



10

# COMMON CHALLENGES

A Guidebook to UNLOCK the POTENTIAL of  
**COLLEGE & PRO ATHLETES**

**THIS GUIDEBOOK WILL GIVE YOU A**  
***GAME-CHANGING***  
**ADVANTAGE IN SPORTS AND LIFE!**



Hello, I'm James Gantis, the founder of Athletes Unlocked. I have over 35 years of leadership training experience for athletes of all ages, skill levels, goals, and challenges. As a result, I've gained valuable insights into what they need to enhance their mental fitness and successfully navigate the inevitable obstacles of sports and life.

If you're genuinely motivated to reach your full potential, my team and I have created guidebooks like this one to help you advance to the next stage of your development.

**DO YOU WANT A**  
***MENTAL EDGE?***

You are your own leader; you have the power to determine who you want to be and what you wish to achieve. Do you want to settle for merely being okay or even just good, or do you aspire to be elite? If it's the latter, focus on mastering these five essential skills:

**5**

**Knowing Yourself**  
**Understanding Others**  
**Managing Yourself**  
**Enhancing People Skills**  
**Reaching Your Goals**

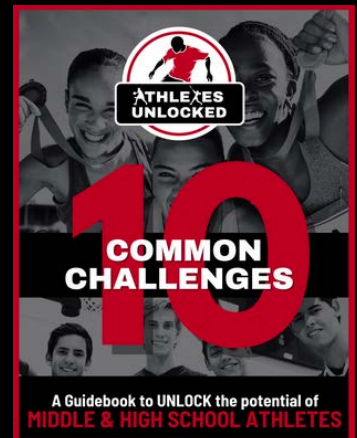
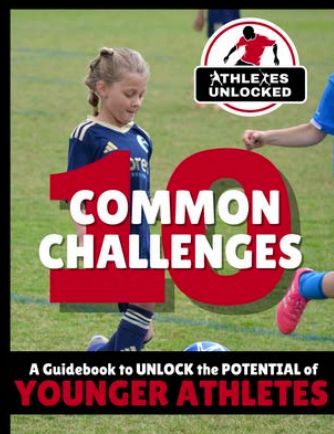
To elevate your performance, it's essential to say no to distractions and time-wasting activities, while saying yes to increased focus on work, study, play, and rest necessary for reaching your full potential. This requires making wise, informed decisions in each moment of your day.

The more adept you become at mastering this, the more you'll cultivate these five key skills, helping you achieve your goals and unlock your true potential.



# OUR PROGRAMS ARE TRUE GAME-CHANGERS!

**ATHLETES UNLOCKED** introduces a collection of guidebooks designed to help **PARENTS, COACHES & ATHLETES** at all levels—professional, collegiate, and youth—overcome challenges they face both in **SPORTS** and in **LIFE**.



**info@athletes-unlocked-365.com**



# How motivated are you to **EXCEL** in SPORTS & LIFE?



Many young athletes possess the physical abilities required for their sport, yet they often lack the mental fitness training needed to elevate their performance to the next level. This guidebook explores ten common challenging scenarios you may face, providing valuable insights on how to think, communicate, and respond effectively in difficult situations.

# **10** COMMON **CHALLENGES**

athletes tend to run into:



**Goal Setting & Accomplishment**

**Responding to Adversity**

**Responding to Success & Failure**

**Responding to Fear**

**Being a Good Leader of Yourself**

**Setting Unrealistic Ideals**

**Having Unrealistic Expectations**

**Building Good Relationships**

**Competing with Character**

**Balancing Life – Tasks, Study, Play & Rest**

If you don't learn to effectively handle these ten challenging scenarios, you'll face discomfort similar to the list below, as well as negativity and various problems. Mastering these scenarios is crucial for achieving success in both sports and life.

**Regret**

**Disappointment**

**Discouragement**

**Frustration**

**Anxiety**

**Anger**

**Sadness**

**Stress**

**Disapproval**

**Fearfulness**

**Vulnerability**

**Failure**

**Dread**





# **Quick Tips For** ***COLLEGE & PRO ATHLETES***



**When faced with obstacles, respond rather than react.**

**Assess negativity thoroughly before addressing it.**

**Maintain your composure, no matter the situation.**

**Be honest and direct without hesitation.**

**Practice fairness, irrespective of others' behavior.**

**Strive to remain positive even in tough times.**

**Welcome feedback and constructive criticism without fear.**

**Value personal growth over simply winning.**

**Embrace, rather than shy away from the life lessons.**

**The goal? Always be assertive in thought and communication.**

# ***1*** ***CHALLENGE***

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**Goal Setting &  
Accomplishment**

# GOALS



**Setting goals is a vital part of our journey toward achieving our vision for what we want to gain, become, and experience, often juggling short, medium, and long-term aspirations.**

**It's important to remember that not all goals contribute positively to our own well-being or that of those around us. Sometimes, we can be led to believe that a goal is the “perfect” fit for us, only to discover later that it comes with unintended drawbacks.**

**Being intentional about the goals we set is crucial. Take time to reflect and ensure that the objectives you pursue are genuinely beneficial. Many of our aspirations are shaped by external influences; it's essential to analyze these motivations carefully.**

