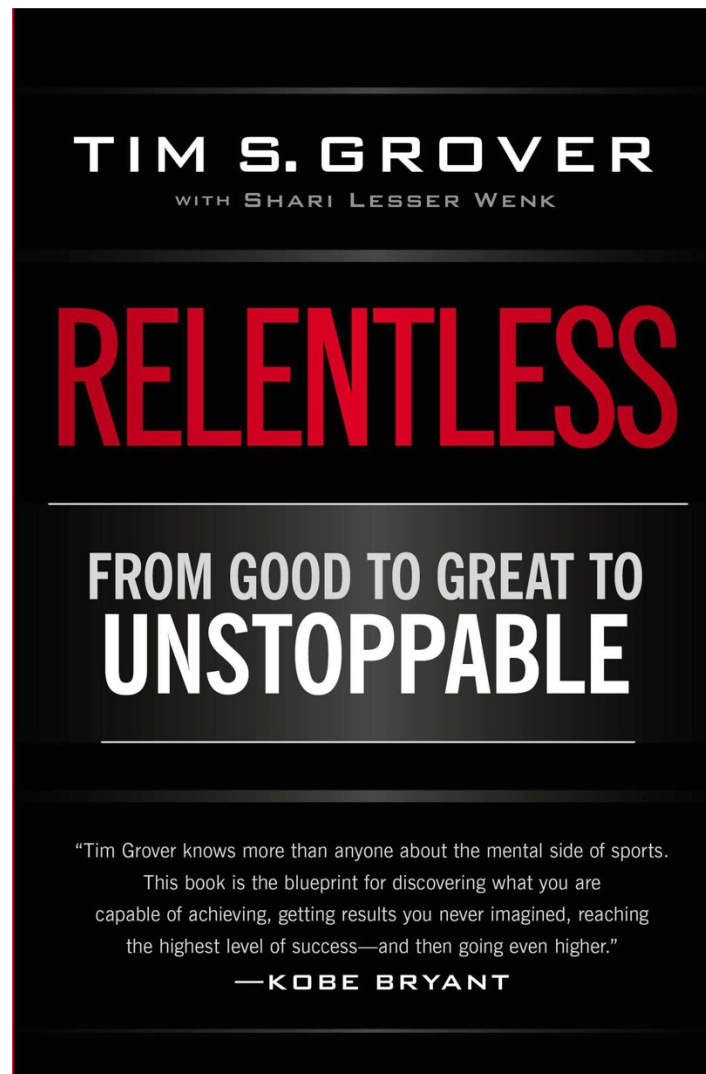


SELECTED NOTES FROM THE BOOK

RELENTLESS

by Tim S. Grover



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A NOTE FROM TIM GROVER

Keep going. Stay strong. Never Quit.

You need an instinctive drive to keep going, stay strong, and never quit.

“In real life, being relentless is a state of mind that can give you the strength to achieve, to survive, to overcome, to be strong when others are not. It means craving the end result so intensely that the work becomes irrelevant.”

“If you want to be unstoppable, you’ve got to make the commitment.”

The way to get the most out of some people is to let them be who they really are, not who you or others want them to be.

There is a loneliness to chasing goals that most other people consider to be impossible.

Trust your instincts, shut out doubt and fear, and keep going when everyone else has given up.

It’s your mindset that allows you to dominate. More than anything, it’s your mindset.

“One great performance – or even a great season – doesn’t make you a Cleaner; you’re supposed to play well, that’s your responsibility. It’s the ability to repeat that result over and over, season after season, never satisfied, never letting up, that makes someone truly relentless.”

“Many players get that first ring and find it extremely difficult to withstand the unthinkable pressure and expectations needed to stay at the top; they just can’t sustain the drive and desire to do the work.”

“There are plenty of trainers who will just give you a workout. That is not me – we train for one thing and one thing only: a championship.”

“Lots of guys say they’ll do anything for that ring, but there’s a difference between saying it and actually *doing* it.”

“You don’t have to love the hard work; you just have to crave the end result.”

It’s not about skill or talent. It’s a mindset. It’s a mindset of taking the pressure of winning that first ring and using it to drive yourself harder for the second ring.

Complete focus. Never letting up until you get the end result. And as soon as the second ring is yours, you immediately come back to be a better player. Still not satisfied.

“The only difference between feedback and criticism is the way you hear it.”

“In order to be successful, to truly have what you want in your life, you must stop waiting to be told what to do and how to do it. Your goals, your decisions, your commitment. If *you* can’t see the end result, how can anyone else see it for you? I can’t give you a ten-step process or a checklist for accomplishing your goals; no one can do that for you, nor should you ask them to. What I *am* giving you is insight into the mentality and guts of those who have found unparalleled success by trusting their own instincts to get to where they want to be.”

“Tell yourself what to do, and stop waiting for others to lay it all out.”

“You don’t have to play basketball like Michael Jordan to have his mind-set and mental toughness, and apply it to whatever you do. You don’t need Kobe’s athletic skills to attack your dreams the way he attacks his. You don’t have to overcome injury and impossible odds like Dwayne Wade to overcome whatever obstacles are standing between you and your goals... You just need to share their relentless drive for the end result. And let nothing stand in your way of achieving it.”

DON'T THINK

“Instead of shutting it all out and trusting his instincts and natural ability, he’s thinking... He flew two thousand miles to hear these two words: *Don’t think.*”

“To be the best... it’s never enough to just get to the top; you have to stay there, and then you have to climb higher, because there’s always someone right behind you trying to catch up. Most people are willing to settle for “good enough.” But if you want to be unstoppable, those words mean nothing to you. Being the best means engineering your life so you never stop until you get what you want, and then you keep going until you get what’s next. And then you go for even more.”

If success defines your entire life, you better be very careful about how you define success.

Turn your motivation into actions. Turn your actions into results.

“You can read clever motivational slogans all day and still have no idea how to get where you want to be. Wanting something won’t get you anywhere. Trying to be someone you’re not won’t get you anywhere. Waiting for someone or something to light your fire won’t get you anywhere.”

“Everything you need to be great is already inside you.”

“Most people give up because everyone has told them what they can’t do, and it’s easier to stay safe in the comfort zone. So they sit on the fence, unable to decide, unable to act.”

“If you don’t make a choice, the choice will be made for you.” (There is a similar section in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck*. Check that out). NOT CHOOSING IS CHOOSING.

“It’s time to stop listening to what everyone else says about you, telling you what to do, how to act, how you should feel. Let them judge you by your results, and nothing else; it’s none of their business how you get to where you’re going.”

“If you’re relentless, there is no halfway, no could or should or maybe. Don’t tell me the glass is half-full or half-empty; you either have something in that glass or you don’t... Decide. Commit. Act. Succeed. Repeat.”

Raise your standard of excellence. Go beyond what you already know and think. Don't place limits on yourself.

"I don't care how good you think you are, or how great others think you are – you can improve, and you will. Being relentless means demanding more of yourself than anyone else could ever demand of you, knowing that every time you stop, you can still do more. You must do more."

"What you won't find in this book is a lot of garbage about "passion" and "inner drive". I don't have any feel-good strategies for dreamers who love to talk about "thinking outside the box." There is no box. I'm going to show you how to stop thinking about how you're going to think, and do something instead."

STOP THINKING ABOUT HOW YOU'RE GOING TO THINK – AND DO SOMETHING INSTEAD.

"Success isn't the same as talent. The world is full of incredibly talented people who never succeed at anything. They show up, do what they do, and if it doesn't work out, they blame everyone else because they believe talent should be enough. It's not. If you want to be truly successful, you can't be content with "pretty good." You need to find an extra gear."

IF YOU WANT TO BE AS GOOD AS YOU REALLY CAN BE, YOU HAVE TO FACE WHO YOU REALLY ARE.

Follow your instincts. Face the truth. Get rid of excuses that stand between you and your goals.

No matter how complex and unattainable it may seem, no matter how many people tell you it can't be done – it can be done.

Trust who you are. Shut out the noise, negativity, fear, distractions, and lies. Achieve whatever you want in whatever you do.

Success is about dealing with reality and facing your demons. Face who you really are and make it work for you, not against you.

"Success is about dealing with reality, facing your demons and addictions, and not putting a smiley face on everything you do. If you need a pat on the back and a "Good job!" to get your ass off the couch, this is not the book for you. Because if you want to

be unstoppable, you have to face who you really are and make it work for you, not against you.”

If you’re trying to be the best, you can’t worry about whether your actions will upset other people or what they’ll think of you.

“From this point on, your strategy is to make everyone else get on your level; you’re not going down to theirs. You’re not competing with anyone else, ever again. They’re going to have to compete with you. From now on, the end result is all that matters.”

“He was so distracted by his fear of losing that he couldn’t focus on what he had to do to win, couldn’t stem the wave of frustration and emotion that was drowning all his natural ability and confidence.”

“That’s how great teams lose: the leader doesn’t show up. It happens in business every day, when the boss shows his frustration in meetings or snaps at his employees. He’s not confident, he’s not cool, he’s not on his game, and it comes out in little ways he might think no one else perceives. But you can be sure everyone picks up on it and panics.”

“Sometimes you need to step away and get back to that calm, cool place where you’re in total control.”

“Forget about losing... Forget about trying, because if you’re just trying, then losing is still an option. You want to be the best? Then you ignore the pain and the exhaustion and the pressure to please everyone else. You don’t let your enemies take your balls, you don’t let them set up shop in your head.”

“Everything is impossible until someone does it.”

“We never saw obstacles or problems, we only saw situations in need of solutions... We learned, we made mistakes, we learned from our mistakes. We kept learning.”

About Michael Jordan: “... he was the best because he was relentless about winning, relentless in his belief that there’s no such thing as “good enough.” No matter how many times he won, no matter how great he became, he always wanted more, and he was always willing to do whatever it took – and then some – to get it.”

“Relentless is about never being satisfied, always driving to be the best, and then getting even better. It’s about finding the gear that gets you to the next level... even when the next level doesn’t exist yet. It’s about facing your fears, getting rid of the

poisons that guarantee you will fail. Being feared and respected for your mental strength and toughness, not just your physical abilities.”

THE CLEANER YOU ARE, THE DIRTIER YOU GET

“When a championship is on the line and you’re a Cleaner, you don’t let others carry the load, and you don’t just hope it all works out. You make every possible move to put yourself where you need to be.”

“If you think old, you become old.”

Never forget where you came from and how hard you worked to get where you are.

“In order to have what you really want, you must first be who you really are.”

“Being relentless means never being satisfied. It means creating new goals every time you reach your personal best. If you’re good, it means you don’t stop until you’re great. If you’re great, it means you fight until you’re unstoppable.”

“It’s not about talent or brains or wealth. It’s about the relentless instinctive drive to do whatever it takes – anything – to get to the top of where you want to be, and to stay there.”

Michael Jordan would be in the locker room with champagne already talking about what he needed to work on for next season.

“Most of their work is done quietly behind the scenes, alone, without fanfare or glamour. Cleaners don’t do it for show, they don’t go through the motions. A true Cleaner never tells you what he’s doing or what he’s planning. You find out after the job is complete. And by the time you realize what he’s accomplished, he’s already moved on to the next challenge.”

“They take responsibility for everything. When something goes wrong, they don’t blame others because they never really count on anyone else to get the job done in the first place. They just clean up the mess and move on.”

“Failure is never an option; even if it takes years, he’ll find a way to turn a bad situation to his benefit, and he won’t stop until he succeeds.”

“Excellence is lonely.”

“He knows what he’s worth, and he’ll remind you if you make the mistake of forgetting.”

“A Cleaner is never, ever content. Cleaners understand they don’t have to love the work to be successful; they just have to be relentless about achieving it, and everything else in between is a diversion and a distraction from the ultimate prize.”

Sometimes you just need to pull back, refocus, and return with a renewed appetite for more.

