

THE

# MAP

TM

MENTAL ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE

FOR

**FIREFIGHTERS**



THE M.A.P.  
FOR  
FIREFIGHTERS

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**Gary Mack  
and the  
Phoenix Fire Department**

*Cover by Harold "Pooney" Pickering  
Phoenix Fire Department*

## PREFACE

When the alarm sounds and the lights come on, it's "show time." And just as a running back must think with his head and move with his body, so must firefighters as they dart their way through a flaming building or highway accident. But there's no referee to stop the action, and instead of a ball, there may be an endangered child in the firefighter's arms and only split seconds to determine a difficult set of options. Confidence, control, and concentration must surface. It's like no other game.

Fire fighting is listed among the most stressful occupations in the world today. Critical life and death situations, demanding physical exertion, uncertainty, and time demands put extraordinary pressure on the mind and body of a firefighter. The purpose of this manual is simple. Our goal is to help firefighters increase their chances for success, while decreasing the affects of stress. Unlike sports, where the goal is winning and losing, firefighters have an even bigger challenge and that is to keep playing.

For the past ten years, I have been working in the field of performance and sports psychology. During that time, I have had the privilege of working with elite athletes and high performers in both professional sports and fire fighting. In my observations, research, and countless discussions with these individuals, I have found certain keys and common characteristics. These models of excellence consistently demonstrate a set of learned behaviors and applied mental skills in their performance and training regimens. These are skills that, you too, can learn.

The firefighter is both a mental and physical athlete. To succeed, he/she must be "equipped" with skills to handle both the mental and physical demands of the profession. An enormous investment has been made by fire departments in technical training, protective equipment, and physical fitness. This program now offers an extended area - *The Mental Aspects of Performance*. The M.A.P. is a mental fitness program designed to help you develop emotional muscle and mental toughness to excel throughout your career.

I'd like to thank the Phoenix Fire Department and the firefighters who have helped to make the M.A.P. for firefighters a reality. A Commitment to Excellence has, as its basis, a fundamental belief in the power of individual potential. I believe the M.A.P. will help unlock your full potential to guide you on your road to success at home, at work, and when the alarm sounds.

Gary Mack  
Phoenix, Arizona

## PREFACE

For many years, Gary Mack has been associated with the Phoenix Fire Department. He has a keen interest in ensuring the effective, successful performance of our Firefighters and Officers. Several years ago, Gary and I began applying some of his mental training techniques and concepts for sports to sustaining and improving the performance of our members in the various areas of the fire department.

Mental training is a key element of successful fire training programs for the future. For as long as we can remember, we have pondered the question "Why, at a given time and place, is a firefighter or officer, who is properly trained and equipped, and who has successfully performed a particular task or evolution several times in the past, unable to perform in a certain situation?". It occurs so frequently that we have developed names for this phenomenon. We say they "choked", "shaded", or were perhaps the victim of "cerebral-rectal inversion". The M.A.P. is the best shot we have at implementing a structured, ongoing training approach that is geared and dedicated to minimizing these mental let downs and making people more effective.

Fire fighting, E.M.S., hazardous materials, technical rescue, and many other fire department responsibilities are very difficult and can be extremely stressful. For us, it isn't a matter of winning or losing, it's a matter of life and death. A mental error can literally cost the lives of our members and/or customers.

M.A.P. is a safety issue; it helps guide the quality of internal relations and interpersonal relationships within the organization, and it affects the quality of external customer service. It is an inexpensive and effective improvement program for the organization.

I would like to thank Gary Mack for his friendship and his many contributions to the Phoenix Fire Department. I would also like to thank Fire Chief Alan V. Brunacini and the other members of our Department who assisted in the M.A.P.'s development and implementation. The concepts have been integrated into many of our training and safety activities.

Good luck to the fire service as it explores the application of the M.A.P. to their training programs and successful delivery of service!

Dennis Compton  
Phoenix Fire Department, Arizona

## **The MAP Legacy**

### **The MAP: Mental Aspects of Performance for Fire Fighters**

Gary Mack was a friend and colleague who unfortunately died at the peak of his career. He was a well-regarded sport psychologist who did pioneering work with first responders in conjunction with the Phoenix Fire Department.

Sport psychologist, Dr. Samantha Foster and I participated in a seminar with Gary at the Phoenix Fire Department Symposium in 1998. At that time, Gary introduced us to the MAP for Firefighters, and encouraged us to put this training manual to use in our work.

Now, many years after his untimely passing, on Gary's behalf, I am sharing the MAP so that it can be used more widely in work with firefighters for health and performance.

It is free to use and available at:

<https://zenzonedigital.net/category/police-public-safety/>

Please do not alter or change the MAP. If you use the MAP, please contact me so I can track its use: [jheil@PHRoanoke.com](mailto:jheil@PHRoanoke.com)

John Heil 7/27/23



Dear John.

Nice to hear from you. The Firefighter Health and Fitness Conference is June 25-27, 1998 at the AZ Biltmore.

I am putting your name in front of the committee and will call you after they meet.

Enclosed is the M.A.P. for firefighters. It's pretty basic but has sold well. I would be glad to train you and Steve in how I present my workshops.

Best Talk to you soon.

Guzak

## Gary Mack Obituary

Gary "Bat" Mack, devoted husband and friend to all, passed away on October 7, 2002. A well-known sports psychology consultant and counselor, Gary was the author of the best-selling book "Mind Gym", an Athletics Guide to Inner Excellence. During his career, Gary had been the Team Counselor and Sport Psychology consultant to the Seattle Mariners, Chicago Cubs, Phoenix Suns, Phoenix Mercury, Arizona Diamondbacks, Arizona Cardinals, and Phoenix Fire Department. He was also the personal counselor and performance coach to numerous athletes and performers in the MLBA, NHL, PGA, LPGA, ATP, and the Senior Tour. Gary was someone people turned to - always there to listen, to provide guidance, to challenge your thinking. It was what made him so great in his field, and a trusted confidant to many. A great athlete himself, Gary was an avid and talented golfer and tennis player. A man of many talents and interests, Gary was also an art and Chinese snuff bottle collector, yoga practitioner, and music producer. Gary was a graduate of Gettysburg College and received his Masters of Counseling Psychology from Arizona State University. A native New Yorker, Gary resided in Paradise Valley and Flagstaff, Arizona. Gary is survived by his wife Marie, his sister Beverly Hall of Nantucket, Massachusetts, his beloved Golden Retriever Sunny, and his three cats Benny, Brooks, and Rusty. A "Celebration of Life" will be held at the Seattle Mariner Peoria Sports Complex, 16101 N. 83rd Ave., Peoria, AZ on Sunday, October 20 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. In lieu of flowers, donations can be sent to The Phoenix Zoo ([www.phoenixzoo.org](http://www.phoenixzoo.org)) and Rescue a Golden of Arizona ([www.golden-retriever.org](http://www.golden-retriever.org)). Arrangements by Messinger Indian School Mortuary, Scottsdale.

Published by The Seattle Times on Oct. 13, 2002.

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/seattletimes/name/gary-mack->

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1	OVERVIEW	Page 1
Section 2	GROWTH	Page 16
Section 3	ATTENTION	Page 30
Section 4	MOTIVATION	Page 46
Section 5	ENERGY	Page 57
Section 6	THOUGHT	Page 71
Section 7	IMAGE	Page 81
Section 8	PERFORMANCE	Page 93
Section 9	SELF	Page 104
Section 10	NOTES	





THERE IS NO RIGHT WAY, ONLY YOUR WAY.

OVERVIEW

## THE M.A.P. OVERVIEW

"Firefighters are like relief pitchers. Every day they go to the park not knowing what might happen or when. They often answer false alarms - warming up on the side, getting ready, but not going in. Psychologically that takes its toll and every time you get up, it's an appearance."

### **A RATIONALE FOR MENTAL TRAINING**

Today's firefighters have come to expect the unexpected. Performance demands and uncertainty put firefighters under physical and mental pressures on a daily basis. The mental aspect of fire fighting is particularly demanding since it not only involves the stress and tension of dangerous work, but also requires a high psychological state of readiness, long periods of waiting, clarity, self-control, and confidence.

Training and fitness are the heart of any athlete's preparation for the game. The ability of the firefighter to remain in control when all hell is breaking loose is a mental skill that, like the athlete's preparation, must be learned and practiced. It goes against human nature to remain calm, composed, and focused when you can't breathe, can't see, and are in the middle of a dangerous situation. The M.A.P. for Firefighters will teach you skills to overcome the natural human reaction to stress and help you perform. It is **THE HEAD EDGE** - the mental aspects of fire fighting - that will make the difference when it's needed most.

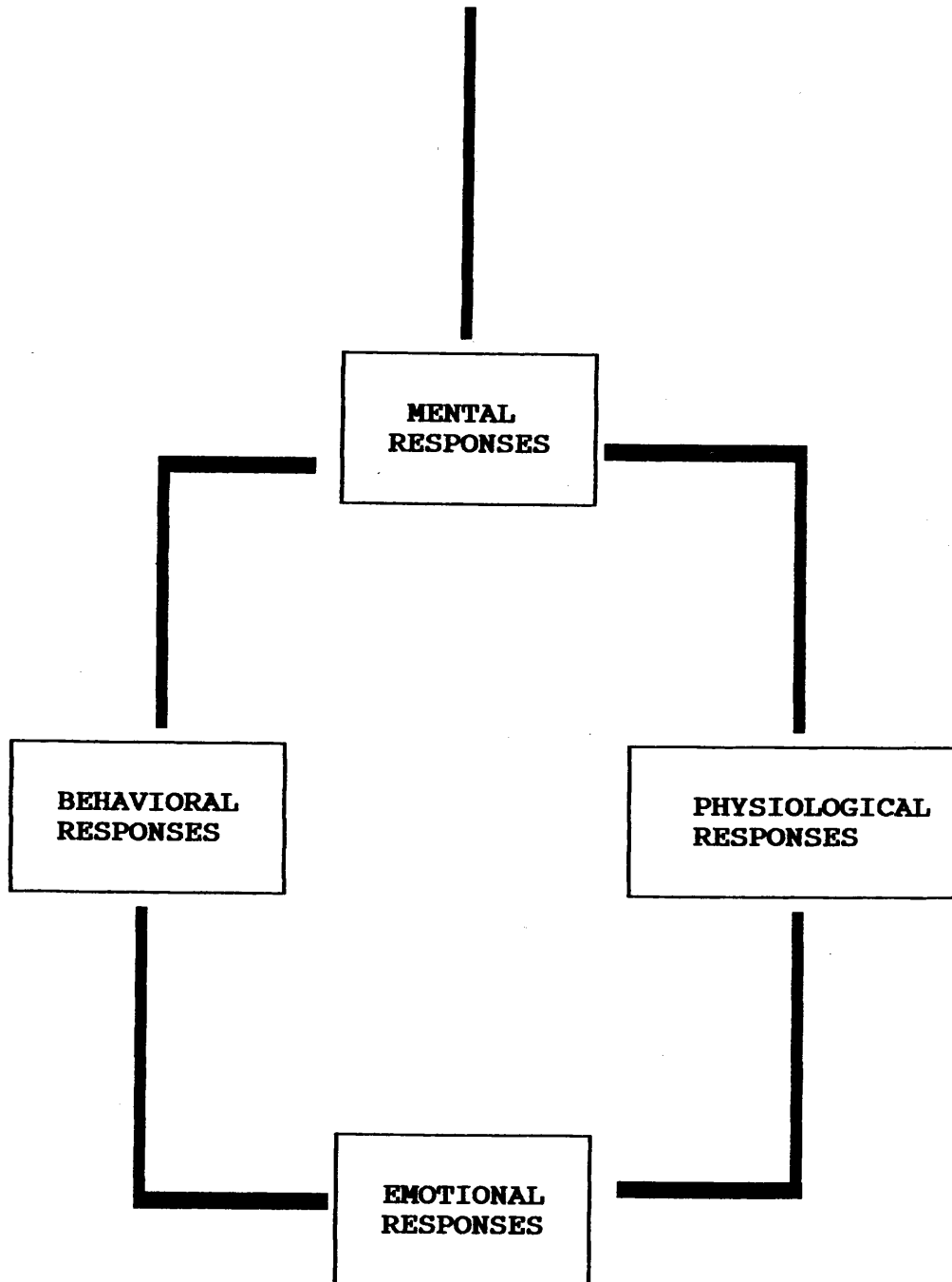
### **THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION**

Over the past 20 years, much has been learned about the mind-body connection and its effect on performance. Recognizing the enormous impact our mental state has on our physiological state, performance psychology principles are now being made a fundamental part of all kinds of high performance training from world class athletes to artists and astronauts.

We have come to realize that the firefighter is both a mental and physical athlete of the highest degree. An athlete that must perform at an optimum level at a time when pressure is at its greatest.... when life is on the line. And just as world class and professional athletic teams have come to recognize the importance of the mind and body connection in developing and executing physical skills at critical moments, so must the firefighter.

# STIMULUS-RESPONSE CYCLE

## STIMULUS-SITUATION



## THE GAMETIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR COOL WHEN THE HEAT IS ON

Years of research and countless interviews with peak performers have allowed me to isolate what I consider the eight essential control keys to peak performance situations. As a way of remembering these keys, I have grouped the 8 CONTROL KEYS into the acronym GAME-TIPS. Associated with each of these 8 CONTROL KEYS are other concepts relevant to increasing personal effectiveness, or what I call the "GAME-TIPS" for Peak Performers". Combined, the M.A.P. covers many topics relevant to the Mental Aspects of Performing. Each topic contains both ideas as well as exercises that help one put theory into practice, or "where the rubber hits the road."

The study of peak performers in all areas of endeavors from athletics to business also seems to point to certain common behaviors and capacities that allow one to achieve an ideal performance state. Together we call them the CONTROL KEYS AND SUCCESS C's.

<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>E</b>
GROWTH GOALS GREMLINS	ATTENTION AROUSAL ATTITUDE	MOTIVATION MISSION MINDSET	ENERGY EVALUATION EMOTIONS
<b>T</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>S</b>
THOUGHT THINKING	IMAGES IMAGINATION	PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVE	SELF STRESS

### CONTROL KEYS AND SUCCESS C'S FOR BUILDING MENTAL MUSCLE

#### CONTROL KEY: GROWTH

#### SUCCESS C: CHALLENGED

The ability to learn, grow, change, and adapt are critical to peak performers. Most of the greats regardless of the profession have been open and innovative, as well as students of the game. They view change as a challenge to embrace rather than a threat to resist.

#### CONTROL KEY: ATTENTION

#### SUCCESS C: CONCENTRATION

The ability to focus one's attention on the goal or task at hand is essential to performance success. Next to confidence, concentration is considered one of the most essential mental skills in learning how to increase and sustain attention and decrease distractions.

**CONTROL KEY: MOTIVATION****SUCCESS C: COMMITMENT**

All great performers have an intense desire - the "fire" to be the best. Their internal drive, intensity, and commitment separate them from the pack. They also have the motivation to keep pursuing regardless of the odds or obstacles. They are people on a mission with a mindset for excellence.

**CONTROL KEY: ENERGY****SUCCESS C: COMPOSED**

Although many great performers are highly energized and emotional, they always seem to play within themselves. Learning how to control, create, direct, and maintain energy and emotions over time and task is a key to success.

**CONTROL KEY: THOUGHT****SUCCESS C: CONSTRUCTIVE**

Thoughts create emotions and emotions influence performance. Learning how to talk to yourself as a constructive coach rather than a negative critic is a key to getting the job done. Performers with "Can Do" attitudes and positive self-talk seem to self-enhance rather than self-defeat.

**CONTROL KEY: IMAGE****SUCCESS C: CONFIDENT**

Whereas the mind responds to verbal instruction and words, the muscles respond better to visual instruction and images. Winners clearly "see" themselves as successful performers and have positive mental images that provide "mental blueprints" for high performance, particularly under pressure.

**CONTROL KEY: PERFORMANCE****SUCCESS C: CONDITIONED**

Any great coach will tell you it's not the will to win, but the will to prepare to win that makes the difference. Learning how to make things happen in practice allows you to let things happen in performance. You have the confidence to go with the flow and "play in the zone". It is the conscious practice of mental and physical skills that leads to subconscious habits of success under performance pressure.

**CONTROL KEY: SELF****SUCCESS C: CONTROLLED**

Of the hundreds of professional athletes asked the number one key to performance success, over 90% say confidence. Confidence is the "emotional knowing" that you are prepared and can handle whatever comes your way. Winners may hate to lose but they don't fear it. A high self esteem and positive regard allows peak performers to learn from setbacks and come back committed to giving it their best. People with a healthy self concept take responsibility for their actions and are open to new learning. They have a self image which makes them open to success and resistant to stress.

## OVERVIEW EXERCISE: PEAK AND WEAK EXPERIENCES

- Step 1            Go back in time to one of your best performances. It could be at work or in sports. The key here is to recall a clear and vivid memory evoking sensory rich thoughts images, actions and emotions.
- Step 2            Probably many experiences come to mind but select one which is of specific significance and relevant. I want you to now relive that experience as fully possible in 3-D, living color, stereophonic sound. Play particular attention to the sights that you see there, the sounds that you hear there, and the situation and circumstances of that peak experience.
- Step 3            Answer these questions:
- Where are you?
- Who are you with?
- What time of day is it, when, what year?
- When is it?
- What are you doing?
- How does it feel?
- How's your concentration level?
- How's your relaxation level? Are you tense or relaxed.
- Confidence?
- Step 4            Once you're finished reliving a "personal best" bring those "winning feelings" and "winning ways" into the present.
- Step 5            Count from 1 to 5 and at 5 you'll be wide awake and fully alert.
- Step 6            Write down all the thoughts and feelings that come to mind about this experience. Take a few moments to make sure you have all the details and then we will discuss that experience.

Step 7

Now do the same exercise following steps 1-6 but this time instead of focusing on a "peak performance" we are going to select a "weak performance." It may be a similar situation or an entirely different set of circumstances. But this time, instead of reviewing one of your "highlight films" we will be reviewing one of your "low light films" - one that was full of mistakes, errors, embarrassment.

Step 8

Compare and discuss the weak and peak performances.

Answer these questions:

What was the difference between your weak and peak performances?

How much was physical?

How much was mental?

What was the difference between your confidence levels? Thoughts, feelings, images, actions?

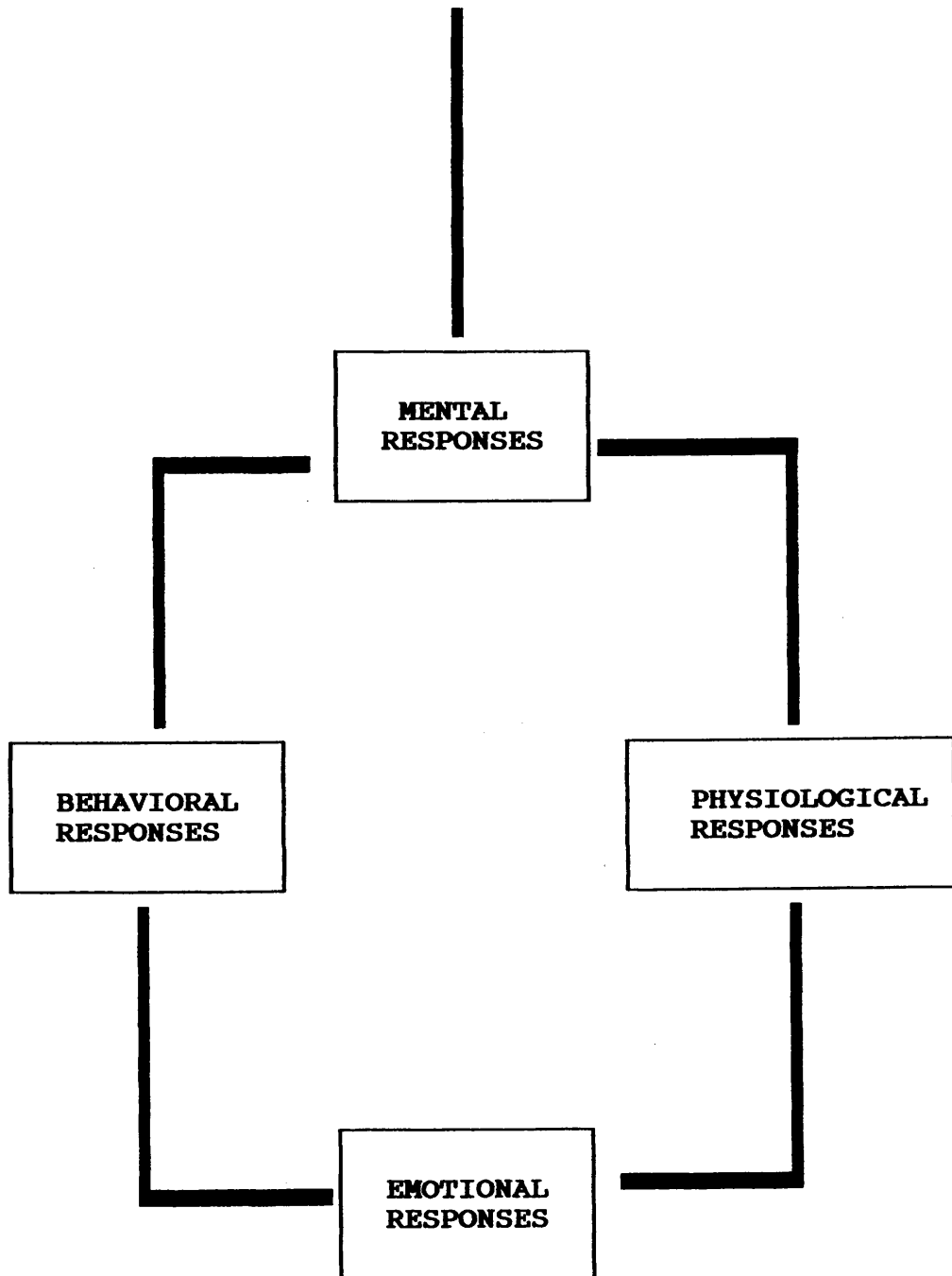
Your relaxation levels?

And your attention levels?

What per cent was physical and what was mental?

