

CHAPTER NINE

Courage



69 – Definition

Courage means doing the right thing at the right moment, in spite of risks, fears, and threats which might prevent you from doing. A professional athlete, in fact, is a brave individual: he/she is not making decisions anymore: the situation requires a specific solution and that solution is executed. There is neither decision nor choice: the PRO must obey. If you are still in a state of fear (low propension to risk added to inner self-vulnerability and low self-confidence), the action might not be executed correctly. This means that the action is not effective. For such a reason you need to learn how to perform well and you have to master that gesture. Technical and emotional skills empower self-confidence and self-confidence generates courage.

Courage: Courage is a mental or moral strength to venture, perceive and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.

HE WHO IS NOT COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO TAKE RISKS WILL ACCOMPLISH NOTHING IN LIFE.

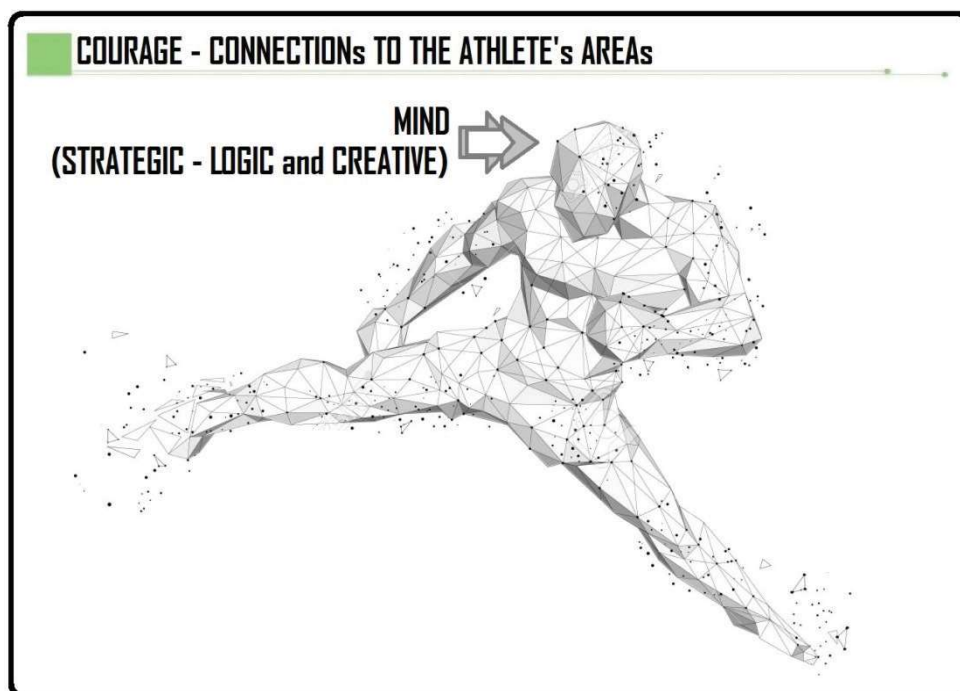
[MOHAMMED ALI – BOXE HEAVYWEIGHT WORLD CHAMPION]



70 – Contextualization

Courage actually affects your mind. Heart and spirit may activate the proper and prompt action (or reaction), but the mind actually drives the action. A conscious mindset can effectively lead to the courage to do the right thing and fix a crucial and dangerous problem.

Courage, in fact, is not a matter of physical talent or technical skills. Courage is rather a matter of psyche. The individual's mind resists the powerful and almost unstoppable pattern of the “*Instinct-Trilemma*” (*Fight-Fly-Freeze*) and finally makes the emotions silent, then makes a quick decision and takes action. We are used to seeing and evaluating the actions of an individual, because they are quite evident, and appreciate the effects of these actions, but courage is an inside-out process that takes place in the mind.





71 – Factors

Courage features, which are significant for the development of the Champion's Mindset, are 6: (1) Propension to Risk – (2) Risk Management – (3) Non Conformity – (4) Internal LOC – (5) Fearlessness – (6) Responsibility.



1. **Propension to Risk:** *Risk is the possibility of something bad happening.*

Any huge target requires a huge risk to be taken. Any huge accomplishment requires you to risk something before you accomplish it. No big target is easy to achieve: I am neither talking about

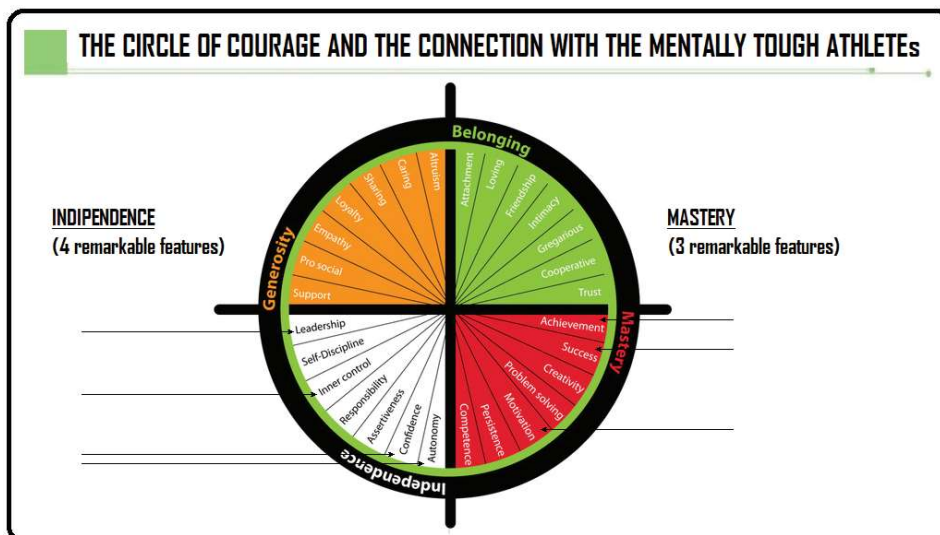
sacrifices and efforts nor about technicalities and physical skills. All of that is “*quantity*” and quantity, in fact, is only a matter of time and commitment, which is the basis of being (and feeling) a sportsman/woman: no doubt that it is within the reach of every athlete. I am rather talking about “*quality*”, something very difficult to develop, even if not impossible, but equally crucial. If you really want to achieve, you must accept that you have to run a risk and you will run risks as easily as you have got an inner attitude to do that, the so-called “*Risk-Appetite*”. The stronger and more natural this attitude, the quickest the results arrive. The first risk you must become familiar with to run is *the risk to fail*. This is not as easy as it seems, because all human beings are provided with a special attitude which is called “*propension to certainty*” (or resistance to uncertainty): if you are not able to modify such a propension, you will never become a champion within. You must become familiar with exposure to failure. There are athletes who have this propension to risk as an innate skill, while others feel limited or stuck if approaching uncertainty. Nevertheless, this risk must be run, otherwise, there is no contest. The other risk you must take is the risk of consuming all the energies, in your performance: *the risk of being emptied*. A champion knows how to balance energies, but when the situation requires an extra push, he/she also knows where to engage the energies and exploit them without fear. He/she does not ever save energies for the way back: is not his/her concern. The only thought is focused to reach the target and the champion will grant all his/her resources for this purpose without additional concerns. If you really learn how to exploit everything you are provided with, you have no alibi: the champions avoid excuses, for they already know everything is up to them. The third risk you have to run is a *technical risk*: any sports discipline has special moves and gestures which lead the performer to a higher score (or to a situation of significant advantage), but which equally require a higher risk: *failure exposure*. Many times, something unexpected occurs that needs your quick and strong reaction and also affects your original strategy. You are consequently forced to adopt risky strategies to balance the situation. When risky events happen, you need to get ready to fulfil your propension to risk and to quickly apply what the situation actually recommends. You take a high risk to achieve a high result: you need to handle this balance, otherwise, the risk may overcome the benefit. Lots of additional risks you need to become familiar with to handle, if you want to become a high-caliber athlete. You need to develop a particular skill that somehow involves your inner analytics: catch the best solution, size the risk, balance the risk with the benefit expected, then apply the solution. You are running a risk, in fact, but you are increasing your propensity to risk.