“You don’t have to be relentless about everything, you don’t have to be the best at everything. You can’t be unstoppable in your career *and* your relationships *and* your other interests, because achieving excellence in any one of those areas requires you to say, “I don’t give a damn about anything else.””

“Cleaners sacrifice the rest to get what they want the most. Most people stress about that. A Cleaner never does.”

“Everyone has a different definition of personal success: some people allow life’s circumstances to decide for them, others decide what they want and say “good enough” when they get it, and then there are a select few who can’t even define success because they keep raising the bar on what that means.”

“A Cooler is careful; he waits to be told what to do, watches to see what everyone else is doing, and then follows the leader. He’s a mediator, not a decision-maker; he’s not taking sides unless he’s forced to. He can handle a certain amount of pressure when things are going well, but when things get too intense, he kicks the problem over to someone else. He can make a huge play, but he’s not ultimately responsible for the outcome. He’s the setup guy, keeping things cool until the Closer or Cleaner can take over... A Closer can handle a lot of pressure; he’ll get the job done if you put him in the right situation and tell him exactly what you need him to do. He’ll study all sorts of scenarios so he can anticipate what might happen, but he’s uncomfortable when faced with something unexpected. He seeks attention and credit, and he’s very aware of what everyone else is doing and what others think of him. He loves the rewards and perks associated with his fame and would choose financial security over winning or success... A Cleaner is rarely understood, and he likes it that way.”

- Coolers can have an amazing game.
 - Closers can have an amazing season.
 - Cleaners have amazing careers.
-
- Coolers worry about the competition and how they measure up.
 - Closers study the competition and plan their attack based on the opponent.

- Cleaners make the competition study them; they don't care whom they're facing, they know they can handle anyone.
- Coolers avoid taking the winning shot.
- Closers take the shot if they know they have a good chance of making it.
- Cleaners just trust their gut and shoot; they don't have to think about it.
- Coolers won't offer to take on a role they're not comfortable with.
- Closers will take the role if you ask them and they'll do it well, if they have enough time to prepare for and study the situation.
- Cleaners don't wait to be asked, they just do it.
- Coolers let others decide whether they're successful; they do the job and wait to see if you approve.
- Closers feel successful when they get the job done.
- Cleaners never feel as if they've achieved success because there's always more to do.
- Coolers don't want to carry the team, but they're the first to slap you on the back when you do a good job.
- Closers want the credit for getting the job done and love being congratulated for what they did.
- Cleaners rarely congratulate you for doing your job, they just expect you to do it.
- Coolers think they want the spotlight, but when they get it, they usually handle it badly.
- Closers stand in front because they need to show who's in charge.
- Cleaners don't have to show who's in charge – everyone already knows.
- Coolers will eat whatever you feed them.
- Closers will order what they want and be satisfied with a great meal.
- It doesn't matter what a Cleaner eats, he'll still be hungry again in an hour.

“There are circumstances and outcomes, and you can control both if you desire.”

“... if you give people a numbered list, they think #1 is the most important and the rest just follow behind. If it’s a long list, they lose interest after #3 or #4. But on my lists, everything is equally important... I don’t number anything #1, #2, #3, #4... I number everything #1.”

THE RELENTLESS 13

When You’re a Cleaner...

- #1. You keep pushing yourself harder when everyone else has had enough.
- #1. You get into the Zone, you shut out everything else, and control the uncontrollable.
- #1. You know exactly who you are.
- #1. You have a dark side that refuses to be taught to be good.
- #1. You’re not intimidated by pressure, you thrive on it.
- #1. When everyone is hitting the “In Case of Emergency” button, they’re all looking for you.
- #1. You don’t compete with anyone, you find your opponent’s weakness and you attack.
- #1. You make decisions, no suggestions; you know the answer while everyone else is still asking questions.
- #1. You don’t have to love the work, but you’re addicted to the results.
- #1. You’d rather be feared than liked.
- #1. You trust very few people, and those you trust better never let you down.
- #1. You don’t recognize failure; you know there’s more than one way to get what you want.
- #1. You don’t celebrate your achievements because you always want more.

We are capable of doing so much more with what we already have.

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU KEEP PUSHING YOURSELF HARDER WHEN EVERYONE ELSE HAS HAD ENOUGH.

"Those who talk don't know, and those who know don't talk."

"...anyone who says you can "train like a pro" by reading a book is just trying to sell you a book. The book might be a good start, but let's be honest: you train like a pro by committing to work at the highest level of intensity, every moment, in everything you do, constantly working on your body, your skills, your preparation, leaving no detail to chance. It's not something you can do for thirty minutes in the morning, then head to work or school or wherever your other obligations take you."

"...your ultimate power source will come from the neck up, not the neck down."

"In sports, we spend so much time on the physical component – training, working, pushing the human body to be faster and stronger and more resilient than most people ever thought possible. And then eventually, we get around to paying some peripheral attention to mental conditioning... That's completely backward. Excellence isn't only about hitting the gym and working up a sweat; that's the smallest part of what you have to do. Physical ability can only take you so far... The fact is, you can't train your body – or excel at anything – before you can train your mind. You can't commit to excellence until your mind is ready to take you there. Teach the mind to train the body... Physical dominance can make you great. Mental dominance is what makes you unstoppable."

"... get your mind strong, so your body can follow. The true measure of an individual is determined by what you can't measure – the intangibles. Anyone can measure weight, height, physical strength, speed... but you can't measure commitment, persistence, or the instinctive power of the muscle in your chest, your heart. That's where your true work begins: understanding what you want to achieve and knowing what you're willing to endure to get it."

"I want guys who want to work as hard as I do."

"When I train my athletes, it's a dictatorship with three rules: show up, work hard, and listen. If you can do those three things, I can help you. If you can't, we have no use for each other. I will bust my ass for you every way possible, but I expect you to do the same for yourself. I'm not going to work harder than you do for your benefit. Show me you want it, and I'll give it to you."

“No disrespect to your team trainer or dad or massage therapist, but if they knew how to handle the details of your situation, or if you knew how to do it yourself, you wouldn’t be here.”

“You already have the talent; my job is to show you what you can do with all that talent so you can bust out of that cage holding you back.”

“I expect both of us to commit to hard work and dedication, and hopefully that result will be a professional relationship we can both be proud of. I see so many trainers who want to be friends with the players, trying to keep them happy for fear they’ll lose a big-name client, going easy when the players say, “Enough.” Believe me when I say this: I don’t need to be your friend. You already have plenty of friends to tell you how great you are. What you and I do together is professional, not personal. If we end up being friends, that’s great, but it’s more important to me that we take care of your career and your future.”

“I’m happy to listen to your input and ideas, but once you’re working with me, you agree to let me do what I do. No options. Most people have too many options, and they rarely choose the tougher one... So I’m not giving you options. Nothing for you to think about. Let me do all the thinking for both of us. I’m making your life easy by doing all the homework and giving you the answers to the test. Just show up, work hard, and listen. That’s your part of the deal. Do the work.”

“Do. The. Work. Every day, you have to do something you don’t want to do. Every day. Challenge yourself to be uncomfortable, push past the apathy and laziness and fear. Otherwise, the next day you’re going to have two things you don’t want to do, then three and four and five, and pretty soon, you can’t even get back to the first thing. And then all you can do is beat yourself up for the mess you’ve created, and now you’ve got a mental barrier to go along with the physical barriers.” [See section of The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck on feeling guilty about feeling guilty. Connection there.]

Think about the destination, not the bumpy road that takes you there.

“Crave the result so intensely that the work is irrelevant.”

“... they come to me because they’re not satisfied staying where they are, they’re committed to enduring the pain and discomfort of improving on near-perfection, and they know I’ll push them until they exceed their goals.”

“... here’s the truth: no trainer or coach or expert can make you good or great or unstoppable if you’re not going to do the work, if you’re waiting for someone to make it happen for you. It’s on you.”

“Bottom line if you want success of any kind: you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable.”

“You control your body, it does not control you. You shut out the fear and emotion and physical stress and you do the thing you dread. You don’t go through the motions and watch the clock until it’s over. You invest in what you started, pushing yourself again and again beyond where you’ve already been.”

“If you do what you always do, over and over, you’re going to get the same result.”

“Do the work before you need it, so you know what you’re capable of doing when everyone else hits the panic button and looks at you.”

“Few people know what they’re truly able to accomplish, and even fewer want to find out.”

“But I’m not going to make it comfortable. Why should I? Comfortable makes you good. We’re going for unstoppable, and there’s a price to pay for that. I’m not going to hurt you, but if you don’t trust me to take you where you have to go, we can’t get this done. I’m never going to put you in a situation you’re not ready for, but I’m going to put you in that situation quicker than most people would. Because if I allow you to get there at your own pace, we’re never going to get there.”

“There are no secrets. There are no trips. If anything, it’s the opposite: Whether you’re a pro athlete or a guy running a business or driving a truck or going to school, it’s simple. Ask yourself where you are now, and where you want to be instead. Ask yourself what you’re willing to do to get there. Then make a plan to get there. Act on it... There are no shortcuts.”

“If you can choose between being uncomfortable because you’re overweight and sick, or uncomfortable because you’re sweating at the gym three times a week, why do so many people choose the discomfort that leads to complete physical failure?”

“You can’t help people committed to failure.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU GET INTO THE ZONE, SHUT OUT EVERYTHING ELSE, AND CONTROL THE UNCONTROLLABLE.

A Cooler gets everyone cranked up and emotional before the game.

A Closer gets himself cranked up and emotional before the game.

A Cleaner never gets cranked up or emotional; he stays cool and calm and saves it all for game time.

“... a Cleaner in the Zone... Everything you feel, all your energy, it’s right under the surface. No ripples, no waves... No one can see what’s coming. Leave the drama and chaos to others, that’s not you. You’re saving it all for what’s ahead.”

“...it’s ultimately your mental focus and concentration, your ability to control your environment and the heartbeats of others, that determines whether you succeed or fail.”

“In your two feet, you have 52 bones, 38 muscles and tendons, 66 joints, and 214 ligaments. And at the other end of your body, one lightweight brain, floating around in your head. You can find out almost everything about the intricate function of your bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, and tendons, and how they allow you to do what you do. But you can find out almost nothing about the intricate function of your brain, and *why* it allows you to do what you do.”

When you’re in the zone, you’re intensely focused. No fear. No worry. No emotion.

“When you’re finally able to let go and be who you really are, that’s what puts you in the Zone, and only then can you control your fear and inhibition. Without that deep instinctive component, it’s like trying to light a lighter that has no fuel inside. You get a lot of sputtering little sparks but no fire.”

I don’t want to be the one who pushes your buttons. I want you to push those buttons for yourself... As soon as you allow others to push your buttons, you lose.

He once told a player, “I’m going back to the hotel to pack your bags because you’re playing like you’ve already left town.”

Possible Buttons to Push:

- Mention what another player did.

- Repeat something you heard from a coach.
- Have somebody get aggressive with you during a workout.
- Having your manhood or ability questioned.
- The site of your own blood.
- Physical confrontation.

“Once you show me what lights you up, I’m going to make sure you stay lit.”

“Cleaners show emotion if it’s the only way to get everyone else where they need to be. But never because the Cleaner has lost control of his feelings.”

“Watch true leaders. At game time, Kobe comes onto the court the way a CEO walks into a shareholders’ meeting. Shakes a few hands, says hello to the players and the refs, and gets down to business. Michael wanted no physical contact before a game – no hugs or handshakes. He’d give his teammates a fist bump or a subtle high five – hands never too high, always low and contained – and he never made eye contact. At the end of the player introductions, he’d go around to his teammates and settle everyone down, like a father covering the kids, a quick moment to remind them, Don’t worry, I got you.”

