

EXCERPTS FROM

THE QUALITY OF EFFORT AND

THE QUALITY OF EFFORT WORKBOOK

by Reggie Marra

Foreword, Preface, and Chapter content is identical in the Kindle edition and the Workbook. The workbook includes an *About This Workbook* section, *end-of-chapter questions*, *blank pages* for notes and responses, and *a full index*, which are not part of the Kindle edition. The Appendix in the Workbook includes several entries, related to the end-of-chapter questions, that do not appear in the Kindle edition's Appendix.

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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

THE QUALITY OF EFFORT WORKBOOK IS DESIGNED with the intention of helping interested student-athletes, parents and coaches move forward with their own development in the roles they currently play, and may play in the future, within youth, interscholastic and intercollegiate sport. While the questions and exercises at the conclusion of each chapter are based on the chapter's specific content, and often focus on one of the three above-mentioned roles – student-athletes, parents or coaches – these suggestions for reflection and practice more often than not have value for anyone, regardless of role, who is willing to do the work.

Readers already familiar with the 2012 edition of *The Quality of Effort* will recall the two questions with which each chapter ended (and which we'll develop more fully in Chapter One):

1. Is there anything in this chapter that brings up strong feelings of agreement or disagreement? *What is it* that brings up a sense of resonance or aversion for you?

2. *What is it about you*—about who you are and how you experience the world—your values, beliefs and experiences, such that you respond to this chapter as you do?

These questions, deliberately wide-open, can be applied to anything in our lives – simply replace the words “this chapter” in either question with whatever currently has your attention, and engage the respective inquiries: 1) What is it *out there* that I'm responding to, and 2) What is it *within me* that leads me to respond as I do?

The *Workbook's* chapter-specific questions and exercises provide the opportunity to go deeper with this inquiry, with more focus on specific content and within each reader's unique context. In response to these questions and exercises, sometimes reflection will be appropriate, sometimes a written exercise or two will help, sometimes a conversation with a teammate, coach, student-athlete, parent or friend will open important doors, sometimes some form of ongoing practice is called for, and often some combination of these, daunting as it may seem, will help keep you on the good path and aligned with your true trajectory.

I encourage you to play with the questions – tweak them in a way that best addresses how and where you find yourself – not to find an easy way out if you know

there's work to be done, but to inquire in such a way that the inquiry is authentically yours. If a question seems not to apply to you right now, first check to see if perhaps you're avoiding something you need to address, and if you're comfortable that that's not the case, skip the question. You can always come back to it if it becomes relevant, or leave it alone for good. If you're a coach *and* a parent, perhaps one of these roles might provide a deeper exploration of the questions than the other, or perhaps you might benefit from reflections on your earlier years as a student-athlete. Use the questions as a point of departure and allow yourself to make the journey you need to make.

If you choose to engage the written questions in this Workbook, and I hope you do, I strongly encourage you to “freewrite” your responses. Simply put, get your response on the page in whatever way works for you: make a list, create a chart, jot down some notes, write complete or incomplete sentences, and don't worry about getting anything “right.” *Write freely.* Spelling, grammar and punctuation don't matter for this writing (I'm a licensed English teacher with the authority for such dispensation). Write for your own insight and development. While you're welcome to share what you write with folks of your choosing, you need not share it with anyone. If what you write is brilliant and you decide to publish it, great – then you can edit, revise and proofread.

Engage this *Workbook* in a way that serves you. Perhaps your authentic engagement will raise questions that aren't in the book and that you need to ask. Great. Ask. Respond. Go deeper when it makes sense, and move on when it's time. Trust yourself *and* explore some perspectives other than your own.

Enjoy.

FOREWORD TO THE 2012 EDITION

AFTER READING THIS BOOK, I WISH I could redo my entire childhood sports experience. As a young student-athlete, I always played baseball with only one goal in mind: Cooperstown or bust. Well, if that isn't setting myself up for failure, what is? Reggie's experience really resonates with me. I was never the most talented player, I didn't have notable strength or size, and my family couldn't afford the proper nutrition or even medical care. I stayed competitive on pure hustle and love for playing, and I even remember teammates complaining about me showing them up in practice.