**THE SUCCESS-STRESS SPIRAL**

**PERFORMANCE RESULTS**  
**OUTCOMES**





## **THE INSIDE MOVES - MOVING FROM WEAK TO PEAK PERFORMANCE**

In addition to studying the behaviors and attitudes of "peak performers", I have also spent a great deal of time looking into what gets in the way of people, who in spite of ability and potential, seem to break down rather than break through when the pressure is on.

Scott Hamilton, the Mens Figure Skating Olympic Gold Medal Winner, commented after finally winning the medal that for years had eluded him, "Under pressure people will perform 30% better or 30% worse." In athletic performance, that 60% is actually the difference between winning and losing. With firefighters, it is the difference between life and death.

So what gets in the way? What are the obstacles and barriers that keep people from reaching their peak? The exercise on the next page will help you get the answer to this question. The Inside Moves is really the learning process of moving from an undesired state of performance to a desired one. Reaching a higher level of mental experience, awareness, and consciousness that results in specific states of readiness and control in performance situations.

## **BUILDING MENTAL MUSCLE - DEVELOPING THE INSIDE MOVES**

<b><u>GROWTH</u></b>	<b>CLOSED TO OPEN</b>
<b>GOALS</b>	<b>PERFECTION TO PROGRESS</b>
<b>GREMLINS</b>	<b>RESISTING TO RELEASING</b>

Learning to move from closed, complacent, and resistant to open challenged and committed. Receptive to growth and change.

<b><u>ATTENTION</u></b>	<b>SCATTERED TO FOCUSED</b>
<b>AROUSAL</b>	<b>RACING TO PACING</b>
<b>ATTITUDE</b>	<b>CAN'T TO CAN DO</b>

Learning to move from scattered, distracted, and unfocused to centered, concentrated, and focused in the present on the task at hand.

**MOTIVATION**                      DISTRACTED TO DIRECTED  
**MISSION**                              PUSHED TO PULLED  
**MINDSET**                              UNDISCIPLINED TO DISCIPLINED

Learning to move from unclear, unrealistic, uncontrollable outcome goals to realistic performance goals. Being motivated by a mission and pulled by a vision.

**ENERGY**                              DRAINERS TO GAINERS  
**EVALUATION**                          THREATS TO CHALLENGES  
**EMOTIONS**                              ANXIOUS TO EXCITED

Learning to move from tense, unproductive racing to relaxed, productive pacing of energy and emotions.

**THOUGHTS**                          DESTRUCTIVE TO CONSTRUCTIVE  
**THINKING**                              IRRATIONAL TO LOGICAL

Learning to move from negative, critical, and discouraging to positive, coaching, and encouraging thoughts and self-talk.

**IMAGES**                              FAILURES TO SUCCESSES  
**IMAGINATION**                          LIMITED TO UNLIMITED

Learning to move from unclear, destructive images of failures to clear, constructive images of success.

**PERFORMANCE**                      FIGHTING TO FLOWING  
**PERSPECTIVE**                          IDEALISTIC TO REALISTIC

Learning to move from weak, forced, and dreaded to peak, flowing, and enjoyed performances.

**SELF**                                  CRITIC TO COACH  
**STRESS**                                  VICTIM TO VICTOR

Learning to move from a low, rejecting and limiting self-concept to high, accepting, and unlimited self-confidence.

## THE MASTER SKILLS FOR IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

The Master Skills taught in the M.A.P. are clinically proven and field tested techniques for enhancing performance and decreasing stress.

### MASTER SKILL 1 - GOAL SETTING

Goal setting is a proven motivational tool for increasing confidence and sustaining effort over time. By learning how to set challenging, but realistic process goals, firefighters can measure their growth and improvement over time and let go of unrealistic expectations and uncontrollable outcomes.

### MASTER SKILL 2 - CENTERING

The ability to maintain proper focus and eliminate unwanted distractions is crucial to firefighters who often work in hectic and hostile environments. Controlling the external environment as well as internal arousal levels is essential to avoiding "the shades." Breathing patterns are taught that enable the fire fighter to control both arousal and attention levels.

### MASTER SKILL 3 - MENTAL DISCIPLINE

The ability to stay focused, maintain intensity, and sustain a high commitment level throughout one's career requires Mental Discipline. This skill teaches you how to increase your motivation, follow your vision, and develop a mindset for success through dedication, determination, and discipline.

### MASTER SKILL 4 - DYNAMIC RELAXATION

The ability to stay intense without getting "over tense" requires that firefighters have the ability to monitor their stress levels and release any unwanted or unproductive tension through deep and dynamic relaxation techniques. Firefighters will learn both muscle and mind techniques for controlling both the acute and chronic stress which is inherent in their jobs.

### MASTER SKILL 5 - SELF INSTRUCTION TRAINING (S.I.T.)

This technique teaches firefighters how to talk to themselves in a language their brain will understand and their bodies can translate into action.

**MASTER SKILL 6 - SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EDUCATION (S.E.E.)**

This technique teaches firefighters how to use their imagination and sensory experience to mentally practice and prepare for upcoming performances. It is particularly effective in increasing confidence for physically demanding activities.

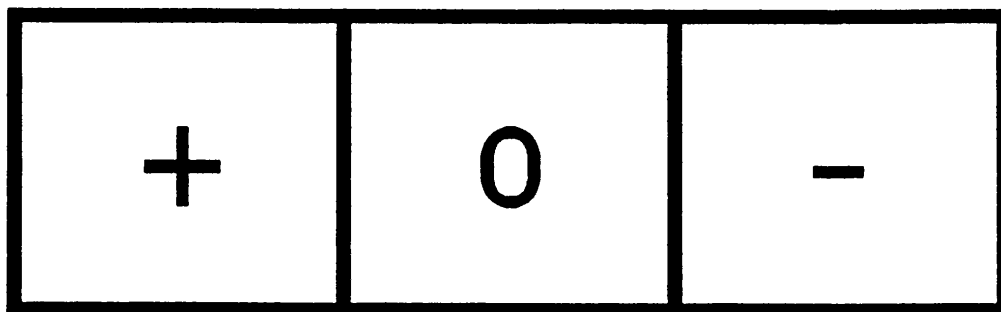
**MASTER SKILL 7 - SITUATION EVALUATION TRAINING (S.E.T.)**

This technique helps to eliminate the stress of unexpected, unknown, or uncertain contingencies facing firefighters. By mentally reviewing all possibilities and mentally rehearsing appropriate responses, firefighters learn how to turn the "Oh Shits" into "Oh Sures" - "I can handle this."

**MASTER SKILL 8 - POSITIVE AFFIRMATION TRAINING (P.A.T.)**

Patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving have been learned over time through practice and repetition. P.A.T. teaches the firefighter how to reinforce desired behavior and extinguish unwanted behavior. It is a way of programming your mind and body with positive statements and suggestions to increase success and minimize stress.

## THE MENTAL TRAINING MODEL



**POSITIVE**

**NEUTRAL**

**NEGATIVE**

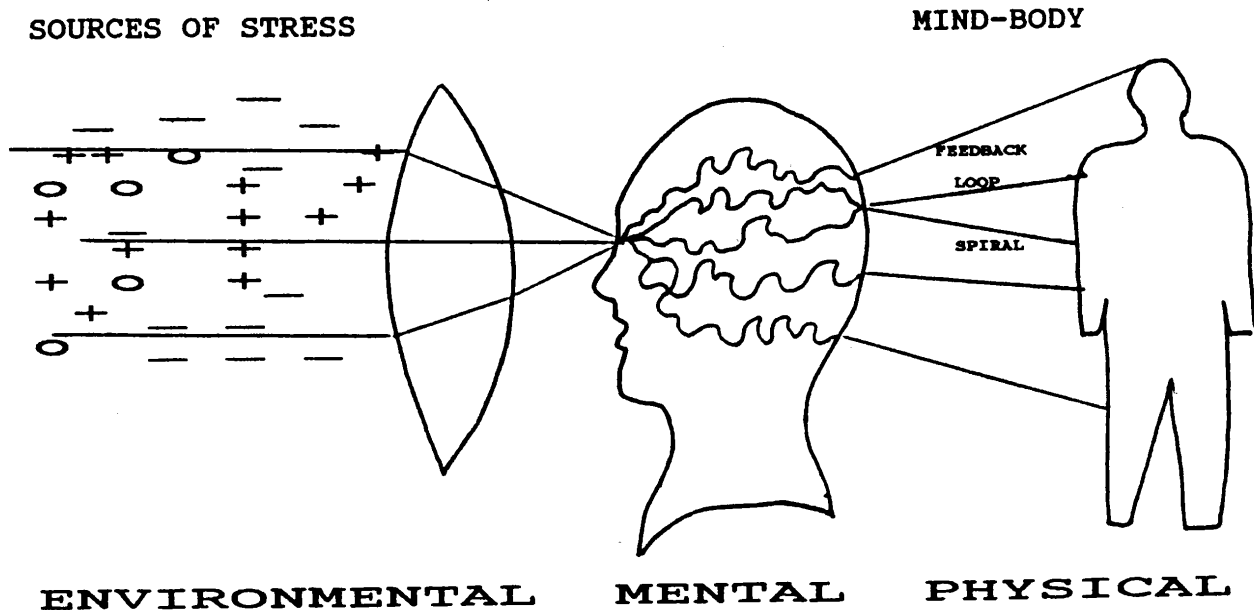
Successful images

No Picture

Unsuccessful Images

We all have positive successful thoughts, images, and memories as well as negative stressful thoughts, images, and memories. As rookies or booters we need to continuously develop more success circuits and also eliminate or neutralize our stress circuits.

## THE MENTAL TRAINING TRIAD



## SUMMARY

The M.A.P. is full of many more concepts, skills, and exercises. The GAMETIPS and Master Skills discussed in the overview are the basics to put you on the path to Peak Performance and Personal Excellence. There is no magic or quick cures in this training. Just as with physical training, the benefits come from doing, not the thinking. The more you practice, the better you get.

In fire fighting, in sports, and in life, we are constantly dealing with barriers and threats that inhibit our personal effectiveness. Recognizing the difference between real and perceived threats is one step to removing barriers to performance. Equally important is developing an understanding of the mind-body connection and its impact on both physical performance and mental clarity. Training and practice are at the heart of the athletic experience, and so it is with the mental aspects of fire fighting.

Which reminds me of the story of the man who wanted to become great...

"There was a young man who wanted to know everything there was to know about mathematics. So he studied and studied and became a great mathematician. Then he wanted to become a great historian, so he studied everything there was ever written on history and became a great historian. Finally, he wanted to become a great swimmer. So he read everything there was to know about swimming and he drowned."

Welcome to the M.A.P. Dive in and flow like H<sub>2</sub>O!

**OVERVIEW EXERCISE:**

**YOUR MAP TO SUCCESS**

After the slide show or overview presentation write out from memory the **CONTROL KEYS**. Then the **SUCCESS C's**, the **MASTER SKILLS**, and finally the **INSIDE MOVES**. Once you have done the best you can on this exercise go to the back of the workbook and fill in or correct the areas you were unable to complete. Once you have done this exercise you have drawn a **MAP TO SUCCESS**. But remember, a **MAP** is just a guide to point you in the right direction. This manual will help you create your own map to cover the territory that you will be traveling. It will serve as a guide for you to increase your success both on and off the job.

<u>CONTROL KEYS</u>	<u>SUCCESS C's</u>	<u>MASTER SKILLS</u>	<u>INSIDE MOVES</u>
G _____	C _____	1 _____	_____ TO _____
A _____	C _____	2 _____	_____ TO _____
M _____	C _____	3 _____	_____ TO _____
E _____	C _____	4 _____	_____ TO _____
T _____	C _____	5 _____	_____ TO _____
I _____	C _____	6 _____	_____ TO _____
P _____	C _____	7 _____	_____ TO _____
S _____	C _____	8 _____	_____ TO _____

**KEY: GROWTH**



**WHAT YOU RESIST PERSIST**

**GROWTH**

**GOALS**

**GREMLINS**



## GROWTH

The ability to grow and learn are essentials to being a successful firefighter. Rapid change in fire services and emergency medical work requires both flexibility and adaptability. Research studies on psychological hardiness demonstrate that certain people actually thrive rather than just "survive" during periods of rapid growth or continuous change. The five characteristics describing these people are called the five "C's". These people are:

- 1) COMMITTED to their profession
- 2) They look at change as a CHALLENGE to be embraced rather than a threat to be resisted.
- 3) They focus on what they can CONTROL and let go of things out of their control.
- 4) They have CONFIDENCE in their ability to adapt and succeed.
- 5) They stay CONNECTED to family and friends for support and strength.

## THE 5 L'S

Harvard professor, Bernie Grieff came up with similar findings which he called the five "L's" for successful living. Successful people have the capacity to 1) love 2) labor 3) learn 4) laugh 5) leave. The first two, according to Freud, are the essence of the human experience. We all want to love and be loved and to labor, be useful, and productive. The last L - leave, doesn't mean quitting your job but rather taking some R & R to relax and recharge the batteries.

## "KAIZEN" - PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION

Over the past few years there has been an enormous interest in what has made the Japanese so successful. The result of what we have learned is that the Japanese do not differ so much from us by having a superior aptitude or ability, but rather in their attitudes toward learning. The Japanese view learning as a life long process. They recognize the importance of "learning how to learn". Another fundamental concept in Japanese philosophy is something called "Kaizen". Loosely translated "Kaizen" means constant improvement and daily growth. Their goal is progress, not perfection.

## CHALLENGE IS A GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

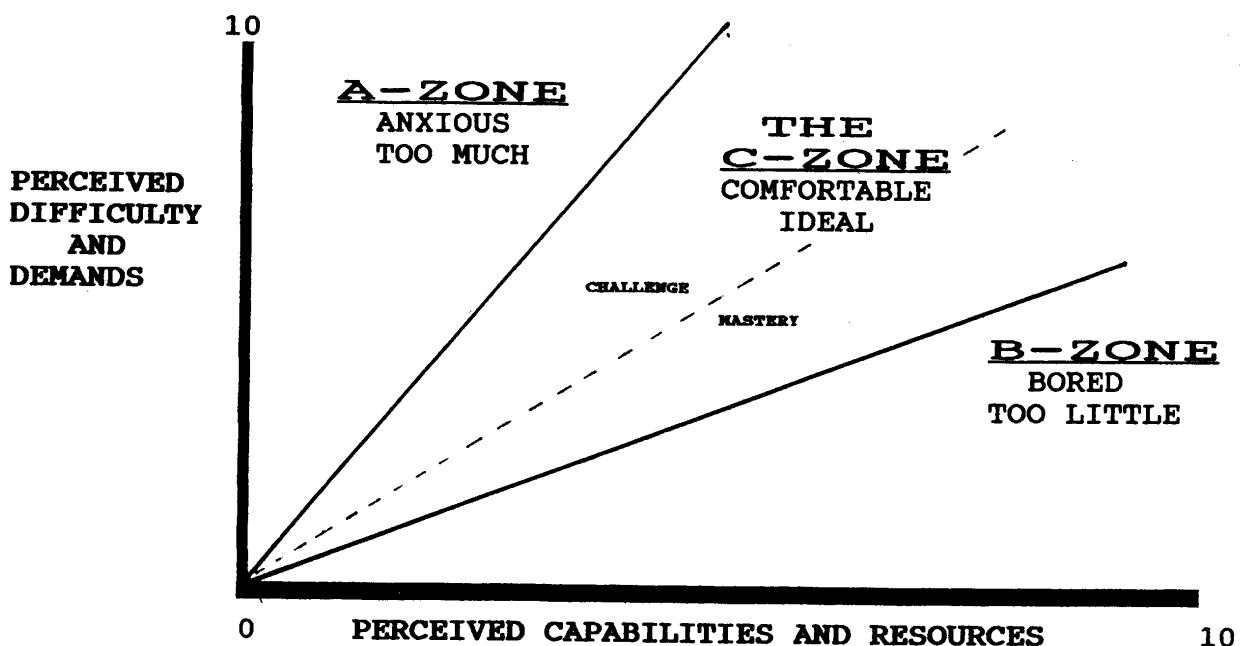
In America we are preoccupied with the outcomes of winning and losing while in Japan they focus on the process of getting better and growing. Ironically the most successful basketball coach in college history, John Wooden of UCLA, never used the words "winning" or "losing." He described success as doing the best you can at that particular time and place.

High performers look at setbacks as a growth opportunity - a challenge to rise up to rather than a problem to run away from. They have the maturity to postpone short term gratification for long term satisfaction. They have the ability to focus on solutions rather than problems. They attempt to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way. They accept responsibility and accountability. They don't make excuses and blame others. They make bold choices and accept the consequences of their actions. They realize that while they might not be able to change events, they are able to change how they view, think, and, consequently, how they feel about those events.

In the words of O.J. Simpson, "The day you take complete responsibility for yourself and actions, is the day you stop making excuses and blaming others. That is the day you start climbing the mountain to the top."

And the way to get there is to keep your eyes focused on the path to progress rather than staring at the peak and stumbling off the path.

### THE PERFORMANCE ZONE CHALLENGE - MASTERY SHUTTLE



**GROWTH EXERCISE:      A.C.T. BACKWARDS**

This exercise helps turn your **VISION INTO ACTIONS** to accomplish your desired outcomes. By starting at the end visualizing exactly what, where, when, and how you will be in your ideal state or accomplishment, you then work your way backwards and begin to develop specific action plans to get you there.

By creating a compelling vision of your desired state, you captivate your emotions and stir the spirit. This clear, rich vision will provide emotional fuel and focus for achieving your ultimate goal of being the best you can be. Remember the richer you can imagine this desired state, the more power and persistence it will give you as you pursue it.

The ACT formula stands for the following:

- (1) **ACCEPT** your present state
  - o Clearly define where you are today
  - o Do a strength-weakness analysis before you write this down
  
- (2) **CREATE** your desired state
  - o Visualize where you want to be in the future

Close your eyes and see yourself as clearly and vividly as possible in your desired state. See yourself exactly the way you want to be. Feel the feelings of being that way, notice where you are, who you are with, and what you are doing. Write down what this desired state would look like. Write it so that a third party observer would know exactly what it was like.....What they would see if it were accomplished.
  
- (3) **TAKE** Action Steps to get you there.
  - o Remind yourself that success is a journey of one step at a time. And the longest journey begins with the first step.

We will discuss goal setting later in this chapter, but for now write out what you need to be doing to accomplish your vision. Break it down into bite size steps. Remember, the way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time.

## GOALS

Goal setting is a fundamental skill for success. Goals allow you to focus and sustain your energy over long periods of time. Well defined and sensory rich goals are motivational because they allow you to measure your success and progress over time. Goals also organize your thoughts and actions and give you a sense of direction and purpose. They help you to persist in spite of minor setbacks and obstacles. Goals can serve as a beacon of light in dark times or a road map when all seems lost.

Goal setting is a way of bringing the future into the present so you can take action now. People often worry about the future. This is described as anxiety without action. Goal setting allows you to take action by focusing that anxious energy in the direction you want to. It allows you to create your own future by helping you to create your own road map to guide you in life's journey.

- o Goals increase both motivation and performance.
- o Goals help clarify expectations and provide motivational feedback on progress and growth.
- o Goals relieve the boredom of training by making it more challenging.
- o Goals increase pride and self-satisfaction from seeing yourself growing and getting better.

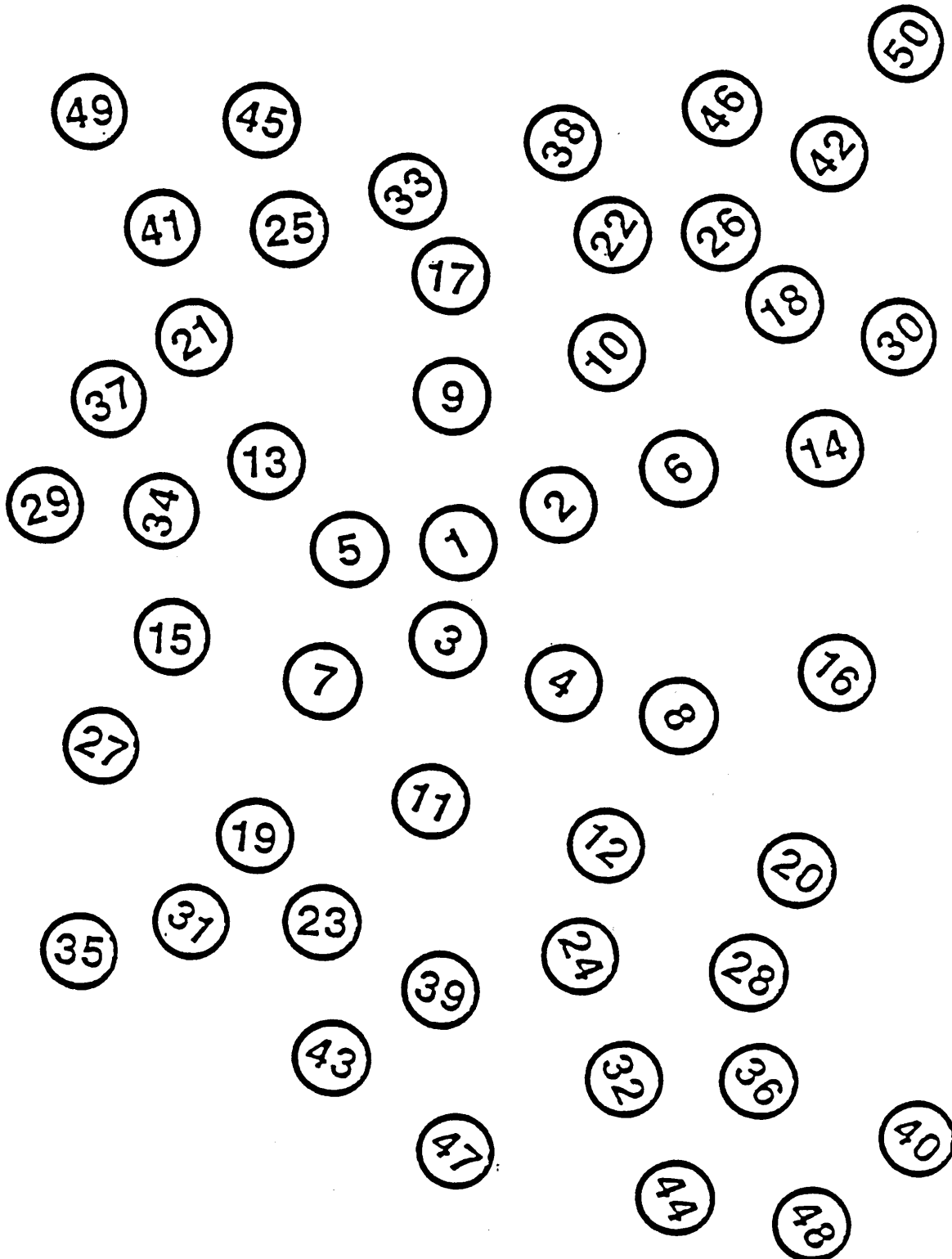
The importance of goal setting cannot be overstated. That is the reason that goal setting is the first skill to be learned in the MAP for Firefighters. While all of us may have dreams, goal setting is a way of putting those dreams into action and making them become a reality.