“You can tell someone all day, “You need to relax, you need to focus.” But what does that actually mean? You’re not giving him anything he can use. He’s looking for someone to tell him what he’s doing wrong because he thinks he’s relaxing and clearly he’s not. I can always tell when something on the inside is making someone react on the outside. So I point it out. Here’s your movement pattern, you look nervous. Your eye contact shows stress, you’re looking away instead of looking at your opponent. You’re grabbing at your shorts, you’re rolling your eyes... You’re emotional... And you’re doubting yourself... You’re thinking... Don’t think.”

“... as Kobe says, you know you’re in the zone but you can’t think about it, because thinking is a distraction.

“Players always ask me what they should think about at the free throw line, something to make them forget the pressure, block out the crowd and the noise and all the distractions. First of all, I can’t give you a made-up thought, it has to be something internal that means something to you. But ideally, I want you thinking about nothing. If you’re truly in the Zone, it’s just you and the ball and the hoop, as if you’re alone on the playground or the driveway or the practice floor. I’d rather have you tell yourself, “It’s just a couple of free throws, not the end of the world either way.” But if you have to go somewhere in your head, go somewhere positive, to your kids or something that’s all about pure relaxation and happiness.”

Use old music that you haven't heard in years to try taking you to a good place.

"I want you to be cool and relaxed, just being who you are, who you used to be before everyone started pressuring you to be different."

"I don't want you relying on me or anyone else, I just want to point you in the right direction and then get the hell out of the way."

"Once a Cleaner steps into the Zone, he's detached from everything on the outside. Whatever else is going on – personal, business, anything – it can't affect him until he's ready to return. That, by definition, is the Zone. No dear, no intrusion. Total concentration. You're not thinking, because thinking turns your thoughts *on* to everything, and the Zone is about the opposite, turning your thoughts *off* to everything except the task at hand. Thinking takes you away; the Zone keeps you where you need to be."

"You have to get to that place where you can control time and space, and nothing controls you."

"Few people can duplicate the extreme level of focus and concentration in different settings; they become comfortable in one place, and that's where they perform the best. Why do teams play better at home than on the road? Why do some athletes perform better in certain stadiums than others? They can't reproduce that environment that puts them in the Zone. They're thinking about being in a different atmosphere, instead of instinctively knowing how to adapt to their surroundings. Instead of dictating the outcome of the event, they're letting the event dictate the outcome to them. Instead of feeling steady and steely, they start feeling unsure and worried. They lose their cool confidence, they start feeling emotional, and make no mistake about this: emotions make you weak.

The fastest way to tumble out of the Zone is to allow emotions to drive your actions.

When you feel fear, you recoil and put up a wall to protect yourself. Is there really a wall there? No, but you act as if there were. Now you can't go forward because of the wall. Put your hand through it, there's nothing there, you can walk straight through it. But if you stay behind that imaginary wall, you fail.

When you feel rage, you lash out. When you lash out, you're usually irrational because you're acting out of impulse, not reason. Now you're out of control and you've lost all sense of what you're supposed to be doing. Instead of feeling cool and prepared, you've lost all sense of focus. And without focus, you fail.

When you feel jealousy, you shift all your attention and energy to whoever is making you jealous. Doesn't matter if it's a colleague's success or your girlfriend's new man; either way, you're thinking about something other than what you're supposed to be doing. And you fail.

The only exception to the emotion rule is anger: controlled anger is a deadly weapon, in the right hands."

"... anger you can restrain and turn into energy. All Cleaners have that slow-burning, blue-hot internal anger, and it works if they can control and maintain it. But it never becomes blind rage, and it's never allowed to become destructive... It's a fine line. If you don't control your anger, you get violent, throw a punch, argue with the refs, glare at the other players, get completely emotional, and stumble permanently out of the Zone."

"Emotions pull your focus and reveal that you've lost control, and ultimately they destroy your performance. They make you think about how you feel, and you're not supposed to think."

"Cleaners feel the same excitement and anxiety and nerves before a big event. But the difference between Cleaners and everyone else is their ability to control those feelings, instead of allowing those feelings to control them. Even Michael used to say he had butterflies before a big game. "Get 'em all going in the same direction," I'd tell him. They're not going away, but now you're controlling how you feel about them, instead of allowing them to make you feel nervous. Energy instead of emotion. Big difference."

"I want you in a routine, and I don't want that routine to vary, whether it's a meaningless preseason exhibition or the championship game of the Finals. Do what you do every day, so you never have to account for your environment or the situation. Everything stays the same."

"I want you surrounded by supportive people who know what you need and know you can't give a lot back... people who understand you can't take all the uncles and cousins to dinner the night before the big game, friends who don't get you involved in their drama. No emotion, no added pressure. Because the minute you start telling yourself and everyone else, "Whoa, big game tomorrow, don't mess with me," you've become emotional. That's the worst thing you can do."

"I want you to start cool and stay cool, because anything that starts too hot can only get cold."

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE.

A Cooler thinks about what he's supposed to think about.

A Closer think, analyzes, and eventually he acts.

A Cleaner doesn't think at all, he just knows.

"Can you remember a time when you weren't being taught limitations and compliance, watching what everyone else was doing, scrutinizing the options, worrying about what others would say? At some point you stopped doing what came naturally and started doing what you were told. You took all your crazy urges and ideas and desires, and you stuffed them down where no one could see.

But right now, right this minute, you know they're still there, in the part of you that you don't show anyone else, the part that refuses to be taught, refuses to conform and behave. That's the dark side of your instinct.

You cannot be great without it."

"Picture a lion running wild. He stalks his prey, attacking and killing at will, and then goes in search of his next conquest. That's what his lion instincts tell him to do, he doesn't know anything else. He's not misbehaving, he's not bad, he's being a lion. Now lock him up in the zoo. He lies there all day, quiet and lethargic and well fed. What happened to those powerful instincts? They're still there, deep inside, waiting to be uncaged. Let him out of the zoo and he goes lion again, preying and attacking. Put him back in the cage, he lies down.

Most people are the lion in the cage. Safe, tame, predictable, waiting for something to happen. But for humans, the cage isn't made of glass and steel bars; it's made of bad advice and low self-esteem and bullshit rules and tortured thinking about what you can't do or what you're supposed to do. It's molded around you by a lifetime of overthinking and overanalyzing and worrying about what could go wrong. Stay in the cage long enough, you forget those basic instincts."

"Can you be reasonably successful by just following directions and staying within the lines? Sure. That's what most people do. But if we're talking about being elite, if you want to be unstoppable, you have to learn to put aside everything you've been taught, all the restrictions and limitations, the negativity and the doubt."

"YOU HAVE TO STOP THINKING."

“Why are you still questioning your ability to do it? Quick answer: because at some point, you made something simple into something complicated, and you stopped trusting yourself.”

Don’t turn something simple into something complicated. Trust yourself.

“There’s a difference between training and taming. You can train people to reach higher and be better and go further than they would on their own. But taming means training them to be something less.”

Everything you need is already inside you.

“No thinking. Just the gut reaction that comes from being so ready, so prepared, so confident, that there’s nothing to think about... No thought, no hesitation. Instant response, based on experience and preparation. If you think, you die. When you just know, you can act.”

“People talk about killer instinct as if it were a slogan on a T-shirt, a careless cliché used to describe a fierce competitor. TV commentators sit around discussing it as if it were something in the playbook: “So when can we expect to see that killer instinct?” “Oh, it usually kicks in around the fourth quarter!” They have no clue.”

“Most people who claim to have killer instinct rarely do, because when you have that kind of power, you don’t talk about it. You don’t think about it. You just use it.”

“Some of the greatest athletes in any sport can’t fight the need to overthink. They study all the film, watch the same replays over and over and over, break down every motion to analyze and prepare the right response to different situations. That’s a Closer, learning how to react to someone else’s action, waiting for the right moment to respond. But what if that moment doesn’t arrive? What if the opponent does the unexpected and goes in a different direction?

Now the Closer has lost his feel for the actual game. He’s so completely determined to recognize something he saw on film, waiting for that specific situation, trying to remember all the right answers. Instead of playing his own game, he’s playing the other guy’s game. Reacting instead of acting. Overthinking. Overanalyzing. That’s how you lose the natural ability that made you great in the first place.

It happens to coaches all the time. Some know all the X’s and O’s, but they watch so much film that they have no personal perspective of what’s actually happening on the floor. They can tell you every nuance of what they’re seeing on video, but when a real game gets out of hand, it’s as if they’re playing Xbox without a controller. No video to rely on, no instincts, no chance for success.

When you become too focused on what's going on around you, you lose touch with what's going on deep inside you. Those are the guys who are perfect in practice, but blow it when it counts. They can't find the Zone, they're distracted by their own thought process, and they don't trust themselves. They're thinking about everything that can go wrong, thinking about what everyone else is doing, thinking instead of knowing, without a doubt, *I got this.*"

"The greats never stop learning. Instinct and talent without technique just makes you reckless, like a teenager driving a powerful, high-performance vehicle. Instinct is raw clay that can be shaped into a masterpiece, if you develop skills that match your talent. That can only come from learning everything there is to know about what you do.

But real learning doesn't mean clinging to the lessons. It means absorbing everything you can and then trusting yourself to use what you know instantaneously, without thinking. Instinctive, not impulsive... quick, not hurried. Knowing without a doubt that all the hours of work have created an unstoppable internal resource you can draw on in any situation. Having the maturity and experience to know who you are and how you got to the top, and the mental toughness to stay there."

Don't just simply learn. Take what you learn and create ways to improve on it.

"... maturity and experience and seasoned instinct are priceless compared to that of a kid with fresh legs and a ten-cent head."

"Stop waiting to be taught something you already know." (Diet and exercise books, for example.)

"No one ever lost weight sitting on the couch with a book."

"Instinct is the opposite of science: research tells you what others have learned, instinct tells you what *you* have learned. Science studies other people. Instinct is all about you. Are you willing to base your decisions and actions on research done by and about people you don't know, whose best advice is to tell you to change? Who knows you better than you know yourself?"

"Every right decision I've ever made has come from my gut, and every wrong decision I've ever made was a result of me not listening." – Oprah

"In order to have what you really want, you must first be who you really are."

"Anyone can have a great idea... it's what you do with the thought that defines you."

“A Closer thinks about what he wants; a Cleaner feels it. A Closer tells his heart what he wants the outcome to be; a Cleaner’s heart decides on its own, he never has to think about it. Total confidence in his gut. The difference is that millisecond of pause between thinking, “I can do this,” and not having to think anything at all.”

“When you’re great, you trust your instincts. When you’re unstoppable, your instincts trust you.”

“Instinct is what tells you how to finish the fight. When you’re listening to a mess of external directions, you’re going to end up trying a million little things, without complete confidence that any of them will work. But when you’re trusting yourself, you have the focus and efficiency to pinpoint the one big move that will do the job.”

“There is *zero* chance you’ll get anywhere if you allow yourself to become paralyzed by soft excuses and countless reasons why you’ll never get to where you want to be. Trust your gut to navigate the hard road to get there.”

“Stop thinking. Stop waiting. You already know what to do.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU HAVE A DARK SIDE THAT REFUSES TO BE TAUGHT TO BE GOOD.

A Cooler tries to fight his dark side and loses.

A Closer acknowledges his dark side but isn't able to control it.

A Cleaner harnesses his dark side into raw, controlled power.

"If you want to climb out of your rut and get up to the next level, you have to leave your baggage behind... Drop all the bullshit and inhibitions and allow yourself to just do what you do, the way you want to do it, performing instinctively at the most extraordinary level. No fear, no limitation. Just action and results."

"Everyone has a dark side... Think about the things you don't want anyone to know about you... The secrets you keep, the maneuvers that have helped you along the way, your desires, your greed, your ego... the lust you feel for things you're not supposed to have... That's your dark side. You need it... It's the essential link to getting into the Zone, and achieving what you want."

"It's all about going to that side of yourself that no one else can see. Getting rid of the safety net and judgmental opinions that hold most people back. Letting go."