I remember our high school quarterback and baseball standout being quoted in an interview during his senior year, stating "I'm a realist. I'm never going to play in the NFL. These are my glory days." Back then, I didn't understand that statement, but I remember our teachers making a big deal about it in class the next Monday. He understood the quality of effort. He went on to graduate from Yale and has a successful career in finance in New York City.

While I credit baseball with saving my life by keeping me off the street and away from the wrong crowd, I never gave much thought to how much it has made me a better friend, a better husband, and a better business owner. After reading *The Quality of Effort*, I get it.

I am so glad my mother pushed me so hard in school. My freshman year in college, I blew out my arm pitching, and our lack of health insurance finally caught up with me. Baseball was over. I hit the books, and I hit the books hard. New goal. Be the best in business that I could be. And thinking back now, honestly, the injury couldn't have happened to me at a better time.

For the love of the game, however, I found myself back on the baseball field at age 30, competing with college players. This time around I knew these would be my glory days, since there was no self-imposed pressure or future baseball career opportunity involved. I practiced hard, played hard, got in the best shape of my life, and made a team, albeit the worst team in the league. Even though that team went winless, I took the mound once a week for two summers and threw some of the most gut-wrenching innings of my life. It

wasn't pretty. It hurt physically. But those were the best games I ever played, despite the outcome on the scoreboard, I learned the meaning of the word *courage* those two summers. I knew the quality of effort was there, I had played my best, and that is all that mattered to me.

After reading this book, years after hanging up those cleats one last time, I thank Reggie Marra for putting into words the exact feelings I had for those two summers.

Robert Gambardella, CPA, CTA

[Concierge Tax Services](#)

Shelton, Connecticut

July 2012

FOREWORD TO THE 1991 EDITION

FROM THE FIRST TIME I met Reggie Marra, I knew he had a lot to give. It is the great good fortune of parents, student-athletes, coaches, and all who care about kids and sport that he has chose to give us *The Quality of Effort*.

Having worked side-by-side with him, I have been witness to the living as well as the writing of this book. The “quality of effort” that he puts into his teaching, coaching, writing and living demonstrates that these words are verbal expressions of real deeds done on behalf of the very audience for whom this book is written.

I only wish that you, the reader, could have been a student in his classroom, a player on his team, or a friend in his life. For then you would know from experience the quality of effort that gives his life definition. I am glad that now at least you can hear his voice—a voice that speaks with great power to this listener, who knows that he means and lives all that he has written.

As the father of four student-athletes, I have found this book sensible, to the point, instructive, and brave. Imagine a writer who is not afraid to confront issues head-on with sound values, directness, and an unmistakable love of kids and sport—in that order. I have no doubt that all will benefit from his concise reflections on the philosophy of sport and the educational development of the human person.

We are treated to his story, which is enough like our own, to establish the identification that the stories of elite sports heroes make impossible. At the same time, this hero’s story teaches us the lasting value of hope, hard work, and persistence in the building of a productive human life. This down-to-earth story presents the day-to-day realities and truths that our children need to be fed on since most of them will live their lives, not in the professional sports arena, but in the even more challenging world of family, career and society.

It is truly refreshing to hear the good sense behind his critique of individuals and organizations in the world of sport who often miss the point (instinctively, we knew it all along, whether at the Little League game or the NCAA meetings, but Reggie Marra comes right out and says it): kids are the most important part of sport—not parent egos, not winning traditions, and certainly not money. We know in our hearts that sport helps grow good kids. Reggie Marra *shows* how sport, in its proper perspective, combines with academics, values education, health and family to do just that—grow good kids—and God knows the world has never needed more the good kids who grow into good adults.

Perhaps it is no accident that a book this honest, this right-minded, this unbiased, comes to us in a private printing. Those life players who reduce all things to profit and profiteering have seldom given us what we and our kids really need. Reggie Marra gives it to us in this rare book.

Tom Rogers
Husband, Father, Teacher
Tucson, Arizona
September 1990

THE
QUALITY
OF
EFFORT
WORKBOOK

Integrity in Sport and Life for Student-
Athletes, Parents and Coaches

REGGIE MARRA

NEW FOR 2013

From the Heart Press
2013

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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK:

The Quality of Effort Workbook contains the updated text of the 2012 Kindle edition, plus chapter-by-chapter questions and exercises for student-athletes, parents and coaches. Both this workbook and the 2012 Kindle edition are revisions of the first edition of *The Quality of Effort*, which was published in 1991. Watch for updates on this information and availability announcements at <http://qualityofeffort.com>.