Courage and bravery are kinds of *self-referential skills*, in a sense. You can develop bravery by being brave: no other possibility is an option. Becoming a brave athlete (and a brave individual) starts with taking action after you take a risk of such an action, in case of evident threats or adversities. Champions have got straight to the point: they know facing their biggest doubts, fears, pains, and worries are the ultimate challenges to achieving their goals and therefore they actually exercise a huge amount of bravery and courage throughout their lives and sports careers. In fact, they realize

that they need to take action if they want to change reality, so the bravery they develop during the battle for their dreams is nothing but a direct consequence. As a recommendation to develop or empower your courage, you ought to follow these steps: (1) shortlist seven things/activities you have always been afraid of and assign a score: 7 is the highest, 1 is the lowest – (2) pick one of them, average score (3–4 points) – (3) start investigating everything related to this activity, to the risks, the threats and also the connection to your emotional balance – (4) convince yourself to take the risk – (5) start taking action: *do this thing*. The so-called “Circle of Courage” is a model of individual development based on the principles of *belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity*. The Mentally tough athlete, the athlete who set him/herself to become the champion, ought to develop bravery and courage for a few specific features included in the 2nd and 3rd quadrants:

2nd quadrant (*Mastery*): (1) achievement – (2) success – (3) motivation;

3rd quadrant (*Independence*): (1) leadership – (2) inner control – (3) confidence – (4) autonomy.



IF YOU ARE NOT WILLING TO RISK THE UNUSUAL, YOU WILL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR THE ORDINARY.
[JIM ROHN – AMERICAN BESTSELLING AUTHOR, MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER]

2. **Risk Management:** *The forecasting and evaluation of specific risks together with the identification of procedures to avoid or minimize their impact.*

Together with *Time*, *Risk* is one of those critical issues that, if handled carelessly, can lead to the collapse of a project. What we consider useful here to underline is the subject’s perception of risk and the impact this aspect generates as a consequence. Risk is connected to success, it is immanent in the path of achieving any challenging result. It is the very concept of “*challenge*” that evokes it: if there is a challenge, then it means, by definition, that the amount of psychic and physical

commitment required is decidedly superior to any routine task or activity; this also means that the pathway includes additional dangerous and risky aspects which cannot be assessed, because they are unknown. The inconsistency of our modest forecasts associated with the fluidity of the future, which “*semper incertum est*” (fate is always uncertain) and certainly does not protect us from threats, whether internal or external, determines the emergence of risk. Risk is the currency with which success is paid: “*Assess and take your risk and then take action*” the managerial motto suggests, without fear of being proven wrong. Playing the game while taking a certain risk means getting out of your comfort zone. In our comfort zone, everything is familiar to us. We find ourselves immersed in a perfect combination of physical and psychological comforts, small difficulties that are perfectly manageable without affecting our nervous tension, obstacles that are not very significant and never really prejudicial, and the occurrence of sudden episodes, manageable by changing the program of the day.

The Comfort Zone is the substance of the routine that keeps us, like a cog, in the standard process of average and mediocrity (political scientists call this same standardized phenomenon “*mediocracy*”). The assumption of risk, intuitively, coincides with the abandonment of the Comfort Zone that switches to the Discomfort Zone, an area open to operations that could hide threats and obstacles which are unknown (intensity/form), but certainly offers enormous opportunities, equally unknown. Anyone who wants to move from the universe of the average to that of success and excellence is forced to cross the path of discomfort and, consequently, to take the responsibility of managing risks. For many Top/Peak-Performers of all fields, the risk is a necessary element in their journey, it is the fuel of their motivation, the fuel that keeps them awake, in a trance state, to devise the best solutions and reach the goal. The motto of the members of the English SAS is “*Who dares, wins*”, switched to the sports dimension it sounds like “*Who plans, wins*”. Beyond brocades, mottos, and proverbs, what often keeps us from daring is not the lack of courage, but the invasive presence of fear. Courage, in fact, is not opposed to fear: Courageousness is an individual who acts “*despite*” fear suggests the opposite; *courage coexists with fear*. The problem arises when fear, which is essential, because required by the instinct of self-preservation, goes beyond its role of alerting the subject thus paralyzing and preventing him/her from deciding, acting, or reacting. The brave subject takes the risk and acts despite fear. The appearance of fear testifies to the transition from a comfort zone to a discomfort zone. Since it is an instinctive mechanism, fear must certainly not be removed, also because it improves concentration, accelerates actions and decisions, and strengthens the will to try again, in case of failure; it has rather be managed. When fear is triggered by exceptional stimuli (a full-blown threat, for example), a defense mechanism is activated which, in sports jargon, is called “*Reaction Trilemma*”: Fight, Fly, or Freeze, (or fight, fly or become paralyzed). The worst instinctive reaction that can happen is the third because it offers the whole target to the opponent and the impact, at that point, is extremely powerful. Other psychodynamic characteristics related to the sports personality determine the exercise of one of the other options (*fight-fly*). This is