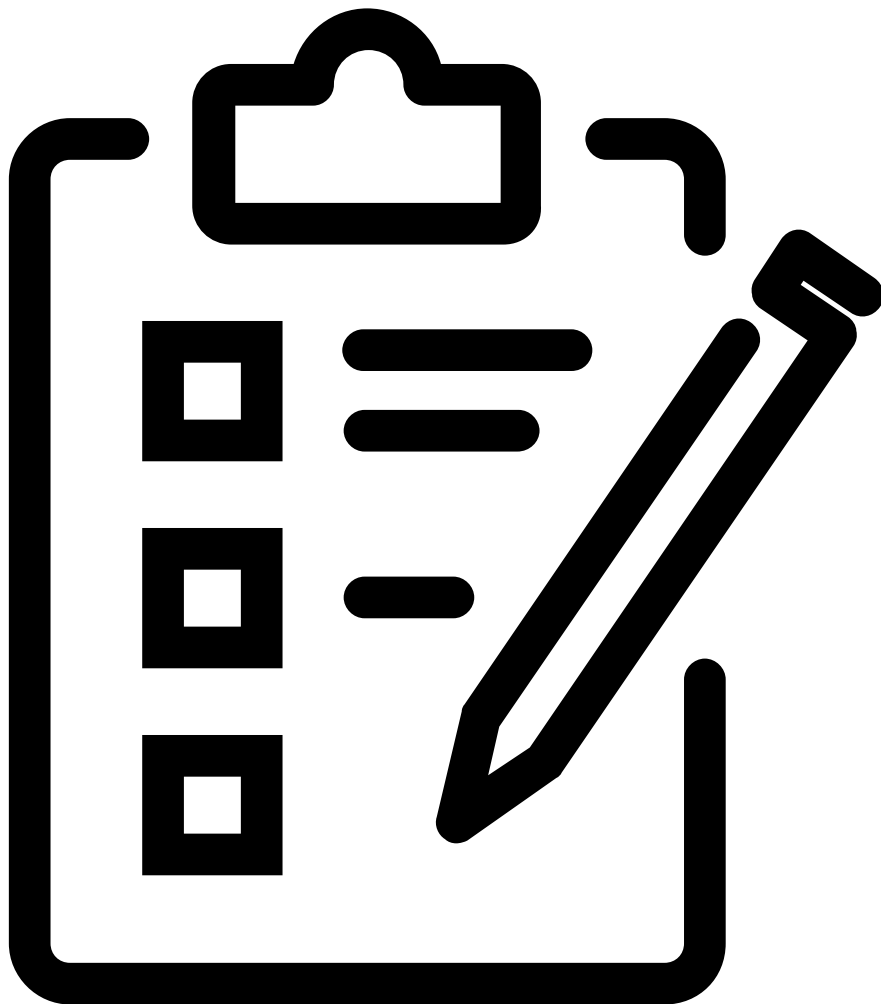
**This thoughtful approach will help us use our energy and resources wisely, striking the right balance between work, study, play, and rest. By doing so, we can thrive in both our personal endeavors and our athletic pursuits, leading to a more fulfilling life overall.**



# YOUR GOALS

**What do you truly hope to achieve in your lifetime? Consider areas such as sports, personal growth, relationships, health, fitness, skill mastery, experiences, and your legacy.**

**Thoughtfully reflect on the goals you're currently pursuing, and create an additional list of the aspirations you genuinely wish to fulfill in both the near and distant future.**



# DISCERNING GOOD & BAD GOALS

As you think about the goals you set for a typical day, take a moment to assess their true value. Are these objectives genuinely beneficial? Do they pave the way for positive outcomes for you and those around you? Or do some of them miss the mark, offering only a partial benefit or, worse, not contributing positively at all?



**POSITIVE OUTCOMES  
NEGATIVE OUTCOMES  
COMBINATION OF BOTH**

Being intentional with your goals is crucial. It's not just about checking items off a list; it's about fostering motivation and determination to pursue those goals that truly matter.

Reflecting on your daily objectives can help ensure that you're on the right path, leading to meaningful accomplishments that resonate with your values and aspirations.

So, take a moment to evaluate: are your goals elevating you and those you influence, or is it time to recalibrate for a brighter, more impactful day?

# GOAL AWARENESS LEVEL



As you evaluate your current goals and set new ones for the future, it's essential to be as mindful as possible about each of them. One effective method for gaining insight into your goals is to review past objectives and reflect on your level of awareness regarding them at that time.

**VERY AWARE**

**LESS AWARE**

**NOT VERY AWARE**

**BARELY AWARE (IF AT ALL)**



# SETTING YOUR GOALS

Some clever person developed the SMART acronym to assist in setting goals. We strongly endorse this approach and recommend that any goal you decide to pursue align with it, to ensure comprehensive evaluation.

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**chievable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime-Bound



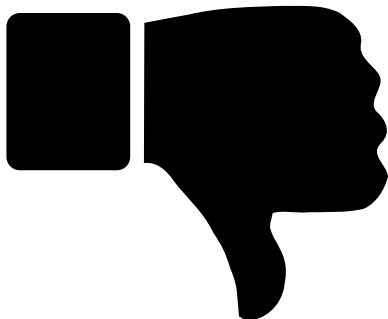
# THE APPROACH TO SUCCESS

Setting effective goals is important, and crafting a solid, foolproof action plan is fantastic. However, if you don't adopt the best approach along the way, you may diminish the benefits.