FROM THE PREFACE

... Much has changed since *The Quality of Effort* made its way into the world in February of 1991. That first edition attempted to provide a sane overview of youth, interscholastic and intercollegiate sport for interested student-athletes, parents and coaches. More specifically, I intended it to be a first word for those three groups—a departure point from which they could begin, or a rest stop from which they might assess, their respective experiences. I knew then, and I understand more deeply now, that my approach was a clear reflection of my earliest experiences as both a student-athlete and a coach. Had I been a more talented basketball player, or had I fallen in love with another sport, my experience might have been different—perhaps I would have written “The Quality of Talent” or “The Essence of Victory.”

Alas, neither of these was my experience. What prompted me to write the book was the dynamic around talent, effort and results. As a student, my talent and effort produced above average grades, academic-awards and scholarships. As an athlete, my talent and effort never once made a basketball team in high school and college, and allowed me to run a sub-five-minute mile for the first time at the age of 31. As a teacher and coach, I constantly faced the diverse mix of learning styles, intelligences and levels of effort in the classroom and the gym. Faced with the myriad sagas of my own and others’ victories and defeats, I wanted to more deeply understand the place of effort in life. I explored the “well-played loss” and the “poorly-played win,” the prospect of doing the best I could and falling short of my perceived goal, and the frustrating experience, especially in youth, of engaging someone with great talent, who seemed to make little effort, and always, it seemed, came out on top. In a nutshell, I wanted to understand my own experience more clearly—to take a close look at any chosen endeavor, my quality of effort within it, my preconceived notion of success, and the ultimate meaning of the experience, both in light of and completely divorced from any final result.

As I was completing the revisions to this edition, the 2012 Summer Olympics lured me to spend more time in front of a television screen than I would ordinarily. As I watched these amazingly gifted and hardworking athletes with their respective reactions to winning gold, silver, bronze or no medals, or to not even qualifying for the medal rounds of their events, I was both moved and intrigued by their diverse perspectives. Some were elated just to compete in the Olympic Games, some made it clear that a silver medal was a failure, and others danced in joy with their bronze medal in hand as they celebrated the gold and silver winners.

These games reminded me yet again of the very human story behind every gold, silver, bronze, and no-medal performance, and of the countless stories of those athletes who don't make it to the Olympics. Every performance everywhere—from local youth leagues to the NBA, from Major League Baseball to intercollegiate competition, from the NFL to high school sports, and from the World Championships to every other level and class of athletic competition—guarantees that for every win, another, or ten, or a hundred, or thousands of other performances didn't win, at least not in the traditional sense of score, time, weight or distance. This book is about how each of us holds these stories and performances—within the context of, and completely apart from, the final outcome.

* * *

...Other changes that undoubtedly influence the worldview through which I now revise this book include the deaths of my dad at the age of 88, and mom at 83, respectively, on February 14, 1996 and December 15, 1999. My returning to the home in which I grew up in Yonkers in order to take care of my mom for the final three-and-a-half years of her life was, as you might imagine, a truly transformative experience, as my marriage to Marianela Medrano on January 15, 2000 and my immersion into “stepfatherhood” with my stepson, Noé Jiménez, continue to be.

On December 18, 2003 I had both my hips replaced after negotiating the increasingly painful symptoms of osteoarthritis for almost a decade and engaging various other-than-surgical approaches to alleviating the pain.

I have also been called a poet, a teaching poet, and an “integralist” since *The Quality of Effort* was published in 1991. In 1996 I founded Integral Journeys for Pilgrims, Poets, Fools and Saints (now, <http://reggiemarra.com/>), and began both a meditation practice and an enthusiastic engagement of Ken Wilber's work (<http://www.integralinstitute.org/>)—all three of which continue today. In 1998 I enacted a vision quest with the intention of clarifying the trajectory of my work in the world (see <http://www.animas.org/> and <http://www.visionarrow.com/> respectively for more about Bill Plotkin and Trebbe Johnson, who guided me through that experience).