"Give me an honest answer: How many leaders in sports/business/Hollywood/politics – the top names in any field – can you name with 100 percent confidence they'll never be involved in a scandal? They don't have to be celebrities, it doesn't even have to be a public scandal. How many powerful people would you trust to never get tangled in some kind of moral/ethical/legal/marital/financial/personal controversy?

That's what I thought. Not too many.

And guess what: that's how people became powerful in the first place. They're not bad people, they're just not content to be upstanding, complacent... Being conventional is for those content to be ordinary, and ordinary isn't going to take you to the top."

"You don't get to be the best at anything without blistering confidence and an impenetrable shell. You get there by taking huge risks that others won't take, because you rely on your instincts to know which risks aren't risks at all."

“Staying safe means being limited, and you can’t be limited if you’re going to be relentless.”

“A Cleaner controls his urges, not the other way around... You can feel your desires and act on them, or not act on them; your self-control is what distinguishes you from everyone else. You can walk away or hold back whenever you choose. You reach for the bottle because you want a drink, not because you need one. You can have the hottest women, enjoy them all, but never get too involved.”

Attack, control, win.
Intense, competitive, driven.

“Cleaner Law: control your dark side, don’t let it control you.”

“Would you be as successful if you followed all the rules and always behaved and never took chances? No, you’d be just like everyone else, scared about failing and worried about being liked.

Most people can’t begin to comprehend the psychological makeup of an individual who is one of the best in the world at what he does, and what he’s been through to get there. You can’t compare your values and rituals and perspective with his. You just can’t. It’s not that his mindset is better or worse than yours, it’s just unique.

But the bottom line is that he doesn’t give a damn what you think about him or his dark side or anything else, because the only pressure he feels is whatever he puts on himself, and as you’ll see, he can’t ever get enough of it.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU'RE NOT INTIMIDATED BY PRESSURE, YOU THRIVE ON IT.

A Cooler is never in a situation where he has to be “clutch.”

A Closer is “clutch” in high-pressure situations.

A Cleaner is always “clutch.”

“Let’s get this out of the way right now: There is no such thing as the “clutch gene.” Or if there is, it’s not something you should want.

When do you hear that expression? When a guy is under pressure, steps up at the last minute, and makes something miraculous happen.

Everyone goes nuts about how “clutch” the guy is, and for days there’s a big discussion about the so-called clutch gene – whatever the hell that is, I still don’t know – and who has it and who doesn’t and how you can tell and on and on about this completely false premise.

There is no clutch gene.

There’s your predatory instinct that tells you to attack and finish the fight, and there’s the readiness to know how and when to do that.

Preparation + opportunity. That’s it.

If you’re a true competitor, you always feel that pressure to attack and conquer, you thrive on it. You intentionally create situations to jack up the pressure even higher, challenging yourself to prove what you’re capable of. You’re not waiting for a critical moment to dust off some mythic “gene” to showcase your greatness. You show it in everything you do, every chance you get.

Closers are called Closers for a reason: they show up at the end. They can deliver in a pressure situation because they step up when something is on the line.

For Cleaners, every moment is a pressure situation, and everything is always on the line.”

“Being relentless means constantly working for that result, not just when drama is on the line. Clutch is about the last minute. Relentless is about every minute.”

“A lot of guys won’t take that last shot, not because they’re afraid they’ll miss, but because if they make it, they have to *keep* making it.”

“For a lot of guys, it’s easier to stay in the comfort zone, close to the ground. Minimal expectations, minimal pressure... minimal rewards. But you’re safe.”

“Cleaners crave that height, along with the pressure of staying up there and going higher and higher. As soon as they start relaxing for just a moment, they instantly feel as if they’re slacking.”

“To a Cleaner, relaxing is something weaker people do because they can’t handle pressure.”

“When LeBron finally got a ring, everyone was saying, “Finally, the pressure is off.” Are you kidding me? The pressure just quadrupled. Now you have to get started on doing it again, so you can do it again the year after that. Anyone who is content with one ring and doesn’t feel the pressure to earn another needs to retire, effective immediately.”

“Most people run from stress. I run to it. Stress keeps you sharp, it challenges you in ways you never imagined and forces you to solve issues and manage situations that send weaker people running for cover. You can’t succeed without it. Your level of success is defined by how well you embrace it and manage it.”

“A Cleaner doesn’t respond to external pressure, he puts the pressure back on the guy trying to get under his skin by refusing to acknowledge him. Remember, you don’t compete with anyone, you make them compete with you. You can control what you put on yourself; you can’t control what the other guy puts on you. So you focus only on the internal pressure that drives you. Run to it, embrace it, feel it, so no one else can throw more at you than you’ve already put on yourself.”

“Everyone can handle pressure. Most people choose not to because it’s easier to stay safe in the comfort zone. But if you want to be successful, to have that place in the sun, then you have to leave the shade.”

“Stress is what brings you to life. Let it motivate you, make you work harder. Use it, don’t run from it. When it makes you uncomfortable, so what? The payoff is worth it. Work through the discomfort, you’ll survive. And then go back for more.”

“Of course, you have to be able to recognize the difference between stress that can bring great results, and stress you create yourself that just causes chaos. Showing up unprepared, not putting in the work, blowing off commitments and obligations... that’s the stuff that creates pointless stress. You had the option to manage those things before they turned into negative situations. But when you’re faced with the stress of great challenges set before you – making the team, working for a raise, finishing a job, winning a championship – undeniable gifts are buried under all that pressure. Not everyone gets the opportunity to be stressed by the potential to achieve exceptional

things... But you have to keep that pressure turned up all the time, not just when you need to take it up a notch.”

“The guys who quit first aren’t the leaders with all the pressure on them; it’s the other guys that can’t stay engaged all season. The leaders don’t have the luxury of checking out.”

“It’s one thing when you’re in an individual sport – if you quit, you quit on yourself. With a team sport, you have a lot of other people relying on you, and you know that every day someone is mentally taking the day off, so you’re going to have to cover for him. But you don’t know who it’s going to be – who’s showing up to play, who’s not really showing up at all – until you’re right there in the middle of the situation. So there’s even more pressure to figure out what you’re working with.”

“It’s not enough to get to the top. You have to stay there. Feel that pressure, and fight to stay there. You have to work for that. It’s not owed to you.”

“When you deal with stress all the time, it becomes second nature. It’s still not easy or effortless, but you handle things without panicking because you have experience in accepting the rigors of complex challenges. When you never have to take on anything harder than your daily routine, when you shy away from anything that rocks your sense of safety and control, you’re much more likely to fall apart at the first twinge of pressure.”

“Cleaners never feel external pressure; they only believe what’s inside them. You can criticize, analyze, demonize a Cleaner, but he’s still only going to feel pressure from within. He knows what he’s doing right, and what he’s doing wrong. He does not care what you think. He steps out of his comfort zone and challenges himself to get to the next level.”

“It all goes back to confidence. When you’re challenged, do you bring the pressure, or do you let the other guy push you into a corner? Do you feel trapped like a rat or do you attack first? Do you pull back, afraid of the fight, or do you make the other guy get in the mud with you? Wounds heal, scars don’t; those are your combat medals. In the MJ days, we’d say, “Go get some on ya.” Go get dirty.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... WHEN EVERYONE IS HITTING THE "IN CASE OF EMERGENCY" BUTTON, THEY'RE ALL LOOKING FOR YOU.

A Cooler waits for you to tell him the plan.

A Closer works on the plan, studies it, memorizes it, and knows exactly what he has to do.

A Cleaner doesn't want a specific plan; he wants every possible option available to him at all times.

"I am 100 percent certain that if you bring me into any situation, I'm going to have a positive impact on you. There's no way I'm going to show up and not be prepared, and not have something to offer you. If you're willing to listen to what I'm asking you, tell me what I need to know, and follow what I say, you're going to have some improvement.

If that sounds like arrogant swagger, fine with me. I'm confident in what I do because I know whatever happens, I'm going to adjust and keep rolling. Not everything works the first time, sometimes it doesn't work at all. But there's a difference between confidence and cockiness: confidence means recognizing something isn't working and having the flexibility and knowledge to make adjustments; cockiness is the inability to admit when something isn't working, and repeating the same mistakes over and over because you stubbornly can't admit you're wrong."

"When what you're doing isn't working, find someone who can make it work. And then let him do it."

"You take the risk to taste the greatness."

A Cooler takes no risks.

A Closer takes risks when he can prepare in advance and knows the consequences of failing are minimal.

Nothing feels risky to a Cleaner; whatever happens, he'll know what to do.

"Some people know without a doubt they'll be okay no matter what happens. Others choke as soon as things go wrong."

"Few people have the ability to adapt on the fly and make quick adjustments that work. You can plan and prepare for ten different scenarios, be completely ready for every

variable you anticipated... and you can be sure there will be an eleventh scenario you never saw coming. Most people are ready for one scenario, they can't even envision ten; they're completely paralyzed by all the possible variables, and when one thing goes wrong, they can't adjust."

"That's the trademark of a dangerous competitor: he doesn't have to know what's coming because whatever you show him, he's ready. No fear of failure."

"I'm not saying you can't think about what you have to do, but do your thinking and planning in advance, building your reflexes, so you know when your back is against the wall, you've got the right move. You don't accomplish that by obsessing and worrying until you're an emotional mess, unable to sleep or focus on anything else."

"You have to be willing to fail if you're going to trust yourself to act from the gut, and then adapt as you go. That's the confidence or swagger that allows you to take risks and know that whatever happens, you'll figure it out. Adapt, and adapt again."

"Being relentless means having the courage to say, 'I'm going for this, and if I'm wrong, I'll make a change and I'll be fine.'"

"You want to know a true sign of a Cleaner? He feels no pressure when he screws up and has no problem admitting when he's wrong and shouldering the blame: When a Cooler makes a mistake, he'll give you a lot of excuses but no solutions. When a Closer makes a mistake, he finds someone else to blame. When a Cleaner makes a mistake, he can look you in the eye and say, 'I fucked up.'"

That's it. Confident, simple, factual, no explanation. You made a mistake? Fine. Don't explain it to me for an hour. The truth is in one sentence, I don't need a long story. You tell me you messed up, take responsibility... now you've gained my trust. As soon as you start giving me reasons and rationalizations, I know you have something to hide, and you're not ready to take ownership. Save us both the time. You fucked up. Say it. There is not a faster way to alleviate pressure. "Man, I fucked up." Okay. There's no comeback for that, you owned it. Now fix it. You can't fix something unless you admit it.

People think admitting mistakes creates more pressure because now they're to blame for something. False. The ability to put your hands up and say, "Yep, my fault," is the greatest way to *stop* the pressure. Now you only have one objective: resolve the issue. As long as you continue to deny responsibility, you have the added burden of covering your mistake, and you know the truth will eventually come out anyway. Why bother prolonging the drama? You screwed up, admit it.

Cleaners will just get in your face and announce you fucked up; they're completely desensitized to criticism and blame, and they expect you to be the same. To

you it feels like an attack; to them, it feels like a couple of guys working out a situation. Their confidence level is so high they have no problem admitting when something has gone wrong. They know they can make it right. No problem.

I've made tons of mistakes, I'm going to make plenty more. But I never think of them as failures. Failure to me is when you bring other people into it, when you're looking for an out instead of accepting your own mistake and planning a route to resolving the issue. Once you start blaming others, you're admitting you had no control over the situation. And without that control, you can't create a solution.

And are there times when you truly have no control? Absolutely. But at that point, it's on you to figure out how to take charge and navigate forward. Otherwise, you're allowing external pressure to dictate the outcome. Create your own pressure to succeed, don't allow others to create it for you. Have the confidence to trust that you can handle anything.

When you can laugh at yourself and not take every setback seriously, that's confidence. On the other hand, when someone says something to you that you don't like or you don't want to hear, and you allow it to put pressure on you, even for a moment, that's a confidence problem. When you're confident, you don't care about what others think; you can take your mistakes seriously but still laugh because you know you can and will do better. Cleaners always have the confidence to know they'll get it right. Accept the consequences and move on."