what happens on an instinctive, prehistoric, and reptilian level: very effective reactions, but far from logic and rationality. If you want to contrast fear you need to learn how to mediate between instinct responses (*Instinct-Trilemma*) and rational decisions: while doing that you are “*taking a risk*”. Fear is controlled by self-confidence, which is inversely proportional to the degree of self-efficacy (subjective) and self-esteem (equally subjective). It is also manageable through a sense of self-irony that displaces one’s internal enemy (which supports and corroborates the feeling of fear). Fear is also manageable through the continuous, systematic, and passionate study of failures; this kind of analysis, if conducted in a sincere way, develops the intuition to *guess the dangers*, anticipating them. The very awareness of “*expecting*” a threat, in a path of discomfort (risk), transforms the *unexpected* event from a threat into a simple obstacle. Finally, fear can be controlled by the attitude of constantly keeping it at bay, offering it the food that it desires; if the object of fear is death, let us constantly offer it this thought: let us keep the mind focused precisely on death; this attitude, typical of the Samurai of the Japanese Middle Ages, exorcises the fear of death in the long run. Managing risk, in essence, means *learning to live with it*, in most cases (PLW: *Prepare to Live With*). It is a part of the job of those who want to excel. You just have to accept this truth: the ways to manage risk come as a direct consequence of applying to become number one.

RISK, THEN, IS NOT JUST PART OF LIFE. IT IS LIFE. THE PLACE BETWEEN YOUR COMFORT ZONE AND YOUR DREAM IS WHERE LIFE TAKES PLACE. IT’S THE HIGH-ANXIETY ZONE, BUT IT’S ALSO WHERE YOU DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE.

[NICK VUJICIC – AMERICAN SPORT COACH AND MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER]

3. Non-Conformity: *Failure to match or act like other people or things or a conscious refusal to accept generally accepted beliefs.*

We have already spoken a lot about both uniqueness and how peculiar skills of an athlete should be “*specialized*” and pushed to excellence, so that can be finalized in “*specials*” and to strengthen the UPP: *Unique Performance Proposition*. If appropriately endorsed, uniqueness leads to higher competitiveness and becomes the main resource of a champion. What we have to better focus on, now, is that the uniqueness of an athlete also benefits from the contribution of his/her non-conformity. Extraordinary people are frequently provided with equally extraordinary skills and attitudes. Extraordinary features are “*beyond ordinary*”, which means that there are people who have got unconventional skills and qualities which we can also name “*incompliant*” because they do not comply with standards. They are “*non-conformist*” persons and non-conformist athletes. That makes sense if we consider that the hugest champions seem to be provided with supernatural skills and qualities. What we have to understand, for our specific purpose, is that such an inner non-conformism, when present, must be fed and protected until your personality is strong enough to express itself with as much freedom as possible. The competitiveness of an unconventional athlete is something operational and tangible: needs time, space and open-mindedness to be

expressed in the tangible world (the competition, the contest). If we realize we have special skills, we have the personal obligation and commitment to protect them from accusations and judgments from others and to give them the best way to express and affirm themselves. We ought to understand how such a skill might be employed for the final purpose (the victory) and then make them a strength, rather than being ashamed of it (because non-compliant with standards and conventional approaches). For such reasons non-conformity sounds like a huge skill for the Champion: you need huge self-confidence to become who you really are, to behave as you really desire, in a world of conventions.

GREAT THINGS ARE NOT ACCOMPLISHED BY THOSE WHO YIELD TO TRENDS AND FADS AND POPULAR OPINION.

[JACK KEROUAC – AMERICAN BESTSELLING AUTHOR]

4. **Internal-LOC:** *Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they, as opposed to external forces (beyond their influence), have control over the outcome of events in their lives.*

Being aware means answering certain seemingly trivial but very powerful questions: *Who am I? Where I am? Where do I want to go? Why do I want to go right there? What choices does my vision involve? What sacrifices am I willing to make to become myself?* Exhaustively answering these questions requires considerable internal work and energy expenditure, but you cannot escape that. The answers include the motivation to action: we cannot ignore such a task. The LOC (*Locus of Control*) expresses the tendency to make the outside world responsible for the events and the impact they have on our personal life. Those who tend to complain and shift responsibilities to the outside have an external LOC; vice versa, those who believe they have been the “*cause of the problem*” or in any case have actively taken part in the determination of an event (*contributing cause*), have a strong internal LOC. Self-efficacy consists in the subjective perception of high competence in a specific area of activity (“*I know how to do that thing well*”), while Resilience does not need to be described. Well, it is neither enough to define the goal, nor to devise an action plan, if you do not first work strictly on your inner matrix. A man who wants to assert himself is aware of himself (self-image as sincere and truthful as possible), has a very solid internal LOC, calmly admits he has areas of self-efficacy, and, above all, is a resistant subject. The combination of these four elements determines the onset of motivation which, little by little, is ridden by the conscience. It manages to activate the resources that are congruent, in quantity and quality, with the effort required to achieve the result. The *Inner Matrix* evolves by challenging our original hypotheses and those limiting beliefs that had kept us stuck. The goal: the same goal that we had intuited and were unable to represent before, today appears specific, detailed, and within the reach of our abilities. The goal, that same goal, is within our reach simply because it was conceived. That goal is the source of the action. Take Action. Your goal will follow.

I AM NOT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME. I AM WHAT I DECIDED TO BECOME.

