

THE BEST LEADERS LEAD THEMSELVES FIRST

When I was a teenager training for the Olympics, I believed all the old adages people told me:

- ✓ Where there is a will, there is a way.
- ✓ Willpower is the key to success.
- ✓ Next to courage, willpower is the most important thing.

AND these adages are all true, but what my coaches and parents didn't tell me was that willpower is not enough. It is never enough. No matter how much will you have, it will not be enough to overcome the limiting beliefs that hold you captive.

If you have the will to train hard but your subconscious mind has a different story, your will power loses out every time. Your willpower exists in your conscious mind where it strives hard to overcome the beliefs your subconscious mind holds, and your subconscious mind holds the blueprint for how you react and believe.

Imagine you are sitting in the passenger seat. You have a map in front of you, and you read all the road signs along the highway. You point in the direction where the car should turn, but your subconscious mind is sitting behind the steering wheel and decides based on past experiences to drive straight on ahead.

You thought you were driving the car, but your subconscious mind was making the real decisions. Your conscious mind is a marvelous passenger, but your subconscious mind is the driver.

Willpower is only as strong as the beliefs you hold in the subconscious mind. Your subconscious mind absorbs all true experiential learning. While your conscious mind analyzes, rationalizes, and resolves, your subconscious mind works from habit and from thoughts that were entered by your earliest experiences.

I thought I could be an Olympic athlete. Being an Olympian was a conscious dream, wish, and goal, yet my subconscious mind believed that I wasn't good enough. No matter how hard I trained, I found ways to self-sabotage. I got injured. I drank myself silly. I yelled at my coaches. I fought with the star of the team. I excused myself for not performing at my best. All these behaviors were outcomes of my subconscious mind obeying the beliefs of my earlier experiences in life.

Willpower was not enough. Willpower got me to the banquet table but did not let me join in the feast. To align my willpower, I had to develop my mindpower. When I learned that thoughts are things and began to attend to the thoughts I held—the ones telling me I wasn't tall enough, fast enough, strong enough, or talented enough—and started turning those thoughts to positive affirmations, my willpower tripled.

Willpower can get you to the brink of success, but mindpower takes you to the world of success.

THE BEST LEADERS AIM FOR THE TOP 3%

Do you know how many high school athletes think they will play at the more prominent and better funded universities, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I universities? Do you know how many high school athletes receive scholarships to Division I programs?

During summer basketball camps, I asked my campers how many of them wanted to receive a collegiate basketball scholarship. Every time I asked this question, nearly every young lady raised her hand. Some of these campers raised their hands because their friends did, but many of them dreamed of becoming the next collegiate star.

According to the Georgia Career Information Center, 98 out of 100 high school athletes never play athletics at any collegiate level, and less than 1% receive a scholarship to a Division I University. Only about 3% of all male and female high school basketball players play collegiate basketball at any level, and of those players, less than 1% play professionally.

No statistics are available on how many college athletes make it to the Olympics, but the number is far lower than the percentages who become professional athletes. I was one of the very few collegiate athletes to become an Olympian.

How did I get there? I knew I had to aim to be not just one of the best, but THE BEST.

I trained twice a day for 12 years. As a high school student, I drove to school at 6:45 a.m. so I shoot before school started. In the afternoon I trained with the team, and then practiced for another hour on my ball handling and passing skills. I worked out on Sundays alone for three hours perfecting my skills. During the summers I scrimmaged with the men in downtown Fort Worth where I was the only girl and usually the only white player on the court.

When I was selected for the USA Team Handball National Team, I trained twice a day all year around except on holidays. I put my college education on hold, sacrificed friendships, and moved half way across the country from my family. I did this without any compensation for my efforts. For the first year and a half of training, I worked a full-time job while still maintaining a two-a-day workout schedule. I took the action most people were not willing to take.

If you want to be the BEST LEADER, you must think big. You believe that you can separate yourself from the 97% of leaders who try to make it big, not just 97% of all leaders, but the 97% who are willing to try. Most leaders are afraid to try, and then a huge percentage of those will stop at their first failure. Your willingness to try will already take you past most leaders and over your first hurdles, but that is just the beginning.

To be one of the elite, to be in the top 3%, you act, think, and aim differently. You are not one of the campers who raised her hand but did not take her lessons to the next level. You must be willing to separate yourself every single day from those leaders who want to be in the top 3%.

Most people want something better. But as soon as they learn what it takes to be in the top 3%, they stop trying. You must be willing to believe that you are one of the elite, and then take the actions that get you there.