

MIND MATTERS

We are nearing the end of 2006. A time of year when people are inspired to set their New Year's resolutions and list their goals for the coming running year. So often or not, we lose interest in those resolutions and goals that we set, and they tend to fall by the wayside or we simply don't achieve them. We may have the most advanced training and dietary programmes, but still not achieve the desired result. In order to achieve our running goals, we certainly need training and dietary programmes. However, we also need to take care of our own mental limitations.



In 1974 Timothy Gallwey published a book called *The Inner Game of Tennis*. He mentions that athletes have two opponents. An outer opponent on the track, court or field. An inner opponent being their mental limitations. You win the inner game first in order to win the outer game. To help win the inner game, runners should have an awareness of their running values and beliefs, as well as mentally

rehearsing the successful outcome of their goals.

You need to ensure that your goals are congruent with your values and beliefs. A simple exercise of determining and listing your running values can assist in goal-achievement. As an example, your goal might be to run your first marathon. Your values for running might be fun, social, enjoyment, health, etc. Getting up at 5a.m. and running six times a week in order to run your first marathon might not be fun, enjoyable or even sociable for you. Your goal would therefore not be congruent with your values and thus increase the chances of you losing interest or not achieving your goal.

Our beliefs about running also play a large part in whether we achieve our goals or not. Sports commentators on many occasions have asked sports people about their success after an event, and so often we hear their response that they or their team believed in themselves. Anthony Robbins is a well-renowned peak performance coach to company executives, professional sports teams, as well as to a number of prominent world figures. In his book, *Unlimited Power*, he mentions that what we believe to be true, what we believe is possible, becomes what's true, and becomes what's possible. Belief is nothing but a feeling of certainty about what something means. If we have a goal of completing our first marathon, and we believe this to be "an uphill battle", we have "pushed ourselves a little to far this time" or "I don't think I can do this", we will experience those difficulties and may not attain our goal.

Finally, it goes without saying that goals need to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timed). Furthermore, it is also useful for the person to be able to mentally rehearse the successful outcome of their goal. This can be done by visualising what it would be like to achieve that goal using all the senses. What do you see,

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feel, hear, smell and taste. As you imagine yourself in that winning situation. The more this picture of achievement lights you up, the more motivated you will be to attain that goal. Mike Lipkin is one of South Africa's leading motivators and trainers. In the book that he co-authored with Eric Parker, *You're the boss*, they mention that one of the most powerful psychological discoveries of the 20th century, is that your mind cannot tell the difference to what really happens to you and what you imagine is happening to you. First you win in your mind and then you win in reality.

In the words of Logan Pearsall Smith, "There are two things to aim at in life: first, to get what you want; and after that, to enjoy it." Let 2007 be the year that you overcome your mental limitations in order to win your internal game and be more successful at achieving your running goals.

"They can because they think they can."
Virgil.

Alain Howes



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