"If I spend every day working with a guy and he goes out and has a lousy game, I don't blame him for the lousy game. I know everyone else is blaming him for the lousy game, but I'm wondering if something we did in the gym affected his shot. That's my job; the pressure is on me to ensure he doesn't have two lousy games. It would be easy to shrug it off – most people would – but if you want to be the best, you never have the luxury of shrugging off a bad performance. You face it, fix it, and prepare to do better next time."

"Have the confidence to say when you've screwed up, and people will respect you for it... If you did it, own it. If you said it, stand by it. Not just the mistakes, but all your decisions and choices. That's your reputation. Make it count. If you want your opinions to have value, you have to be willing to put them out there and mean what you say. Two things you can't let anyone take from you: you can't let them take away your reputation, and you can't let them take away your balls. That means accepting the pressure of taking responsibility for everything you say and do."

"Two bulls stand on top of a hill, a father and a son, looking down on a field of cows below. The son can't wait: "Come on, let's go, we gotta run down and get some of those cows!" And the father looks at him slowly, wisely, and says, "No, let's walk down and get *all* the cows." Instinct, not impulse."

“A Closer will adjust himself to the situation; a Cleaner adjusts the situation to himself. A Closer has to know what he’s going to do. A Cleaner doesn’t; he never wants to be locked in to one plan.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU DON'T COMPETE WITH ANYONE, YOU FIND YOUR OPPONENT'S WEAKNESS AND YOU ATTACK.

A Cooler does a good job and waits for a pat on the back.

A Closer does a good job and pats himself on the back.

A Cleaner just does a good job, that's his job.

"When you get two relentless individuals going against each other, that situation can play out for years. They can still be cool with each other, hang out, get along... but the Cleaner inside never forgives and never, ever, forgets."

"I have this theory, yet to be disproven, that any player 6'10" or over cannot handle harsh, confrontational criticism. With someone 6'9" or under, you can get in his face and just blast him. But any taller, he'll just lose it and go right into a shell. I think it comes from a lifetime of being stared at and gawked at for being so much bigger than the rest of the population, people pointing and making height jokes, so the tall guys become more sensitive and self-conscious. They're just emotional softies. They can be complete killers in competition, but they're also the guys you have to pat on the back, boost their confidence, and make them feel good about what they're doing. The little guys? You can call them every name imaginable and they keep right on going."

"When you're the guy at the top, it's on you to pull everyone else up there with you, or everything you've built comes crashing down."

"You'd be surprised by how many people don't want to stand alone under the glare of the spotlight, because as soon as you reveal what you're capable of, that's what everyone will expect of you. But when no one realizes how good you are, you don't have to be the guy making miracles and running the show, no one will expect much, and everything you do will seem heroic. Easier that way... Easier, that is, if you're okay being average... A lot of gifted people will lower their skills to close the gap between themselves and those around them, so others can feel more confident, involved, and relatively competitive. I've seen Kobe do that briefly when he has to, as a way to bring his teammates into the action and keep them engaged... Michael went the other way and came right out and said it: that's my supporting cast... His message was clear and unrelenting: Hey, I'm not bringing my game *down* so you can look better; you bring your game *up* so you can look better."

“It’s far more typical for stars to get aggravated and emotional when their teammates don’t show up, and then everyone falls apart because, as we’ve discussed, emotions make you weak, and all that emotional energy is completely destructive.”

Emotions make you weak – and all that emotional energy is completely destructive.

Michael Jordan loved Steve Kerr because Steve Kerr would stand up to him.

“When a Cleaner puts you in a position to execute, you’d better be prepared. At some point, whether you’re in the boardroom or the locker room or anywhere else you want to excel, someone is going to point in your direction and say, “You.” It may be an opportunity that lasts a minute, maybe ten minutes, maybe a week or a month. But what you do in that time is going to determine what you’re going to do for a long time after. Someone is going to do something the coach or the boss doesn’t like, and you’re going to get the chance to take his spot. Will you be ready? Will you have done the work that allows you to step in, fully prepared, and show you should have had the job all along? Have you been finding ways to stay sharp and focused? Because if you do well and impress someone, you’re in the system. Now the head guy knows he can go to you, and you’ve added a weapon to his arsenal going forward. But if you don’t do well, you’re done. The next guy will get the opportunity you didn’t grab. You got your chance, you won’t get another.”

“You don’t have to like it, but you’ll like the results.”

“Don’t be fooled: a true Cleaner isn’t thinking about making you better for your benefit. He’s happy for you if you get something out of it, but whatever he’s doing, it’s for his sake, not yours. His only objective is putting you where he needs you to be so he can get the result he desires.”

“A great leader knows the best way to get people to raise their performance is to put them where they can truly excel, not just where you want them to excel. Cleaners don’t block others from reaching the top with them, if they’re capable and ready.”

Bobby Knight told Portland to take MJ over Sam Bowie. They told Knight that they needed a center. Knight told them to play MJ at center.

“You have to look at your teammates, your employees, and see what they *can* do, not what they *can’t*.”

“We’ve established what he can’t do, so let’s stop waiting for him to do it. Let’s find out what he can do and put him in the system where he can succeed.”

“Everyone is given some ability at birth. Not everyone finds out what that ability is. Sometimes you find it on your own, sometimes it has to be shown to you. Either way, it’s there. At the same time, there are abilities you are not given. Our challenge in life is to use the abilities we have, and to compensate for the abilities we don’t have. It’s completely instinctive; we compensate in order to survive. Individuals with limited vision frequently have heightened hearing; people with certain disabilities discover they have extraordinary talents in other area. Something is given and something is taken away. I know countless athletes who are blessed with incredible physical gifts: height, skill, strength, speed... but no work ethic, or no support system, no way to use or develop or take advantage of those skills. Successful people compensate for what they don’t have; unsuccessful people make excuses, blame everyone else, and never get past the deficiencies. A true leader can see past those deficiencies, identify the abilities, and get the most out of that individual.”

A Cooler wonders what’s going to happen.

A Closer watches things happen.

A Cleaner makes things happen.

“When you’re so extraordinary at your craft, when your talent is so natural and your skill is so elevated, it’s hard to understand that not everyone is like you and can do what you do. It’s not a matter of their trying more or working harder, they really just can’t do it. And if it’s not handled right, it will destroy your entire team or office or wherever you have elite performers surrounded by less gifted colleagues.”

“We talked about every guy on the team, focusing on all the players’ strengths instead of their weaknesses. I told him that as the leader, his job was to recognize his players’ talents and put them in situations where they could use those talents. Yes, we know this guy might mentally check out, and that guy isn’t going to take a shot under pressure. We know this guy can deliver during the regular season, but in the playoffs he’s going to look like the D League player he really is. So don’t put the player in a position where it will matter. Work with the strengths, and everything else you get beyond that will be a bonus. You control this. Take charge of the situation and make it work in your favor.

But... you also have to recognize you’re so competitive that you’re crushing them with your disapproval. You don’t realize the impact you have on everyone else because your wiring is completely different. When you’re shaking your head or yelling at them, they shut down. And I know you love these guys, so they need to feel that you’re backing them, not turning against them.”

“When you say something to an individual, and then you turn away before he can respond or make a comment back to you, you’re making your point, and you’re not letting him have his say. You have to see how someone reacts, so you know what’s coming next. Is his head down? Is he angry? Are you motivating him or doing the opposite? When you hit someone with a negative attack, it doesn’t energize him, it just brings him down. You’re not going to win these guys over by making them feel worthless.”

“Remember, when a Cleaner gives you an opportunity, be ready, because he won’t ask you again if you blow it. It’s easier for him to just do the job himself, and if he’s going down with the ship, he’s going to make sure he’s the captain.”

“When you’re the guy they hired to make things happen, those things better happen or you won’t be that guy for long. You are responsible. If there’s going to be a mistake, you have to be the one to make it so you can turn it around immediately and get everyone back on track. It’s all on you.”

“Usually, as soon as you give them the entire view and tell them it’s theirs to manage, every little detail and personality and weakness and strength, as soon as you give them that moment of complete power and control, most of them say, “Um, no thanks.” Easier to stay where they’re at, safe and comfortable... No one knows that better than the coaches, who not only have to figure out the tribe but manage the chiefs as well. The good ones understand the dynamic: let your Cleaners do their thing. Those who can’t give up that control eventually coach themselves out of a job. A Cleaner player needs a Cleaner coach because they’ll understand and respect what each other has to do. Cleaners never sell each other out, they just let the other guy take care of business.”

“Phil never sought relationships with his players, he just put them in situations where they could succeed, and he didn’t try to make people do what they couldn’t. He’s not an X-and-O guy, he’s all about total instinct and a gut feel for the game. He sees personalities and measures what they can do.”

[Coach K] – “He’s the best at bringing in players who he knows will work in his system – *I have this big stud here, that guy with the high basketball IQ over there, this guy with the jump shot* – and he pieces them together so it all works. They’re not always the most gifted athletes, but he knows exactly what will work for his team, recognizes what they can do, and puts them in situations where they can shine.”

[John Calipari] – “John Calipari goes the other way, he wants the best athletes out there so he doesn’t have to mastermind anything. A different way of achieving the same

result – winning – but relying more on the players’ ability to excel without a lot of coaching or teaching.”

“Regardless of how you build that team – any team, in sports or business or any endeavor – no matter how you snap the pieces into place, you need that one guy who never needs a fire lit under him, who commands respect and fear and attention and demands that others bring the same excellence to their performance that he demands of himself. He doesn’t have to be the most skilled or gifted guy on the team, but he establishes an example that everyone else can follow.”

“The only way you can light other people on fire is to be lit yourself, from the inside.”

“A professional doesn’t let other people down just because of personal issues. If you need to show up, you show up. You might detest every individual in the room, but if your presence makes them all feel better, if it pulls the team together, if it results in better performances, then you’ve helped yourself to get one step closer to your own goal. That’s how you get others to come up to your level: show them where it is, and set the example that allows them to get there.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU MAKE DECISIONS, NOT SUGGESTIONS; YOU KNOW THE ANSWER WHILE EVERYONE ELSE IS STILL ASKING QUESTIONS.

Three things you will never hear me talk about in a good way:

Inner drive.

Passion.

Whether the glass is half-full or half-empty.

You know what they all have in common?

They all translate into "I thought about it, and did nothing."

What the hell is "inner drive"? Inner drive is nothing more than thought without action, internal wanderings that never hit the pavement to go anywhere. Completely worthless until those thoughts become external and convert to action. What good is the drive on the inside? Where are the results? People who preach inner drive are dreamers with a lot of ideas and a lot of talk, and zero production. They tell you everything they're going to do, and then they do nothing. That's inner drive.

Let's move on.

Passion: a strong feeling or emotion for something or someone. Very nice. Now what? Are you just feeling it, or are you going to do something about it? I love hearing motivational speakers tell people to "follow your passion." Follow it? How about *work* with it. *Excel* at it. *Demand to be the best* at it. Follow it? Eh.

But my favorite: the timeless debate over whether some invisible glass is half-full or half-empty.

This is a concept invented by someone suffering from the complete inability to make decisions. Half-full or half-empty? You have something in the glass or you don't. If you like what's there, add more. If you don't, pour it out and start over. Otherwise, you're just staring at this nonexistent glass thinking, "Damn, there's no way to decide."

Bullshit. Of course there's a way to decide, you just don't want to commit to a decision. As soon as someone starts with the half-full/half-empty analysis, you know you're in for a long debate about nothing, with someone who can't or won't make a choice. To me it's the equivalent of a guy standing in the middle of a busy intersection crying, "I don't know!" while everyone around him screams, "Get out of the street!"

Trust yourself. Decide.

Every minute, every hour, every day that you sit around trying to figure out what to do, someone else is already doing it.