[CARL GUSTAV JUNG – SWISS PSYCHOLOGIST AND PSYCHIATRIST]

5. **Fearlessness:** *The quality of having no fear. Strength of mind to carry on in spite of the danger.*

The term “*fear*” originates from a distortion of the Latin word “*pavor-paveris*”: fear. This term, in turn, derives from the verb “*fear*” substantiated: “*timeo-es-ui-utum-ēre*”. The root of the verb “*timeo*”, in essence, can be traced back to the origin of the Latin verb “*timēre*”. Linguists and codicils believe that the root of the verb fear originates from ancient Sanskrit: “*tam-rā*”, in the literal meaning of “*obscurity*”, properly alludes to a state of obscuration, disturbance, dulling of the mind. Fear, therefore, has been considered for millennia as the condition in which the mind (therefore: *the rational center*) is darkened by an external agent or an internal agent. It is generally understood as the feeling of strong worry, insecurity, and anguish, which is felt in the presence or at the thought of real or imaginary dangers. Professor Umberto Galimberti describes fear in his Dictionary of Psychology with the following words: “*Primary emotion of defense, caused by a dangerous situation that can be real, anticipated by prediction, evoked by memory or produced by fantasy. Fear is often accompanied by an organic reaction, for which the autonomic nervous system is responsible, which prepares the organism for the emergency situation, arranging it, even if in a non-specific way, to prepare the defenses that usually translate into attitudes of fight and flight.*”

Fear is, in fact, a brilliant stratagem that nature has organically inoculated in the living being, which has allowed a strategic evolution of the species, but which has its roots in uncertain and very often misleading. You are afraid of a real threat (which is reasonable and correct), but you are also afraid of an imaginary or eventual threat, which leads to serious problems and uncontrollable pathologies. If it is clear that fear is a contingent tactic that collaborates with the survival instinct, by which the principle of self-preservation is governed, then it will be equally clear that the source of fear (of all fears) is the *fear of death*. It takes different forms and different declinations from man to man, based on experience, the degree of internal/external LOC (*Principle of Responsibility*), deep and latent beliefs, and age. Fear of loneliness, sense of inadequacy, vanity, immanentism (inability to project oneself in the future), inaction, egocentrism, ineffectiveness, mendacity, presumption, victimhood, self-pity, nihilism, identification: all these disabilities, incapacitating and limiting, are psychically related to the fear of death according to a regressive internal dynamic based on the sedimentation of emotional slime that stratifies, year after year, decade after decade, and finally returns to the subject an unbalanced response (the disorder) that can degrade into a real pathology. When focused on an imaginary object or on the possibility that a truly unlikely event occurs, fear turns out to be a terribly harmful element, harmful to the balanced structuring of the personality, hostile and averse to the achievement of results, intended in a perspective of “*evolution of the generic individual*”. Fear must be found, faced, broken down, explored (origin, effects), compromised (negotiated), silenced, or

definitively annihilated. When it does not determine real immobility, fear contaminates the rational center of the individual, makes it dysfunctional, determines a psychic/emotional discrepancy, and, consequently, impacts the path of action, in the cycle of success. It basically contaminates the decision-making process (when taking action), but even more often it inhibits the decision itself (inaction). It envelops the primary emotions, pollutes and poisons them by stealing the energy of passion and any other quality useful for evolution or simple manifestation, and transforms an opinion (*limiting opinion*) into conviction (*limiting belief*). From that moment on, the interpretation of reality, which forms the basis of the “*individual representation of reality*” that each individual constructs through his/her own individual perceptual system will be unequivocally based on the “*limiting beliefs*” generated and fed by fear, regardless of the form that this has assumed, settling into the personality of the subject. Until we eradicate these convictions, consequences of specific fears, we are condemned to the failure to which those same convictions aspire, because either everything changes or everything repeats itself forever. It is evident that fear is the intangible representation of our “*Internal Enemy*”, which also runs a very tangible power over us, taming our behaviors.

ONCE YOU BECOME FEARLESS, LIFE BECOMES LIMITLESS.

[ELIO D'ANNA – ITALIAN PHILOSOPHER, LIFE COACH]

6. **Responsibility:** *The state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone.*

Responsibility is certainly a critical element for various reasons. First of all because very often the subject officially burdened with certain responsibilities, fails to fulfill the expectations of those who assigned them, entering into a condition of stress, high psycho-physical tension, and psychological pressure. In the second instance, there is often a dystonia between the attribution of responsibility and the power to make decisions and transform them into actions, to fulfill that specific responsibility. Responsibility is a fundamental element for managerial management as it is for the achievement of any sports result. Responsibility “*includes everything*”. Moreover, in common words, some individuals are accused of being “*irresponsible*” in the precise sense of being unaware of the consequences of their actions, or of consciously ignoring them, which should make us reflect. A responsible person simply “*responds*” to the results of his/her actions or is he/she also required to evaluate the consequences of these actions in advance, and therefore to correct them at the decisional stage? In the first case, he is simply a *man of his word*, in the second case he is a *strategist*. Are these elements sufficient, even when combined with each other, to define a responsible person? Is there something missing? The term “*responsibility*” is hardly used, we almost always speak of “*reactivity*”, or “*responsiveness*”: the quality/ability to offer a quick, timely response, but above all congruent with the scenario and what is happening during the competition. Yet, intuitively, the moment of confrontation with the opponent is a partial moment that does not represent the complexity (and