In 2001, 2004 and 2006, respectively, I published [Who Lives Better Than We Do?](#) a collection of poems that includes, among other topics, reflections on my parents lives and deaths; [Living Poems, Writing Lives: Spirit, Self and the Art of Poetry](#), which engages poetry writing as a way to explore our sense of identity and the lenses through which we see the world; and [This Open Eye: Seeing What We Do](#), a collection of poems that looks at the impact of violence, especially the violence of war, on both civilians and military combatants.

On March 17, 2009 I found my only sister, Anne Marie, deceased in her home at the age of 55. She was a talented artist, in the broadest sense of the word—singer, musician, poet, quilt-maker, and interior designer.

In February 2011 I completed certification training as an Integral Coach™ through [Integral Coaching Canada](#), and later that year formed a coaching and consulting partnership, [ParadoxEdge](#), with Steve Benson and Kent Frazier. Most recently, in July 2012, Marianela (known professionally as Marianela Medrano-Marra, PhD, LPC, CPT) and I ushered the [Palabra Counseling & Training Center](#) into the world.

I share these selected events to neither complain nor brag, but to reinforce that the worldview through which I type right now is significantly different than the one through which I typed the original manuscript (on a typewriter!) from 1988 to 1990. I think this revised edition is less didactic than the original, and while it draws some of the same conclusions, it often draws them through a process and from a perspective that is significantly different (in the sense of being more comprehensive, inclusive and balanced, I would hope) than that of the first edition.

FROM CHAPTER 1

THE QUALITY OF EFFORT

We are all playing our own games—political and religious leaders, corporate executives, entrepreneurs, professionals, entertainers, athletes, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, the unemployed, the defendants, plaintiffs, victims and criminals in the world, whether we make the front page or the nightly news or not, we are playing at some level. The games vary according to player eligibility, rules of conduct, and respective value to individual, culture, society and nature, but they are similar in that success—winning the game—is preferred over failure—losing the game.

“Success” looms as one of the most deeply pervasive, and ironically, one of the most nebulous concepts to which we humans aspire. Early individual development and experience, along with cultural influences and societal resources, inevitably contribute to both what we believe about success and how we hold our beliefs. Some of us see title, power, fame, fortune, or victory over an opponent as a true symbol of success. The boundary line, the bottom line, the final score or the grand prize determine whether and to what degree we have succeeded. Each of these, as a recognized goal, has value: we would all rather win than lose—gain rather than lose money; finish ahead of, rather than behind, our opponents; in essence, we strive to attain or achieve that which we have set before us as a goal. It is when winning, achieving the goal, literally matters more than anything else that we begin to have problems.

Few things* are more important than the quality of effort that goes into an endeavor. This quality of effort will strongly influence whether the final goal is achieved at all, yet it is often sadly (or gleefully) neglected while the prospective achiever flails away, blindly focusing on nothing but the coveted prize. The prize is not wrong or bad—it’s often the perceived reason for participating or competing at all. Again, *blindly focusing* on nothing but the coveted prize, not the prize itself, is the primary focus of our exploration.

Occasionally, our extraordinary or superior talent or an opponent’s inferior quality of effort will allow us to achieve our goal or attain the prize. Such achievement, despite its visible signs of “victory,” can be empty and ephemeral in its satisfaction for the victor. A fortunate genetic arrangement or a competitor’s default cannot replace our human need to enjoy the fruits of our labor—sure we may enjoy a “lucky break” from time to time, but we really do derive satisfaction from a “job well done.” This joy can only be fully realized as the result of a quality effort; victories attained without a quality effort provide superficial

satisfaction grounded only in result, not in the integration of effort and result—cause and effect. We will look more deeply into this issue in Chapter Four when we explore “the well-played loss” vs. “the poorly-played win.”

Without a genuine focus on the quality of effort, participants who fall short of their perceived final goal, be it a hostage release, an end to racism, a profit margin, world peace, the next free throw, or a national championship, often feel as though they have wasted their time—that they have failed—the prize is not theirs. With a genuine focus on the quality of effort, participants who fall short of their perceived final goal are able to assess their participation and process, derive real satisfaction from their effort, and learn valuable lessons from the entire experience—perhaps to continue to pursue the goal, perhaps to let it go, and in either case, to translate the lessons learned to additional areas of life.