While you're trying to choose whether to go left or go right, this way or that way, someone else is already there.

While you're paralyzed from overthinking and overanalyzing your next move, someone else went with his gut and beat you to it.

Make a choice, or a choice will be made for you.

Most people don't want to make decisions. They make suggestions, and they wait to see what everyone else thinks, so they can say, "It was just a suggestion." They know the right answer, but can't act because if something goes wrong, they'll have to take responsibility and then they can't blame anyone else. Meanwhile, someone else is going to make a decision, and when it works, he's getting all the credit. And maybe the choice he made isn't one that works for anyone but him, but since no one else took charge, too bad for everyone else.

A Cleaner makes decisions because there's no chance in the world he's going to let anyone else make a decision for him. He may ask your opinion and add it to everything else he knows, but he's not going to do what anyone else tells him; he's still going to follow his own instincts. And once he decides, it's set in stone; he doesn't care what anyone else thinks of his choice, and he's going to live with the outcome.

He decides, and then he acts.

"You can waste a lifetime sitting around overthinking possible ways to look at something. On one hand... but on the other hand... but then on this hand... Stop it, you only have two hands, and that's already too many."

"The positive thinkers want you to only visualize your success the negative thinkers want you to focus on everything that could go wrong. Well, visualizing anything doesn't make it a reality, and overthinking imaginary problems just generates fear and anxiety. I want you armed with reflexes and instinct, not Xanax."

"You'll never hear me say, 'We have a problem.' We might have a situation that needs to be addressed, or an issue we have to resolve, but never a problem. Why automatically cast something as a negative? Instincts don't recognize positive or negative. There's only a situation, and your response, and an outcome."

"Thinking doesn't achieve outcomes, only action does. Prepare yourself with everything you'll need to succeed, then act. You don't need a hundred people to back you up and be your safety net. Your preparation and your instincts are your safety net."

STOP THINKING.

"Are you listening to others, or to your own instincts? Are you taking advice from people who know what they're talking about, or those who only see failure? As soon as you allow yourself to start overthinking your decisions, you start saying things like 'I'll sleep on it' or 'Let's put it on the back burner' or any one of the stupid clichés that

mean “I don’t trust myself to make a decision.” Back burner? The back burner is for cooling things. You’ve just cooled a hot idea. And then you’ll forget about it altogether and quit, never knowing how close you might have been to success.”

“Good things come to those who wait... No, good things come to those who *work*. I understand the value of not rushing into things – you want to be quick, not careless – but you still have to work toward a result, not just sit back and wait for something to happen. You can’t wait. The decision you don’t make on Monday will still be waiting for you on Tuesday, and by then two new decisions will have to be dealt with, and if you still don’t make those decisions, you’ll have three more on Wednesday. Pretty soon, you’re so overwhelmed by everything you still haven’t dealt with that you become completely paralyzed and can’t do anything... Meanwhile, as you sit back doing nothing because you’re afraid to make a mistake, someone else is out there making all kinds of mistakes, learning from them, and getting to where you wanted to be. And probably laughing at your weakness.”

“You can’t rely on others to jump up and make your dreams happen. They have their own dreams, they’re not worrying about yours. People might be willing to help if they can, but ultimately, it’s on you. Get the best people around you, know your strengths and weaknesses, and trust others to do what they do best. But in the end, it’s still your responsibility. Make a plan, and execute.”

“Make a choice and stand by it... Most people can’t do that. They’re content to “wing it” or “see what happens.” Come on, you already know what’s going to happen if you go into it that way – whatever you started is going to fall apart. But that’s what most people do, they “test the waters” before jumping in. Why? Unless you suspect those waters are churning with crocodiles, what’s the worst thing that can happen if you take the plunge? You get wet. A Cleaner thinks, “No problem, I’ll swim.” Most people just stand at the edge shivering and looking for a towel.”

With some people, the only thing they’re really good at is keeping busy.

“In order for you to reach your highest ability, this is going to be your number one focus. I want to make you excellent at this one thing. You can be average and above average at the other things, but when people talk about someone who can do this, you’re going to be the first name on the list.”

“Figure out what you want to do, then do it. And do it better than anyone else... And then let everything else you do build around that; stay with what you know.”

5, 6, or 7... As in: What time are you hitting the gym tomorrow?

Work out every morning while most everybody else is still sleeping.

It's always interesting how the guy with the most talent and success spent more time working out than anyone else.

“It all comes back to this, no matter what you do in life: Are you willing to make the decision to succeed? Are you going to stand by that decision or when it gets hard? Will you choose to keep working when everyone else tells you to quit? Pain comes in all sorts of disguises – physical, mental, emotional. Do you need to be pain-free? Or can you push past it and stand by your commitment and decision to go further? It's your choice. The outcome is on you.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOVE THE WORK, BUT YOU'RE ADDICTED TO THE RESULTS.

A Cooler makes you wish you paid him less.

A Closer asks how much and then decides how hard he'll work.

A Cleaner doesn't think about the money; he just does the work and knows you'll be grateful for the privilege of paying him.

Kobe Bryant went to the gym to work out and practice the day he was drafted.

"Making it to the top is not the same as making it at the top."

"If you think it's not hard to take the best and find ways to make him better, you've never had to face that challenge. It's easy to improve on mediocrity, not so easy to improve on excellence."

It's easy to improve on mediocrity, not so easy to improve on excellence.

"Cleaner Law: when you reduce your competition to whining that you "got lucky", you know you're doing something right.

There are no shortcuts, and there is no luck. People always say "good luck" in a pressure situation. No. It's not about luck, I don't believe in luck. There are facts and opportunities and realities, and how you respond to them determines whether you succeed or fail... When the game is on the line, you don't want to hear "good luck"; it suggests you're not prepared. When you're headed to a job interview, you don't need luck. You need to know you're prepared and in control, and you're not relying on some random events or mystical intervention. Luck becomes a convenient excuse when things don't go your way, and a rationale for staying comfortable while you wait for luck to determine your fate."

"It doesn't matter what you get handed, it's what you do after you receive it that affords you the privilege of saying, "I did this on my own." If you get that gift and decide you're all set, you stand no chance – zero – of ever understanding greatness or excellence. Now you're the opposite of unstoppable. You stopped all on your own."

"You cannot understand what it means to be relentless until you have struggled to possess something that's just out of your reach. Over and over, as soon as you touch it, it moves further away. But something inside you – that killer instinct – makes you keep

going, reaching, until you finally grab it and fight with all your might to keep holding on. Anyone can take what's sitting right in front of him. Only when you're truly relentless can you understand the determination to keep pursuing a target that never stops moving."

No question, those who are gifted get to the top faster than anyone else. So what? Is that your excuse for not reaching as high? The challenge is staying there, and most people don't have the balls to put in the work. If you want to be elite, you have to earn it. Every day, everything you do. Earn it. Prove it. Sacrifice.

No shortcuts. You can't fight the elephants until you've wrestled the pigs, messed around in the mud, handled the scrappy, dirty issues that clutter everyday life, so you can be ready for the heavy stuff later. There's no way you can be prepared to compete and survive at anything if you start with the elephants; no matter how good your instincts are, you'll always lack the basic knowledge needed to build your arsenal of attack weapons. And when you're surrounded by those elephants, they'll know they're looking at a desperate newcomer.

"People who start at the top never understand what they missed at the bottom."

"You can't claim you ran a marathon if you started at the seventeenth mile."

"Most people are looking for an elevator instead of taking the stairs – they want the easy route... They can't deal with being uncomfortable so they seek the shortcut, and when they can't find it, they quit."

"Ask yourself honestly, what would you have to sacrifice to have what you really want? Your social life? Relationships? Credit cards? Free time? Sleep? Now answer this question: What are you *willing* to sacrifice? If those two lists don't match up, you don't want it badly enough."

"... people who look around at others who have more success and say, 'I can't believe how lucky that guy is, I could do that it...' Stop. You could do that if... what? If you put in more time and effort? If you commit to whatever is making it work for him? If you're willing to pay the price he's paying? What's he doing that you can't do?"

"When did hard work become a skill? It doesn't take talent to work hard, anyone can do it. Show up, work hard, and listen. It takes a willingness to be dedicated, to improve, to be better. I don't care if you're a superstar or the weakest guy on the team, anyone can show up, work hard, and listen. Are you looking for that nonexistent shortcut, or are you ready to do things the right way? Do you want it easy, or do you want it great?"

“Protect your body and your skills, get in shape and stay that way. It’s a year-round commitment, not a hobby.”

“You should have been ready to go, instead of planning to do the “real” work when the season was ready to roll.”

“In anything you do, it takes no talent to work hard. You just have to want to do it.”

“Spend your career on the bench for the right team and you can walk away with a nice bonus and a ring. Good enough, if good enough is what you set out to achieve. You made some money sitting down. But money doesn’t make you smart, it doesn’t make you a good businessman, and it sure doesn’t make you better looking. Most of the time it makes you soft, complacent, and mistakenly confident about your future.”

“Money doesn’t make you smart, it doesn’t make you a good businessman, and it sure doesn’t make you better looking. Most of the time it makes you soft, complacent, and mistakenly confident about your future.”

“Anyone can start something. Few can finish.”

“Part of the commitment to hard work is knowing what you have to give up to do the work... learning to control whatever pulls you away from your mission. You start having a little success, people notice you, it feels good... and maybe you start feeling a little satisfied and privileged. Trust me: privilege is a poison unless you know how to manage it.”

“Just work, because he knew better than anyone else that all the outside stuff was the result of hard work on the inside, not the other way around.”

“I’m going to show up ready to work every day, and I expect the same of you. So tell me the night before if you’re going out, if you’re not going to be worth anything the next day, so I know how to make my adjustments. I need to know if there’s something wrong with your game, or if you got overserved and can’t see straight. Maybe we’ll go a little easy on this day, but we’ll make it up here and there. The more you communicate with me, the better results I can get for you. But just the truth, and keep it simple. “I feel like garbage today.” Fine. Heard you. I don’t want the explanation. If I need more, I will ask you. If I think you’re seriously fucking up, I will tell you. Otherwise, show me you care about your career and I’ll care as well.”

“Cleaner Law: When you’re going through a world of pain, you never hide. You show up to work ready to go, you face adversity and your critics and those who judge you, you step into the Zone and perform at that top level when everyone is expecting you to falter. That’s being a professional.”

“There’s no off-season when you’re serious about being a winner.”

“Do the work. There is no privilege greater than the pressure to excel, and no greater reward than earning the respect and fear of others who can only stand in awe of your results.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU'D RATHER BE FEARED THAN LIKED.

A Cooler keeps his opinions to himself.

A Closer will say what he thinks, but only behind your back.

A Cleaner will tell you straight to your face what he thinks, whether you like it or not.

“A Cleaner wants to beat you when you’re at your best.”

“When you’re the best of the best, someone is always going to try to catch you, and you love watching them try.”

A Cooler is liked.

A Closer is respected.

A Cleaner is feared, and then respected for doing exactly what everyone feared he’d do.

“A Cleaner moves silently under the surface – he makes no waves, so you never know what he’s doing. You can’t see him or hear him. You may not even know who he is. But when he’s ready for you to find out, he does it with a tsunami that comes with no warning. You have no idea what’s coming until you’ve been completely rocked, and by then it’s too late for you to do anything but be swept away.

He will make no effort to get you to like him; he doesn’t care. But he’ll do everything possible – and succeed – to make sure you fear him.”

“If I want to get into another guy’s head, I’ll whisper in someone else’s ear while he’s watching. I may just be whispering about where we should go to dinner after the game, but now the first guy is wondering what we’re saying instead of focusing on what he’s supposed to be doing. Knocks him right out of his Zone... Do you want to be the guy worrying, or the guy quietly making everyone else worry?”

“Fear and respect: let them know you were there by your actions, not your words or emotions. You don’t have to be loud to be the focus of attention.”