The only viable method for thinking, communicating, or acting in pursuit of a goal is through assertion. It embodies both a mindset and a way of doing things. Mastering this takes significant effort, but the return on investment is unmatched.

While the other three options may be tempting due to their short-term gratification, they often introduce unnecessary negativity. The choice is yours, but if I were in your shoes, I'd opt for the championship mode of operation every single day.

**ASSERTION IS CHAMPION**



**PASSIVITY**  
**AGGRESSION**  
**PASSIVE-AGGRESSION**

# THE PROCESS TO SUCCESS



**What are you really trying to gain?**

**Are your goals truly worthwhile?**

**What does success look like?**

**Think about the pros and the cons.**

**What's likely to stop you?**

**What will you need to be successful?**

**Stay positive and don't lose faith.**

**Don't quit!**

**Assess your progress.**

**Be determined.**

Setting the right goals is crucial, but equally important is planning how to achieve them. Here are some insights to keep in mind on your journey to accomplishing these objectives.



# ***CHALLENGE***

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**Responding to  
Adversity**

# OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



If you're working toward a goal, for sure there will be unavoidable obstacles you'll need to adjust for. At times, these roadblocks seem to hinder your progress toward a positive outcome; other times, they serve to teach you new paths to success or they prompt you to consider different pursuits.

Discernment is crucial. To excel in both sports and life, you must be mentally flexible, agile, and adaptable. Mental strength and endurance are equally important. Keep these principles in mind as you navigate any negativity you encounter in the pursuit of your objectives.

## HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET

**Remember, tough times can be great teachers and help you grow a lot. Look for challenges so you can learn from them and then move on to harder and more complicated ones!**

# PROPER MINDSET FOR ADVERSITY

Regardless of your level of expertise in setting and achieving meaningful goals, you will encounter internal, external, or relational challenges. They're a natural part of growth and development, providing chances or you to be creative and resourceful in overcoming obstacles.

Instead of shying away from these difficulties, you should welcome adversity and the valuable lessons it brings.

Anticipate challenges and learn to see them as essential opportunities for growth. By doing so, you can enhance your training and appreciate the journey of overcoming obstacles, no matter their source.

## THE BARRIERS

**INTERNAL**

**EXTERNAL**

**RELATIONAL**

# AN ADVERSITY EXERCISE

As you reflect on your goals more critically, it's essential to consider the level of threat or opposition to your success.

No matter how many daily objectives you may have, assessing any threats to their accomplishment is crucial in selecting the most effective responses in a timely manner.

The greater the adversity, the sooner you need to marshal your resources, use your skills, and focus to overcome the obstacles in your path.

## THE LEVELS

**SIMPLE**  
**MODERATE**  
**SEVERE**





# BEST RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY

The best way to handle any situation is to respond with assertiveness. This means being calm, confident, positive, brave, patient, present, focused, and resolute.

This is the most difficult approach to learn and master. It requires significant effort, but it's far more effective than reacting passively or aggressively to challenges.

Don't give in to fear, anger, blaming, or complaining. Do challenge yourself, find the information you need, and make your own way forward without harming yourself or others.

## ASSERTIVENESS

**COMPOSED**

**RESILIENT**

**HOPEFUL**

**ENGAGED**

**RELIABLE**

**STEADY**

# PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

**Anticipate internal, external, and relational obstacles.**

**Choose assertion and not passivity, aggression, or passive-aggression.**

**Mental fitness is intentional and purposeful.**

**Adversity is designed to make you better, more agile, flexible, and enduring.**

**The mentally fit say yes to a challenge and not to running away.**

**Make adjustments as necessary; don't fear them.**

**Seek counsel from the wise if needed.**

**Have courage, trust, faith, and march forward.**

**If you need to be held accountable to be responsible, do it.**



# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



**To conquer adversity, you're going to need skills, strategy, willingness, and tools. Keep these elements in mind as valuable assets in your journey to overcome negativity.**

**Obstacles are natural and often necessary.**

**Respond thoughtfully, don't react impulsively.**

**Failure is only failure if you perceive it as such.**

**Struggling is part of the journey; quitting is not an option.**

**Don't hesitate to try harder or explore new methods.**

**Aim for excellence; perfection is unrealistic.**

**Avoid shortcuts; the more challenging path is often better.**

**Develop mental strength, endurance, and agility.**

**Stay calm, think, and respond assertively.**

**Discover your maximum capacity; embrace challenges.**

# **3** ***CHALLENGE***

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**Responding to  
Success & Failure**



# INTRODUCTION



**When we experience success, winning, or achieving our goals, it's easy to let our egos swell, leading us to believe we're something special or superior, even dominant. This can become a significant trap. An inflated ego is temporary and will inevitably come crashing down.**

**Conversely, dealing with a deflated ego after experiencing failure can be just as challenging. In times of loss, we may naturally feel inferior, weak, or like failures. This mindset is also a trap. While your performance may not have met your expectations, it's important to remember that it's just that—performance.**

**The key is to be as intentional as possible in maintaining a balanced, humble yet confident, steady mindset regarding outcomes and circumstances. Easier said than done, but it's essential for reaching the highest level of your abilities. To excel and be your best, mastering the assertive champion's mindset is crucial.**

# PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

**Reflect on how to develop and sustain a champion's mindset during successes, failures, wins, and losses. Consider what to tell yourself or actions to take to remain focused and avoid setbacks. Here are strategies to apply before, during, and after any life situation or sports competition.**

**Use loss or failure as motivation to work.**

**Your value is not determined by your victories or defeats.**

**Observe what success looks like and strive to replicate it.**

**Relying solely on natural talent isn't enough; effort is essential.**

**Prioritize your time wisely and avoid distractions.**

**Elite performers leverage every experience to enhance their skills.**

**Actively seek feedback, even when it's challenging to hear.**

**Maintain resilience and have faith in your abilities.**

**Honor the process of getting better.**

**Say no to the nonsense and yes to the effort.**





# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



**Tools are resources we can leverage, along with our skills and motivation, to reach our objectives. What do you need to maintain that champion's mindset? Here are some of our suggestions.**

**You are valuable and significant regardless of how you perform.**

**Focus on continuous learning and improvement.**

**Avoid negative self-criticism.**

**Balance personal goals with others' needs.**

**Seek feedback, correction, and even discipline if needed.**

**If self-discipline is difficult, ask a trusted source for help.**

**Aim for perfection to achieve excellence.**

**Do the math; don't continue with an ideal if it is unreasonable.**

# **4** ***CHALLENGE***

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**Responding  
to Fear**



# INTRODUCTION



**WHAT FEARS DO YOU HAVE?**

**WHICH FEARS MIGHT BE UNREALISTIC?**

**WHAT SHOULD YOU BE AFRAID OF BUT AREN'T?**

These questions are vital for grasping the nature of fear. Fear serves as our instinctive reaction to perceived threats or harm, impacting us and those we love.

It continually influences our lives, and rightly so, as it is essential for our survival. However, when our fears become excessive or unfounded, they can waste valuable time, energy, and resources, diverting us from maximizing our efficiency and effectiveness in both sports and life.

Taking stock of your fears and gaining a comprehensive understanding of them is crucial.

# FEAR ASSESSMENT



**What's causing this fear?**

**What specifically is scaring me?**

**Is this fear real or just in my head?**

**Am I blowing it out of proportion?**

**How do I usually feel when I'm scared?**

**What do I usually say or do when I'm scared?**

**If I had enough skill, could I overcome this fear?**

**If I had enough courage, could I overcome this fear?**

**What thoughts run through my head when I'm scared?**

# FEAR INVENTORY/THOUGHT LIFE

Are you afraid of snakes, spiders, and sharks? If not, good for you! However, our focus is on identifying any negative thoughts that trigger fear. By “negative”, we mean any undesirable, threatening, or harmful communication, and we aim to eliminate such.

Listing the negative thoughts that trigger anger, stress, fear, cause us guilt or sadness helps us identify messages perceived as threats.

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# FEAR INVENTORY/MESSAGES

Recognizing the thoughts that trouble you is a good start; the next step involves addressing the messages we receive from others that we often perceive as negative, and which can trigger a fear response in you.

List any messages that you believe are negative or provoke feelings of anger, stress, fear, guilt, or sadness. This exercise will help you identify messages that are perceived as threats.

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# THREATENING & HARMFUL MESSAGES

In both sports and daily life, we can misallocate our focus and resources by either resisting perceived threats or ignoring actual ones. It is essential to identify what truly warrants our attention and to respond thoughtfully.

Many people struggle to manage these messages effectively, leading to wasted resources and unproductive reactions. Were any of the messages in your fear inventories connected to these types of messages?

**I am weak.  
I am a failure.  
I failed.  
I am insignificant.  
I am selfish.  
I am limited.  
I am injured.  
I am incapable.  
I am soft.  
I am fragile.  
I am vulnerable.**



# PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

**Prioritize accurate and helpful messages.**

**Recognize and dismiss inaccurate, unhelpful messages as noise.**

**Cultivate mental resilience and pursue personal growth.**

**Embrace challenging messages, even if they're uncomfortable.**

**Accept mistakes and setbacks as part of the process.**

**Keep pushing forward after failures.**

**Find enjoyment in struggles and maintain determination.**

**Understand that courage involves facing fears.**

**Fear can't be eliminated, but courage can be strengthened.**



# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



Our fears, though they may appear unrealistic, are real and need a solid action plan to address them. Having faith in someone, something, or yourself is essential. Here are guiding principles for overcoming fear.

**Identify the threatening message and its origin.**

**Reflect on why it feels threatening and its potential damage.**

**Choose courage to examine the threat and seek expert help if needed.**

**Define your goal and envision success.**

**Determine the necessary thoughts, words, or actions to counter the threat.**

**Identify required skills and assess available resources.**

**Create a detailed action plan and embrace courage.**

**Anticipate obstacles and proceed safely.**

**Maintain faith and seek help when needed.**

**Train to remain calm, composed, and confident, and practice regularly.**

# **5** ***CHALLENGE***

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**Being a Good  
Leader of Yourself**



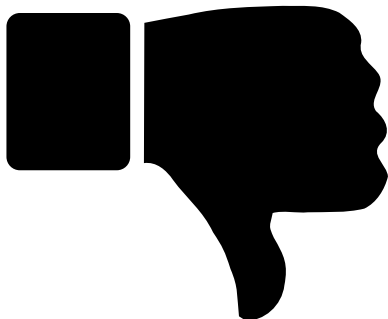
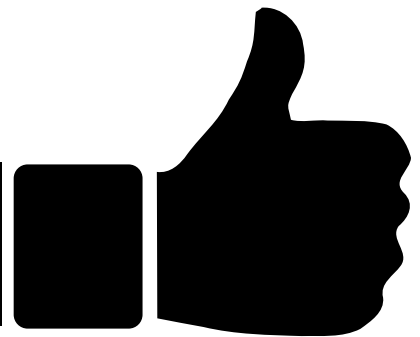
# INTRODUCTION

Self-leadership is always at play. No matter how many people try to sway your thoughts, words, or actions, you ultimately hold the reins of your own life. You have the final say. It's a big responsibility for anyone, and one that should never be taken lightly.