Some people have subjective goals, like being a "winner" or being happy. What we are interested in here, however, are objective goals like studying three hours each night or completing a drill in the required time. Most people think they know how to set goals, but there are some basic principles to follow:

- 1) Set performance goals rather than outcome goals. This focuses on improvement and things that you can control.
- 2) Set challenging but realistic goals.
- 3) Set specific not general goals, be measureable and observable.
- 4) Set daily as well as short term, intermediate and long term goals.
- 5) Follow the ABC's of goal setting, A - Achievable, B - Believable and C-Controllable.

## THE PATTERN GAME

Using only your finger (no pens, pencils, etc.) and starting with the number 1, follow the numbers in proper sequence as quickly as you can in the time allotted.



**EXERCISE:**

**THE PATTERN GAME**

- |  | Number |
|--|--------|
| 1. Do this exercise 1st with no time. Write out the number you were able to accomplish.  | _____  |
| 2. Do it a 2nd time with a time limit. Write out the number you were able to accomplish.   | _____  |
| 3. Do the 3rd with competition and write out the number you were able to accomplish.   | _____  |
| 4. Do a 4th time with expectations. Write out the number you expected to achieve and the number you were actually able to achieve.   | _____  |
| 5. Do the exercise with distractions.  | _____  |
| 6. Record the number you reached on each trial attempt. After you have done this exercise notice which areas you got better in and which areas you got worse in. Notice how well you were able to deal with distractions and time limits. Were you able to live up to your expectations? Did the pattern game get easier over time? Did you make progress and then have setbacks, or did you progress steadily throughout the whole exercise? Think over these answers and discuss them with a partner. What did you learn about yourself? |        |

## GREMLINS

Gremlins are invisible mental mischief makers that often get in the way of our own achievement and success. If everybody did great all the time there would be no need for mental training. Mental training is one way of looking at your gremlins and turning those self-defeating behaviors into self-enhancing behaviors.

Awareness leads to enlightenment and gremlins only operate in the dark. By learning about your gremlins you can turn a weakness into a strength and "stress spirals" into "success spirals."

Remember that "what you resist persists." And the best way to change behavior is not to fight old habits but to start new ones. The MAP will show you how to do that.....and the GAMETIPS will show you how to overcome any gremlins you might encounter along the path to reaching your full potential.

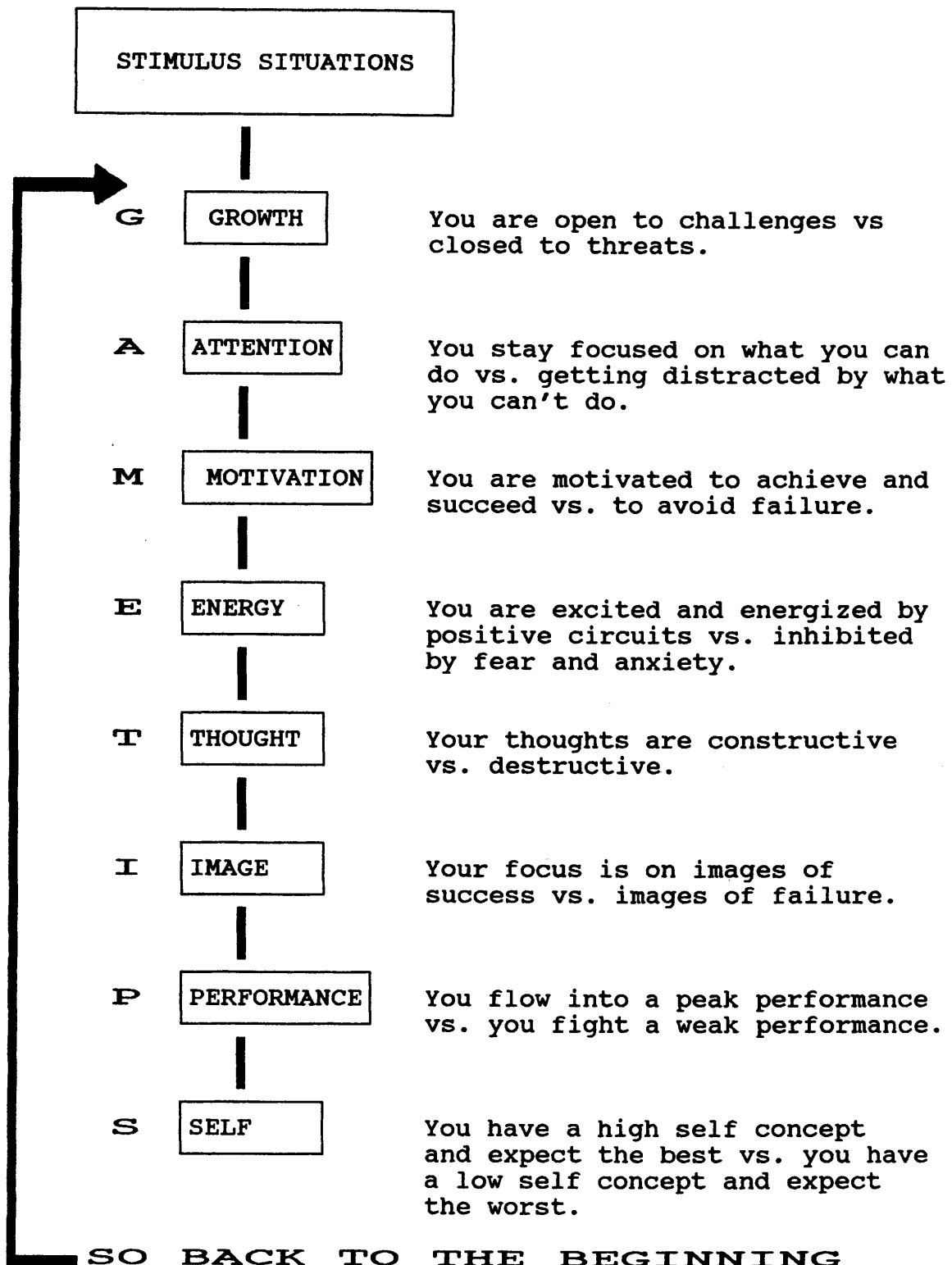
### GREMLIN EXERCISE: THE GREMLIN CHECKLIST

The following checklist may help you identify and become aware of any performance gremlins you may have. Go through the list and check those gremlins that apply to you. Once completed go through what you have checked and see if there are any common themes among your gremlins. Also see if you can't turn your gremlins (weakness) into a strength. Pick a gremlin and try to discuss it with a partner and develop an alternative behavior. Remember the way to get rid of an unwanted habit is not to suppress it, but to release it and get started on new wanted habits.

- G     \_\_\_ RESISTANT TO CHANGE/LEARNING
- \_\_\_ UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS
- \_\_\_ PERFECTION AND PROCRASTINATION
- A     \_\_\_ EASILY PANICKED - TIME URGENCY- TYPE A
- \_\_\_ POOR CONCENTRATION - EASILY DISTRACTED
- M     \_\_\_ LACK OF COMPETITIVE SPIRIT
- \_\_\_ EASILY BORED
- \_\_\_ "THE FATAL" DISTRACTIONS
- E     \_\_\_ TRYING TOO HARD
- \_\_\_ EASILY FRUSTRATED - UPSET
- T     \_\_\_ IRRATIONAL FEARS AND DISTORTED THINKING
- \_\_\_ PARALYSIS BY ANALYSIS
- I     \_\_\_ SELF DOUBTS
- \_\_\_ WORRIER
- P     \_\_\_ OVER-ANXIOUS
- \_\_\_ PERFORM POORLY UNDER PRESSURE
- S     \_\_\_ LIMITING SELF-IMAGE
- \_\_\_ LOW SELF-ESTEEM
- \_\_\_ SELF CONSCIOUS
- \_\_\_ OWN WORST ENEMY
- \_\_\_ OTHERS

# "HITTING FOR THE CYCLE"

## GAMETIPS TO INCREASE SUCCESS AND DECREASE STRESS







YOU GET WHAT YOU SET

**MASTER SKILL 1**

**GOAL SETTING**

## **GOAL SETTING EXERCISE**

Goal setting is a powerful, yet easy to learn mental skill that has proven to be effective in both enhancing performance and sustaining motivation.

Goal setting simply involves setting a goal, a behavior pattern you want to achieve, creating action steps to get you there, and setting a specific timeframe and method to achieve it.

There are several types of goals:

- Subjective goals (to be successful)
- Objective goals (making \$40,000)
- Performance-related or process goals (working 40 hours/week)
- Outcome goals (winning the lottery)

Goals can be positively focused (to stay healthy) or negatively focused (not to get sick). They can be personal or professional, practice or performance related. What you will learn in this section is the most effective way to set goals.

### **A SIX-STEP GOAL SETTING PROCESS**

#### **1. GOAL IDENTIFICATION**

Identify your goals and prioritize them. You may also indicate whether they are daily goals, short term goals (within one year), or long term goals (career).

#### **2. GOAL FORMULATION**

Using the goal setting checklist, write out your goals into a powerful and positive statement.

#### **3. GOAL PLANNING**

This process breaks the goal into action steps (See checklist). Using the stair step model, one step leads to another until you reach the top. Plan, prioritize, sequence, and target date each step. Plan for obstacles and seek support. Set up a schedule of daily activities with time, date, location, and duration. Set specific target dates with reasonable outcomes.

#### **4. GOAL PROGRAMMING**

Use daily affirmations and visualizations (Master Skill 8 - P.A.T.) to program yourself for success, stay motivated and focused on accomplishing your goal.

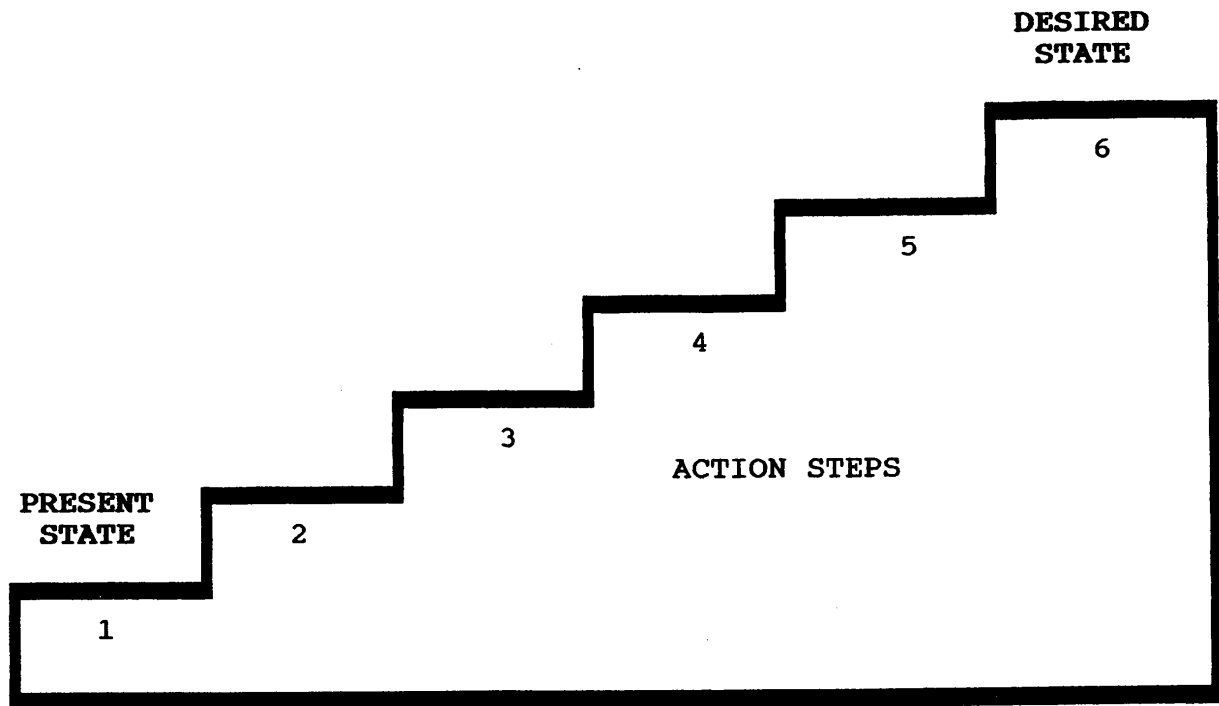
**5. GOAL MONITORING and REWARDING**

Monitor your progress and reward "small victories" and successful approximates. Reward efforts as well as results. How did you get better today? Remember, Progress, not perfection!

**6. GOAL MODIFICATION**

Goal setting is an ongoing process. Maybe your expectations were too great, or your timetable too short, or your priorities have shifted. If so, readjust or reset new goals.

**THE STAIR STEP MODEL OF GOAL SETTING**



Remember.....Success is a journey of one step at a time.....Progress, not perfection.

**GOAL SETTING SHEET**

Goal setting and action steps take you from your present state to your desire state.

GOAL (Checklist) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Target Date

ACTION STEPS  
(Sequence) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

OBSTACLES \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SUPPORTS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

REWARDS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## CHECKLIST FOR EVALUATING GOALS AND ACTION PLANS

Evaluate your plan by answering and checking Yes or No to the following questions.

- | <u>GOAL</u>             | <u>YES</u> | <u>NO</u> |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. Is it achievable?    |            |           |
| 2. Is it believable?    |            |           |
| 3. Is it controllable?  |            |           |
| 4. Is it desirable?     |            |           |
| 5. Is it specific?      |            |           |
| 6. Is it realistic?     |            |           |
| 7. Is it thorough?      |            |           |
| 8. Is it worth setting? |            |           |
| 9. Do I want to do it?  |            |           |

### ACTION STEPS

10. Are my action steps integrated with my regular routine?
11. Have target dates been set?
12. Do I know how I will track?
13. Do I know how I will measure progress?

### OBSTACLES

12. Provisions made for overcoming?
13. Provisions made for obtaining help?

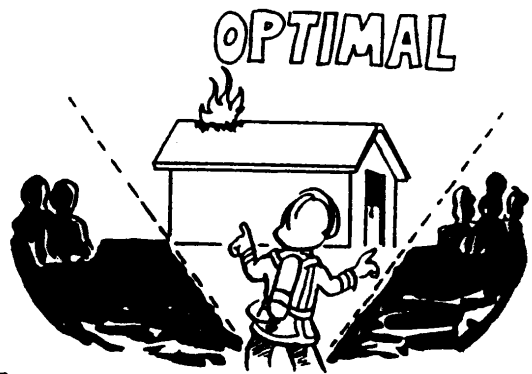
### SUPPORT

16. Do I have commitment from others on whom I'm dependent for success of the plan?

### REWARDS

17. Have I established appropriate rewards for achievement of the goal?
18. Given the degree of difficulty of the goal, what is the probability that, with hard work, I can achieve it?

# KEY: ATTENTION



THERE IS NO PRESSURE IN THE PRESENT

ATTENTION  
AROUSAL  
ATTITUDE

## ATTENTION

Attention is the ability to focus or tune in certain stimulus to the exclusion of others.

ATTENTION can be described as broad or narrow, external or internal, present, past, or future oriented (See illustration). The ability to select and shift attention is essential to peak performance. The ability to block out distracting stimulus and sharply focus on a specific tasks is **CONCENTRATION**. To perform certain tasks under pressure, we must learn how to avoid distractions and increase and sustain concentration. But at the same time we must learn how to break that concentration so that we can attend to other task relevant objects.

"Candle moth" is an example of how we can be too narrow in our attention and not be able to see other relevant stimulus (see illustration). This is the same phenomena that we experienced as a child when we rode our bicycle right over the nail we became fixated on. Our eyes are the guidance systems for our bodies and proper eye control is an important concentration technique to be learned and mastered.

### "SHADES COMING DOWN"

A phenomena that firefighters experience is **SHADES COMING DOWN**. This happens because attention is affected by our arousal levels. (See the Performance-Arousal Curve) When we become over aroused, our ability to select and shift our attention diminishes. We start to attend to internal and physically uncomfortable sensations and intruding thoughts and images. We lose our external task oriented focus. Because you cannot attend to two things at once, we become internally self-conscious rather than externally task conscious. And our performance deteriorates. At its extreme, panic can set in as we become anxious about being anxious.

You can demonstrate this phenomena by imagining yourself standing on a 3' wide beam on the floor. While on the floor, you would have no problem keeping your balance. But if you raise the beam ten stories above the ground, all of a sudden you would start to wobble. Your attention suddenly goes from staying on the beam to not falling off. The simple process of walking a 3' beam becomes a terrifying experience. The pressure of those 10 stories leads to us holding our breath and becoming self conscious rather than task conscious. Skills that normally flow naturally become forced. We start fighting ourselves. Sensations become focused internally rather than staying focused on the external task of walking the beam. Panic increases and performance decreases.

## "NO PRESSURE IN THE PRESENT"

At the end of this section you will learn breath patterns and concentration techniques to help you stay centered and focused on the task at hand. The exercises in this section seem very simple, but they are not easy. They require practice, patience, and the willingness to learn.

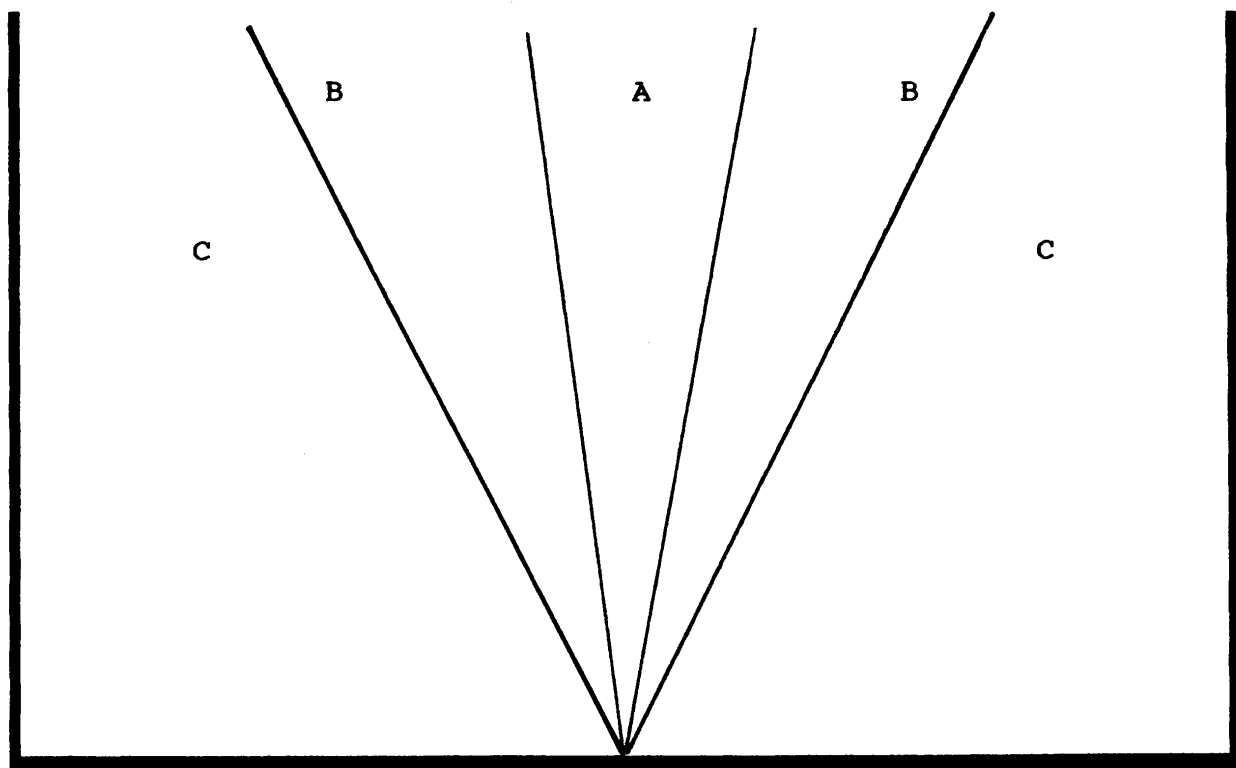
A favorite quote to help firefighters stay centered and focused is, "There is no pressure in the present." What happens to us is that we get distracted by getting anxious about the future or angry about the past. We lose our present focus on the task at hand. While it is important to learn from the past and prepare for the future, when actually performing you must stay centered in the present and take one step at a time.