quantity) of the work and commitment of the athlete. As decisive as it is, the competition represents only the apex of effort and concentration, the moment of evidence. We could say that training is *work*, while the match is just a *stage*. There are two kinds of responsibility: *Real Responsibility* (which is a very rare and equally powerful element) and *Mendacious* or *Fictitious Responsibility* (which is completely inconsistent). The first comes from within, it is a quality of being and takes the power needed to be sustained just from the inside. Generally, it is refractory to titles or proxies (it does not need it), it is resistant to criticism, it expresses itself in an evident and tangible way and it is recognized and appreciated by the subjects who benefit from it. The second, otherwise, arises from the outside, it is a *defect of being*, it is fragile and vulnerable because it is based on negotiation (*do ut des*), it is temporary (it is linked to a contractual term), it is considered a weight (or an aggravation) and ends up being detested, blamed and hindered. Finally, responsibility testifies to the quality of the goal we have set ourselves to achieve. “*I want to be the world champion*”, he will have confessed to himself any champion of any sport one day, when he was still very far from his goal. That *personal statement* has the force of a contract. He/she took responsibility and that responsibility gave him/her back the resources, a path, and the opportunity to become the best version of him/herself, one day. This assumption gave the strength to fight, attention, concentration, two legs and two arms to be reared patiently, with constancy, a head to protect and a mindset to be strengthened, year after year. If otherwise, the responsibility comes from the outside (*Outside-In Process*), then we must be wary: there will be catastrophes. (1) It may be that the set goal is not (or is no longer) “*ecological*” or coherent and in harmony with other goals achieved (family, personal interests, economic interests); (2) it may be that the goal is not (or is no longer) “*corresponding*”, in the sense that the athlete is no longer really motivated to achieve it; (3) it may be that he is not actually able to direct or handle pressure with sufficient emotional distance, being overwhelmed by events; (4) it could be that the athlete has difficulties in making rational decisions, because they involve too many resources close to him (sense of guilt); (5) finally, it could be that he is not sufficiently competent to carry out the role. In all these cases it fatally happens that the level of psychophysical stress exceeds the *Performance Balance Point* so far (the so-called IPS: *Ideal Performance State*). Ultimately, the responsibility of an athlete should be intended as a long-life “*journey into being*” in search of one’s motivation and the definition of everything we wish to sacrifice to achieve a goal, an enhancement of such a goal, remembering that everything, always, springs from an “*inner yes*”, that everything is born in the invisibility of our essence and then solidifies in reality. *Visibilia ex invisibilibus*, Latin used to say: the visible comes from invisible.

RESPONSIBILITY IS ACCEPTING THAT YOU ARE THE CAUSE AND THE SOLUTION OF THE MATTER.

[GEORGE IVANDVITCH GURDJIEFF – ARMENIAN PHILOSOPHER, AUTHOR]



72 – Threats

If you cannot handle uncertainty, then you have to know that you can learn how to cope with it. If you don't want to, you'd better become familiar with failure. Even though it is not evident to our eyes, no real goal is achievable without running a risk. A sized and pondered risk, but a risk is run, definitely. If you don't learn how to detect, size, and manage risks, you are condemned to the first level of competition: *victory is always uncertain to happen* because is affected by possible occurrences which you did not predict in advance. You are condemned to improvisation, to a feeling of being unprepared. If you don't learn how to cope with fear, you are condemned to permanent psychic imprisonment. About the threats in case of violation:

#	FACTOR	POSSIBLE THREAT
1	PROPENSITY TO RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Losing chances • Talent locked
2	RISK MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unexpected turns to failures • Incorrect reactions
3	NON-CONFORMITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine • Non-risk-taking athlete
4	INTERNAL LOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaining • Fear of external environment • Difficulties turn to inabilities
5	FEARLESSNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviours imprisoned • Creativity is locked • Paralysis
6	RESPONSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant complaining • Suffering others' plans • Rage and bad emotions

1 You prefer avoiding rather than approaching: your fixed mindset will prevent you from succeeding because only in the heart of the action, the chance comes out clearly. You will lose chances and your talent will be kept locked and unknown.

2 Unpreparedness is what happens to whom doesn't feel well in facing uncertainties and, when forced, cannot manage to handle and overturn the situation. You will react incorrectly because you will fall into the "*Instinct-Trilemma*" (Fight/Fly/Freeze) without any plan in your hands. Unpredictable occurrences will lead you straight to failure because you do not know "*what to do*", or how to react.

3 Conventional routines drive conventional athletes. Conventional athletes are not champions, but can only aspire to be good/average athletes. Your arsenal will remain poor and locked, limited by your weak attitude to risk-taking.

4 Risk-avoidance, unwillingness to learn from failures, unfamiliarity to deal with uncertainties, and compliance to conventional rules will slowly bring you towards a loser attitude: systematic complaining, alibis, fear of eternal environment, and, finally, the progressive transformation of your current difficulties into inabilities. All of these preventing features depend on your inner belief that the world controls you in spite of vice-versa.

5 Fear and being scared of fear itself lead you to psychic imprisonment. You enter a vicious circle from which you cannot escape easily. In fact, fear is crucially important because forces your attitude to focus on risks, pressure, and threats. You do not have to put your fear "*in front of you*", but "*behind you*", so that you will feel motivated to run, to take action, and to execute tasks. If you do not face and overcome your fear, your creativity will remain locked and your best potential behaviors will remain unknown because imprisoned by invisible chains. So take action, rather than postpone.

6 The world wants you as its slave. The world needs most of the people feeling psychologically imprisoned and limited to support the choices and the projects of a few ones, who take responsibility for their business. The first segment is the workforce which is needed to achieve the projects of the second segment of people. You need to decide which segment you want to belong to. If you take full responsibility, you will be given all the resources needed to achieve your goal: physical, mental, and financial. Otherwise, you will always be complaining, suffering others' plans, and full of rage and bad emotions.



73 – Opportunities

When fearless, you become brave and courageous. You can actually affirm yourself as an intact human being. You are capable of acting according to your will and ethics to fulfill your desires, in spite of reacting to offenses that somehow are related to fear. When fearless, you can catch your uniqueness and turn it into a competitive weapon to succeed. When fearless, you are free: ready to succeed in any contest you like.

#	FACTOR	STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE
1	PROPENSITY TO RISK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catching more chances • Talent is unlocked
2	RISK MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No huge surprises • Appropriate reactions
3	NON-CONFORMITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free expressions of your uniqueness
4	INTERNAL LOC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control your world/sports-career • Creates chances to victory
5	FEARLESSNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living your inner essence • Being one • Integrity
6	RESPONSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal LOC very high • Increasing your arsenal according to your will

1 A strong propensity to risk will enable you to catch more chances, not only during competition but even in ordinary life. Your sports career will be enriched accordingly. Your talent will progressively be unlocked and you will start thinking bigger. Even your self-image and your self-confidence will be awarded and empowered.

2 Managing the risk in the appropriate way will enable you to control the tournament from a strategic and tactical perspective. You will react accordingly to surprises because you should have already planned them in advance. You will switch to the second level of the competition: *Compete after winning*.

