

Secrets of Emotional Toughness

by Dr. Gregg Steinberg

Thanks for downloading my PDF "**Secrets of Emotional Toughness**".

As an extra bonus, I have included an article I wrote called "**Performance Secrets of Top Athletes**" below, which gives additional insights on emotional strategies for peak performance.

- Dr. Gregg

Performance Secrets of Top Athletes

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**Tiger
Woods**

Build Tiger Confidence

Tiger wears the red shirt on Sunday to build confidence, because our actions impact our emotions. Self perception theory indicates that our actions directly influence our emotions. So if you want to be happier, smile more. If you want to be more confident, strut your stuff when you walk.



**Kobe
Bryant**

Maintain Intensity like Kobe

Kobe keeps his intensity level at an even keel, not getting too high or too low, which allows him to play at his best throughout the game. If your intensity level is too high, you will burn out. If it is too low, you can never perform at your best. You need to find your optimal intensity level to play your best.



**Peyton
Manning**

Prepare like Manning

Peyton prepares extensively before every game so he is confident he can be at his best. When you develop an adversity plan, which is having an effective response for any situation, you will be prepared. Confidence is built on being prepared.



**Serena
Williams**

Talk yourself into greatness like Serena

Serena uses a lot of positive “self-talk” to keep her confidence high when times are tough. What we say to ourselves greatly impacts how we feel. If you speak to yourself negatively, you will lose confidence. If you speak positively, you will feel good about what you do.

Secrets of Emotional Toughness

By Dr. Gregg Steinberg

It was one of “those” travel days. I missed my flight. My shoulder and neck ached from lugging my wheel-less 49lb. travel bag across 3 airports. When I finally arrived at my seat, all I desired was to finish my newspaper and get a little shut eye on my flight home. The last thing I wanted was to get into a long meaningless airplane conversation.

But I could tell that the guy sitting in the dreaded middle seat really wanted to talk.

I did not want to seem unfriendly. But, any frequent flier will tell you that the plane can create an instantaneous therapy session. Perhaps out of loneliness or fear of crashing, whatever the reason, the stranger in the next seat always wants to share his life story with you for the entire flight.

As a speaker and author, I love to hear people’s stories. Unfortunately, most of the stories I hear on the plane are real snoozers: They usually fall between the IT guy who covers the country fixing his company’s technological problems to the grandmother who is flying to Orlando to meet her grandkids at Disney World.

I decided to open my mouth as soon as I noticed that my neighbor had pulled out a Merck pharmaceutical folder from his briefcase. Smugly I asked him if he enjoyed his job in these tough economic times.

With an endearing smile, he said, “Love it”.

I was perplexed. Earlier in the day, I had spoken to a national conference of pharmaceutical reps who were told of a probable 20% downsizing to the industry in the upcoming year. A few reps at the conference told me that some of their colleagues had been just let go and now they were expecting another round of layoffs shortly. There was a palpable fear that pervaded the conference. No one knew who might be the next casualty - it was like playing Russian Roulette with their careers.

But the guy sitting next to me was so different from these reps at this conference. He was full of life, with great passion and energy. He then asked me, "Do you want to hear my secret weapon?" and pulled out his iPhone. He showed me his wallpaper picture. It looked like a doctor giving CPR to a very bloody patient on a gurney.

He proceeded to tell me that he was not always a financial advisor. In his former life he was, Lt. Bill London, a medic in Afghanistan. The boy on the gurney was Pvt. Williams. The Private's squad had been on a routine surveillance of a small village when they all got pinned down in an abandoned house by enemy fire. Pvt. Williams was the designated look out, so he waited behind. When he saw his squad in dire trouble, he got in his HumVee and rode into the village with bullets swarming all around him. Pvt Williams bashed the HumVee into one of the walls of the house, his squad jumped in and he drove them all to safety.

"Unfortunately, Pvt Williams was shot 5 times during this exploit", Lt Bill said sadly, and then added, "He was airlifted to my makeshift med center, near Kavo. This kid had a 5% chance of living. He lost enough blood for two people,

but I was not going to leave him. A kid with this much courage and heart was going to get everything I had, so I stood over him for 5 long hours. Whether it was an angel on his shoulder or just pure luck, I don't know, but Pvt Williams made it."

Lt Bill proceeded to tell me that one of his colleagues had taken this picture and sent it to him and now he uses it as wallpaper on his phone.

He turned to me and said, "This is my secret weapon. Every time our industry takes a turn for the worst, or a client yells at me, or I just feel burnt out, I pull out my phone and look at this picture of me over Pvt Williams."

Lt. Bill then firmly stated, "This image brings up emotions of great joy because it reminds me that I am here on this planet to help people in times of despair. When I look at this picture, all the stress of my job just melts away. This is why I love my job and life".