## THE ATTENTION-DISTRACTION MONITOR

IRRELEVANT  
DISTRACTIONS

TASK-RELEVANT  
CONCENTRATIONS

IRRELEVANT  
DISTRACTIONS



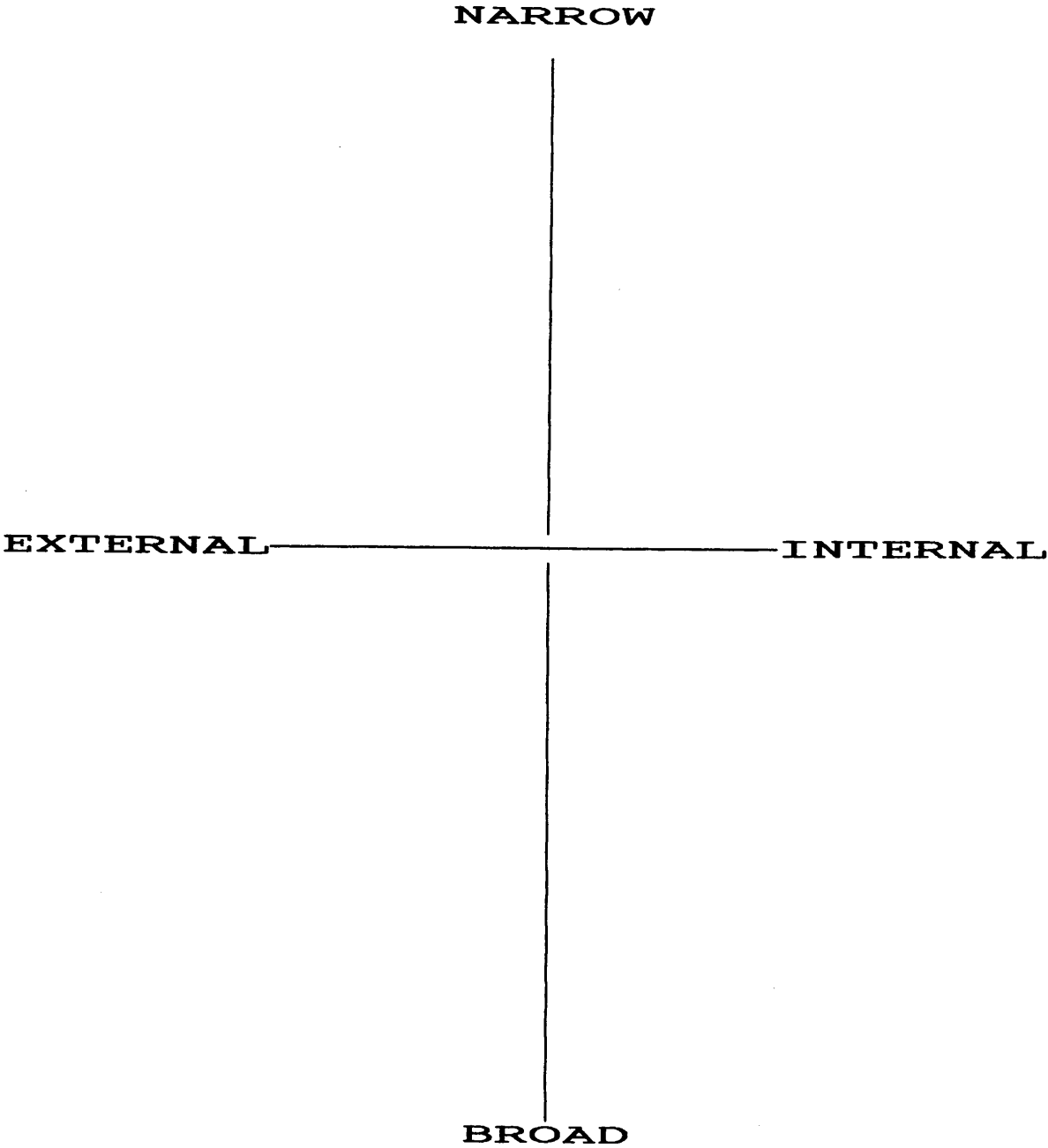
A. TOO NARROW

B. OPTIMUM

C. TOO BROAD



THE ATTENTION CROSS



**ATTENTION EXERCISE: THE ATTENTION SHUTTLE**

This exercise is designed to familiarize you with the internal and external dimensions of attention as well as the different senses we use to process information in our environment. It will teach you not only to select and shift your attention but also to widen/broaden or narrow in like a zoom lens on a camera.

- Step 1. Find a spot or object in front of you and above you. Fix your eyes on it for one minute. If you get distracted, notice how you got distracted and then return to the spot.
- Step 2. The next step is to close your eyes and turn your attention inward. First, broadly scan you body starting at the tips of your toes and working up to the top of your head. Notice any signs of tension or relaxation. Second, narrow your focus on your breathing, saying silently "1" with every exhale. (See One Relaxation Technique)
- Step 3. Next: Open you eyes again and say silently to yourself or out loud if alone.

3 Things I see are: (Visual)

I see \_\_\_\_\_  
I see \_\_\_\_\_  
I see \_\_\_\_\_

3 Things I hear are: (Auditory)

I hear \_\_\_\_\_  
I hear \_\_\_\_\_  
I hear \_\_\_\_\_

3 Things I feel are (kinesthetic)

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_

- Step 4. You can continue to do this exercise with your eyes open or closed alternating thoughts, feelings, sounds, and sights. Advanced students can also include smells (olfactory) and tastes (gustatory).

## AROUSAL

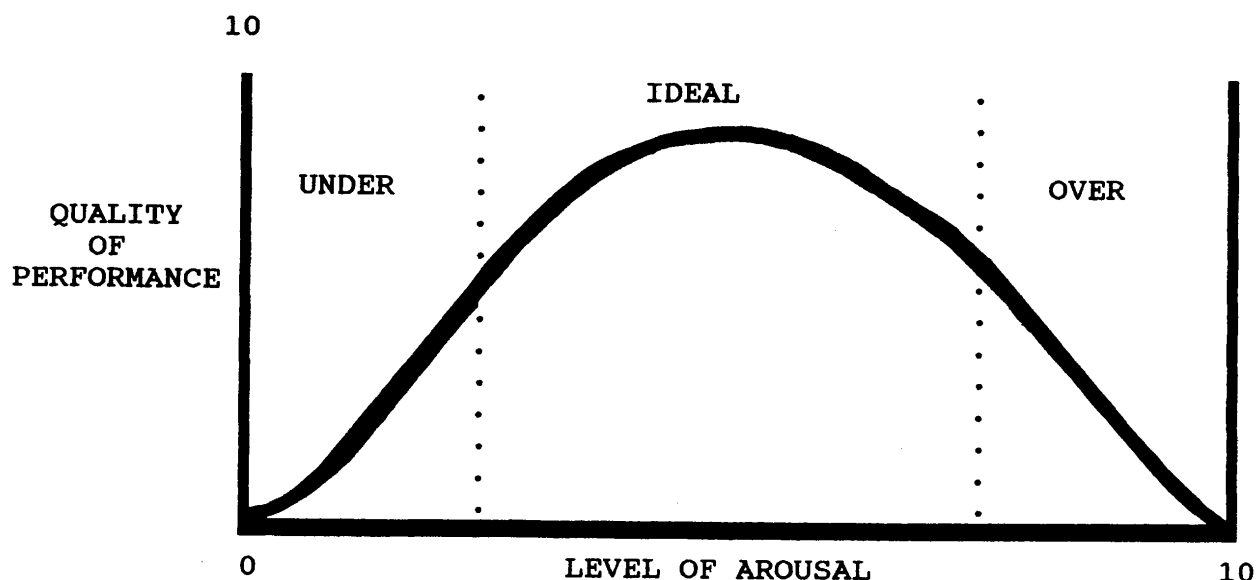
One of the most enduring concepts in sports and performance psychology is the Performance-Arousal Curve. (See illustration)

The Performance-Arousal Curve looks at the level of arousal on a horizontal axis versus the quality of performance on the vertical axis. It has been called the "inverted U" hypotheses because what it shows is that as our arousal increases, our performance increases until it reaches a certain point called the peak. But then as arousal continues to increase, our performance begins to decrease.

Another way of looking at the Performance-Arousal Curve is to say that without enough arousal we are unproductive. With enough arousal, we are in the "ideal performance state" and optimally productive. If we are over-aroused we become counter productive. Arousal can also be described as activation, anxiety, stress, distress, or energy. We will talk about these in a later section. But for now, the important concept to know is what level of arousal is needed for the task at hand. It is also important to know how to get back into that ideal performance state when you are over-aroused, as well as to know when you are under-aroused so you can psych yourself up to get more productive. The Breathing Patterns at the end of this section are a powerful tool for controlling your arousal level by controlling your breath rate.

Over time, over-arousal leads to panic and ultimately to burn out. It can also lead to apathy and rust out. Arousal levels not only affect performance, but also confidence, motivation, attention, and awareness. Arousal is also influenced by the task at hand, the time you will be doing it, and the performer's temperament.

### THE PERFORMANCE-AROUSAL CURVE



**AROUSAL EXERCISE: RATE YOUR AROUSAL-IDENTIFYING AROUSAL STATES**

Think of a time and task where everything seemed rushed and panicky and your performance suffered. Take a few minutes to relive that experience and then answer the following questions.

- o How would you rate your arousal level?
- o How did that affect your performance?
- o What were your physiological symptoms?
- o Were your thoughts racing?
- o Describe your ability to concentrate.
- o Were you able to think clearly?
- o How was your breathing?
- o What were your behaviors?
- o How did you feel?

Now think of a time when you were flowing and everything seemed effortless and egoless and your performance was one of the best. Take a few minutes to relive that experience and answer the above questions.

- o How would you rate your arousal level?
- o How did that affect your performance?
- o What were your physiological symptoms?
- o Were your thoughts racing?
- o Describe your ability to concentrate.
- o Were you able to think clearly?
- o How was your breathing?
- o What were your behaviors?
- o How did you feel?

Now think of a time when you were flat and too lax and your performance suffered. Take a few minutes to relive that experience and again answer the above questions.

## ATTITUDE

Attitude has been described as your mental focus. What you attend to. Simply put, if you had ten people describe a 1/2 filled glass of water, half might say it was 1/2 full and have an optimistic attitude. The other half might have a pessimistic attitude and say it was 1/2 empty. Some might say neither, but that is another story. There is an old saying that "It is not your aptitude but your attitude that will determine your altitude."

Research has shown that people with an optimistic, positive attitude tend to be more successful and healthy because they focus on what they can do. They take action and control over events. A real or imagined sense of control leads to less stress by giving one the perception of being in control of events and not at the mercy of fate. Conversely, people with a negative, pessimistic attitude tend to focus on what they can't do, feel more helpless and out of control, and are less likely to take action. They are more likely to blame others, fate, and circumstances. This perceived lack of control and inability to change their destiny often feeds on itself. It leads to self-defeating behaviors and negative attitudes toward people, places and things.

There are three components to an attitude. One component is how you think about people, places and things.....your belief system. Another component is how you feel about that.....your emotions. The third component is how you behave towards people, places and things. Attitudes are learned over time and consequently can be changed over time. Attitudes can also be adjusted by looking at thoughts and feelings which will be discussed later in this book.

From time to time we all need an attitude check and sometimes an attitude adjustment. In Bob Kriegel's book, The C-Zone, the author uses a six step approach to changing attitudes by changing "sabotage thinking" to "success thinking." The first step involves changing can'ts to can do's and focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses. The second focuses on changing attitudes from don'ts to do's..... Going from destructive to constructive, focusing on what you can control rather than what you can't. The third step involves going from got to's to want to's, changing your attitude from being forced to into desiring to. The fourth takes what if's to if then's, or turning your worries to an anticipation. The fifth changes oh no's to oh yesses, turning past failures to past, present, future successes. The sixth turns I'll try into I'll do, removing doubts and gaining confidence.

The following Attitude Exercise lists attitudes of fire services people towards key areas. Spend some time reflecting on some of your own attitudes, and see which ones you might want to work on changing over time.

**ATTITUDE EXERCISE: THE ABC'S OF ATTITUDE**

Your attitude is your mental focus made up of 3 elements: your Affect (emotions and feelings) your Behavior (how you act) and your Cognitions (thoughts and images).

Listed below are some specific objects, situations, and circumstances. Next to each topic write out the ABC's of your attitude and how that was developed.

My attitude towards work is:

A \_\_\_\_\_  
How I feel?  
My emotions  
B \_\_\_\_\_  
How I act?  
My behaviors  
C \_\_\_\_\_  
What I think?  
My beliefs

My attitude towards being a firefighter is:

A \_\_\_\_\_  
How I feel?  
My emotions  
B \_\_\_\_\_  
How I act?  
My behaviors  
C \_\_\_\_\_  
What I think?  
My beliefs

My attitude towards citizens is:

A \_\_\_\_\_  
How I feel?  
My emotions  
B \_\_\_\_\_  
How I act?  
My behaviors  
C \_\_\_\_\_  
What I think?  
My beliefs

My attitude toward safety is:

A \_\_\_\_\_  
How I feel?  
My emotions  
B \_\_\_\_\_  
How I act?  
My behaviors  
C \_\_\_\_\_  
What I think?  
My beliefs

Other topics: pressure, helping, winning, losing, failure, success

Continue on with other topics you wish and continue to do this exercise.

**ATTITUDE EXERCISE: AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT  
(AGE REGRESSION)**

Our attitudes have been formed over time by our experiences, models, and messages received from significant people in our life. If there is an attitude you want to adjust, the first step is to become aware of where that attitude came from. The following exercise will help you do that. Exercises later on in this workbook will help you explore irrational beliefs, distorted thinking, and faulty learning which may have contributed to an unwanted or unproductive attitude.

**Age Regression:** Use your centering breath to get calm and comfortable and go back to a point in time to infancy, childhood, adolescence. Recall messages you got from parents, teachers, friends and others where the attitude that was formed you are now looking to adjust. What were they and how did they influence you then and now? Pay particular attention to the messages you got and the people who gave them to you. Also pay attention to the situations and circumstances around which this attitude was formed. Who were the significant people in your lives, how did they influence you, then and now? What were the messages and beliefs developed about this situation and how valid are they for you now?

Go back in time again to some vivid experiences you had growing up and recall how they influenced your decisions in life and your view of yourself and others. Know that sometimes attitudes are formed unconsciously. Once you are aware of when and how they were formed you are now able to change them if you desire to. We often grow up with childhood myths which have no logic in an adult world. Once you have completed this exercise write down some of the experiences and messages that you got in childhood that influenced your attitude.

Write down some of these experiences and learnings.

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>MESSAGES</u>	<u>EXPERIENCES</u>	<u>OLD ATTITUDES</u>	<u>NEW ATTITUDES</u>
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# PERFORMANCE FORMULA 1



ANXIETY IS EXCITEMENT WITHOUT BREATH

**MASTER SKILL 2**

**CENTERING**

**MIND-BODY**



## CENTERING EXERCISE: CENTERING BREATH

The following breath control exercises may seem simple, but they are not easy. The ability to stay centered in the present moment and control your breathing as you relax your body is a life long art. The Yogis actually count and measure their lifetime in the number of breaths. The poet Elizabeth Browning said "He who breathes deepest lives longest."

You will find that even a simple breath counting exercise can be demanding as your "busy mind" and overactive senses seek to distract you from the task at hand. This first exercise keeps you mentally and physically focused in the present moment. When done properly with full intention (purpose), and attention (focus), it will clear your mind and calm your body. Done properly, all your emotional upsets and distractions will slip away as you become centered on your breathing. This exercise will be used throughout this workbook. In many exercises, it will be referred to as "THE CENTERING BREATH." This breath is particularly important because it allows you to relax the left side of your brain (the analytical side) and open up the right side of your brain (the receptive and creative side).

Before you start this you may want to stretch and shake out any tension in your body.

1. Sit down and make sure your spine is straight. If you are lying down, allow your body to sink into the support letting go of unnecessary muscle tension. Keep your hands loosely on your lap or by your side.
2. Squeeze your whole body tight for 5-15 seconds. Then release. Feel the tension build up and then release and let go of all accumulated tension and stress. As you feel the tension slip away, you will feel a wave of relaxation come over you. Repeat if necessary.
3. Exhale completely through your mouth with an auditory sigh.
4. Now with your eyes open take in a long inhalation through your nose. Inhale deeply through your nose to a 7 count. Feel your stomach rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out.
5. Hold the breath to a 3 count and close your eyes.
5. Now with your eyes closed, exhale fully and completely to a 7 or 9 count. Pause, then open your eyes and repeat step 4.
6. Do this exercise until you can coordinate your breathing with your eyes opening and closing. Once you are able to do that, you can then keep your eyes closed and go into whatever exercise that you desire. You will be more fully alert and comfortable, physically as well as mentally.

## **CENTERING EXERCISE:    ENERGIING BREATH**

The Energizing Breath stimulates the nervous system and energizes the brain and physical body. It keeps you more alert, controlled, and focused. This breath replaces anxiety and distress with energy and activation. It can be used before a performance when you are tired and feeling sluggish. It will increase your arousal level to your ideal performance state.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair or on the floor. (Do not do this exercise standing up.)
2. Take your palms up on your legs, arms relaxed.
3. Exhale completely through your nose.
4. Inhale deeply through your nose. Hold.
5. Begin taking short pumping breaths in and out to the count of 50.
6. Inhale deeply and hold.
7. Exhale.
8. Inhale deeply and hold your breath for as long as you feel comfortable. (Optional: drop your head back, look up, stretch your throat and neck)
9. Exhale slowly and with control, bringing your chin towards your chest.
10. Repeat three sets of 50 breaths.

## CENTERING EXERCISE: CLEANSING BREATH

This breath pattern is of particular importance to firefighters. It is good for emptying the lungs of all stale air, pollution, and carbon dioxide. It stimulates the nervous system, develops nerve force, energy and stamina.

1. Sit erect on a floor or chair. Place your hands on your knees palms down. (Do not do this breath standing)
2. Exhale completely through your nose.
3. Inhale deeply through your nose.
4. Hold.
5. Exhale through your mouth forcefully in one great breath, emptying your lungs completely of air, making a slight "ha" sound.
6. Inhale deeply through your nose.
7. Repeat three times.

(Optional)

On the third breath, inhale completely, hold your breath and drop your head back. Hold as long as you are comfortable. Exhale, bring your head forward, chin to your chest, releasing all tension through the top of your head.

## CENTERING EXERCISE: THE LEG STAND EXERCISE

Concentration is the ability to focus on selected stimulus/cues (task relevant cues) to the exclusion of other stimulus(task irrelevant cues).

Visually, this is refined to being focused "ON TARGET", or unfocused "OFF TARGET".

Auditorally, it is being "tuned in" (signal) or "tuned out" (static).

Kinesthetically, it is the ability to be "external" or "internal" to attend to certain thoughts, objects, or feelings (sensations) to the exclusion of others (distractions).

The following exercises will help you assess your ability to concentrate. It will also demonstrate to you how and when you get distracted.

This is an excellent exercise to calm your upset. If you are balanced you will lose your upset. If you are upset you will lose your balance.

- Step 1 With your eyes open stare at an object in front and above you. Now lift one leg and see how long you can balance and remain focused. Eye control is essential to concentration because it allows you to focus on an object and to avoid unwanted stimulus and distractions (Candle Moth).
- Step 2 Now close your eyes and continue to balance yourself. Notice if/and what thoughts might distract you and put you off balance.
- Step 3 Now with your eyes closed do the One Relaxation Exercise or the Centering Breath.
- Step 4 Very advanced concentrators can do this while raising their hands above their heads while others try to distract them.
- Step 5 If you have 2 radios or TV's, stand between them and practice auditorially shifting your concentration from one to the other. Note: the volume should be equal on both sets.

This is a good exercise for people who are known to have "rabbit ears" or who have trouble reading or studying in a noisy room.

## CENTERING EXERCISE: THE CENTERING WALK

This exercise, like the centering breath, allows you to coordinate your mind and body into one unit. Done properly this exercise requires your full attention on the task at hand. It is an excellent way to get controlled and centered whenever you need to calm down your mind and focus your attention.

1. On the first five steps inhale. On the next 5 steps exhale.
2. With the next step, begin at one again and count up to six steps. As you march off six steps, exhale for six steps.
3. With the next step, begin at one again and count up to seven steps.

Baseball pitchers do this between innings finding it helpful in slowing themselves down. The concept of reciprocal inhibition states that if you can slow down your body, the mind will follow. This exercise does both.

Remember...

When you walk, walk  
and when you run, run  
By all means, don't wobble!

Zen poem

# KEY: MOTIVATION



YOU GET WHAT YOU SET

MOTIVATION  
MISSION  
MINDSET

## MOTIVATION

In the previous section, we talked about attention and concentration.....the ability to focus and the ability to avoid distractions. This chapter will talk about intention and motivation - the intensity and sense of purpose which you bring to your job and the task at hand. Motivation is the ability to stir to action. It is the energizing and controlling of purposeful behaviors toward specific goals. It is the key to attaining goals and performance excellence.

People tend to be motivated in one of two directions. They either tend to approach achievement and success or they tend to avoid failure or distress. As infants we are born to explore, acquire, achieve, and accomplish. As we are parented and socialized, we tend to do less and analyze more. Things that excited us, now distress us. While we may hate failure and get frustrated by it, fear of failure is a learned, rather than a natural response.

Truly motivated individuals have an internal engine which drives them toward their goals. They have a clear vision and mission which sustains them in difficult times enabling them to come back from difficult setbacks. The mark of a true champion is not what he does when he is winning, but how he handles the defeats and setbacks of life. Research has shown that the most effective achievers are internally motivated and pulled by their visions rather than externally motivated and pushed by other people, places and things. These people have a fire in their heart and a light in their eyes. Another word might be "spirit" which is the essential activating force in all human beings. It is the will to succeed. (See the 5 D's)

It is important to know why, what, and how you are motivated. You have already learned how to set goals and stay focused. The following motivation checklist will help you get in touch with your motivational forces and desires.

**MOTIVATION EXERCISE: MOTIVATION CHECKLIST**

Rank the 11A's of Motivation with 1 being the biggest motivator and 11 being the least.

\_\_\_ ACHIEVMENT - I am motivated by a desire to achieve.

\_\_\_ ANXIETY - I am motivated by a fear of failure.

\_\_\_ ACQUISITIONS - I am motivated by a desire to gain material possessions and property.

\_\_\_ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT - I am motivated by a desire for recognition, status, and attention.

\_\_\_ AUTONOMY - I am motivated to be totally independent and in control of my destiny.

\_\_\_ AVOIDANCE - I am motivated to avoid pain and punishment, guilt and embarrassment.

\_\_\_ AGGRESSION - I am motivated by a desire for power, control, and dominance over others.

\_\_\_ AFFILIATION - I am motivated by a desire to have friends and fit in.

\_\_\_ ADMIRATION - I am motivated by a desire to be admired and looked up to.

\_\_\_ AFFECTION - I am motivated by a desire to be loved.

\_\_\_ ACTIVITY - I am motivated to seek excitement and stimulation.



## MISSION

Besides having a clear vision and being motivated by goals, it is important to have a purpose, or mission in life. Human beings all need a meaning to life. By writing out your mission statement, you can begin to provide the emotional fuel and mental muscle to guide you in your profession, even through dark times and disturbing events. The vision we discussed in section one becomes the mental magnet to show you where you want to go. Goal setting gives you an action plan to follow to get there. Motivation gives you the reason to take that journey to success. Attention allows you to avoid the distractions that will knock you off that path.