This entails that every little decision about how you manage yourself falls under your ownership and accountability. It's essential to keep your thoughts, emotions, motivations, behaviors, and relationships aligned. That means embracing assertion, assertion, assertion.

Why? Because when you're assertive, you're showing love for yourself and others. You become an effective leader for both yourself and for those around you. Assertion is truly the key.

**ASSERTION IS CHAMPION**



**PASSIVITY**

**AGGRESSION**

**PASSIVE-AGGRESSION**

# THE OPTIONS-THE AGGRESSIONS

There are several ways to define and describe the various forms of aggression. Here's how we typically explain three of these approaches related to your thoughts, words, and actions.

**Being PASSIVE entails neglecting responsibilities, settling into complacency, and evading necessary actions. Essentially, it involves choosing to ignore, avoid, and resist what must be done. This state is characterized by dormancy and apathy, prioritizing something other than what is truly needed.**

**Being AGGRESSIVE means acting with excessive and unnecessary force. This approach often includes an element of hostility—sometimes to the extreme.**

**It emphasizes working hard rather than smart, causing considerable damage to everyone involved, including the aggressive person. While it may yield some positive outcomes, this focus can ultimately harm both you and those around you.**

**PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVENESS is a hybrid of the previous two forms of aggression. It tends to be sneaky, manipulative, and less direct, embodying a more insidious way of operating and communicating.**

**Although these approaches might offer short-term satisfaction, they lead to negative consequences in the long run. While society may tend to glorify aggression as a path to success, assertion is truly the only healthy and constructive choice.**

# THE OPTIONS-ASSERTION

Assertion can be defined and described in so many different ways. To avoid confusion, here's how we explain this most effective approach to your thoughts, words and actions.

**Being assertive means actively and intentionally thinking, communicating, and behaving with purpose. It embodies stability, consistency, balance, humility, confidence, and loyalty. It's about being composed and loving toward yourself and others, regardless of their actions or words.**

**To embody assertion is to act gracefully, thoughtfully, comfortably, confidently, and competently. When faced with obstacles, it's important to efficiently and effectively devise creative solutions to navigate through, over, under, or around them with minimal damage.**

**This approach is undoubtedly the best way to navigate through life, and it is truly a joy to witness someone operating in this manner. Mastering this way of being and doing should be our goal, ideal, and expectation.**

**We should all strive to learn and be trained in this manner of operation. It says "no" to the negative, "yes" to the positive, transforming negativity and encouraging a positive outlook. This approach is optimistic, strong, stable, and responsive rather than reactive.**

**Sounds incredible, right? Know that all of our leadership training promotes this philosophy. You know how to connect with us if you want to learn more.**

# WHAT IS GOOD?

Once again, there are many ways to define or describe concepts like goodness, love, health, and responsibility. It's essential for us to share our insights to help you formulate your own definitions that truly resonate with you in both sports and life.

Remember, everything we think, say, and do conveys a message. When you distill it down, messages can either be positive or negative in their intent and outcome.

## SAY YES TO THE GOOD, ACCURATE & USEFUL

**To us, "good" signifies positivity—making decisions and taking action regardless of the challenges involved in activating and conveying valuable, accurate, and useful messages.**

**These messages are designed to build, equip, and empower rather than deplete resources. They enrich both internal and relational resources.**

**Internal resources include significance, a sense of control, safety, freedom, peace, and joy. Relational resources include empathy, feedback, discipline, encouragement, and affirmation.**



# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



**The earlier you cultivate a mindset of ownership and responsibility —without dwelling on the actions or words of others—the more successful you will be both in sports and in life. Embracing self-acceptance is a crucial goal. Take some time to research this concept.**

**Eliminate distractions.**

**Pursue peace, joy, and freedom.**

**Avoid blaming others or complaining.**

**Be intentional and have a clear purpose.**

**Maintain a positive and optimistic outlook.**

**Stay humble and focused, avoiding arrogance.**

**Place your faith in someone beyond yourself.**

**Concentrate on gratitude and personal fulfillment.**

**Choose control and take responsibility for your actions.**

**Don't feel sorry for yourself or have a victim mentality.**



***CHALLENGE***

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**Unrealistic  
Ideals**

# INTRODUCTION



Ideals represent our motives for who we aspire to be, influencing our thoughts, words, and actions. Various factors can shape or even distort these ideals, making it essential to evaluate them regularly. We must ensure that our ideals are:

**Realistic**  
**Authentically Ours**  
**Genuinely Positive**

It's critical to understand whether your ideals are truly ideal. If not, the outcome might be negativity, discomfort, and various challenges. To keep striving for something you cannot achieve or do may create a disconnect that affects you and those around you.