The stakes, of course, vary, and it is never our intention to dismiss or minimize the real feelings and tangible results of unmet goals. Despite the dramas that unfold in our little league, scholastic, collegiate, world and professional arenas, however, sport remains a relatively safe place within which to learn, experience, and negotiate winning, losing, triumph, disaster, success and failure. When the hostage negotiator comes up short, innocent lives may be lost; when we miss the free throw, depending on the score and the time remaining, we may still salvage the game, the season, even the championship.

FROM CHAPTER 2

BECOMING AN ATHLETE

WHAT REQUIRES YOUR ATTENTION in your athletic endeavors (and everything else in your life) generally falls into four broad areas of concern:

1. What and how you think, feel, believe and value—your individual perspective on the world. We'll call this **worldview** or **mindset** and for the rest of the book, use these two terms interchangeably.
2. The physical body you were born with and what you do with it—your **behavior/actions/experience** (your actions or behaviors today are the experiences you can look back on tomorrow).
3. *Shared* values, beliefs and traditions—the **cultures** of the various groups that influence your life, whether or not you are aware of or agree with them. While the people in your family, neighborhood, school and team(s) may be the most relevant to your athletic activities, these groups also include your town or city, religion, state, ethnicity and nation—even cliques and gangs that may be active where you live.
4. The physical **environment**—both the natural and human-made worlds, indoors and outdoors. While our primary concern here is your access to athletic facilities and equipment, this includes everything from playing fields and fitness centers to internet access and public transportation; from the structure of the league in which you compete, or the way practices are run, to things we often take for granted like electricity and indoor plumbing.

You may have already noticed that these four areas are both distinct from and interrelated with each other. Your individual *worldview*, *cultural influences* and local *environment* influence each other and your *behavior*. For example, if your family (*culture*) believes in athletics and competition, your parents encourage you to play sports from an early age, and the town or city (*environment*) in which you live has a popular youth sports program and lots of fields and gyms, there's a good chance that your *worldview* will value athletic competition, and you will play competitive sports (*behavior*). If you enjoy competition, your playing will reinforce your *worldview*, and you will help to continue and influence the *culture* that influenced your own formation.

FROM CHAPTER 4

WINNING, LOSING, AND COMPETING – A PERSPECTIVE

AS THE OPENING PARAGRAPHS OF CHAPTER 3 reminded us, many people participate in sports for purely recreational or health reasons rather than for the competition. They enjoy the game or activity so they play or do it; whether they win or lose is not important as long as they participate, have fun and perhaps derive some health benefits. While I hope that all athletes, competitive or not, enjoy what they do, this chapter has the competitive athlete in mind—especially the competitive athlete who might be losing sight of, or who has yet to see, both the exterior and interior aspects of competition.

If we ask twenty different athletes—female and male, individual and team sports, youth, high school, college and professional—what their goals are prior to a contest, the answers will vary. Some will say, “to win,” others will say, “to do my best,” and some will state their intention to achieve a specific measurable distance, time or score—a personal best or an age-group, local, regional, state, national or world record. Few if any will say, “to get by,” although some will do just that.

I believe the following advice is beneficial to all athletes, regardless of age, sport, level of achievement or aspiration, and to people in general: *Personal excellence, the individual’s absolute best, is the ultimate goal; performance judged relative to others inevitably limits or frustrates the performer.* If you judge yourself only against the world’s best, you will frustrate yourself; if you judge yourself only against someone who has far less talent than you do, you will limit yourself. Of course, if it helps you, the best in the world, your neighborhood, school or league can be great inspiration—that’s fine; just don’t judge yourself as a success or failure according to what the world champion, or anyone else, can do. I encourage you to embrace two simple ideas about opponents:

Don’t be happy with your performance simply because you defeated your opponent.

Don’t let defeating your opponent be the only result that will make you happy.

In other words, be happy with your performance when you have done your best with the variables over which you have control. If you are preparing for a marathon or an outdoor tennis match, you can control your diet, the nature, details and duration of your

training, and the equipment and clothes that you wear. You cannot control the rain, the thirty-mile-per-hour wind gusts, or how well the course or the court was prepared for the event. Whatever your sport, learn to recognize those variables over which you do or do not have control. Invest your attention and energy in those you do, and not to those you don't.

