

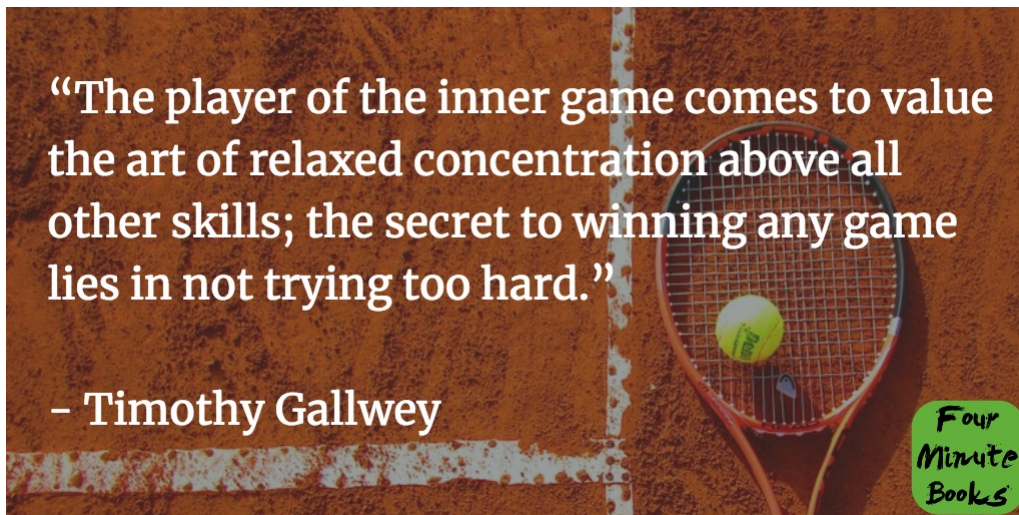
The Inner Game Of Tennis Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Inner Game Of Tennis* is about the mental state required to deliver peak performance and how you can cultivate that state in sports, work, and life.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



I distinctly remember the day I quit tennis. I'd gotten lessons for a couple months but was completely destroyed in my first tournament. Soon after, I found the problem. One sunny afternoon, I went to the court and knocked at the door of my trainer's sheet iron shack. No answer.

I tried a couple times, then laid down on a bench, waiting for him to show up. He'd often been late, so I wasn't surprised. Eventually, I fell asleep. I woke up much later, close to the time my parents came to pick me back up. He never showed up. Didn't even call to apologize. That was the day I quit tennis. Not because I didn't like it or because I was bad, but because my coach didn't care.

Now, I'm pretty sure if I had had Tim Gallwey as my trainer, or at least a copy of *The Inner Game Of Tennis*, that wouldn't have happened. This unexpected mega-million bestseller from 1974 isn't just about the world's most popular solo sport. It's a template for the state of peak performance.

Here are 3 lessons to help you deliver your best work on and off the court:

1. How our two inner selves interact decides how skilled we are on the outside.
2. In order for our performance to flow effortlessly, we must calm Self 1 and have faith in Self 2.
3. The inner game applies in all walks of life, not just tennis or even sports in general.

Whatever you want to accomplish, mastering your inner game will help you relax, have fun, and excel all at once. Let's go!

Lesson 1: We all have two selves and their inner battle determines our outer success.

Do you sometimes insult yourself out loud? For example when you drop something? “Ugh, you idiot, watch out!” While some of us do it more than others, it’s a very common phenomenon in sports for players to curse at themselves. This is a prime example of Self 1 and Self 2, as Tim Gallwey calls them, interacting.

Self 1 is your conscious mind, the part you’re usually in touch with and that you use to think, decide, and talk to yourself. Self 2 is your subconscious, which you access when you’re in flow, relaxing, and just letting things happen. **These two selves are often in inner conflict and how this conflict ends usually determines how well you perform on the outside.**

As you can probably guess from thinking back to your own experiences, it is when Self 2 is in charge that we’re at our best. And often, Self 1 only gets in the way. For example, when you tell yourself to “stop being nervous,” does that ever work? Rarely.

For this inner conflict to be resolved, we need to take a different approach. Applying pressure doesn’t work.

Lesson 2: To resolve our inner conflict, we must quiet Self 1 and trust Self 2.

The inner game is so powerful in determining our behavior that, sometimes, we can predict who will win a match, fight, or competition before it’s even begun. If you see a boxer stiffening before a match, they’re often trying too hard and, thus, will lose.

The mental state we need to excel instead is exactly the opposite. Tim Gallwey calls it “out of mind.” Not as in ‘insane,’ but as in ‘not stuck in your own head.’ What’s good about this phrase is that it doesn’t imply control. When we refer to flow as ‘being in the zone,’ we assume there’s a repeatable process we can use to get into that zone. That’s not really the case.

What we can do, however, to resolve this inner conflict, is to quiet Self 1 and trust Self 2. **Primarily, that means not judging ourselves, but observing what happens and then trusting that Self 2 will do the best job it can.** When you judge and scold yourself, you’re making Self 1 stronger and more present, which is counterproductive.

Lesson 3: The inner game isn’t limited to tennis or sports in general, it matters everywhere in life.

As children, we’re great at playing the inner game. We don’t intellectualize everything. All we do is observe and then try on our own. This is called implicit learning. Basically, you memorize a skill without necessarily being able to describe what you’re doing every step along the way.

As adults, we have to learn to focus on this kind of learning again, but once we do, we have a tool we can use to become better in all areas of life. For example, while all sports, including tennis, are competitions, champions rarely see their opponents as enemies. They merely represent an obstacle in a game. And to deal with that obstacle, the player has to win the internal match against themselves.

The players who are able to do that are less judgmental, have more fun, and aren't trying to control everything. Where else would that be helpful? Pretty much anywhere! Business deals happen faster when you don't obsess about every detail. You're more authentic on a date when you're not trying hard. Artists create their best work when they just let ideas flow. And so on.

So, before you set out to achieve your biggest goals, remember to stay cool, not give yourself a hard time, and always have fun along the way.

My personal take-aways

After reading the summary of *The Inner Game Of Tennis* on Blinkist, I instantly ordered a copy. It's only 160 pages and I really want this idea to sink in. All of my best work has happened when I didn't think about what I was doing. When I wasn't worrying.

The metaphor Tim Gallwey uses to describe this state really resonated with me. There's a reason this book has been selling so many copies for so long. I highly recommend you learn from it.

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What any coach's number one job is
- Why visualizing yourself doing something helps let Self 2 take over
- How to best prepare your mind for any match, competition, or important event
- The best way to practice focus methodically
- Why differentiating between the 'right' and 'wrong' way to do things is unnecessary
- How you can use role-playing to become a top performer

Who would I recommend The Inner Game Of Tennis summary to?

The 15 year old tennis player, who has a real shot at a professional career, the 31 year old struggling actress, who can't seem to access her talents during auditions, and anyone who forgot what it feels like to be "out of their mind."