Sometimes, we need assistance in evaluating our ideals to ensure they're realistic, genuinely our own, and truly beneficial.

# SIGNALS OF UNREALISTIC IDEALS

As you reflect on the goals you've set for yourself, it's important to identify which ones may be unrealistic or impractical, as these can lead to unnecessary negativity, discomfort, and challenges.

Here are some common uncomfortable emotions that can signal that you need to adjust your personal ideals.

**Frustration**

**Anger**

**Overwhelm**

**Apathy**

**Laziness**

**Avoidance**

**Aggression**

**Guilt & Shame**

**Dissatisfaction**

**Discouragement**

**Disappointment**





# IDEALS INVENTORY

**Now we're making progress! You've gained a better understanding of your ideals, along with the signs and symptoms indicating that they may need some adjustments.**

**Reflect on a few of these ideals that are causing you challenges, and list them below. Include the percentage of time it often takes for you to ideally achieve them.**

# IDEAL

**%**

[illegible]

# THE ORIGIN OF IDEALS

**As you reflect on your ideals, it can be incredibly beneficial to trace their origins. Consider whether they stemmed from a parent, teacher, coach, friend, or even social media.**

**Understanding where these ideals originated is important, as well as recognizing why you adopted or formed them and what you hoped to achieve by maintaining them.**

**The more thoroughly you comprehend this, the better equipped you will be to make necessary adjustments.**

**You want to lead a life that is both effective and efficient, especially in sports. Feeling like a failure, defeated, or overly stressed is far from ideal, and a waste of time.**



# ADJUSTING YOUR IDEALS



**The earlier you cultivate a mindset of ownership and responsibility—without dwelling on the actions or words of others—the more successful you will be both in sports and in life. Embracing self-acceptance is a crucial goal. Take some time to research this concept.**

**Recognize the unrealistic ideals.**

**Do your best to discover where these ideals originated.**

**Understand why they became ideals in the first place.**

**Reflect on what you hoped to achieve by accomplishing them.**

**Take time to grieve the loss of these ideals.**

**Establish new, improved ideals.**

**Ask for help with this if you need to.**

**Ensure these new ideals are realistic yet still challenge you.**

**Assess your progress and adjust as necessary.**

# ADJUSTMENTS

Once you recognize a conflict with your personal ideals, it is crucial to make internal adjustments to your self-expectations. One effective approach to evaluate any thought, behavior, or message is by examining its form or presentation, along with its frequency, duration, intensity, and outcome. These five elements act as the key measurement tools for assessing behavior, thoughts, and communication.

**FORM**  
**FREQUENCY**  
**DURATION**  
**INTENSITY**  
**OUTCOME**

Here is a sample personal ideal that I recently modified:

## MY UNREALISTIC IDEAL

I strive to remain calm, composed, and in control of my words, while maintaining a positive attitude regardless of the scenario or circumstances.

## THE ADJUSTED IDEAL

As much as possible, I aim to reach this goal safely about 80 percent of the time. I won't be hard on myself for not achieving it one hundred percent of the time or for falling short of the ideal.



# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



**It can be quite challenging to make healthy adjustments to your personal ideals, but it's essential. Here are some encouraging messages to support you throughout the process.**

**Being truthful with yourself can be challenging yet freeing.**

**Notice any discomfort, as it often reveals significant truths.**

**Mentally resilient individuals, learn to adapt without surrendering.**

**Champions adjust while ensuring the process remains manageable.**

**Refrain from projecting your frustrations onto others.**

**Contemplate your ideals and address them with care.**

**Making adjustments doesn't imply you aren't striving for excellence.**

**Your ideals should not lead to serious problems or harm.**



***CHALLENGE***

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**Unrealistic  
Expectations**

# INTRODUCTION



**Just as we set goals and standards for ourselves,  
we also have expectations for those around us.  
And they have their own expectations of us.**

**When we hold unrealistic expectations of how others  
should communicate or behave, various conflicts can  
arise. No doubt you've experienced both receiving  
and setting unrealistic expectations, which can  
become a significant nuisance if not addressed.**

**On the following page are some common signs that  
indicate how our expectations may be maligned.**



# SIGNS OF UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

How can you assess whether your expectations for someone else are unrealistic? One of the simplest and most effective ways is to pay attention to any uncomfortable emotions that arise when there's a disconnect between your expectations and their actual behavior or communication. Here are some common signals to look out for:

**Frustration**

**Anger**

**Resentment**

**Hostility**

**Sadness**

**Fear**

**Stress**

**Guilt**

**Dissatisfaction**

**Discouragement**

**Disappointment**





# EXPECTATION INVENTORY

Reflect on the expectations you may have that require adjustment, recognizing that the disparity between what you anticipate from others and their actual actions is often significant. The greater the discrepancy, the more unreasonable your beliefs about their behavior may be.

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# ADJUSTMENTS



Many of us frequently fail to consider our expectations of others. Instead, we often react when we perceive that they're not performing at their best or fulfilling their roles as we think they should. Even if they have previously met those expectations or possess the potential to do so, we tend to concentrate on their shortcomings instead of understanding the context.