3 Self-confidence, added to a strong self-image, will facilitate catching and exploiting your inner special talents. Your uniqueness will become one of your weapons in winning the competitions. You will enter the winners' cycle.

4 When you understand that everything depends on you, that everything which you may control must be under your unique control, you have entered that special pathway to become a champion. You will not complain anymore about anything and you will create circumstances to apply your uniqueness and chances for victory.

5 Fearlessness will free you and will allow you to behave as "*one*". Will progressively lead you to spiritual and social integrity

6 *It's none of your business: it's my business!* This might be the statement of the responsible athlete, in a sense. Everything depends on you, every goal is up to you. Great responsibility, but you're equally given all that you need to execute such a responsibility. Your huge goal will give you resources: the huger the goal is, the better the resources will be. Your Internal-LOC will be increased accordingly and you will become good at increasing your arsenal depending on your will and your efforts. You define the limit because *you are the limit*, and you bear this in your mind very clearly.



74 – Methodologies

The primary psychic factors related to Adaptation are the following:

- Risk Management —
- Internal LOC —
- Fearlessness —
- Responsibility —

The methodologies for empowering these factors are actually based on psychic skills and competencies.

Precisely explore and study any crucial action and shortlist everything which may happen as a consequence, if you made that action. Try separating possible risks from threats and from current risks. Then learn how to quickly assess the risk by applying a cost/benefits mental model, then make your decision. For any action, for any circumstance, for any level of competition. Try this during a gym training session before applying to an official match. Try, experiment, assess the result and understand. Do this lots of time, then you get ready to use risk assessment during an official competition.

Risk Management will enable you progressively decrease your fear. Why? Because you are experiencing what fear is, because you're actually confronting the risk of an action that creates fear. Because you're progressively embracing your fear and you will become able to put fears behind you and run towards success, in spite of keeping them in front of you and being stuck. Face your fears in any possible training session: run against your fears, so that you can destroy them, finally.

Responsibility and Internal LOC are strictly connected and recall your self-confidence, your self-effectiveness, your ambition, and your sense of control. Create lots of circumstances rationally, and consciously, and turn these circumstances into achievements. Experience continuously your power to affect, adapt and create reality and you'll be increasing both your Internal-LOC and your sense of responsibility.

PILLAR # 07 - ADAPTATION					
	TOPIC	GOAL	ACTION	EXERCISE	REPETITION
1	RISK MANAGEMENT	Apply bravery to competition Exploit each opportunity Reduce the risks	Think of an action Breakdown the risk connected Assess the risks Find a solution	Create situations Make your choice and finalize See the risk running (in action)	Once per week Long Life work
2	INTERNAL LOC	Full control of external events Strong mix of Mindset Tools Philosophic attitude to victory	Create conditions Enter the contest Do the job and finalize	Find the internal causes of effects (outside-in process) Make the right connections	Long Life job
	FEARLESSNESS	Express your inner self	Explore your inner self Haunt your fears See the cause of your fears	Create fearful scenarios Go through those scenarios Face your fears and win	Long Life job
3	RESPONSIBILITY	Internal LOC increase All things related to you The owner of your own destiny	Select your project Take full ownership Finalize time-bounded targets	Pick the effects Find the connections Explain reasons and causes of these connections	Long Life job



75 – Practical Techniques

The “*Yes-Attitude*” will enhance this skill: take action, have fun doing lots, and do not be scared of failing. This is a good definition of Propensity to Risk.

Risk Management is strictly related to the propensity to risk and is crucial to catch multiple chances during a competition. You need to: (1) realize the presence of a risk – (2) decline the risk (quality/size) – (3) define the impact of any risk (low/medium/high) – (4) prepare a contingency plan for any risk – (5) manage the risk: *erase – reduce – prepare to live with* – (6) go to action and perform at your best.

You need to be provided with strong self-confidence to affirm your precious Non-Conformity because you might be contaminated by possible effects of criticism coming from your opponents, coaches, companions, and even from your audience. You must be compliant with the code of ethics and the rules of the sport, but you should not ever give up your uniqueness. So take action, affirm yourself, and ignore criticism and blame coming from outside. Make your results talk on your behalf.

Internal LOC is strictly related to both your code of ethics and your inner philosophy and sense of responsibility. Consciousness is the key, added to your sense of responsibility. These two generate beliefs that activate resources; decision follows, then action and achievements. You need to understand what is really under your control. Try realizing that, most parts of the events you have been involved in: (1) either had been influenced by you (when conscious), (2) or you were completely subjected (unconscious).

Self-confidence, added to a strong self-image and to self-control, can facilitate the emersion of a crucial state, for the Champion and the Peak-Performer: *fearlessness*. If you want to get such a crucial state you need to develop those skills first, and you will equally get a kind of courage that enables you to do the right thing at the right moment with the appropriate amount of energy. Fearlessness is achieved by taking decisive actions and proving to yourself that: (1) you can do that, you can achieve, in spite of your original fear – (2) nothing crucial happens if you fail – (3) you can take profit from both a victory and from a failure: lots of lessons to learn, to prepare yourself challenging your fears again. Before taking action, you ought to find the real causes of your fears, which are directly related to the exploration of your inner self vulnerabilities.

When you get a strong sense of Responsibility you feel any business you are involved in is totally yours: you respond to yourself about resources, motivation, organization, and results. Your sense of

responsibility can only be developed as long as you work on your internal-LOC empowerment. In addition to that, you can apply these crucial recommendations: (1) stop lying to yourself and to others – (2) do not identify any more – (3) do not express negative emotions – (4) stop making excuses for yourself – (5) stop complaining – (6) learn how to manage your resources – (7) overcome procrastination – (8) be consistent and stick to your schedule – (9) start realizing nothing ever happens by chance – (10) start realizing your life is the projection of your conscious activities and of your level of being. In short: if you want to counteract your external LOC, you must resist routine habits.



76 – Powerful Questions

Use these questions to force yourself (as an athlete) or your coaches to switch to a higher mental perspective and unlock additional energy to keep being in the right direction. All the questions require specific and honest answers which may also take a few minutes or more, to be developed.