FROM CHAPTER 6

PARENTING THE STUDENT-ATHLETE

PERHAPS THE MOST FRIGHTENING, frustrating, discouraging, and unnecessary experience that a student-athlete can have is to be pushed, badgered, harangued, glared at, and embarrassed by a well-intentioned, ignorant parent who believes that all of his or her words and actions are forms of support and encouragement. *Ignorant* is the key word here since most parents who care enough about their children to attend their athletic contests really do any harm they do because of ignorance, rather than meanness, jealousy or vindictiveness. *Ignorance*, as it is used here, simply means “not knowing,” and does not mean “stupid.” In cases in which the opening sentence above is accurate, the parents simply do not know—they don’t realize—the impact they are having on their children.

This chapter may be the most challenging for some parents to read because it specifically addresses common, but often unrecognized, shortcomings that we parents have when it comes to our kids and sport. If you’re a parent, and you feel a bit defensive as you read now, or if your blood pressure is beginning to rise, the odds are it’s because this pertains to you at some level. Please trust your discomfort and continue reading. Our purpose here is to create awareness.

The anecdotes that follow are not exhaustive. They are designed to depict some broad generalizations of the type of behavior that can create a negative experience for student-athletes, be they eight or eighteen years of age. *Several shoulds* and *should not*s: the basic premise is that sport *should* be both fun and beneficial for the participants. It can be demanding as well, especially as they grow older, but it *should not* be a venue for verbal competition among the parents. *Nor should* it be an attempt by the parents to recapture their youth through the efforts and triumphs of their sons and daughters. When a child “loses,” he or she needs to hear and feel parental support—not excuses or criticism. The child who “wins” still needs support—not to minimize or downplay a victory, but to keep it in a healthy perspective.

We will proceed, despite the dangers of assuming, with the assumption that all of the parents who create problems amid their children’s athletic activities do so inadvertently or carelessly in their attempts to support their sons and daughters. They feel good when their children succeed, and the problems they create emerge from enthusiastic, unconscious behaviors. Parents who deliberately demean, embarrass or humiliate their children are beyond the scope of this discussion.

FROM CHAPTER 8

DELAYING GRATIFICATION: SUBSTANCE ABUSE, SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND CHEATING

The first edition of this book addressed these topics in two chapters. I have chosen, in this second edition, to reframe this approach in order to focus more on what I believe is foundational to substance abuse, irresponsible sexual activity and cheating, and less on the specific details of these three issues. In essence, the desire for immediate gratification combined with the inability to delay gratification provides fertile ground for anyone—especially, but not only, children and adolescents—to engage the chapter subtitle’s three components.

* * *

...While I understand the myths and truths around drugs, sex and alcohol better now with more than half a century under my belt, and I realize that my adolescent behaviors were grounded in a mix of naiveté, myth, fact, self-respect, and fear, I still discourage student-athletes of any age from using tobacco, alcohol and recreational or performance-enhancing drugs, and from engaging in sexual intercourse. Not one of my reasons now is naïve, puritanical or based in myth. I also know that many of them will engage these substances and behaviors, and for understandable reasons, from human development—the invincibility and immortality of adolescence, to coping with a rather scary world, to lots and lots of opportunities and bad examples, to some parents who have lost the ability to command or at least demand respect from their children.

... In 2012, by the time an average student in even a mediocre school district reaches eighth grade, he or she has been educated on the dangers of smoking, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, and (not in all cases yet) unprotected underage sex through a variety of curricular and co-curricular programs—programs that did not exist during my 1967-1968 eighth-grade experience. And still, a significant percentage of each new generation of student-athletes, and young people in general, will smoke, use recreational or performance-enhancing drugs, and/or drink, and become sexually active while in middle school and high school. And we know why.

The student-athlete chooses to engage in these behaviors for the same reasons that anyone else does: to fit in with a peer group; to create and display a desired image; to enjoy the immediate effects of the substance or activity; to temporarily “escape” the difficulties of a scary world; to overcome boredom; to experience the thrill or challenge of a forbidden act; to alleviate physical or emotional pain; and in the specific case of performance-enhancing drugs, to find an illegitimate, high-risk path to better performance—something we’ll look at more closely at the “intersection” of substance abuse and cheating. One way to summarize these motivators might be “to feel better about myself right now, even if it’s temporary,” and that summary can be translated into, “I’ll take some short-term pleasure—or even reduced pain, if I can get it.” Is it just me, or do the older folks reading this realize that that translation, the temptation of short-term, immediate pleasure in whatever guise, is with us throughout our lives? What changes is our ability to respond to it.