“The loudest guy in the room is the one with the most to prove, and no way to prove it. A Cleaner has no need to announce his presence; you’ll know he’s there by the way he carries himself, always cool and confident. He’s never the blowhard telling you how great he is; he’s the quiet guy focused on results, because results are all that matter.”

“When people start broadcasting what they’re going to do, and how great they’re going to be when they do it, it’s a sure sign they’re still trying to convince themselves. If you

already know, you don't have to talk about it. Talk never goes up in price, it's always free, and you usually get what you pay for."

"Cleaners always leave behind a taste of the fear factor to give their next victims something to think about, so everyone knows they're coming; that's the undeniable edge they give themselves."

"Athletes spend so much time working on their physical excellence they sometimes forget that respect isn't just about what you can do physically; you have to be able to perform intellectually and mentally as well. The way you conduct yourself in all areas of your life, your ability to show intelligence and class and self-control... those are the things that separate you from the rest of the pack."

"They don't need me to be on their level physically, they need me to exceed their level mentally."

"MJ understood this better than anyone else. He knew if you were coming to see him play, you were expecting a performance, not just a basketball game."

"I tell my guys now, just once every few games get out of the car, let the fans take a few pictures, sign a couple of autographs, get back in the car. Takes less than thirty seconds, and those twenty fans who saw you will turn into two hundred, and then two thousand, and pretty soon everyone has a story about seeing you, and now you've touched a lot of lives... That's how you earn respect. Excellence in everything. Now you're not just another high-paid athlete, you're a class act."

"You don't need a \$3,000 suit, go to Walmart and buy three for \$100, but come back looking like a man, not a kid who got kicked out of school."

"You need to fit in? Really? I thought the whole point was to stand out. You've done all this work to be exceptional, to rise as a superstar, to set the bar higher, and now you want to blend in with everyone else? When you're the guy at the top, you show others how to act, you don't drop down to their level. You command respect and make them measure up to your standards, not the other way around."

"You're not here to make friends. You're here because you're the best, and you're not afraid to show it. And if that means setting yourself apart from everyone else, good for you. It means you're doing something right."

"I'm not telling you to work at alienating people. But don't be surprised if you do. Coolers are nice; they compensate for their competitive deficiencies by being likeable."

Cleaners don't have to do that. They set themselves apart from their colleagues and peers, distinguishing themselves by rising to a higher level. When you're completely focused on one thing – your craft – it's hard to pay attention to other people. You might sincerely care about how someone is doing, but you're not going to pick up the phone to find out, and if you do, it's usually because you have a motive for asking. You don't have time for chitchat or lunch or anything that distracts you from your single-minded focus. You don't care about being liked, you care about getting what you want. Not a great way to make and keep friends. But the only way to be truly relentless.”

“Kobe rarely goes out with teammates, he'd rather work out or watch game film. And he'd much rather have your respect than your friendship. Michael was the same, so was Bird. They relied on their small inner circles of trusted friends – not teammates – who didn't need to be entertained or impressed, people who understood their role in the circle and who shared their friend's vision of success.”

“You can't get to the top without stepping on some people, but a Cleaner knows where to step without leaving footprints, because you never know when you may need those people again. Being feared doesn't mean being a jerk. I want you to carry yourself so you can be respected, not exposed as an insecure jackass who big-times others so he can feel better about himself. You know that guy: he struts in with an inflated ego and the hot air of cockiness, and leaves behind nothing but the stale air of defeat. That's not a Cleaner, that's a pretender. He might be able to fool a few people for a little while, but when the results are being tallied, he has nowhere to hide.”

“Cleaners don't make big, bragging announcements about how they topped someone else; they let their results do the talking.”

“I want to be noticed for the excellence of my work, that's all. When people rip me for being an asshole or motherfucker – and they do – to me it means I'm on a level they can't attain or comprehend. That's fear. When others have to fight you by flinging insults, you've already won; it means they have no idea how else to compete with you. Now you know they're intimidated, and you can use it against them every time. The only people not intimidated are others just like you... and then it's game on, let's see what you got.”

“To me, it means nothing when people say they “like” you. Like is average. It leaves no impact, no heat, nothing memorable. It's like being “nice”... it's just okay. But it's a million miles from respect, admiration, trust, and an instinctive connection and understanding that you're on the same wavelength and share the same objective.”

“Cleaner Law: the same guy who is worshipped as a cutthroat competitor is also the guy most likely to be called an asshole by everyone around him. And not just any asshole, but *the* asshole. I’ll tell someone he’s the biggest asshole I’ve ever known, and right away he points to another guy and says, “He’s a bigger asshole.” No, he’s not, and you didn’t get it: I was giving you a compliment. Take it as a sign that you’re doing something right, because if you’re truly focused on winning, you’re not concerned with friendship or compassion or loyalty, you’re not worried about how others will judge you.”

“You don’t need friends; your friends need you. You know whom you can trust... and they’d better never let you down.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU TRUST VERY FEW PEOPLE, AND THOSE YOU TRUST BETTER NEVER LET YOU DOWN.

Coolers are afraid of the truth because they can't deal with it.

Closers dig for the truth and get upset when it's not in their favor.

Cleaners know when you're lying and wait for the truth to show itself, knowing whatever it is, they'll handle it.

"A solid entourage is a thing to behold. Basically you have a bunch of unskilled, untrained, generally inexperienced losers from the old neighborhood or some other unknown origin, guys who showed up to a party and never left, all swarming around hoping for a stray piece of ass or a free drink. Then those losers bring around other losers, just to show they know how to party for free. Always free, because none of these bums have a dime in their pocket... they do serve two purposes: telling a superstar how great he is and acting as PHDs – Professional Holders of Dicks. One day I'm going to make PHD T-shirts, congratulate these guys on their accomplishment, and hand them out; those guys will wear anything they get for free."

"You can screw up your own reputation; you're not going to screw up mine."

"Our relationship has to be based on trust, or we can't get anywhere."

"Man, you can't keep me from playing," he said.

"You feel that strongly about it?"

"Yeah, that's how strong I feel."

For a moment we just glared at each other. Look, some of these guys are a foot taller than I am, they could toss me across the court. But if you do that, you better make sure I'm dead, because I'm going to get back up and deal with you in ways you cannot begin to comprehend.

"Fine," I said. "Today is your last day here. I can't fix you. I ask three things of anyone who walks in my door: show up, work hard, and listen. If you can't give me all of those three things, I can't help you. You're throwing your money away paying me for a job I can't do." And I left him standing alone with a ball in his hand.

I'm always going to make you deal with the truth.

"That's a champion recognizing whom he needed to trust, realizing he didn't have all the answers, and knowing what was at stake if he pretended he did... In the world of

Cleaners, if you can't be trusted, you're gone. A Cleaner can count on few people, and if you're one of them, it means you've earned it. If you're not, watch your back. A Cleaner never forgives. Or forgets... But I have to be honest: you should watch your back anyway, because while you can trust a Cleaner to finish the job, if his next job requires him to take you down, you're going down... I never said a Cleaner was a model citizen. I said he gets results by any means possible."

"We talked earlier about trusting your instincts to make decisions, and a big part of that is knowing whom you can trust, or whether you can trust anyone at all. Because no matter who you are, part of success means recognizing the people who can help you get where you want to go, putting all the best pieces in place. You have to surround yourself with people who can operate at your level of demanding excellence. You can't be unstoppable, or even great, if you can't do that. And it's probably the hardest thing for a Cleaner to do."

"To Cleaners, trusting others is the same as giving up control, and they usually have a painfully hard time with that. Cleaners have this in common: at some point they learned they could only trust themselves."

"A Cleaner doesn't sit in the passenger seat unless he's 100 percent confident he can trust the driver, and one thing he knows for sure is that there are a lot of bad drivers out there... But trust doesn't have to mean giving up control and allowing other people to make decisions for you."

"I'm always amazed to see superstars who can't do anything on their own; they hand over all of their responsibilities to others, and then they're surprised when they don't get the results they wanted."

"A Cleaner never just hands over responsibility and says, 'Here, do this.' Too much risk. He'll test you first, maybe for fifteen minutes or fifteen years, whatever it takes, watching how you respond, observing how you work, how you carry yourself, deciding whether your motives and methods are up to his standards. He might not have any need for you now, but when he does, he wants to know whom he can snap into place, and if you've proven yourself, you'll get the call. If not, you're a ghost."

"A Cleaner views people as if they're tools, each with unique, indispensable qualities. A hammer can destroy or it can build; a knife in the wrong hands can kill you, but in a doctor's hands it can heal you. A wrench doesn't do the job of a drill, it only does what a wrench is supposed to do. You're only as good as the tools you've chosen, and your ability to use them to their maximum potential... That's a Cleaner's talent, gathering the best possible assets, placing them exactly where they have to be, and if necessary,

moving them into specific situations for his benefit. Cleaners are meticulous about putting their key people in place; they'll take a long time to build that ideal team, but when they finally get everyone they need, they stay committed to keeping them intact. Think about the most successful people you know. They recognize what works, and they stick with it as long as it keeps working. Cleaners rarely make changes just for the sake of change. What happens when you "shake things up" or "stir the pot"? You get random, unpredictable results. When someone is constantly changing everyone around him, the problem usually isn't those being replaced; more likely, the problem lies with the guy who can't figure out what he needs and wants."

"Pretty soon no one's working together, everyone is bitter and annoyed, and instead of taking pressure off the player so he can focus on the job that keeps everything else afloat, now he's got to manage personnel problems."

"The Cleaner has to be able to trust that everyone around him has his back and isn't operating under some separate agenda. When you're an A+ person, you want A+ people around you, and everyone has to be accountable for doing A+ work... And part of making the Cleaner look good is having the balls to tell him the truth, even when he doesn't want to hear it."

"When someone says, 'I need to be surrounded by positive people,' I just laugh. You know what that really means? *I want people who will lie to my face and make me feel better.* You didn't hire me to tell happy, shiny lies, my job is to set people straight, no matter what the consequence. And if that makes me sound cold or harsh, I'm fine with that. It's made me very good at what I do."

"All I've ever done with these guys is give them a few phrases or an idea that makes them stop in their tracks. That's it. Then let them figure it out. That way it's their idea."

"I don't need to be the center of things, I just want to do my job and get out of the way. If I'm doing it right, I'm always around and you'll never see me."

"The truth is simple. It requires no explanation, analysis, rationale, or excuse; it's just a simple statement that leaves no doubt. You can look at it from every angle, hold it up to the light, flip it over, slice it up, smash it with an ax... it's still the truth. But highly successful people rarely get to hear the truth; they're surrounded by assistants and security and aides and the PHDs who go to tremendous lengths to keep their place in the circle of trust by managing the truth, shoveling polite opinions and puffy compliments, and generally keeping the boss happy... But the boss doesn't always need to be happy. Sometimes he needs an honest smack in the head. You want to be the most valuable guy in the circle? Be the one who looks the Cleaner straight in the eye

and tells him what everyone else is afraid to say. He might hate it, and hate you for saying it, but a true Cleaner knows when he's being bullshitted and when he's being set straight. And guaranteed, the next time he needs to know whom he can trust, he'll be looking for you."

"If you expect the truth from me, you'd better give me the truth in return. Before I ask a question, I already know the answer. And I'll keep asking until you give me the truth."

"You can't make things better until you stop making things worse."

"When the answer is no, a Cleaner says no; he doesn't soften it or wrap it in something pretty. No excuses, and no explanation afterward. Explanations are another way of saying, "I wasn't sure, but then I went through this whole, long thought process until I came to a decision, and now I'm pretty sure. I hope you understand." And if you do need to explain, do so knowing you're opening the door to further discussion, because when the other guy sees you had some indecision, he's going to try to negotiate. No is a closed door, no negotiation. Someone asks you to do something you don't want to do, and you start explaining, that person is going to ask you again and again and again. Don't explain, don't make excuses. Truth takes one sentence. Simple and direct. A question, an answer."