How Imagery Works to Build Emotional Muscle

Images can create our reality: A literal connection exists from our images to our mind and body.

Researchers in this area have discovered that our images create slight electrical activity in our body. If you were sitting in a chair imagining your golf swing, all the muscles used for your golf swing would become active. This electrical activity is smaller than actually swinging the club, but it helps to groove the neuro-motor pathways. According to Psychoneuromuscular theory, this phenomenon is how imagery helps to build muscle memory.

Our images can also develop emotional muscle. Images trigger emotional responses in our brain. During imagery, various areas of the brain associated with the emotion become alive and active. That is, imagery can mimic emotional experiences in the brain. Just the image of a painful situation has produced the pain areas of the brain to stimulate. The same goes for an image with a pleasurable experience: An image that is associated with a wonderful moment will stimulate the pleasure centers in the brain and create an emotional response. There is a literal connection between our images and our emotions.

While Lt. Bill used his sweet spot imagery from Afghanistan to spark effective emotions at work, this performance technique can be even more powerful when the imagery relates to a similar stressful environment. Take the example from Football Great Joe Montana. It was the last two minutes of the 1989 Super Bowl and the San Francisco 49ers were five points down against the Cincinnati Bengals. They needed to march almost ninety yards to score. In the huddle, Joe told his teammates, “This is just like ‘81”.

Those words in the huddle allowed Joe and his teammates to recall a very similar sweet spot image: When they played the Dallas Cowboys in the 1981 NFC Championship game, the 49ers advanced the ball down the entire field in the last minutes of play to an incredible win.

This sweet spot image gave Joe and his teammates a surge of great confidence. With just a few clicks left on the clock, Joe threw the famous

catch to Dwight Clark for the winning touchdown, and brought another Lombardi Trophy back to San Francisco.

While you may never play in a Superbowl or have a heroic moment like Lt. Bill, I know you have many sweet images that represent some of your best moments. Here are some suggestions to capture your sweet spot imagery so that you can be at your best when it really counts.

Secrets of Emotional Toughness

1) Picture yourself like Lt Bill.

If you are lucky enough like Lt. Bill, you will have pictures in your life when you are in your sweet spot. Perhaps it was standing on a podium receiving a trophy, or the time you gave that knockout speech. If so, post it on our phone like Lt. Bill. Or you can post this picture all around your house--on your computer, nightstand, and fridge. Every time, you look at the picture, recall all those great emotions associated with that special time in your life.

2) Keep a golden nugget book.

Sometimes, we are not lucky enough to capture our greatest moments on film. In this case, just record them in a golden nugget book. After an event in which you were amazing, perhaps closing that fantastic deal with a tough client, or really connecting with your difficult boss, make a record of it in small notebook (your golden nugget book). Keep this book in your office or at home. Continually refresh your mind with these sweet moments throughout the day and it will help you to boost your ability to imagine your greatest moments.

3) Make your imagery healthy.

Extend this process to include imagery related to your healthiest moments. Take the case of Mary Olsteen, the mother of the famous Tele-evangelist Joel Olsteen. Twenty years earlier, Mary stated that she had terminal cancer and was told she had 6 months to live. She pursued chemotherapy. Her hair fell out and her skin changed color. However, she did not want to look in the mirror and see herself as sick. So, she found pictures of her healthiest moments--when she was at the beach, in the mountains, at Thanksgiving--and posted them all over the house. Mary looked at these pictures twenty times a day to recall an image of her healthiest state. Mary has stated that, today, she is cancer free. This method helped her to find her sweetest health.

4) Practice your imagery skills.

Not everyone has the skill of recalling past great moments. To many, unlocking sweet spot imagery from days gone by is difficult. In order for you to get better at this vital skill, first recall some good moments that happened yesterday and the day before. Recent events will be easier to recall than ones that happened in years past. When you recall these recent good events, become aware of your emotions associated with these moments.

Once you practiced this “recent” imagery skill for a few weeks, move on to sweet spot events that happened in months past as well as in years past. Again, be aware of your emotions associated with these past great events.

Also, your imagery ability will improve when your mind is clear and your body is relaxed. Try practicing your imagery right before bed, or at a time when you feel at ease. Keep practicing your imagery skill and you will find that the sweet spot moments will jump from your mind.

Centuries ago, the founder of modern philosophical thought, Rene Descartes wrote that we have the capacity to think whatever we choose—and to have thoughts that are self-liberating and those that are self-defeating. You have a choice to recall all the times you failed and choked under pressure--creating a self-fulfilling prophecy---or you can fill your mind with moments of gold and see your life enriched with wonderful moments.

About Dr. Gregg Steinberg

- Hailed by Golf Digest as “one of the sports’ great masterminds”
- Bestselling author
- Entertaining and engaging speaker
- TV personality and radio host
- award winning professor of human performance



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