## MINDSET

Besides having the motivation to succeed and a mission to guide you, the third thing to be discussed is a "mindset for excellence". Athletes often define a mindset for winning according to the following five D's:

- o A desire or drive to be successful.
- o A dedication and devotion to excellence.
- o A clear direction defined by worthy goals.
- o A determination to do whatever it takes to achieve that success.
- o The discipline to stay focused and avoid distraction. To delay short term gratification for long term satisfaction.

In fire services a mindset may be toward safety or success. Just like attitude, your mindset becomes an important mental filter to keep you focused on the task at hand and guide you through difficult times. You get what your mind sets. This is known as the Law of Attraction.

**MISSION EXERCISE: WRITE OUT YOUR MISSION STATEMENT**

Spend a few moments reflecting on your mission as a firefighter.

What is your purpose and philosophy?

What are your goals and objectives?

What words and thoughts come to mind?

In the space below, write out in a few sentences or paragraphs your own mission statement as a firefighter. Later on, you can also do this on personal level.

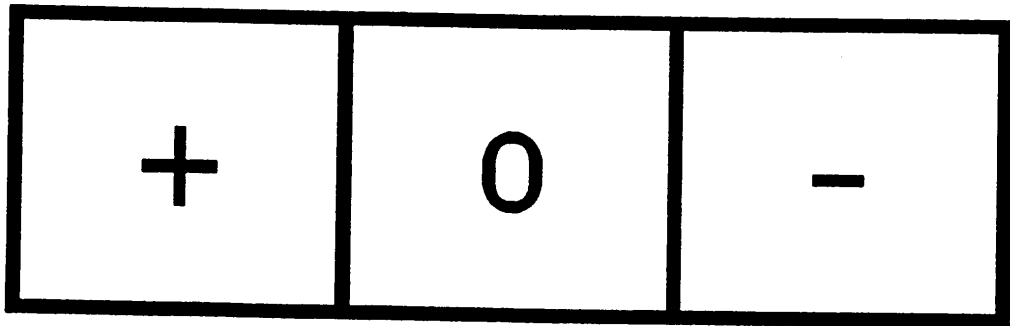


WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

**MASTER SKILL 3**

**MENTAL  
DISCIPLINE**

## THE MENTAL TRAINING MODEL



**POSITIVE**

**NEUTRAL**

**NEGATIVE**

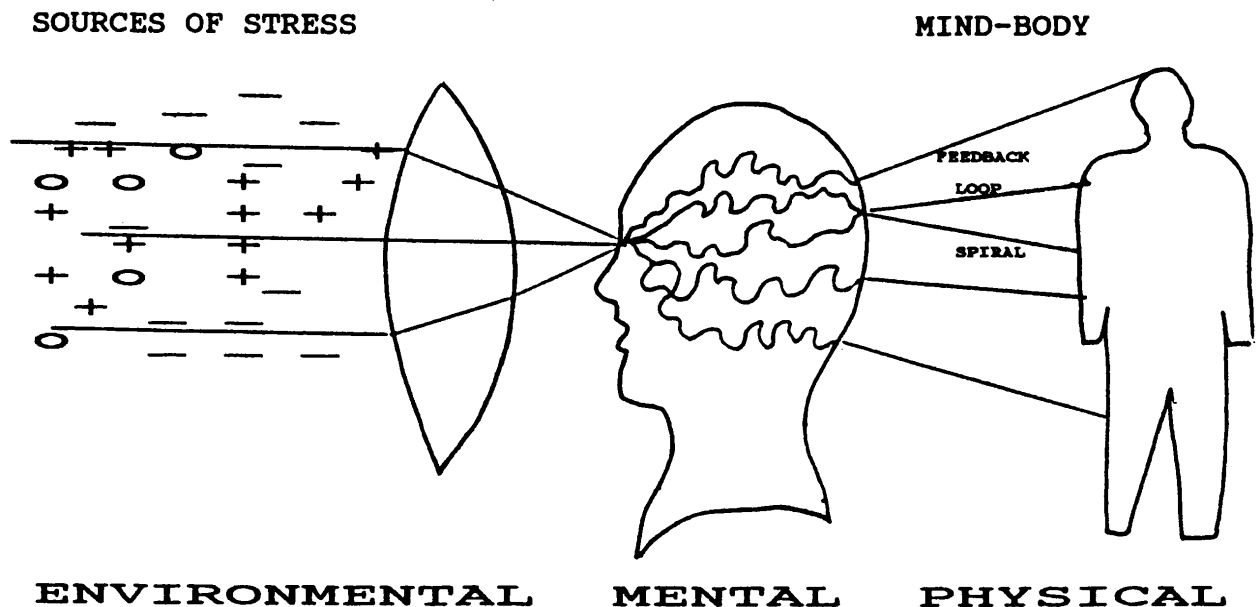
Successful images

No Picture

Unsuccessful Images

We all have positive successful thoughts, images, and memories as well as negative stressful thoughts, images, and memories. As rookies or booters we need to continuously develop more success circuits and also eliminate or neutralize our stress circuits.

## THE MENTAL TRAINING TRIAD



## MENTAL DISCIPLINE EXERCISE: THE BLACK BOX OR MENTAL LOCKER

This is a mind clearing exercise which allows you to compartmentalize your mental life and stay fully focused on the task at hand. It does not suppress thoughts but just "parks" them into a safe place until you need to use them. Firefighters have used it to "put away" critical incidents so they don't bring them home with them. And baseball players use the "Mental Locker" to put away all their troubles and personal problems so they don't bring them on the field with them.

This exercise helps you put aside past or future events which may be important, but which will detract from you being fully "present in the moment". To the extent that you are stuck in the past or anxious about the future, you are unable to concentrate on the task at hand. Remember, "there is no pressure (stress) in the present"..... just the right amount of energy to perform the task at hand.

- Step 1 Sit or lay down in a quiet place. Use a pad to write down all the things you need to do after the class. The best way to empty your mind is to write things down so you can let go of unwanted or tension producing thoughts.
- Step 2 Use your centering breath to relax your body and quiet your mind.
- Step 3 In your mind's eye, develop a clear rich image of a box or container where you can store all your thoughts and images.
- Step 4 As each unwanted or intruding thought or image arises circle them and put them in your "mental locker."
- Step 5 When you have put all irrelevant thoughts and images safely stored in the "box", close the lid and lock it if you desire. Put the key in your pocket knowing that you can come back and unlock the box at any time.
- Step 6 Say to yourself the following:  
  
"To the extent I bring unwanted thoughts and images to the present, I will be unable to fully attend to the task at hand. I have now stored these thoughts and images in a safe place. I will be able to retrieve them after this session if I so desire." I now let go of the past and the future and when I open my eyes I will be fully present, wide awake, fully alert, and totally focused in the present.
- Step 7 Don't forget to go back to your black box if you want to retrieve any of the stored thoughts or images. People usually don't want to retrieve them and go about their day more alert, centered and focused.

## **MENTAL DISCIPLINE EXERCISE: CONCENTRATION BREATH**

This is an excellent technique to both clear your head, balance your brain, and increase your concentration.

1. Sit in a comfortable position, spine straight, shoulders dropped, chin back.
2. Rest the index and second finger of your right hand above your nose and eyes and on your forehead.
3. Close your right nostril with your thumb.
4. Inhale slowly and soundlessly through your left nostril.
5. Close your left nostril with your right ring finger and simultaneously open your right nostril by removing your thumb.
6. Exhale slowly and soundlessly and as thoroughly as possible through your right nostril.
7. Inhale through your right nostril.
8. Close your right nostril with your thumb and open your left nostril.
9. Exhale through your left nostril.
10. Inhale through your left nostril.
11. Begin by doing five cycles. Then raise the number of cycles slowly to 10 or 25.

## **MENTAL DISCIPLINE EXERCISE: ONE RELAXATION TECHNIQUE**

This classic breathing and relaxation exercise is ideal for clearing your mind and calming your body. It can be done for one or two minutes or up to ten or twenty minutes. When you are finished, you will be wide awake, fully alert, yet totally relaxed. Make sure you are in a quiet environment, free from interruptions when you do this exercise.

1. Sit with your spine straight or reclined into a firm support.
2. You may use your deep breathing or centering breath to get comfortable.
3. Notice a space about two inches from your nostrils as you take a deep breath through your nose.
4. Hold it for a few seconds.
5. And as you exhale slowly, say the word "one" silently to yourself.
6. Repeat this procedure as long and as often as you desire.
7. Another variation is called "breath counting" where you inhale silently saying "one" and exhale the number of breaths from 5 to 10. For example, 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, 1-5, 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, etc.

## **MENTAL DISCIPLINE EXERCISE: "BREATHE AND FOCUS"**

It is quite common in the early stages of performing new skills particularly under pressure to get distracted and off task. This happens particularly when we are under pressure. We tend to "choke." The concept of "choking" is actually a combination of two things.

1. Under pressure we hold our breath or hyperventilate which produces unwanted tension and anxiety buildup. The loss of "clear" thinking combined with increased muscle tension leads to a loss of control and an inability to perform in a fluid manner. We actually "choke" our breathing off resulting in loss of control and panic.
2. Under pressure, particularly in the presence of others (i.e. an audience or competitors), we become self-conscious rather than task conscious. It is this focusing internally on ourselves and our feelings that takes our external attention off the task to be performed. Ironically, it is this fear of failure that leads to failure. Fear tightens and inhibits us and leads exactly to the results that we feared would happen.

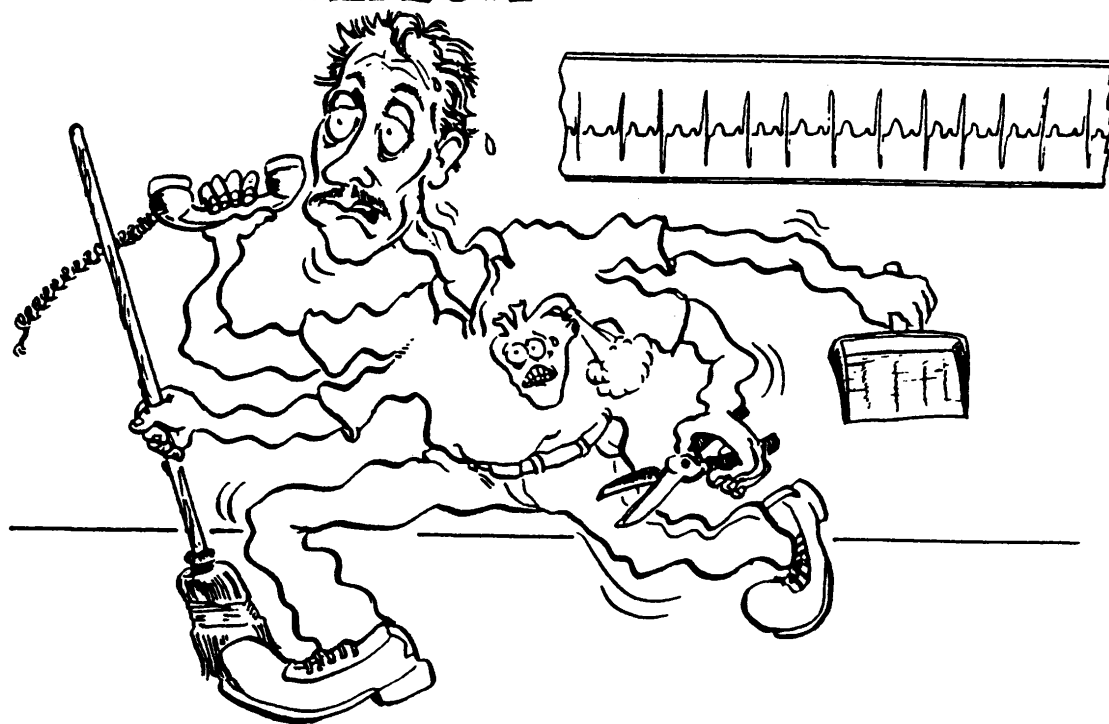
The following techniques will help you break your distraction by distracting it back on task. Visually, it is helpful to have an orientation stop or color on which to fix your attention when it wanders. When unwanted thoughts intrude or unwanted arousal occurs, bring your attention to the phrase "breathe and focus."

A person's ability to concentrate and how he/she deals with distractions varies greatly. Some people are called "screeners". They have a strong ability to block out distractions in the middle of a crowd. Lee Trevino is a person who is an example of this. Jack Nicklaus is a "non-screener". They have to remain focused and concentrated on everything they do. Either way, at the moment of performance, each is able to trigger a single-minded focus. As they enter the "cocoon of concentration" everything else fades away.

Later, we will learn self-instructional training and mental rehearsal for upcoming events. For now, just review pressure situations in your mind's eye and when you feel your concentration breaking up, let your "breathe and focus triggers" bring you back on task. It could be an eye blink, a deep breath, or silent statements repeated in the mind.



# KEY: ENERGY



PACE, DON'T RACE

**ENERGY**

**EVALUATIONS**

**EMOTIONS**

## ENERGY

Just as top performers condition their bodies to increase their physical energy, they must also learn to condition their mind to increase their mental energy. Physical energy is increased by proper exercise and proper nutrition. Mental energy can be increased by building emotional muscle on a healthy diet of positive thoughts and successful images. We will discuss thoughts and images in the next section. The important point here is that we can increase or decrease our energy level by the use of our mind.

Here is an example. Given the same situation for two people, one performer may view it as a threat and get anxious and inhibited by fears and images of failure. A second performer may view that same situation as a challenge and get excited and energized at the opportunity to excel and the images of success.

As we discussed earlier with arousal, too much uncontrolled energy, can lead to a counter-productive and poor performance. Conversely, too little energy can lead to a lax, flat, and unproductive performance.

The goal of this section is to learn how to create and channel your energy into positive, purposeful and productive behavior.

As you know the quality and intensity of our energy is dependent upon the evaluation of both the situation we are faced with and the physical sensations we experience. This is also true of emotions. We will discuss this next. The important thing to remember here is that energy and emotions can be like fire. They are a great servant but can be a dangerous master. You must learn to control them or they will control you. Uncontrolled energy and emotions are like driving a car at full throttle without any brakes or steering.

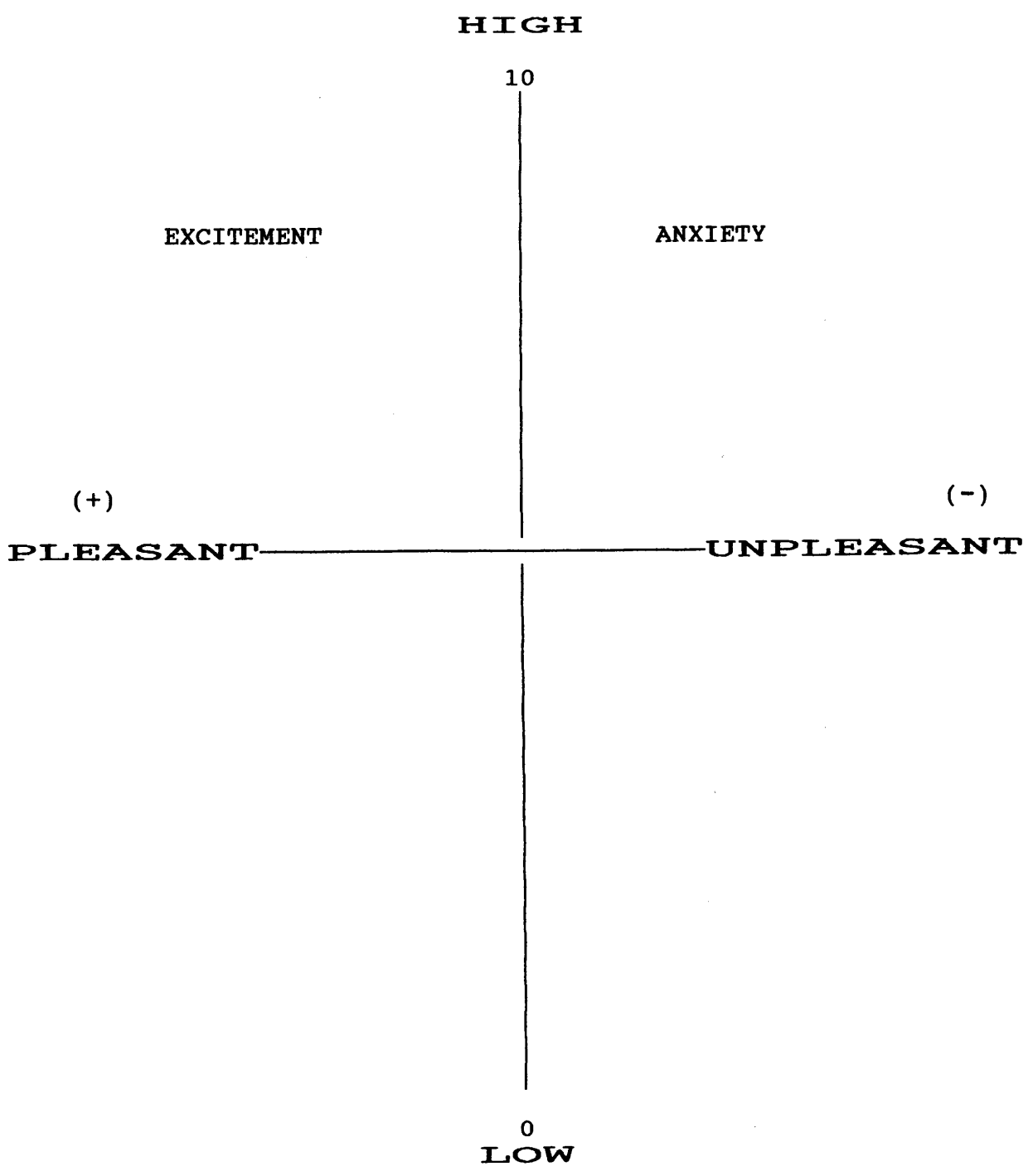
### ENERGY EXERCISE

Here is a simple exercise to demonstrate how mental energy can strengthen or weaken you. Get with a partner about the same size and weight. Face each other and have your partner extend his right or left arm. Test their arm strength by placing one hand on their shoulder and the other on their wrist. Try to push their arm down.

Now have your partner think of a particularly negative or unpleasant event. When they have a clear and vivid picture, have them nod and try to push their arm down.

Was it stronger or weaker than before? Now do the same with positive and energizing thoughts and images. Was it stronger or weaker? Switch roles. Repeat and discuss with each other.

THE ENERGY CROSS



**ENERGY EXERCISE: ENERGY GAINERS AND DRAINERS**

Spend a few moments visualizing your day at work and at home. Do a few centering breaths. Now get in touch with those thoughts, situations, people, activities, and places that energize you and fill you with excitement and positive energy. Write them down below.

Now do the same thing visualizing your day at work and at home. This time become aware of those thoughts, things, people, places, activities, and events that drain your energy and fill you with anger, anxiety, and negative emotions. Write them down below.

Now notice how and what you mentally focus on. Think about how they can energize or drain you. See if you can't eliminate some of the energy drainers in your life and increase some of the energy gainers. Remember, "You become what you think about all day long." In the next section, we will focus on not only what you think about, but also how you think about it.

## EMOTIONS

Although there are many theories of emotion, we will only discuss a few in this section. One theory states that all emotions stem from the basic emotion of excitement. Excitement can lead to a pleasant emotion called delight or an unpleasant emotion called distress. The delight emotions include happiness, joy, love and ecstasy. Distress emotions include fear, anger and disgust. We can see that certain emotions create pleasant feelings, and others create unpleasant feelings. There is also a level of intensity that is found in emotions that range from happiness to ecstasy and from irritability to blind rage.

Emotions can also give us direction. We tend to approach pleasant emotions and avoid unpleasant ones. This leads us to a second set of emotions called the "flight or fight response" which states that when confronted with a threat or challenge, we either flee from it (fear) or fight it (anger). What we want to learn as peak performers is that, when faced with unpleasant emotions, rather than fighting and fleeing them, we want to learn to flow and let go of those emotions. Courage is often described not as the absence of fear but the mastery of fear. This comes from learning how to flow with fear rather than giving in to it.

Under pressure we tend to brace (tense our muscles), hold our breath, and hold on to emotions, rather than release, breathe and let go of them. We have already learned how to breathe through unpleasant emotions. In this section, we will learn how to identify and let go of unwanted tension by countering and releasing it with the relaxation response.