Three familiar factors are in play here:

- *Immediate gratification is attractive, especially, but not only, during childhood and adolescence. Who doesn’t prefer what’s pleasurable as soon as it’s available?*
- *The developmentally appropriate adolescent “belief” in invincibility and immortality, and/or, paradoxically, in an overwhelming sense of vulnerability and mortality, especially for those young people who have experienced alcohol-, drug-, and violence-related deaths in their families or among their peers.*
- *An underdeveloped ability to delay gratification. Directly related to these first two bullet points is an inability or disinclination to delay gratification. I want it now, I can have it now, I can handle whatever happens, and people die when they’re old; or, again, paradoxically, as above: the world is so dangerous, I’ll probably die young, so I’m going to get what I can while I can.*

These behaviors do not continue because of a lack of information or an inability to understand it. Whether from parents, schools, friends or the media, student-athletes have heard, and many continue to live, the stories: unwanted pregnancy; abortion or teenage motherhood (rarely, fatherhood); sexually transmitted disease; AIDS; alcoholism; injuries and fatalities caused by drunk drivers; drug addiction; drug-related violence; and the familial, emotional, financial and spiritual upheaval that each of these brings with it.

Throughout the book we’ve been referring to four areas of concern—individual mindset or worldview; behavior; culture; and environment. Each of these plays a role in a student-athlete’s decisions around alcohol and drugs, and each of these, as we’ve seen in earlier examples, influences and is influenced by the others. Even though the choice seems simple—to engage or not to engage in a specific behavior, the contexts within which anyone makes a decision about substance abuse or sexual activity are quite complex. Here’s one oversimplified, fictional and stereotypical example that nonetheless makes the point....

FROM CHAPTER 10

MOTIVATION: WHY AM I DOING THIS?

BEYOND THE REASONS WE MAY BELIEVE attract us to the sports we play, what is it that might drive us to push harder, to excel, to perform at a level that our initial motivation to play simply does not access?

While some simple exterior forces may at first seem to answer this question—make dad happy (or keep him quiet), impress a girlfriend or boyfriend, or even get money for college, ongoing developmental research offers some deeper, interior reasons—not instead of, but rather underlying and complementing, the particular exterior forces that seem to push us. More simply, what we truly value, whether we’re consciously aware of it or not, has a lot to do with what we choose to do and how we choose to do it.

Longitudinal studies (briefly, following a group of people over a period of years and recording their responses—and how they change—to a specific set of questions) provide us with insight into a variety of developmental lines or intelligences, such as cognition, moral reasoning, self-identity, and values, among others as noted in Chapter 2. In this chapter we’ll explore how our values can motivate our behaviors.

Dr. Clare Graves began his research in 1950 and continued until his death in 1986. Since then his work has been continued and applied, most notably by Dr. Chris Cowan and Dr. Don Beck, who refer to it now as Spiral Dynamics or [Spiral Dynamics Integral](#). Currently being used in leadership courses, corporate management, and even gang interventions, Don Beck’s most impressive applications, from my perspective, have been in helping facilitate South Africa’s move in the 1980s and 1990s from apartheid to democracy, and more recently the ongoing work through the [Center for Human Emergence](#) engaging dialogue in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians who are committed to peace.

... Virtually every respected leader, whether he or she has read the research or not, has access to some knowledge or intuitive sense of how to motivate those they lead. I’m

grateful to Cherie Beck for bringing to my attention the following example at the Spiral Dynamics Integral Confab in Dallas in May 2004 (having thanked her, the interpretation below is mine, and any inaccuracies in it are mine as well). The story of the 1980 United States Olympic Ice Hockey team, as depicted in the movie, [Miracle](#) will bring the preceding discussion to life. While some members of that team have commented that the movie did an excellent job in reenacting their experience (Mike Eruzione said in one interview that the movie was about 85% true), all of what follows here is based on the on-screen portrayals and not on the real-life events. All named references below will be to the characters as depicted by the actors in the movie, and not to the real people being so depicted. My interpretation and analysis applies to the movie—itsself an artistic interpretation of real events—and is just that, my interpretation, including whatever biases my own perspective holds.

