-up thoughts.

- Peace of mind takes no work at all. If you are working, you are cluttering—and complicating. Self-help is an interesting phrase. How can employing someone else's motivational or mental strategy be self-help?

Competition, the big game, and late-inning situations are all wonderful. Remember, though, that the calendar or outside events have no power over your thinking or feelings. Athletes perform and live in the visual world. Stay there and listen to the silence.

Here's to a great Inside-Out 2019.