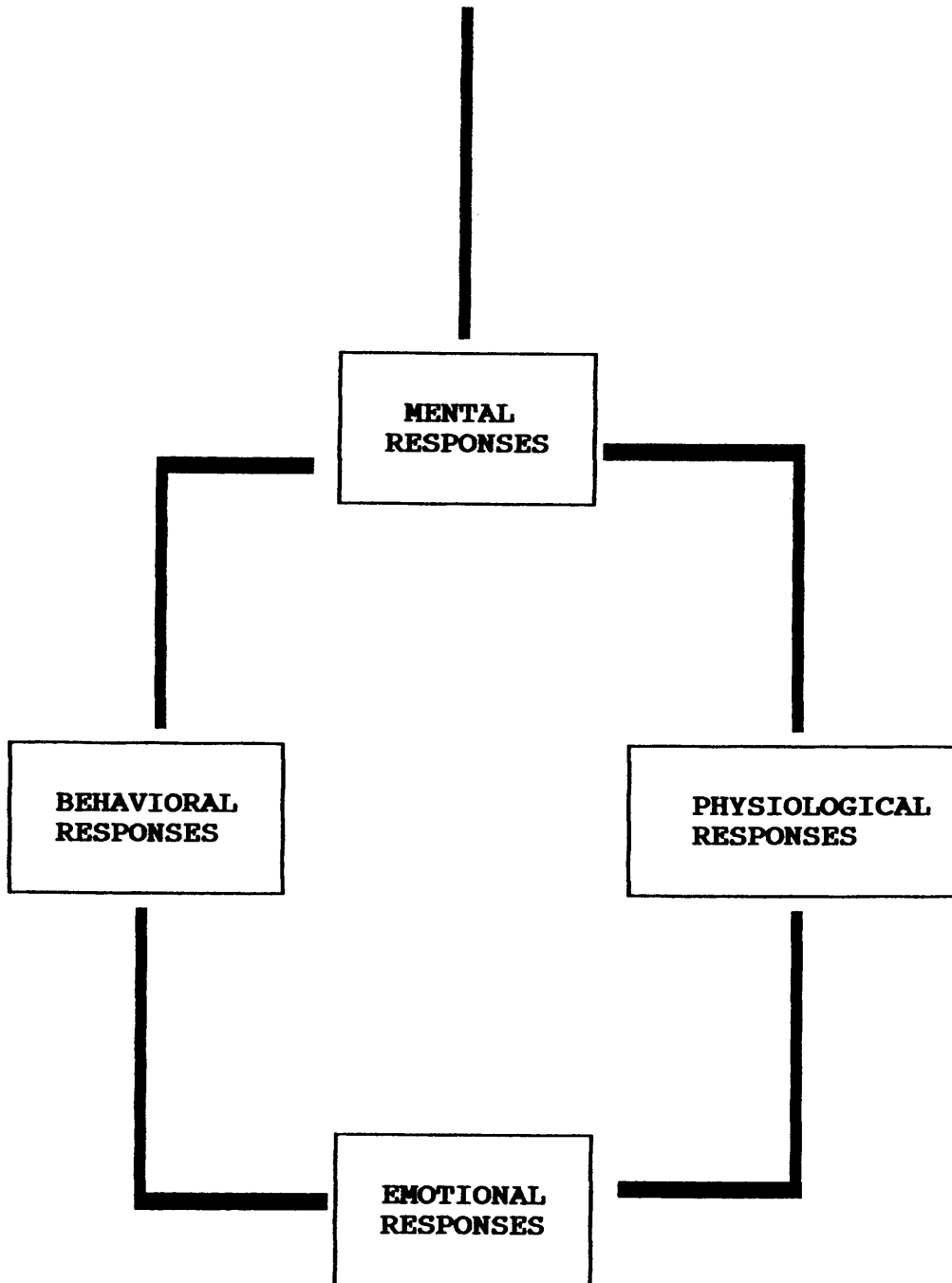
The two opposing emotions of tension and relaxation cannot exist at the same time. There is a psychological principle called "reciprocal inhibition" that states that if you can relax the body, your mind will follow. If you can quiet your mind, you can calm your body. The goal of relaxation training is to learn how to recognize tension and override it with relaxation. We then can enter the higher "flow state" level of peak performers. The exercise on the following page will assist you in becoming more aware of not only tension and stress, but also relaxation and flow.

In the following exercise, you will find that by working backwards, you can discover and evaluate events which lead to your emotions. We will discuss them in depth in the next section, but for now, just do the following:

1. Think of a time you were extremely angry. Close your eyes and really relive it. Now get in touch with the situation and circumstances and evaluate the event. Write out your thoughts and experiences.
2. Do the same for glad, bad, sad, and scared.
3. What have you learned about emotions and evaluations?

**STIMULUS-RESPONSE CYCLE**

**STIMULUS-SITUATION**



**EMOTION EXERCISE: THE ABC'S OF EMOTION  
(Cooling your hot coqs)**

The ABC's of Emotion state that the A - The Situation  
.....leads to B - Self-Talk  
.....leads to C - Your Emotion.

Based on this theory, if you have any unwanted emotions (C), you can change them by changing your self-talk (B). Let's try it.

Think of a time when you were very angry at someone or some thing. Write down that situation.

**A. THE SITUATION** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now think of what your self-talk was about that situation (A). Write down your self-talk.

**B. SELF-TALK** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now write down your emotional response to that situation (A).

**C. EMOTIONAL RESPONSE** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the next section we will learn to substitute rational beliefs for irrational thinking and logical thinking for distorted thinking. But for now, come up with at least three other ways you could look at Situation A and write your self-talk down.

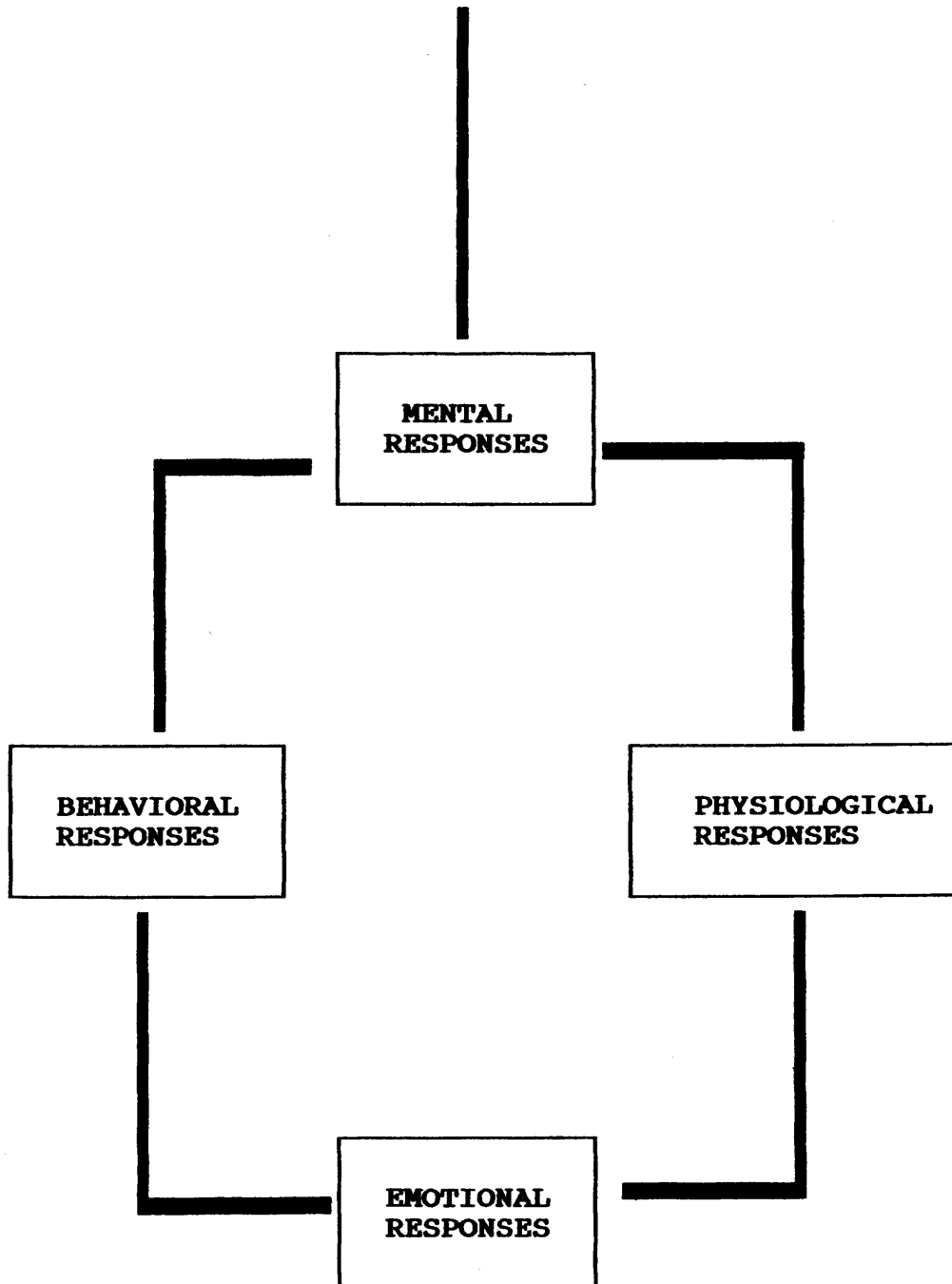
**B. NEW SELF-TALK** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now write down the subsequent emotional responses to your new self-talk.

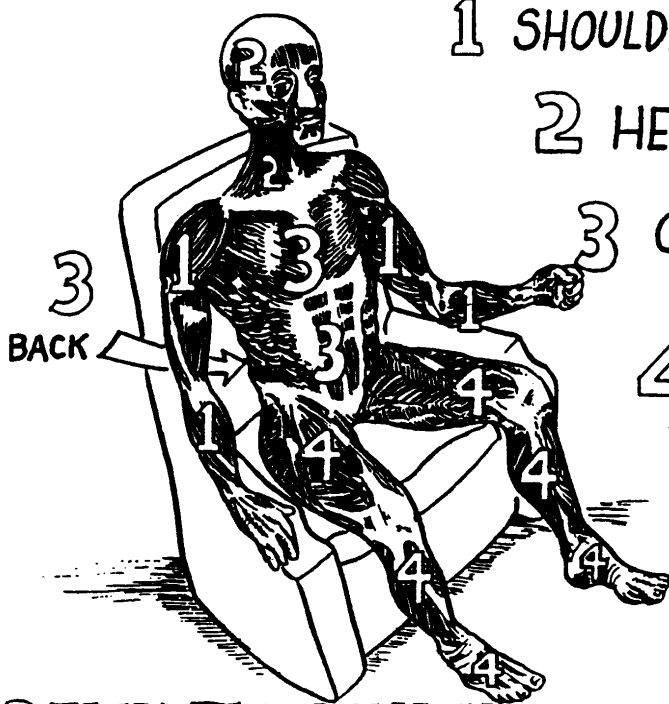
**C. NEW EMOTIONAL RESPONSES** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**THE SUCCESS-STRESS SPIRAL**

**PERFORMANCE RESULTS**  
**OUTCOMES**







1 SHOULDER, ARMS, HANDS

2 HEAD, FACE, NECK

3 CHEST, BACK,  
ABDOMEN

4 THIGHS, LEGS,  
FEET

RELAX THE BODY AND THE MIND WILL FOLLOW

**MASTER SKILL 4**

**DYNAMIC  
RELAXATION**

**EMOTION EXERCISE: TENSION/STRESS EARLY WARNING SIGNALS**

**MENTAL**

**PHYSICAL**

**EMOTIONAL**

**BEHAVIORAL**

## MASTER SKILL 4: DYNAMIC RELAXATION

Just as you can create tension in your body, you can also create relaxation. In this exercise, you will learn to scan your body for early warning signals of tension, and, then with practice, quickly dissolve away that tension with dynamic relaxation.

The technique you will learn combines actively tensing and releasing of muscle groups and then passively scanning and releasing any remaining tension. You will also learn to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate levels and areas of tension.

By learning to breathe deeply inward as you create tension, you will be able to let go of tension as you breathe out. By repeating the autogenic phrases, "breathe in energy, breathe out tension", you are using both your mind and your muscles to heighten the relaxation response. With practice, you will be able to "trigger" a wave of relaxation throughout your whole body simply by making a fist, breathing in energy, holding it a few seconds, and then breathing out all tension as you open your fist and feel the sensations of relaxation radiate throughout your entire body.

### Muscle Relaxation Procedure

The way to relax a tense muscle is first to tighten it more. Hold each muscle group for 5-8 seconds as you breathe in. Hold the tension and breathe. Study it. Then release and relax the muscle group as you breathe out all remaining tension and enjoy the warm wave of relaxation as it spreads through your body. Repeat 2 or 3 times until all tension is released and the full sensations of relaxation are absorbed.

### Preparation

1. Stretch and shake out all tension.
2. Do 5 or 10 rapid, short, pumping breaths.
3. Sit or lie down as you use your centering breath.
4. Passively scan your body for tension starting at the top of your head and work down to the tips of your toes.
5. If you notice any tension, breathe in the relaxation and then breathe out tension.
6. Now actively start with the eight muscle groups.

7. There are eight muscle groups we will use for the active muscle relaxation technique.
  1. Head/Face - Tighten your face as you close your eyes and mouth.
  2. Neck/Shoulders - Stretch your neck up and back as you raise your shoulders up towards your ear and put your shoulder blades back.
  3. Chest/Back - Breathe deeply into your chest as you arch your back.
  4. Stomach/Back - Suck your stomach in as you round your shoulders forward.
  5. Buttocks/Hips - Squeeze your buns together as you push up and out with your hips.
  6. Back of legs - Raise your legs off the floor, pull your feet towards you as you tense your calves and thighs.
  7. Front of legs - Raise your legs off the floor, point your feet away from you as you feel shin and thighs.
  8. Hands and arms - Make a tight fist as you make a muscle with your arms.
8. Finally, combine all the body parts, tense and hold, and breathe in for 5-8 seconds. Feel the tension and now release and let go as you breathe. Feel the warm wave of relaxation. Study and memorize this for 20-30 seconds.
9. Now passively scan all your muscle groups this time from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.
10. When all the tension has left your body and you are totally relaxed in your mind, body, and breath, count up from 1 to 5. At 5, you will be wide awake and fully alert, yet totally relaxed.

Excellent!

**EMOTION EXERCISE: RELAXATION/FLOW CHECKLIST**

**MENTAL**

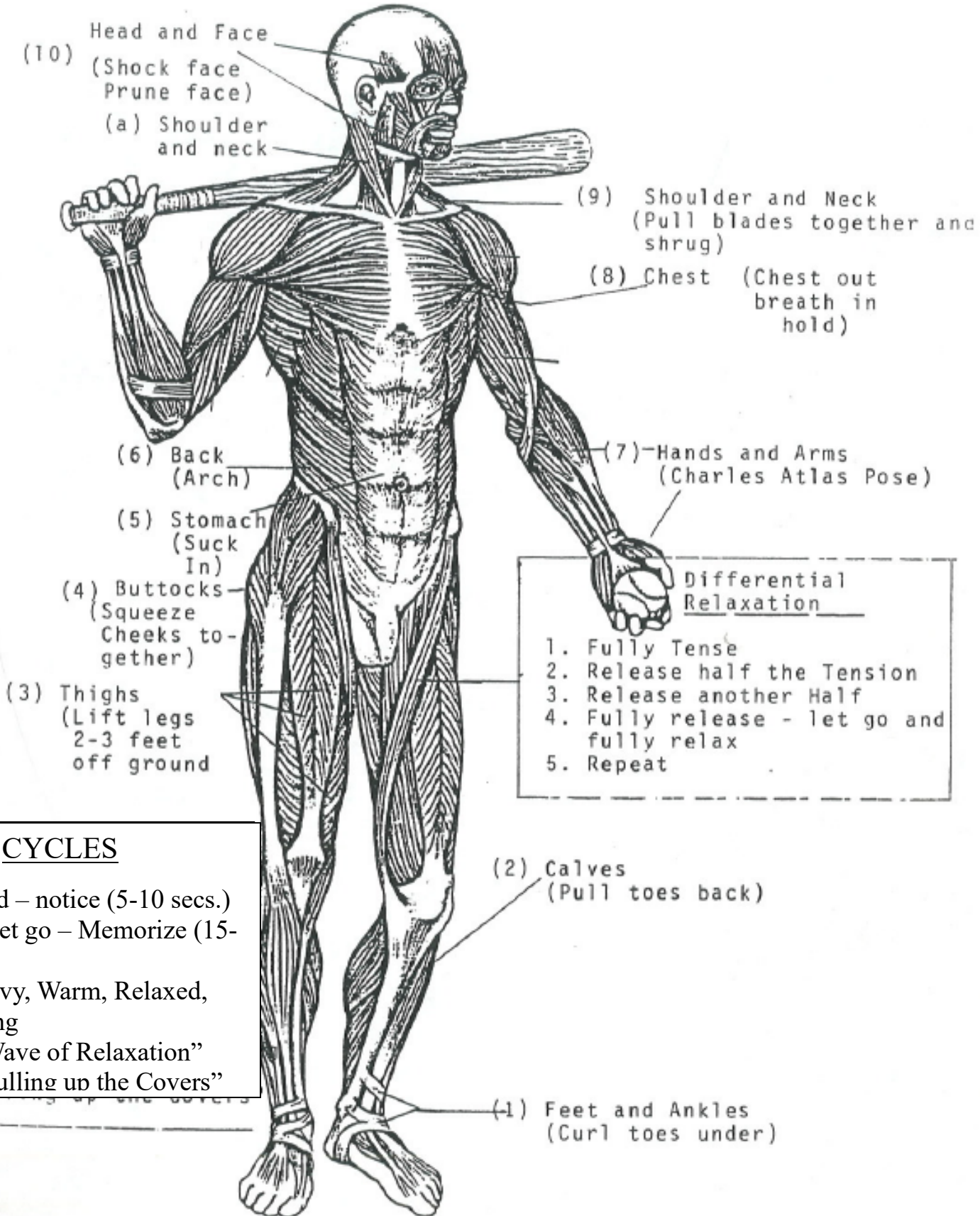
**PHYSICAL**

**EMOTIONAL**

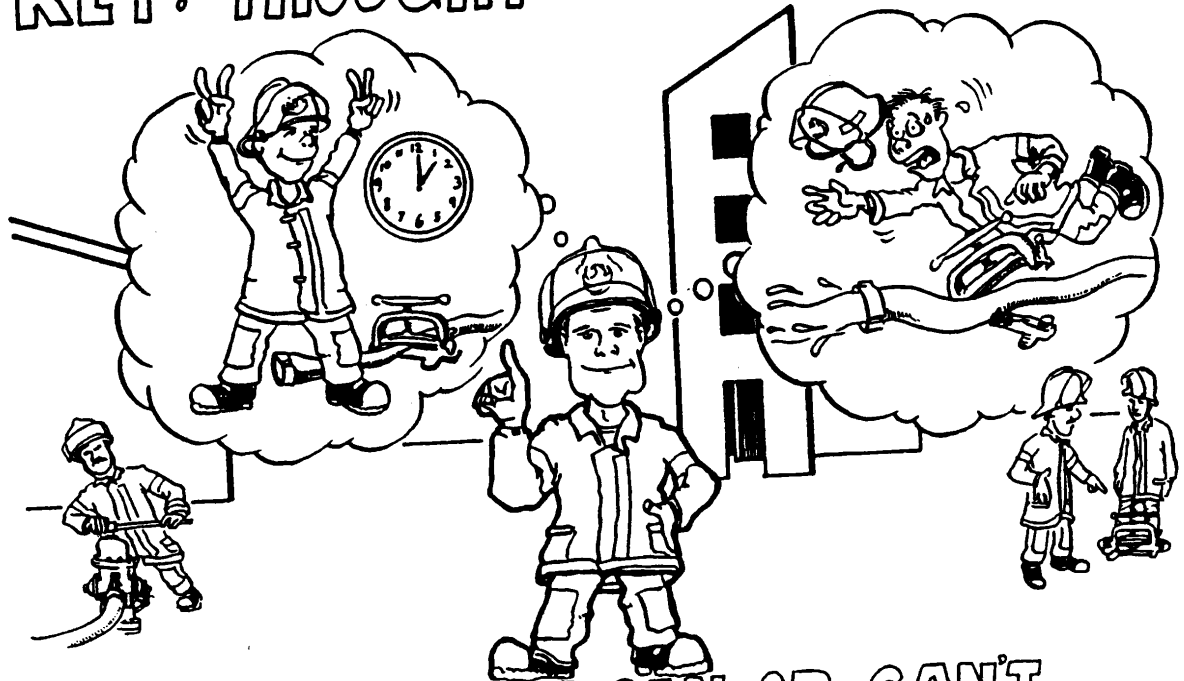
**BEHAVIORAL**

## 10 STEP RELAXATION EXERCISE

"FROM THE TOP OF YOUR HEAD TO THE TIPS OF YOUR TOES"



**KEY: THOUGHT**



**IF YOU THINK YOU CAN OR CAN'T,.....  
YOU'RE RIGHT**

**THOUGHTS  
THINKING**

## THOUGHTS

In the next two sections we will learn how our thoughts and images affect our emotions and actions. We will also learn how to instruct our minds in a language our brain can understand and our body can act upon. In preparing for an event, it is helpful to use words and verbal instructions for tactical and strategic areas. However, during an actual performance involving muscles and movement, it is better to use images and symbolic instruction. In actual performance, thoughts can create tension. Often our thoughts can become disconnected and actually impede, rather than enhance our actions. Since our actions flow from our thoughts and images to a great extent, it is essential to have constructive thoughts and concrete images.

Almost all golfers have had the experience of facing a hazard and saying, "Don't hit it in the water", or "Don't hit it in the sand trap." And, of course, it goes right where they didn't want it to. Why does this happen? We know from the law of reverse effect, when you use a command, "Don't hit it in the sand trap," your mind will just register "sand trap" and will create the image of the sand trap. Action will follow your thoughts and images. You have just hit the shot you programmed your mind for.

In Self-Instruction Training, you will learn to instruct yourself in a language your brain and body can understand and translate into action. What you will learn in this section is how your thoughts affect your emotions and how you can change your mood by changing your mind.

The first step is to uncover your automatic thoughts. Identify those thoughts which lead to negative emotions and unwanted behavior. Second, develop desired thoughts to substitute for the unwanted ones.

All too often we try to suppress unwanted thoughts. That's like putting out a fire with gasoline. It only makes it worse. Our goal will be to identify unwanted thoughts and emotions and let them serve as trigger to release new desired thoughts. Ideally, as we become aware of unwanted negative thoughts, rather than suppress them, we want to develop a series of desired thoughts to substitute.

As we discussed in the last section, emotions are really just thoughts with a lot of energy behind them. And just as we can control our physiology with our breathing, we can control our emotion by controlling our thoughts.

Let's first become aware of our thoughts by labeling them. Then experience the emotion and energy in the thought and rate them. Finally, let's learn to associate and identify desired thoughts while we disassociate and let go of undesired thoughts.



## **THOUGHT WATCHING EXERCISE**

- Step 1: Put a pad and pencil next to you as you get in a comfortable position and use your centering breath.
- Step 2: Spend the next few minutes simply allowing any thoughts or images to come and go.
- Step 3: Begin to notice the nature and quality of your thoughts and images. Label them as positive (pleasant), negative (unpleasant), or neutral (no sensation).
- Step 4: Begin to notice the categories of thoughts, places to go, things to do, people to see - Work thoughts, home thoughts.
- Step 5: When you have enough thoughts and your "chattering monkey" has had enough of this exercise, write down and categorize your thoughts by work or home, pleasant or unpleasant, etc.

What you have you learned about the quality of your thoughts?

Which ones dominate your attention?

Which ones would you like to get more of? Less of?

Discuss with a partner in the class.

Notice, too, how writing them down helps to clear your mind and clarify your emotions.

**Remember:** The quality of your life is the quality of your language. Learn to think Constructively and behave Assertively.

## THINKING

Greek philosophers and American presidents have said it, psychological texts and biblical passages have stated it, we have all experienced it. It is not the event which creates the stress and unpleasant emotions in our lives, rather it is the way we chose to view and think about them.