In difficult situations, it's crucial to first examine our internal reactions and, if needed, our relational dynamics. Step 1 is to adjust our expectations to be more realistic; anticipating perfection or even consistent excellence can be unrealistic. Here are five aspects to consider, to help evaluate your thoughts, behaviors, or messages.

**FORM**  
**FREQUENCY**  
**DURATION**  
**INTENSITY**  
**OUTCOME**

# EXPECTATION ADJUSTMENTS

Consider someone close to you who consistently fails to do or say what you would expect. Reflect on the possible reasons behind their behavior and determine if it could be attributed to one or more of these four factors:

**LACK OF SKILL**  
**FEAR**  
**UNWILLIGNESS**  
**AVOIDANCE**

Consider those people who appear uncomfortable with your behavior or communication, or who react with some form of aggression. Their reactions may indicate that they hold unreasonable expectations of you.

This isn't to say their expectations are necessarily wrong or inaccurate, but rather that they may be unrealistic. Reflect on which of the four causal factors above could be influencing your inability to meet their expectations.

# A SAMPLE ADJUSTMENT

I have placed some unrealistic expectations on the people in my life, including some I don't know personally. Although it's natural to create expectations, they can become harmful if not clearly articulated. Recently, I revised one of these expectations. Picture me observing a mentee who just said something outrageous—just kidding!

## MY UNREALISTIC EXPECTATION

I anticipate that people will adhere to the golden rule:  
treat others as you wish to be treated.

## THE ADJUSTED EXPECTATION

I now expect that, at times, not everyone will follow the golden rule, and I'll mentally prepare myself for that possibility as I interact with them.





# EXPECTATION ADJUSTMENTS

With newfound insights, revisit the list of expectations you believe may not be entirely realistic and revise them with more achievable alternatives. This exercise will provide significant value, especially if you establish a proactive response plan for when your expectations of others aren't met.

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# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



As challenging as it can be to adjust your own ideals, modifying your expectations of others to be more realistic ones may be even more complex. Here are a few points to keep in mind as you make these adjustments:

**Anticipate the unexpected, especially under pressure.**

**Recognize human flaws like mistakes and selfishness.**

**Acknowledge people's limitations and challenges.**

**Your mental fitness demands agility and adaptability.**

**Focus on your role while accepting others' decisions.**

**It's acceptable to ask for adjustments and let them decide.**

**Avoid dependency on the consistently irresponsible.**

**Be wise, evaluate options, be truthful, and observe patterns in others.**

# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



It would be ideal for everyone to share responsibility and act thoughtfully. Since they don't, we must adapt. It's important to identify reliable people and their strengths, expecting them to fulfill their roles. When they don't, we need effective management strategies. For example...

**Empathize with others' feelings and thoughts.**

**Master quick forgiveness.**

**Show mercy by not punishing others.**

**Cultivate mental agility, endurance, and flexibility.**

**Accept people's imperfections.**

**Let go of negativity and discomfort.**

**Be proactive and prepare for the unexpected.**

**Trust reliable individuals.**

**Aim to be self-sufficient and accomplish tasks independently.**

A large, bold, black ampersand graphic is centered in the upper half of the image, serving as a background for the word 'CHALLENGE'.

# ***CHALLENGE***

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**Building Good  
Relationships**



# INTRODUCTION



**What defines a good relationship? How would you describe one?  
For me, it boils down to the same principle of being a good leader of self—aiming to communicate as many positive, accurate, and constructive messages as possible.**

**These messages address both personal and relational needs, which is essentially the core of any relationship, don't you agree?**

**Another insightful way to understand good relationships is to think about their complete opposite: how would you describe a bad one? Most of your interactions are likely a mix of positive and negative messages, which ultimately influence the outcomes. This is part of the human experience.**

**As you progress, pay attention to the frequency and consistency of the positive messages exchanged between you and the other person.**

# MASTER YOUR PART

**Your mindset pays a significant role in shaping your relationships, as it encompasses your beliefs, values, perspectives, and motivations.**

**One of the major obstacles to establishing healthy, fulfilling relationships is negativity.**

**Much like poison or cancer, it can gradually erode and destroy connections if allowed to fester. It's essential to cultivate and maintain a champion's positive mindset, no matter how others may behave or respond.**

**This doesn't imply that you should tolerate abuse or neglect, rather that you focus on what you can control: your own actions and reactions. Relationships have multiple levels and layers, so it's important not to expect every interaction to be wonderful.**





# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



**Leading ourselves and managing relationships can be challenging. To simplify, evaluate the messages communicated—are they positive, accurate, and helpful? Fulfilling personal and relational needs is the core purpose of relationships.**

**Here are tips to improve your role in them:**

**Strive to communicate positive, truthful, and helpful messages.**

**Aim to receive positive, truthful, and beneficial messages.**

**Instead of avoiding negativity, confront it and release it as necessary.**

**Embrace negativity as a learning opportunity.**

**Practice forgiveness, show mercy, and learn to let go.**

**Place your trust in and invest in others who are doing their best.**

**Invest in learning what the best relationships are from the masters.**

# ***CHALLENGE***

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**Competing With  
Character**



# INTRODUCTION



**Competition can bring out both the best and the worst in you. It creates an incredible training environment to enhance your skills both personally and relationally. It's not solely about performance. There's so much more to life than that!**

**Personally, I've had to navigate who I want to be in competitive situations. At times, it hasn't been pretty. I rarely show disrespect toward or abuse an opponent, but I must admit that I've struggled significantly with referees at times.**

**I understand it's not easy; they hold considerable authority, power, and control, and when they lack objectivity or fairness, it can create challenges for players, teams, and organizations.**

**The reason I share this is multifaceted, but one key point is that we all encounter aspects of competitive ventures that are both easy and difficult. Ultimately, the goal should be to cultivate strong character in every aspect of life. It's a simple concept, but not necessarily an easy one to achieve.**

**Reflect on your experiences in competition: where do you find the greatest challenges in maintaining solid character?**

# COMPETITIVE CHARACTER EVALUATION

In what ways do you believe you have exhibited positive character traits during competition? Negative ones?