.... The following brief suggestions will work as departure points from which you can begin to recognize the primary values that motivate you as a coach and/or parent. It's important to remember that we do not develop in an exclusive, linear manner—while each of us has a “center of gravity” or primary value system, research suggests that this center drives about fifty-percent of what we do, and that the other half is driven by earlier values that our current system has transcended (and included) and/or the next emerging system. In other words, someone with an Orange/strategic/success-driven center of gravity, like many competitive athletes, will still have access to Blue/absolutist/obedient, Red/impulsive /exploitive, Purple/tribal/loyal values, and possibly, emerging Green/pluralistic/ egalitarian values as well.

**It is essential that coaches and parents turn their awareness and attention on themselves first—before attempting to diagnose, prescribe to, and motivate their student-athletes. Remember, each of the first-tier values systems, through Green, perceives the others as wrong or misguided. Understand your own worldview, values and biases as a coach or parent, and you will be better able to serve your players and children. When you truly pay attention, you'll begin to see that different values come to the surface in the various roles you play besides coaching and parenting. To give one of many plausible examples: you may find yourself with a primarily Orange center of gravity as a coach, but notice an occasionally strong Red drive when you compete in your sport(s) of choice, perhaps a Green (or Blue) comfort zone when it comes to certain political or religious issues, and, depending upon your job, any one or several of the values structures may serve you well at work.*

It's also helpful to remember that none of these values is better or worse than the others—each serves a valid purpose. As coaches we will have players whose respective primary values center around loyalty and belonging (Purple), impulse and ego (Red), obedience and the right way (Blue), success and the need to excel (Orange) or honoring the

opponent (Green). It's our responsibility to recognize and find appropriate means to honor them within our authentic approach. This includes attempting to recognize and honor the primary motivational value in each player, and attempting to address and awaken the best aspects of each of the values in all of the players.

While this may sound like a lot to take on, remember that the four areas of concern and the values structures are already in place. What we're offering here is a framework within which to engage them.

*If any doubt lingers regarding the statement that *coaches and parents need to turn their awareness and attention on themselves first*, take a look at two contemporary books from beyond the world of sport. In each of these titles, the authors offer in-the-trenches, research-based evidence of the importance of self-awareness for leaders—evidence that is easily translatable into the primary leadership roles we play as coaches and parents.

Anderson, Dean, and Linda Ackerman Anderson. [*Beyond Change Management: How to Achieve Breakthrough Results Through Conscious Change Leadership*](#). 2nd ed. San Francisco: Pfeiffer/Wiley, 2010.

Joiner, Bill, and Stephen Josephs. [*Leadership Agility: Five Levels of Mastery for Anticipating and Initiating Change*](#). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2007.

FROM CHAPTER 12

THE QUALITY OF EFFORT WITH FORESIGHT

...Virtually all of us have heard some version of *not criticizing someone else unless we've walked a mile in his or her shoes*. My experience with this advice is that it's been thrown around by so many people, for so long, and without any authentic investigation into what the metaphor, *walking a mile in someone else's shoes*, might truly mean, it's usually an essentially meaningless, albeit well-intentioned, suggestion.

My concern is grounded in both my own attempts to walk a mile or more in someone else's shoes, and in observing others as they make a similar journey. With very few exceptions, when most of us think we're taking a walk in another's shoes, we sincerely think we're attempting to feel into and understand the other's response to an event or a given set of circumstances by imagining what it would be like to be the other. Inevitably, however, what we do is *imagine what it would be like to be ourselves* in the other's circumstances, and this is perfectly understandable.

Each of us looks at ourselves, others and the world through a unique set of lenses that includes those four areas of concern we've used throughout the book—worldview, behavior, culture and environment; our moods or states of mind; our particular masculine/feminine balance; our personality; and our levels of development across a wide variety of intelligences or developmental lines. When we look at this person in whose shoes we intend to “walk a mile,” we indeed look *at* him or her *through our own lenses*. It is not until we can, with some degree of competence, do the work of identifying and understanding aspects of this other person's unique set of lenses—and *experience his or her circumstances through his or her lenses*—that we are in some small or large way truly walking in shoes that are not ours. We make the move from looking *at* to looking *as* this other person.

This is no small task. It's a lot of work, quite complex, and requires the essential first step of learning to look accurately both *at* and *as* ourselves....