- 1.1 Do You think you feel comfortable in presence of risk? Why? Are you able to manage the risk? Are you capable of declining all the risks connected to an event? I mean: *possible, current, and actual* risk?

✓ *Your attitude to risk-propensity and to uncertainty is tested. Your ability in running a risk is tested as well.*



- 1.2 What is the difference between *possible, current, and actual* risk? Explain.

✓ *SAME.*



- 1.3 Define expected and unexpected events: do risks only come from unexpected events? Why?

✓ *SAME.*



- 1.4 What is your natural reaction against *actual risk* (threat)? How do you handle that?

✓ *Your level of resilience, of adversity-challenging, of managing the risk is tested.*



- 1.5 Do you think a tournament might be won without running any risk?

✓ *Your opinion is required, but your answer is equally testifying the size of your commitment.*



- 1.6 Do you think you have to win “*managing the risk*”? How do you assess the risk?

✓ *Risk assessment is not a talent, but a competence that needs to be developed.*



- 1.7 Any risk is hiding a big opportunity: talk about that, and explain your point on this subject.
- ✓ *SAME. The two points are connected: any competition includes risks (to be run), which can be turned into chances.*



- 2.1 Risk may influence your behavior when performing: how do you react in such a case? Which kind of chances may be hidden in a huge risk?
- ✓ *SAME.*



- 2.2 *Fight/Fly/Freeze* added to *Routine/Disturb/Emergency*-Model: explain the connection, based on your experience.
- ✓ *Help yourself using the following pattern:*

	(WORK)	FIGHT	FLY	FREEZE
ROUTINE				
DISTURB				
EMERGENCY				



- 2.3 Risk escalation: maybe facing the upcoming risk could reduce the final impact: how much are you confident with this? Why? Explain through an experience in an official tournament.
- ✓ *Your familiarity with Risk-Running is tested.*



- 3.1 Rules: what do you think about rules?
- ✓ *You need to be aware of your actual level of discipline. This figure depends on your definition of "Rule".*



- 3.2 A champion is familiar with *breaking the rules*: what is your opinion about this topic?
- ✓ *Your opinion is asked. Your answer includes your openness or limiting belief about this topic.*



- 3.3 You think you have *some kind of uniqueness*: how much do you feel confident in expressing your eccentricity, your *unique electricity*? Do you know how to express it in an unpretentious way?

✓ *Honest and better knowledge of yourself is needed.*



- 3.4 How much are you sensitive to others' judgments? How come? Why do you need to fulfil others' expectations? What do you believe this judgment may add to your training and to your performance?

✓ *Your sensitivity to others' expectations can destroy your performance. You need to be aware of such a risk.*



- 4.1 In your opinion: why does an event happen? Why does this event happen the way it happens?

✓ *Your sincere opinion on this topic is strongly needed. Your future depends on your opinion and position on this matter.*



- 4.2 How much influence do you think you can have on the external environment? Why? How do you think you can increase this percentage?

✓ *The strength of your Internal-LOC is tested.*



- 4.3 What is the limiting belief preventing you from taking charge of everything which happens to you, in your small world?

✓ *SAME, from another perspective.*



- 4.4 When you fail: whose is the responsibility? Whose is the fault? Why?

✓ *SAME, from another perspective.*



- 4.5 There are two possibilities: (1) being a *pawn* – (2) being the *chess checker*. Which segment do you belong to? Which segment you would like to belong to? How do you prepare yourself to have such an influence on the outside world?

✓ *SAME, but you need to go in deep and formulate your powerful conjectures to overcome.*



➤ 5.1 What is “*fear*” in your opinion?

✓ *Your definition, which is probably based on your past experiences and on your current and unresolved issues, is required.*

□

➤ 5.2 How does fear influence your behavior and your performance?

✓ *Your psychic balance, the quality of your self-image, and your sincerity are tested.*

□

➤ 5.3 What are your fears? Which desires are these fears connected to?

✓ *Start exploring your fears.*

□

➤ 5.4 Find a way to connect to your internal and hidden side: you ought to catch your real fears and explore them. Remember: when you are capable of seeing your fears, you have started the process of self-healing.

✓ *As soon as you “see” your fears, you’ve already started the process of healing. So start at the soonest.*

□

➤ 6.1 Are you a responsible person? Why do you define yourself this way?

✓ *Your definition is required.*

□

➤ 6.2 What is the connection between reliability and responsibility?

✓ *SAME.*

□

➤ 6.3 Being responsible means that you are the sole owner of your business: are you such a person?

✓ *Is that ever really possible? Are you such a kind of person? Explain the reason why, bring yourself the evidence.*

□

➤ 6.4 Are you such an athlete?

✓ *SAME, from a sports perspective.*

□

- 6.5 What do you think you need to prove to yourself that everything is influenced by your sense and behavior related to responsibility? How think you can increase such a conviction?
- ✓ *Start developing powerful conjectures on that.*



- 6.6 In fact responsibility means that becoming a world champion only depends on you and on your level of being. Do you think that this sentence is true? Why?
- ✓ *Your inner Code of Ethics is explored and tested.*



77 – Instructions & Recommendations

The PRO attitude makes you do the right thing in the appropriate situation: the technical and tactical circumstance asks the contender for a special solution and the solution comes in the form of execution. The champion's mindset overcomes such an essential pragmatism. The champion applies the best solution which fits both circumstances, time, and requirements, and finalizes the action to a mix of elegance, effectiveness, and technical beauty. The champion is provided with a complete repertoire and can rely on a strong arsenal. The battlefield is the way to express his/her UPP (*Unique Performance Proposition*). Doing the right thing at the right time according to excellent technical standards. You need to overcome fear, to perform in such a way. Fear of failing, first of all, of not being lucid enough in that crucial moment, of getting wrong. The champion knows that everything may never happen, but he/she has focused *on controllability* and acts accordingly. There is no compromise: the champion chooses the best solution and executes his/her possible best. When in the flow, the champion *cannot even choose*: the gesture and the action express themselves on the battlefield. The actions obey to circumstances and cross the champion to express their best.

Do not ever think that the crucial victory may come by chance. Nothing great may ever come unless great efforts have been engaged. Your crucial victory will be something you have built precisely, the set of circumstances which match your strong action.