List them in the columns below.

**POSITIVE**

**NEGATIVE**

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# HOW DO YOU WANT TO COMPETE?



When competing in sports or in life, you're essentially in a battle to be your best or to overcome an opponent.  
That's just the reality.

My personal principle is to do whatever it takes to win, but always with integrity, adhering to the guidelines of fairness and appropriateness. This isn't always straightforward; it demands considerable skill and self-control, and it often takes many of us time to master.

There may not be a more worthy pursuit, though. Start now!

**ASSERTION IS ALWAYS THE SOLUTION. EXPLORE AND LEARN ABOUT THIS APPROACH TO BEING AND DOING, AND EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT FOR THE BEST.**



# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



**Not everyone values fairness and integrity, which makes it even more essential to prioritize respect and justice in competitive environments. You have the power to choose your identity and develop your character.**

**Winners succeed by competing with integrity. Here are some challenging yet achievable tips to guide you.**

**Good character chooses the proper way, no matter what.**

**Consider how you want to be viewed and remembered.**

**Everyone should pay what they owe; you reap what you sow.**

**Always do enough to win, but do it right.**

**Respecting others and the rules is a way to respect yourself.**

**The temptation to cheat is a trap; don't fall for it.**

**Prepare for all potentials and have a plan ready to respond, not react.**

**Know your triggers and work on reducing and eliminating them.**



# **10** **CHALLENGE**

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**Balancing Life:  
Tasks, Activities,  
Study & Rest**

# INTRODUCTION



**Every moment of every day, you have the choice to engage in tasks or activities, whether alone or with others. The aim of these choices should be to make well-informed and beneficial decisions that lead to positive results. This is essential for anyone seeking to maximize their potential and capabilities in any aspect of life.**

**Why not begin learning how to do this now? Don't delay! With each passing day of poor life balance, it becomes more challenging to make changes in future. As someone who helps others address imbalances caused by poor decision-making over time, I know being proactive is key; aim for continuous improvement.**

# POINTS TO PONDER

**No matter what age you are, most days need a good balance of everything: tasks (those boring responsibilities), fun activities, studying (anytime you're focused on learning), and rest (chilling out to recover and recharge).**

**Sadly, lots of young people are super unbalanced – to the point where finding a good balance seems impossible. This causes a ton of problems and messes everything up.**

**Being unbalanced is destructive. It's crucial to figure out how to balance your day, week, year, and whole life, and do it all with confidence. Easier said than done, right?**



# TOOLS FOR SPORTS & LIFE



Achieving a proper life balance can be a challenge for many people, including athletes. It is crucial to establish this balance as soon as possible. Here are some key principles to guide you.

**You have approximately 100 waking hours each week.**

**Strive for a balance between work, study, play, and rest.**

**Maintain a mindset of playfulness and enjoyment as much as possible.**

**Embrace the journey, including the struggles and the work.**

**Be intentional and purposeful in your choices.**

**Prioritize rest and be efficient with your energy, focus, and resources.**

**Challenge yourself to try something new and different each day.**

**Cultivate courage, trust, and faith, and take action.**

**Stay active, incorporate movement, and use progressive overload.**

**Reduce time spent on entertainment and take on more challenges.**



# OUR TEAM

**We are a dedicated team of current and former athletes focused on helping individuals of all ages, skill levels, and aspirations reach their highest potential.**

**With our education, training, and experience, we possess valuable insights into what young athletes must learn and master to thrive in both sports and life.**

**Our approach is positive, optimistic, motivated, and determined, striking the right balance of support and structure to assist them in navigating challenging situations.**

**For more information on how we can create a customized training program for you, your team, coaching staff, or organization, please reach out to us.**



**[info@athletes-unlocked-365.com](mailto:info@athletes-unlocked-365.com)**

# THE BENEFITS

Enhanced understanding of the factors contributing to the challenges you encounter as an athlete, both in sports and in life.

Proven strategies, tools, and tactics to address problems, help you achieve your goals, and realize your potential.

An innovative system for recognizing behavioral patterns and relational dynamics.

A framework to perceive obstacles, negativity, and issues as opportunities for challenges, growth, and success.

These ten universal scenarios must be comprehended and mastered to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in both sports and life.

**STRONGER  
FASTER  
SMARTER**

**[athletes-unlocked-365.com](http://athletes-unlocked-365.com)**



**WANT EVEN MORE**  
***GAME-CHANGING***  
**LEADERSHIP TRAINING?**

We provide leadership training for parents, coaches, teams, organizations, and individuals. If you believe there is more for you to gain, trust us to guide you with valuable knowledge that will enhance your mental fitness and help you reach the next level.