Here's an example. Say two people were stuck in the same traffic jam. The first person thinks this is unfair that this should be happening to him. He starts to get angry and honks the horn and works himself up to a rather unpleasant state as he constantly checks his watch. The second person, stuck in the same traffic jam, realizes that there is nothing he can do about the situation and turns on the radio, listens to the music, and waits patiently for the traffic to move as he makes mental notes to adjust his schedule. In the exercise accompanying this section you will read a series of irrational beliefs and distorted thinking patterns which have been proven to lead to unpleasant or unwanted emotions. You will also learn to develop more logical thinking patterns to substitute for the old illogical ones.

Psychologist Albert Ellis made a famous list called the **Ten Demandments** which he reported led to misery and misunderstanding. His big demandments were... I must be perfect, life should be fair, I always should be happy. Contemporary psychiatrist, Dr. Aaron Beck, discovered similar thinking patterns in depressed or anxious patients. Depressed patients felt helpless or hopeless predicting a dismal future in which they had little control. Anxious patients tended to catastrophize, worry about future events, and expect the worst. In Dr. Beck's experience, he stated that 80% of what people worried about never happened. To a great extent, the things that did happen were not as bad as the patients had predicted.

The point here is that how you think about an upcoming performance, and the things that might happen to you, will greatly influence how you feel, and, consequently, the actions you take. If you think the upcoming situation is a threat, then you will tend to get yourself anxious. We know anxiety can lead to panic and poor performance. By the same token, if you think of the event as a challenge, you will get excited. You will gain confidence and let go of any doubts and fears you may have had. **But remember, your body can't differentiate between real or imagined threats. Your nervous system responds the same whether to a physical attack on your body or to a psychological attack on your ego.**

When they get emotionally aroused, some people tend to over react to that arousal and begin to feel out of control. They begin to look for things in the environment that are dangerous and threatening. Other people can learn to breathe through the arousal. They are able to get focus back on task. They look at things they can control and are able to regain their confidence and composure in any situation. In other words they learn to change the "Oh shits" into the "Oh yeses."

## BELIEF SYSTEM CHECKLIST - THE TEN DEMANDMENTS

Check the following beliefs which apply to you:

- 1. **People Pleaser** - I must be loved and approved by everyone important to me.
- 2. **Perfectionist** - I must be completely competent, adequate and successful in everything that I do.
- 3. **Idealist** - The world should be fair and just, and people should hold the same values I do.
- 4. **Controller** - I must control people, places, and things so events will be the way I want them to be.
- 5. **Blamer** - I am unable to control my emotions or change my past, therefore, I am not responsible for my present behavior.
- 6. **Catastrophizer** - I should always prepare for the worst and if I can't find the "perfect solution", life will be terrible and awful.
- 7. **Quick Fixer** - I should be able to find quick and painless solutions to life's problems.
- 8. **Super Hero** - I should never feel pain, sadness, anger, depression, or seek support from others.
- 9. **Avoider** - Conflict and negative emotions should be avoided at all costs.
- 10. **Magician** - People should change and problems should resolve themselves without me having to change.

- A. Take a few moments and fill in your own demandments.
- B. Don't forget to add....or "I'm a failure, unlovable, unworthy, unacceptable, etc. after each statement.
- C. Cue words are: Should, must, ought.
- D. Identify your own style and belief system.
- E. Explore where they came from and challenge their validity.

## THINKING STYLES CHECKLIST- THE DISTORTIONS

Get with a partner and debate the merits of these thinking styles. See if you can't come up with more logical thinking.

- \_\_\_ 1. **Polarized Thinking** - Thinking in terms of black or white, right or wrong, all-or-nothing without allowing for the grey areas of life. If you are less than wonderful, you are a total failure.
- \_\_\_ 2. **Overgeneralizing** - Seeing a single or isolated negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
- \_\_\_ 3. **Filtering** - Picking out a negative detail and dwelling on it exclusively so your vision of reality becomes darkened. The opposite of rose colored glasses.
- \_\_\_ 4. **Minimizing** - Rejecting positive experiences by insisting "they don't count" or belittling your own assets and accomplishments as insignificant.
- \_\_\_ 5. **Mind Reading** - Jumping to conclusions about what people are thinking without checking it out, or you predict an outcome without it ever happening. (Beware of the self-fulfilling prophecy).
- \_\_\_ 6 **Catastrophizing** - Expecting disaster. You notice or hear about a problem or event and start a series of "what ifs". "What if I'm late?" "What if I screw up?" "What if I'm not liked?"
- \_\_\_ 7. **Personalizing** - Blaming one's self inappropriately as the cause of negative events or assuming what people do is a reaction to you.
- \_\_\_ 8. **Comparing** - Comparing yourself to others, trying to determine who's prettier, smarter, wealthier, etc. (Beware if you win you may become too arrogant. If you lose, you may become bitter)
- \_\_\_ 9. **Labeling** - Instead of saying " I made a mistake" you attach a negative label to yourself or to others like "I'm a loser" (The big brother of over generalization)
- \_\_\_ 10. **Emotional Reasoning** - Assuming the way you feel about yourself is the way things are. "I feel stupid and boring, therefore, I must be stupid and boring."

# PERFORMANCE FORMULA 2



**YOUR BODY TREATS ALL VIVID  
THOUGHTS AND IMAGES AS IF THEY  
ARE REAL AND HAPPENING NOW**

**MASTER SKILL 5**

**SELF INSTRUCTION  
TRAINING  
S.I.T.**

## **SELF INSTRUCTION TRAINING: INNER COACHING**

The next four Master Skills that you will learn are designed to prepare you for an upcoming performance. They are designed to increase your chances for success by mentally preparing you. They are powerful confidence builders because they remove self-doubts and uncertainties and prepare you to stay calm under any situation or circumstance. Because you have mentally rehearsed the performance, the actual performance becomes easier. You are prepared for any contingency and have programmed your success circuits.

The five phases of the performance cycle are:

1. Say it - Tell yourself what to do.
2. See it - Visualize yourself doing it.
3. Feel it - Experience yourself doing it.
4. Do it - Just do it!
5. Praise it - P.A.T. yourself for doing it.

Self-Instruction Training (S.I.T.) covers Phase 1 "Say It". Here are the six stages of S.I.T.:

1. Prior to the situation
2. During the situation
3. To cope with arousal
4. To cope with setbacks
5. To keep you going
6. To praise your success

Think of an upcoming performance and the tasks you have to do. Break the performance into steps and sequences with positive self-instruction and commands.

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Self- Instructions</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

Now write out any self-instructions for dealing with setbacks or uncertainties.

<u>Setbacks</u>	<u>Self-Instructions</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

Now write out any self-instructions for dealing with unwanted arousal or emotions.

<u>Unwanted Arousal</u>	<u>Self-Instructions</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now write out self-instructions (and success keys) for preparing for the actual event.

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Now write our congratulatory statements for successful completion of the performance. Praise the good stuff and reinforce it.

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# KEY: IMAGE



WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET

**IMAGE**

**IMAGINATION**

## IMAGE

In our evolution as human beings, we have communicated much longer in pictures and images than verbally in words and thoughts. To a great extent our new brain, or "neo cortex", which allows us to analyze information, think abstractly, and plan for the future often impedes our natural, intuitive motor functions and instincts. In essence, during performance we can get paralysis by analysis. What was automatic becomes awkward.

The ability to create and control your images goes hand and hand with the ability to control your thoughts. Remember:

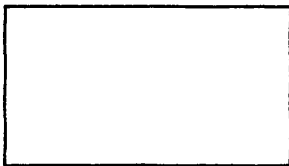
**"Your body treats all vivid images as if they were real and happening now."**

Similar to thought suppression, you cannot suppress images. Remember the old trick..... don't think of a red elephant. What usually happens is that you fixate on a red elephant.

In this section you will learn how to create and control desired images and how to counter unwanted images. In a way, it is like having your own photo library. You can choose the pictures. For more inexperienced performers, they may have to create pictures as they develop or imitate the actions of their models of excellence. They will want to focus on neutral images rather than negative ones until they can create the positive one.

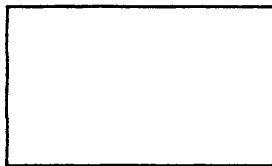
The goal of mental training is for you to create and develop mental images that give you power and confidence. You want to eliminate images that create anxiety and doubt. While this may seem simple, it is not always that easy under pressure. We often tend to revert back to the best learned behaviors.....and old images and thinking patterns.

## THE MENTAL TRAINING MODEL



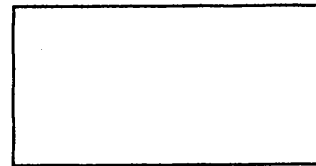
**POSITIVE**

Successful images



**NEUTRAL**

No Picture



**NEGATIVE**

Unsuccessful Images

**IMAGE EXERCISE:      PERSONAL BEST - WINNING FEELING**

**GUIDED** - Follow along as I guide you.

**OPEN** - Let a picture develop in your mind's eye.

**"He" - 3rd PERSON** (Disassociated-Objective) - Describe in detail as a spectator or announcer.

**"I"- 1st PERSON** (Associated-Subjective) - Relive in detail as an actor or performer.

**CONTROL** (Edit) - Change angle of view or situation and circumstances.

**ENHANCE** - GO VAK and heighten your senses.

**MANIPULATE** - Make the picture brighter or darker. Run it forwards and backwards. Change the soundtrack, speeds, sights, sensations.

## IMAGINATION

Russian scientists were amazed when one of their subjects voluntarily controlled his autonomic nervous system. When asked how he did it he said it was simple. "If I wanted to get my heart racing and my blood pressure and pulse up, I would simply imagine myself running for the Leningrad train as it was pulling out of the station. If I wanted to lower it, I would imagine myself relaxing in a warm bath in my Moscow apartment." The ability of humans to control their physical functions with their mind and mental skills is no longer an issue, but a fact. What is still unknown is how and when to do it by choice rather than chance.

We do know that the use of one's imagination can be a powerful tool in creating images of excellence and powerful performance. POWs were able to use their imaginations to mentally practice and enhance physical skills like golf or piano playing. Astronauts and Olympic athletes have used their imagination effectively to mentally rehearse and prepare for upcoming events. One reason Fire Chief, Al Brunacini has such confidence is that he has mentally rehearsed fire fighting in almost every building in Phoenix.

One theory on the effectiveness of mental practice states that powerful images can program your neuro-muscular pathways into success circuits. Studies of skiers and racers have been able to measure the firing of muscles used in an actual event while they were just sitting relaxed and imagining the event.

Another theory states that your imagination can encode information in a way your body understands and translates into action creating blueprints to follow during actual performance. Regardless of theory, however, what we do know is that mental practice can build confidence and reduce stress by preparing appropriate responses for even unexpected events.

This section will give you some tools and skills to create and control your imagination. These skills will help you gain confidence in yourself and also enhance your performance.

### **IMAGINATION EXERCISE: IMAGINEERING**

Imagineering is a technique that allows you to design mental blueprints to help you build your vision and provide the success circuits to translate your dreams into reality.

Imagine yourself one to five years from now. See exactly what you will look like.....What you will be doing.....Where you will be .....and How you will feel.

Notice who is with you.....What you and they are saying.....and pay particular attention to how good it feels to be successful and achieving your goals.

Carefully design in detail this image so it can guide you and fuel you as you progress through the years. Use all the feelings.

When you have finished, come back to the present and write down your thoughts and feelings, words and images about the event.

# GUIDED IMAGERY AND MENTAL REHEARSAL



## MASTER SKILL 6

**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT  
EDUCATION  
S . E . E .**

**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EXERCISE:      SUGGESTIBILITY TEST**

This first S.E.E. exercise measures your level of suggestibility, or how much your mind can affect your body.

The Bucket Exercise

Make sure that you are completely comfortable. Stretch your legs, your arms. And now begin to relax. Close your eyes and take a deep breath....and exhale.....and relax. Completely relax. Relax your legs, lower back, relax your shoulders. Relax your shoulders, your arms, your neck, your face. Relax your whole body, just relax. Take another deep breath....and exhale.....let go, and relax. Become aware of the rhythms of your breathing. Begin to flow with the rhythm of your breathing, and as you inhale, relax your breathing and begin to feel your body drift and float into relaxation. The sounds around you are unimportant, let them go, and relax. Let every muscle in your body completely relax from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. As you inhale gently, relax. As you exhale, release any tension, any stress from any part of your body, mind, and thoughts.

Stretch your arms in front of you at a level even with your shoulders. Imagine you are holding a bucket in each hand. Curl your fingers around the handles of the buckets, hold onto those two buckets. The bucket in your left hand is made of paper, it is made of paper. It is empty and feels very light, the bucket in your left hand feels very, very light. The bucket in your right hand is very, very light because it is made of paper. You hold that light bucket in your left hand. The bucket in your right hand is made of iron. It is made of iron, it is made of heavy, heavy iron, and the bucket has a few rocks in it. As you hold the heavy iron bucket, more and more rocks are dropped into the bucket until the bucket is completely full of heavy rocks. The bucket is completely full of heavy rocks, the rocks are heaped up to the top of the bucket. The bucket is so very heavy, it is pulling your right arm down. The bucket of rocks pulls your arm down and your arm goes down because the heavy iron bucket is so heavy, so very heavy.

In this exercise, your arms will have begun to move some distance from their original position at shoulder level. The further the distance between the left and right arm, the greater your suggestibility.

**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EXERCISE: HOW CLEAR IS YOUR MIND'S EYE**

This exercise measures your sensory awareness. The term GO-VAK is used to remind you of your five senses: Gustatory (taste), Olfactory (smell), Visual (sight), Auditory (hearing), and Kinesthetic (feel).

The ability to create clear, vivid mental images varies among individuals. There is even a percentage of the population who swear they never see mind pictures. The following test, devised by psychologist Arnold Lazarus, will give you a measure of how vivid your images are compared to others. Remember, though, you need only have the ability to create fairly clear images to make imagery techniques a useful learning tool.

**Directions:** The following items ask you to picture certain images. The procedure is simple. Read an item, close your eyes, picture the item as clearly as you can, then record its clarity using one of the following categories:

- \* If your image is "Very Clear", rate it 4
- \* If your image is "Moderately Clear", rate it 3
- \* If your image is "Fairly Clear", rate it 2
- \* If your image is "Unclear", rate it 1
- \* If your image is "Very Unclear", rate it 0

**RATING**

1. Think about a very close relative or friend:
  - a. See him/her standing in front of you \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Imagine him/her laughing \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Picture his/her eyes \_\_\_\_\_
2. Picture a bowl of fruit \_\_\_\_\_
3. Imagine driving on a dry, dusty road \_\_\_\_\_
4. See yourself throwing a ball \_\_\_\_\_
5. Picture your childhood home \_\_\_\_\_
6. See a white, sandy beach \_\_\_\_\_
7. Imagine looking into a shop window \_\_\_\_\_
8. See a blank television screen \_\_\_\_\_



**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EXERCISE: HOW CLEAR IS YOUR MIND'S EYE**

	<u>RATING</u>
9. Imagine the sound of a barking dog	_____
10. Imagine the sound of an exploding firecracker	_____
11. Feel the warmth of a hot shower	_____
12. Imagine feeling the texture of rough sandpaper	_____
13. Picture yourself lifting a heavy weight	_____
14. Imagine yourself walking up a steep stairway	_____
15. Imagine the taste of lemon juice	_____
16. Think of eating ice cream	_____
17. Imagine the smell of cooking cabbage	_____
18. Imagine yourself smelling a rose	_____
 Total your ratings	 _____

**Rating Scale:**

60 or more	You have a very well developed imagery
31 to 59	Imagery techniques will be useful to you
30 or less	Imagery technique won't be highly useful without special imagery training.

**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EXERCISE: VISUALIZATION AND MENTAL REHEARSAL CHECKLIST**

The ability to control and manipulate your imagination allows you to change unwanted images and create new, desired images. Remember, change the images and you change the associated feelings and behaviors. Think of an experience and run through this exercise.

VISUAL

Movie \_\_\_\_\_

Still \_\_\_\_\_

Color \_\_\_\_\_

Black/White \_\_\_\_\_

Associated \_\_\_\_\_

Disassociated \_\_\_\_\_

Bright \_\_\_\_\_

Dim \_\_\_\_\_

Focused \_\_\_\_\_

Defocused \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

AUDITORY

Any sound \_\_\_\_\_

Pitch \_\_\_\_\_

Volume \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Tempo \_\_\_\_\_

Rhythm \_\_\_\_\_

Distance \_\_\_\_\_

Associated \_\_\_\_\_

Disassociated \_\_\_\_\_

**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EXERCISE: VISUALIZATION AND MENTAL REHEARSAL CHECKLIST**

Conversation \_\_\_\_\_  
Constant \_\_\_\_\_  
Intermittent \_\_\_\_\_  
Whose voice \_\_\_\_\_

**KINESTHETIC**

Texture \_\_\_\_\_  
Temperature \_\_\_\_\_  
Dull \_\_\_\_\_  
Sharp \_\_\_\_\_  
Location \_\_\_\_\_  
Consistent \_\_\_\_\_  
Heavy \_\_\_\_\_  
Light \_\_\_\_\_  
Tactile \_\_\_\_\_  
Movement \_\_\_\_\_  
Associated \_\_\_\_\_  
Disassociated \_\_\_\_\_  
Duration \_\_\_\_\_  
Moisture \_\_\_\_\_

**OLFACTORY/GUSTATORY**

Describe in detail \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SENSORY ENHANCEMENT EXERCISE: "SPECIAL PLACE - INNER GUIDE"**

This last exercise is a guided imagery to allow you to develop a "special place" and "inner guide" where you can S.I.T. and S.E.T. or rest and relax.

COMFORT ZONE - GO DOWN  
10 to 0



PLEASANT PLACE  
Cabin in Woods  
Beach by Ocean  
Forest-Meadows



MENTAL VACATION



RELAX-RENEW



INNER GUIDE



BRING BACK CALM - 1 to 5  
COMFORTABLE  
RELAXED-REFRESHED

CREATIVE ZONE - GO UP  
1 to 10



POWER PLACE  
Mental Studio



MENTAL PRACTICE/REHEARSAL



ENERGIZE-PREPARE

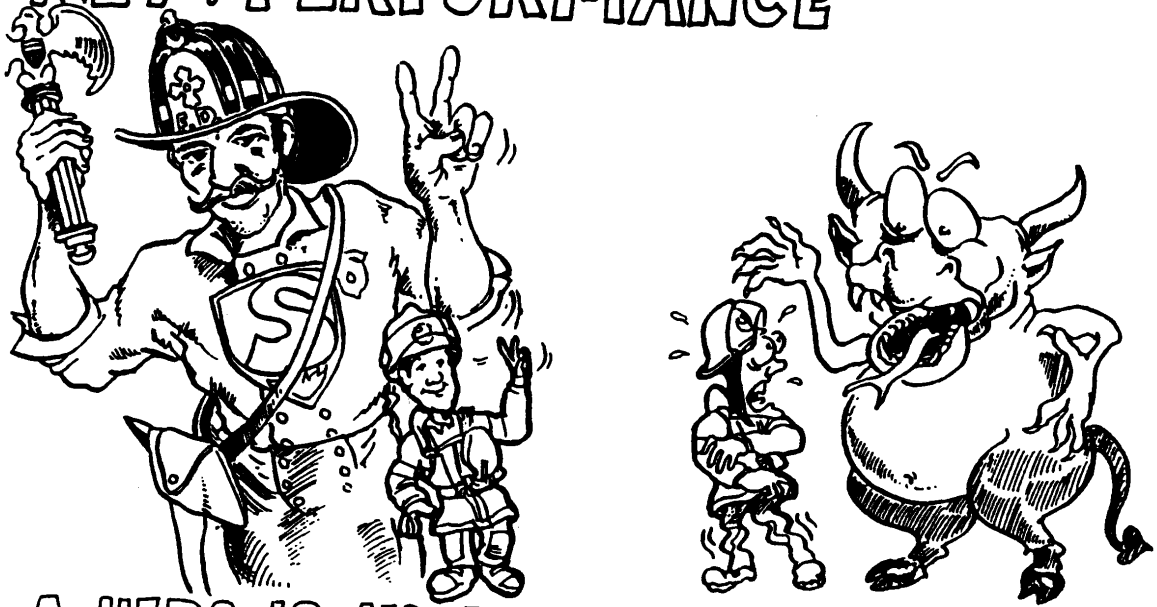


INNER COACH



BRING BACK ANSWERS - 5 to 0  
TO PROBLEMS  
CONFIDENCE-CONTENT  
ENERGY-EXCITEMENT

# KEY: PERFORMANCE



A HERO IS NO BRAVER THAN THE  
ORDINARY PERSON; HE IS JUST  
BRAVE A FEW SECONDS LONGER

**PERFORMANCE**

**PERSPECTIVE**

## PERFORMANCE

Just as you must physically develop your bodies to develop muscle and stamina, so must you develop your mind and mental muscle. It is the conscious practice of skills that leads to the unconscious and automatic behaviors of success under the pressure of actual performance. You play like you practice, but in practice you want to make things happen and develop your strength. In performance you want to let go of any thoughts and doubts and let things happen as you flow into the performance.