As we already know, *Fear* is one of those crucial items which may definitely influence the emotional balance of an athlete and, as a consequence, may strongly affect, reduce or even invalidate the performance, in any field. Fear is a natural, powerful, and primitive human emotion. It involves a universal biochemical response as well as a high individual emotional response. Fear forces an individual to cope with the *Instinct Trilemma* if you're not trained to offer a different and rational response: *Fight – Fly – Freeze*. Fear is crucial and powerful, but fear is even necessary and irrepressible. Nevertheless, fear might be managed, reduced, and mastered. That's what you have to do.

Fear is controlled with confidence – The first way to contrast fear is to mature a strong perception of being prepared to face it and such an inner perception can only be developed with preparation. Training, preparation, and direct experience of fear are 3 primary tools to cope with fear. People feel naturally scared by the unknown, is a natural emotional response, is human, and, finally, is a direct consequence of the instinct of self-preservation: *avoiding the unknown*. Coping with fear, therefore, is

a matter of becoming lucid and rationalizing the cause of fear: such activity requires strong training and preparation. Skills and training are practiced constantly to the point where it becomes second nature (it puts an *automatic response* in the brain's computer) to the point where it becomes even boring, so that, when an athlete is facing a threat, he/she already knows how exactly defusing that situation. Such a strategy includes the following: (a) definition of the cause of the fear and of the fear itself – (b) the creation of realistic scenarios/simulations which even include a real threat – (c) taking action in the situation and fixing it – (d) when effectively fixed, do lots and lots of time.

Fear is controlled with humor – Laughing in the face of fear has been proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce stress, panic, and all the emotional impulses which emerge in case of fear. Some Champions and Peak-Performers set themselves a challenge to laugh every day on selections courses to lessen the strain and pressure. In fact “*Humor is about playing with ideas and concepts*”. So, whenever we see something as funny, we're looking at it from a different perspective. Humor is another way to utilize imagery and mental visualization. In short: when we apply humor to a crucial and critical situation, equally not urgent, we are unconsciously exploiting our skills of imagery and visualization, we are exploring the risky situation, in a sense. Such an attitude lets another perspective clearly emerge and affirm itself on the original one. You can easily resize the risk and regain control and self-confidence, time by time.

Fear is controlled by keeping it at the forefront of your mind – This mental hack was intensely utilized by the ancient warriors of ancient Japan. Both *ancient Samurai* (but also *Thai warriors* in Thailand) got used to keeping fear at the forefront of their minds. They were trained to have death (and all the fears which from death descend) as their primary thought in their mind: continuously, systematically, intensively. The core principle was that the real warrior, to be courageous, brave, effective, even honest, and spiritually intact, had to think about death any time of the day. A samurai should always be prepared to die: whether his own or someone's else. If he engaged in combat fully determined to die, he would have overcome his opponents and would have been alive; if he wished to survive in the battle, he would have surely met death. The amazing thing about fear is that when you run to it, it runs away. Another way to express such a concept is that postponing, due to fear, makes you a coward while taking action defeats fear. So you have to assess the risk and you need to take action: you have to embrace your fear.

Fear is controlled by studying failure – Spend time studying failure: analyze, learn the lesson, and forget. All too often we focus on the successes of others, overlooking their failures. But if we did both, including analyzing failed plans, we would dispel fear as we then apply that information. Studying victories and applying their lessons exactly whilst expecting similar outcomes is just as illogical as repeating mistakes and expecting different results. Sway that fear by analyzing your plans from all angles, different perspectives, and rational criteria. Navy Seals use to say that the word “*FEAR*” spells itself out: *False Evidence Appearing Real*.



You need to learn how to play your game mentally. Such a practice is very effective and is very frequently utilized by champions, peak performers, and soldiers. They learn how to cope with difficult or crucial situations in their mind: the systematic and continuous repetition of visualization generates “*imagery*”, which is a kind of psychometric skill very useful to face crucial situations without stress. You learn to play your game thousands of times, to fine-tune your movements and gestures, to fail and correct your moves and strategies and stand back. You learn how to win, before winning: a kind of theoretical training to prepare you to handle victories and success. The core concept which lies behind such a practice is that “*if you can imagine it, you can achieve it*” (and vice-versa). You know that visualization will be of benefit to you when you realize you want to control the way you act in a particular situation. Using visualization, athletes have been able to face their fears, of heights or open water (for example). You need to follow the 5-steps process to strengthen your imagery skills:

- 1) *Relax the body.* Spend five minutes taking deep breaths and sitting quietly, undisturbed.
- 2) *Picture yourself in a stressful situation,* the situation you want to change, but you performing calmly and in control.
- 3) *Visualize the scenario* with as much detail as possible, appealing to all five of your senses. Imagine the weather, the people around you, the sights, and the smells. Imagine your opponent, the referee, or the audience. Try to hear the noises of the match, the shot of the start. Try hearing your name spoken by the megaphone.
- 4) *Be realistic.* If you are imagining running a marathon, for instance, imagine being hungry, hot, and tired as you would be on the day. Nonetheless, imagine yourself overcoming those obstacles. See the obstacles and see yourself overcoming them: see your efforts, see your face, see your inner smile.
- 5) Focus on how you feel after your success. How does the success make you feel? Attach yourself to that feeling. Create an *emotional anchor*.



Amateurs, low-quality athletes, and individuals tend to create invisible barriers which surround them. They find themselves imprisoned in a mental jail. There are no iron bars preventing them from escaping, only limiting beliefs. The primary conviction which holds these individuals back from moving and from setting for a career jump is the responsibility: they are convinced that they are (and will ever be) victims of the powerful people, of the government, of the outside world, including rules, poverty, unluckiness, hurdles, illness. The champions have a completely opposite perspective: they deeply feel and rationally know the world is abundant and start operating supported by their spirit-self. They really think they are responsible. The three stages of the evolutionary process are the following: *I am a victim* → *I am not responsible for what happens to me* → *I take responsibility* → *I am completely responsible*. You need to become a responsible person and athlete, so you will progressively tend to be unafraid, aggressive, an ultra-competitive warrior who approaches life and competitions like a battle. As soon as you take responsibility for your life and career, your internal LOC will start increasing, as a consequence.