"Most of the time when we ask for advice, we don't want the truth. We want the answer we're seeking. Be open to advice that goes against what you want."

"Cleaner Law: surround yourself with those who want you to succeed, who recognize what it takes to be successful. People who don't pursue their own dreams probably won't encourage you to pursue yours; they'll tell you every negative thing they tell themselves."

"Cleaners trust few people; they'd almost always rather follow their instincts and fix the situation later if they're wrong, than trust someone else and kick themselves for not listening to that voice inside. If a Cleaner screws up, he wants it to be because he did what he thought was right, not because he did what someone else told him to do."

"Beware of the Cleaner you cut loose; he'll be back, and he'll be stronger than he ever was."

When a Cooler speaks, you have doubts.

When a Closer speaks, you listen.

When a Cleaner speaks, you believe.

“They trust me. Why? Because I give them a straight answer. Few words have as much impact as *trust me*. If you say that to someone, you’re taking on some serious responsibility, and you’d better be able to deliver.”

“If I say something they don’t like – which is pretty often – it’s for their benefit. Always for them. If there’s a choice between being the asshole who tells them things are about to go bad, or the good buddy who lies to their faces and tells them everything is great, guess what; I’ll be the asshole who keeps them from failing. They’re used to people showering them with roses, and I’m bringing the thorns.”

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE FAILURE; YOU KNOW THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT.

"A Cleaner is done when *he* says he's done, not when you say he's done."

"How can you fail when your best day is better than most people's worst?"

"It may take years, and all kinds of work no one else will ever see, but eventually a Cleaner is going to own that situation and make it work to his advantage. He has to; it's the only way he knows. This didn't work, so let's do that. If that doesn't work, we can do this."

"There's a big difference between being hired for a job that you'll eventually leave, voluntarily or involuntarily, and owning the business."

"Failure is what happens when you decide you failed. Until then, you're still always looking for ways to get where you want to be."

"Success and failure are 100 percent mental. One person's idea of success might seem like a complete failure to someone else. You must establish your own vision of what it means to be unstoppable; you can't let anyone else define that for you."

"When someone else says you've failed, what they really mean is 'If that were me, I would feel like a failure.' Well, that guy's not you, and he's obviously not a Cleaner, because Cleaners don't recognize failure."

"Dealing with setbacks is how you achieve success. You learn, and you adapt. When everyone else is talking about how you 'failed,' you show up like a professional, remap your course, and get back to work. That's the progression of good-great-unstoppable. No one starts at unstoppable. You fuck up, you figure it out, you trust yourself."

"When you're the best at anything, you wear a big target on your back. When your colleagues and friends and enemies start talking and sniping behind your back, you know you've done something right if they care that much about you and your business, and whether you're going to 'lose.' Lose? What I lose you never had."

"A Cleaner never sees failure because to him it's never over. If something doesn't go as planned, he instinctively looks for options to make things work a different way. He

doesn't feel embarrassed or ashamed, he doesn't blame anyone else, and he doesn't care what anyone else says about his situation. It's never the end, it's never over... And he knows, without a doubt, that whatever happens, he'll find a way to come out on top. If you ever find me and a bear wrestling in the woods, help the bear."

"Make the choice to turn "failure" into success. If your team doesn't win a championship, if your business falls apart, if you don't achieve something you worked for, move to the next step in your evolution. Remember who you are, and how you got this far. Listen to your gut."

It's never over. You have choices:

The Cooler admits defeat.

The Closer works harder.

The Cleaner strategizes for a different outcome.

People who admit defeat and say they had no choice just aren't serious about success, excellence, or themselves. They say they'll "try" and then give up when that doesn't work.

Fuck "try." Trying is an open invitation to failure, just another way of saying, "If I fail, it's not my fault, I tried."

You *tried* your best? Or did you *do* your best? Huge difference. "Well, I tried." Okay, now tell me what you *did*.

Do, or don't do.

Do it, and if it doesn't work, do it again.

"If you aim at excellence, you have to be willing to sacrifice. That is the price of success. You never know how bad you want it until you get that first bitter taste of not getting it, but once you taste it, you're going to fight like hell to get that bitterness out of your mouth. Maybe you got benched, or you lost a lot of money, or someone else got the promotion you wanted. Others might give up, and they'll be the first to say you should give up too. But did you stop because you wanted to, or because they told you to? Is there still work to be done? Do you still feel the anger inside you, driving you to take action and turn things around? A Closer will keep going until he's forced to stop – remember, he's called a Closer because he's there at the end. But once the end arrives, he knows it, he feels it. It's over... A Cleaner can't ever accept that it's over. But he does recognize when it's time to change direction."

"It's no weak to recognize when it's time to shift directions... It's weak to refuse to consider other options and fail at everything because you couldn't adapt to anything... We've all been there: you just know something's not right. Maybe you're not advancing as quickly as you planned, or you're not making the money you anticipated, or maybe

you just don't like what you're doing or whom you're doing it with. Or maybe events outside of your control have impacted your situation... This is where instinct is the most valuable tool you can possibly possess, because only you can decide whether to hear what the voice inside is telling you... In pro sports, it's the decision to retire or to take a shot at one more season. For a young athlete, it's deciding whether to sit on the bench or to find a new sport to play. In business, it can be the choice to change careers or jobs, start or sell a business... In any situation, it's the courage and confidence to know it's time to make a change."

"It takes a special person to say enough is enough and know when it's times to start redirecting your effort into something that can succeed. Maybe your dream isn't going to play out the way you originally envisioned it, but with some creativity and vision you can redirect your goals toward something that keeps you connected to what you always wanted."

"Just don't expect everyone else to understand or agree with your new plan. Most people are either content to stay with the safe thing, or they're too scared to leave a bad thing, and they'll put all that fear and doubt on you. They anticipate failure; you anticipate opportunity."

"You can be good by playing it safe. You can't be relentless unless you're willing to take chances. Safe makes you good, chances make you great."

"You know how much work that takes in your late thirties, to stay in condition and keep making those teams, just because you refuse to go down without that ultimate prize? That's a guy who refused to accept failure and came away a winner."

"I've had this conversation over and over with guys nearing the end of their careers: In one year you're going to be irrelevant. You'll leave a legacy as a player, but what does that mean when you get up every day with nothing to do? Figure it out now, before you're just another ex-player looking for attention."

"A Cleaner knows when to walk away, and which direction to walk. Never running, always walking; he leaves smoothly and on his own terms. He can lose a battle because he's still planning to win the war. Lose a game, but win the season. Lose a season, come back and win the next three. Lose a job, start a new business. No one else is getting the last word on whether he succeeded."

#1. WHEN YOU'RE A CLEANER... YOU DON'T CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS BECAUSE YOU ALWAYS WANT MORE.

A Cooler is first to arrive at the celebration and last to leave.

A Closer will make an appearance, then go out with his own crew.

A Cleaner just wants to get back to work.

"There's always more work to do. And more to prove. Always more to prove... Let everyone else celebrate. You're still not satisfied."

"You did it for that exquisite moment, that electrifying, powerful surge of satisfaction that everyone dreams about but few ever get to experience... Yet the minute you experience it, it's already fading. And all you can think about is doing whatever it takes to get it back... It's that momentary feeling of *"Enough,"* followed by a deep, hot surge of *"More."*

Back to work.

"Winning is an addiction."

"The great Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning is a habit," which is also true, but I think it's a habit that inevitably becomes the addiction. You can't understand it until you taste it, and then you can spend a lifetime craving more."

"If you ever once feel the need to question why it's necessary to work so hard or wonder if it's all worth it... just go ahead and quit. You don't get it."

"It's hard to describe the enormity of winning when it's combined with the realization that to repeat the experience you have to start all over again, go through the whole process, and work even harder for an uncertain outcome."

"That's the addiction. Others think about how many years are left on their contracts, or how many seasons are left in their worn-down bodies. The great ones don't even consciously think about it. There's just one automatic response: win. They don't think about if or when they'll hit their ceiling, they don't believe they have a ceiling. They just keep going, and they leave on their own terms, when they want to, not when anyone else tells them to."

A few years ago I was working with a player trying to come back after surgery, and he said to me, “I just want to get better so I can get even with everybody.”

That got my attention. “Say that again,” I said.

“I just want to get even with everyone.”

“Define *even*,” I said.

“I want to get back at all those people who said I couldn’t do it.”

“You know what *even* means? I asked. “It means you’re equal to them, right next to them. Side by side.” Silence. “Do you truly want to get even with everyone, or do you really want to get ahead of them? Why stand next to anyone when you can push beyond them? In the game of basketball, you get around someone so you can get past them. Play this game the same way. You go for the win, you don’t settle for a tie.”

He got it. Not everyone does. Think about the people you know who are so talented and gifted and capable, yet completely void of the ability to advance, as if an invisible cap were over them. Most people allow themselves to be limited that way, either by what others tell them or what they think of themselves, and they decide they can settle for whatever they have under that cap. My job is to get you to bump up that cap. In everything you do, I want you better and stronger than the last time you did it.

“A Cleaner performs for himself, and everyone else wins. Whatever he does to satisfy his goals internally transfers to them externally. When he achieves what he desires, everyone else around him benefits. If he’s the boss and his company makes a massive profit because he worked around the clock maneuvering a huge deal, his employees win. He’s the guy who hits the game-winning shot because he practiced that damn shot a thousand times every single fucking day, and his teammates get to go home winners. But they’ll celebrate and he won’t because he’ll be looking at the stat sheet, skimming over the positive stuff and going straight to the negative. “Thirty points, ten assists... damn, two turnovers.” And that’s all he’s going to remember: “Oh, the night I had two turnovers.” He played a near-perfect game, but to him, not perfect enough.”

“The drive to close the gap between near-perfect and perfect is the difference between great and unstoppable. You never shake the uneasy feeling that you can’t ever be satisfied with your results; you always believe you could have done better, and you stop at nothing to prove it. Is it an ideal way to live? I don’t know. It’s not easy, that’s for sure. You hope your friends and family ultimately understand. They might not. Your whole life is essentially dedicated to one goal, to the exclusion of everything else.”

“When you’re never satisfied, life can be lonely. People think success will make them happy, but when you experience it, it’s usually different from what you imagined. You’ll have what you desire, but be prepared for the possibility that you’ll be standing alone because you had the balls to take that unpopular path and you went to extremes that others won’t ever understand. You’ll finally have everything you ever dreamed of,

but now you'll know for sure what you suspected all along: Nobody else understands what you went through, or what you did to get there."

"... one of the biggest challenges facing highly competitive people is burnout. You win that prize, you make your money, you get the glory... it can be awfully tempting to lie down and let someone else carry the load for a while."

"I'm convinced childhood is overrated; you can have a much better childhood as an adult, when you have the freedom and the affluence to enjoy it. You get this small window to be a legend, and you have the rest of your life to act like a kid, at any age. Push it as far as you can, and even if you make it until you're thirty or thirty-five, you still have decades ahead to enjoy what you built for yourself."

"A Cleaner feels burnout like everyone else, but the idea of walking away and not thinking about what he walked away from creates more anxiety and stress than keeping it going; that addiction is still demanding to be fed. That's why you see guys retire and return; they're still not satisfied, and they still have something to prove. Not to you, but to themselves. The pressure is all internal... You have to crave that pressure, embrace it, and never let up... You don't have to love it. You just have to be insatiable for the results."

"Every dream you imagine, everything you see and hear and feel in your sleep, that's not a fantasy, that's your deep instinct telling you it can all be real. Follow those visions and dreams and desires, and believe what you know. Only you can turn those dreams into reality. Never stop until you do."

"The greatest battles you will ever fight are with yourself, and you must always be your toughest opponent. Always demand more of yourself than others demand of you. Be honest with yourself, and you'll be able to meet every challenge with confidence and the deep belief that you are prepared for anything. Life can be complicated; the truth is not."