At the moment of truth you want confidence to emerge. This comes from your "emotional knowing" that you were prepared and capable of keeping your cool when the heat is on regardless of the situation or circumstances. **A key:**

**Overpractice so you don't underperform**

In this section you will learn not only your keys to performance success, but also how to develop firm rituals to stay focused on those keys regardless of the situation or distractions. **A key:**

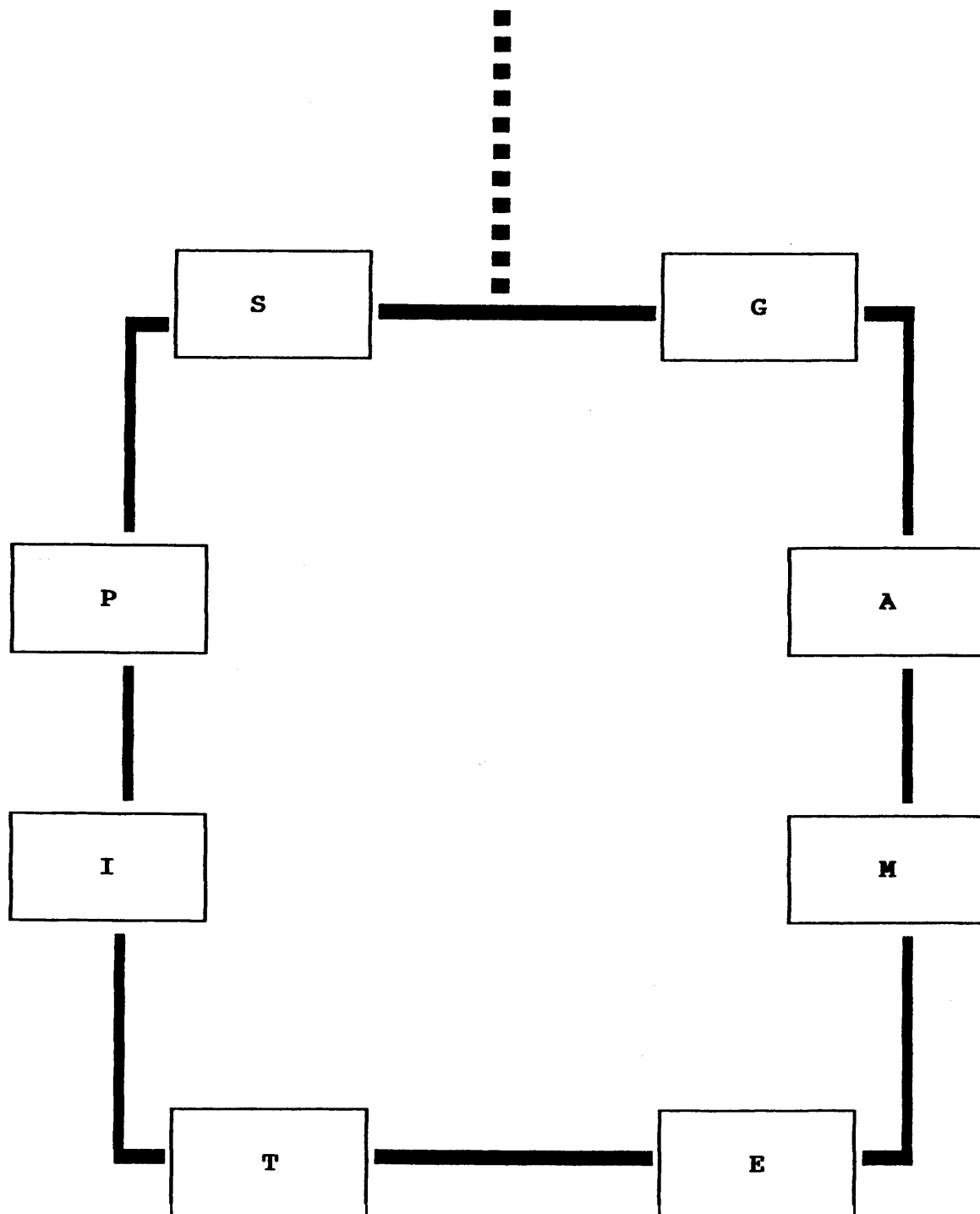
**While you cannot always control the circumstances of the situation, you can control how you react to them.**

One of the greatest soccer players of all time, Pele, was famous for his pre-performance routines. Before every big match, he would take two towels and go into a quiet corner of the locker room. He would put one towel at his back and the other over his eyes. He would then do some deep breathing exercises as he would let his mind drift back to his home in Brazil where as a youth he enjoyed the exhilaration and fun of playing soccer on the beach. He would then begin to recall some of his best performances in World Cup and International competition. These performances would not only give him confidence, but inspiration for the upcoming competition. He would then mentally rehearse himself playing, feeling relaxed and confident, and see himself scoring goals and going past defenders. After about ten minutes he would let these images fade, take a few deep breathes, bring his attention back to the locker room and go out on the field and play ball with total confidence.

This is one example of routines and rituals that a great performer used to get himself ready for upcoming events. In this section we will discuss your own rituals and look at your success schemes to help you in your endeavors.

When followed and practiced, the **GAME TIPS** discussed in this manual will help increase your chances of success and decrease your stress. Remember this old saying, "Chance favors the prepared mind, the more you practice the luckier you get."

**THE GAMETIPS CYCLE**  
**SUCCESS OR STRESS**



**PERFORMANCE EXERCISE: PERFORMANCE ROUTINES AND SUCCESS KEYS**

Think of an upcoming performance. Now go back in time to a similar performance. A time when you performed at your best, when everything went right.

1st, View yourself performing as if you were an announcer describing the action. Pay particular attention and describe in detail the images and actions of you at your best.

2nd, Experience yourself performing as if you were actually there again reliving your past glory and peak performances. Memorize the feelings and sensations. Recall your thoughts and actions. How was your confidence and concentration? What were your keys to success?

Now, Bring your attention back to the present and write out on a 3 X 5 card your keys to success. What you need to be doing, thinking, seeing, and feeling?. What are the mental triggers that will release the correct physical responses?

Note: If you don't have a similar past experience, think of a particularly difficult past performance where you overcame uncertainty and obstacles and performed optimally.



IT DEPENDS ON HOW YOU SEE IT  
THIS WAY



OR THIS WAY

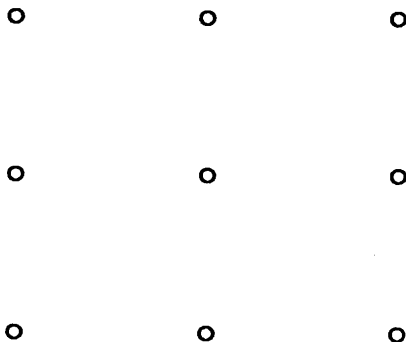
## PERSPECTIVE

Learning how to keep a perspective on your life and past performances is an essential key for firefighters. Unlike sports, where the goal is to win or lose, the goal of fire fighting is to keep playing and to do your best regardless of the situation or circumstances. You must remember that losing is a part of winning. It is not always possible to save every child or put out every fire in time.

Even though you can't control every situation, you can control how you view that situation. It is the ability to maintain a healthy perspective on events that will sustain you in your career as firefighter. Airline pilots have a saying that "Good judgement comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgement." It is the willingness to learn from experience that will help you grow from mistakes rather than repeat them.

It is also important to learn how to live your life in balance. Know what energizes or what drains you in your professional and personal life. Learn how you can get away from the drainers at work by doing things in your personal life. The goal of mental training is to help you stay healthy, positive and productive, both personally and professionally. It focuses on balance as a key to personal and professional growth.

Below is a familiar puzzle you may have seen before. The object is to connect all 9 dots with only four straight lines. The only rule is you can't lift your pencil off the paper. You have two minutes to complete the puzzle.



Regardless of the event, things happen for a purpose. You can always draw a "bigger" circle around events and with time, learn and grow. By taking the time to step back and form a new perspective, obstacles often become opportunities for greater things and setbacks can become stepping stones to an even higher ground.

**PERSPECTIVE EXERCISE: THE 6 STEP REFRAME**

Just as we learned in Section 4, you can change your thoughts to change your emotions, so you can change your emotions by how you view an event and the meaning (intentions) you assign to it. Look at the bright side.....When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.

There is an old saying that "things happen for a purpose." By reviewing an event that was emotionally upsetting or distressing, and then coming up with the answers to the following questions, you can often put things into a new perspective and learn and grow from them.

1. What is it about the situation that bothers me so much?
2. What are two other ways to view it?
3. What can I learn from this?
4. What good can come of it?
5. How will it make me a better person?
6. What can I do next time?

If you have problems answering any of these questions, get with a partner and ask them for their ideas.



**OVERTIGHTNESS LEADS TO  
UNDERPERFORMANCE**

**MASTER SKILL 7**

**SITUATION EVALUATION  
TRAINING  
S.E.T.**

## **SITUATION EVALUATION: MENTAL REHEARSAL-SCENARIO PLANNING**

The last four Master Skills are designed to prepare you for an upcoming performance by increasing your chances for success and mentally preparing you. They are powerful confidence builders because they remove self-doubts and uncertainties and prepare you to stay calm under any situation or circumstance. Because you have mentally rehearsed the performance, the actual performance becomes easier. You are prepared for any contingency and have programmed your success circuits.

The five phases of the performance cycle are:

1. Say it - Tell yourself what to do.
2. See it - Visualize yourself doing it.
3. Feel it - Experience yourself doing it.
4. Do it - Just do it!
5. Praise it - P.A.T. yourself for doing it.

Situation Evaluation Training (S.E.T.) covers Phase 2 "See It" and Phase 3 "Feel It." Here are the six stages of S.E.T.

1. Prior to the situation
2. During the situation
3. To cope with arousal
4. To cope with setbacks
5. To keep you going
6. To praise your success

Think of an upcoming performance and the tasks you have to do. Break the performance into steps and sequences with positive self-instruction and commands. Then mentally rehearse using sensory and detailed imagery.

<u>Steps</u>	<u>Self- Instructions-Mental Rehearsal</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

Now write out any self-instructions for dealing with setbacks or uncertainties. Then mentally rehearse using sensory and detailed imagery.

<u>Setbacks</u>	<u>Self-Instructions-Mental Rehearsal</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____

Now write out any self-instructions for dealing with unwanted arousal or emotions. Then mentally rehearse using sensory and detailed imagery.

<u>Unwanted Arousal</u>	<u>Self-Instructions- Mental Rehearsal</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Now write out self-instructions (and success keys) for preparing for the actual event and mentally rehearse it.

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Now write our congratulatory statements for successful completion of the performance. Praise the good stuff and reinforce it. Actually see and feel yourself enjoying the rewards of a job well done.

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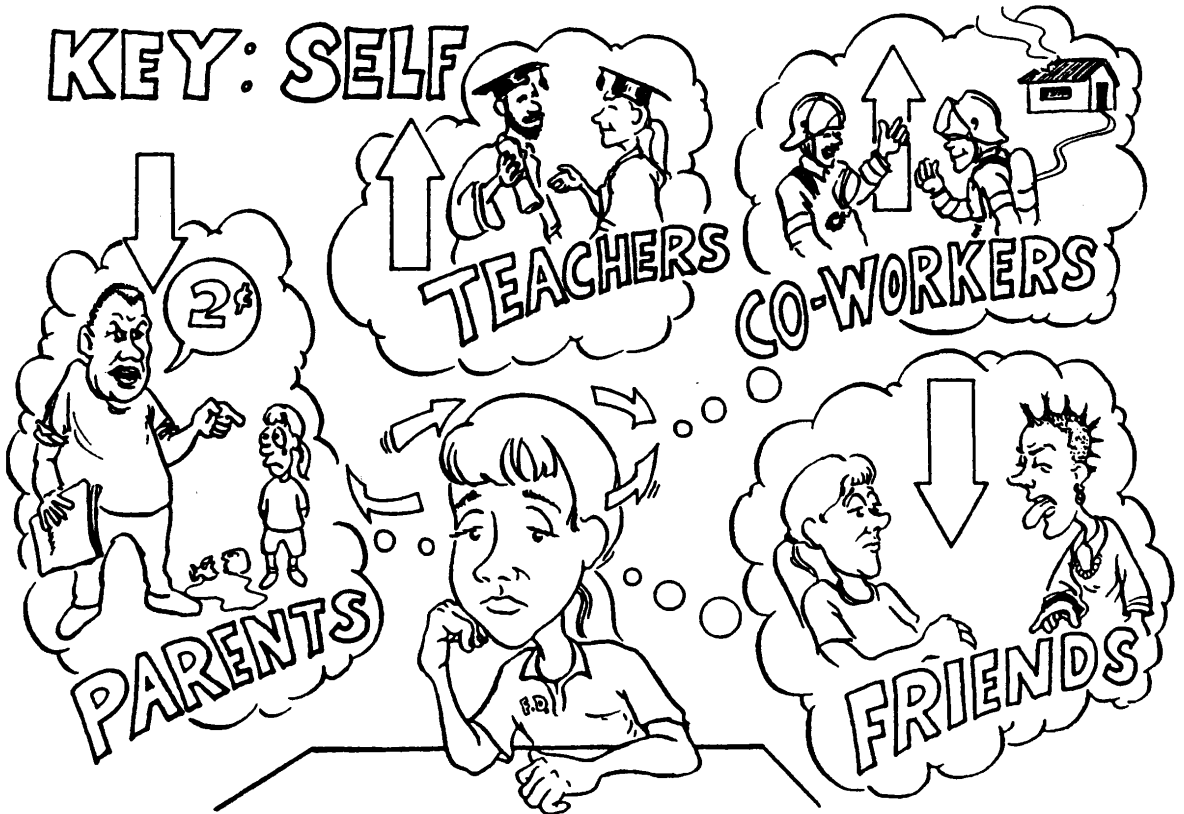
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KEY: SELF



YOU CAN'T OUTPERFORM YOUR SELF CONCEPT

**SELF**  
**STRESS**



## SELF

The last section could easily be the first....., how to maintain healthy esteem and decrease stress in your life.

### SELF ESTEEM AND SELF CONCEPT

A healthy and high self concept is by far the most important factor in success. People with a positive self concept tend to be open, optimistic and low in stress. They are accepting of themselves and others and don't depend on other people, places or things to feel successful. Because they feel good about themselves and their abilities, they are not threatened by unfamiliar situations nor do they personalize their wins and losses.

People with a low self concept tend to be pessimistic, defensive, opposed to change, and fear failure. It is exactly this fearful defensiveness that brings about the self-fulfilling prophecy of failure and self sabotage. People low in self concept are often high in stress and depend upon external factors for their success. They tend to blame others and make excuses for their failures. Rather than learn from their mistakes, they tend to repeat them. This leads to a stress rather than a success cycle. Their failures validate their low self esteem and give them a reason to blame others. They are too well defended to accept responsibility and grow from their mistakes. All too often they are condemned to repeat them. Remember,

**You can't outperform your self image.**

By the same token no one can take away your self esteem without your permission. In this section we will examine the making of a low self concept to teach people how to become aware of past messages which may affect present performance. Through personal awareness and affirmations, we will be able to change low self concept to high self concept.

A low self concept is primarily the result of negative, critical, and conditioning messages which tend to make an individual feel fearful, inferior, and incompetent. As we have learned throughout the **GAME TIPS**, however, it is just as easy to think positive, constructive thoughts as it is to think negative, destructive thoughts. **They just might not be as familiar!** It is also just as easy to become your own constructive coach rather than a negative critic. Through practice and repetition in situations that will provide success, you will soon be able to maintain your self-concept and increase your self-image.

**SELF EXERCISE: ACCESSING YOUR INTERNAL RESOURCES**

Go back over your past experiences and remember a time when when you felt the feelings associated with the words below. Briefly write out each experience.

A time you felt totally confident

A time you experienced excellence

A time you felt totally relaxed

A time you felt particularly courageous

A time you showed persistence

A time you overcame an obstacle

A time you learned a very difficult task

A time your self esteem was very high

A time you felt invincible

Others

## STRESS

Simply put, stress is "wear and tear on your body." The "fight or flight" stress response is a neuro-hormonal chemical cocktail which prepares the body to go with or flee from danger. A stresser is any stimulus that triggers a stress response. Most stressors today are more psychological than physical and the dangers are more imagined than they are real. Psychologists say that most of the events that we worry about never happen and when they do they are not as bad as we thought they would be.

To demonstrate the stress response select someone and give a talk in front of a group.

There are different types of stress. Good stress is positive stress that comes from a positive event such as a wedding. Distress is a negative stress that comes from too much anxiety, fear or arousal. When you go on a call or take a test that would be acute stress. Your body is stressed when you are on call, but when you return to the station or home, your body goes back to its normal status. If you have a particularly busy shift with numerous calls back to back this can lead to episodic stress. It may take a longer time for your body to return to normal when faced with one stresser after another over a period of time. This is known as the (GAS-ARE)- general adaptation syndrome which states that when faced with a difficult or protracted stress, your body goes through four stages:

1. The alarm state where all your body functions get higher for the event.
2. The adaptation stage where your body state is up with signs of hyper-arousal and hyper-vigilance.
3. The resistant stage where your body fights off the stressors.
4. The exhaustion stage, where your defenses collapse and the full effects of stress set in.

The constant stress of fire fighting and E.M.S. work can lead to cumulative or chronic stress which is a buildup over time to where your body stays in a hyper-vigilant state both on and off the job. This type of stress often leads to burnout. The term "burnout" comes from the aerospace industry and is used to describe when a rocket expends all its fuel before reaching its final destination. "Pacing rather than racing in the journey to get there" is the best deterrent to burnout.

Remember.... Life is like a dance, it's to be enjoyed while you are doing it, not when you stop.

## CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING - CID

At a later date you will learn more about critical stress debriefing. Right now it is important to know that cumulative events can lead to a stress response in almost any firefighter. Critical incidents include death of a fellow firefighter, multiple casualties, such as an airport crash, or extended and protracted events leading to episodic stress, particularly those that may have media coverage. The death of a child can be particularly traumatic if you have a child of that age.

If you are traumatized by a critical incident, the best thing you can do is to attend the debriefing and seek help until the signs and symptoms lessen. If flashbacks keep reoccurring and get stronger rather than weaker, that may be sign to seek help from your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Critical incidence and traumatic stress are the same mentally as they are physically. They are wounds that need to be cleaned out and disinfected by talking it out. Otherwise a scab may form and life has a way of picking on the infection and disease inside. It is a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek help when you need it.

## SOURCES OF STRESS

Three sources of stresses are: a) Environmental b) Mental c) Physical (See Diagram)

Environmentally the heat in Phoenix in summer is a stressor. Physical stress could be the result of dehydration or overstimulation. Mental stress is in the brain of the beholder. It is how you perceive, evaluate and think about events. While you can't always control events in your life, you can control how you feel and think about them.

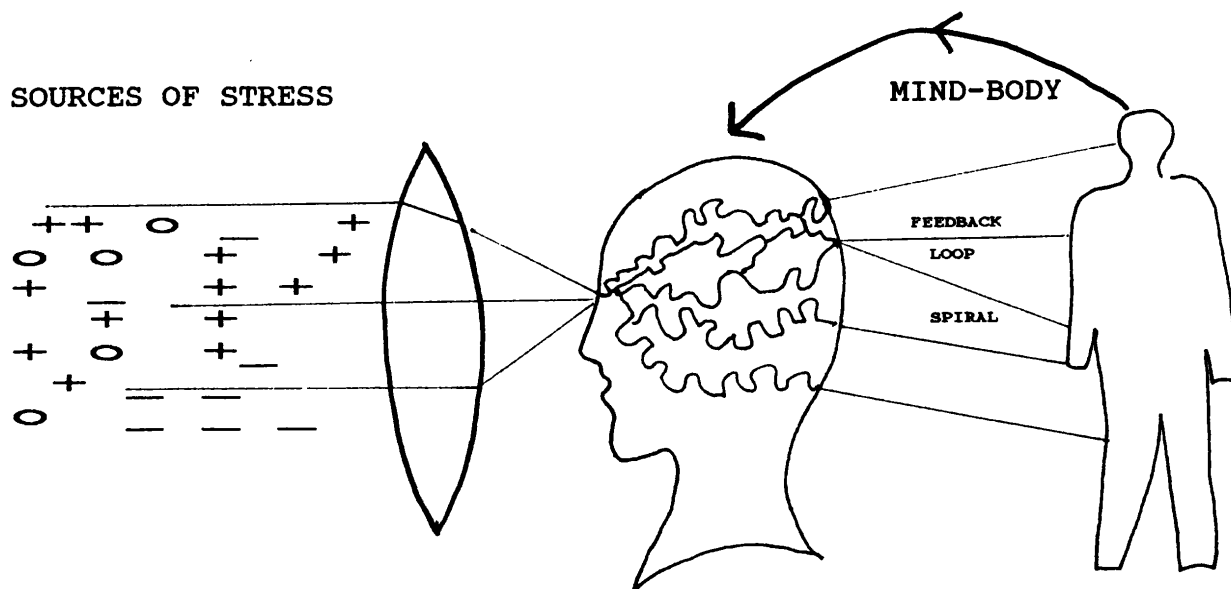
The **GAME TIPS** in this book will help you decrease unwanted stress and increase your chances for success. When you do experience some kind of stress, you can now identify the environmental and physical factors causing that stress. You will be able to take corrective action to develop coping skills to diminish their effects. Any time you experience any stressors sit down and do some stress mapping. Turn your stress cycle/spirals into success cycle/spirals.

Remember.....There are only two rules for Stress Management.....

Rule 1 - Don't sweat the small stuff.

Rule 2 - It's all small stuff.

## THE MENTAL TRAINING TRIAD



**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**MENTAL**

**PHYSICAL**

ATTENTION  
MOTIVATION  
GROWTH  
MINDSET

THOUGHTS  
IMAGES  
MEMORIES  
EXPERIENCE

AROUSAL  
TENSION  
ANXIETY  
STRESS

# PERFORMANCE FORMULA 3



**FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT**

**MASTER SKILL 8**

**POSITIVE AFFIRMATION  
TRAINING  
P.A.T.**

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION (AUTOSUGGESTION) TRAINING: P.A.T.

Positive Affirmations and autosuggestions are powerful ways to program or reprogram your conscious and unconscious mind. Remember your body will treat all vivid thoughts and images as if they are real and happening now.

The constant and daily repetitions of desired statements and suggestions will begin to influence both your emotions and your actions. They can be used to program yourself for success and substitute for old programs that are creating stress.

Guidelines for affirmations:

1. Stated positively
2. Stated actively
3. "I" statements
4. Stated with conviction
5. Stated with emotion
6. Stated with repetition

Listed below are some of my favorites. Write out some that fit you.

For self-acceptance	"I like myself"	_____
On arising	"I feel great"	_____
On challenges	"I can handle it" "I am confident"	_____ _____
Under pressure	"Breathe and Focus" "Easy - Easy"	_____ _____
Mohammed Ali	"I am the greatest"	_____
When racing	"Pace yourself" "Breathe deeply" "Stay centered"	_____ _____ _____
To relax	"My hands are warm" "My muscles are loose"	_____ _____

Once you have some good ones, go over your list and repeat them to yourself or a partner. Choose one you will stand up and repeat to the group - **LOUDLY AND CLEARLY 3 TIMES.**

**NOTES**  
**WORKSHEETS**