DARDEN BUSINESS PUBLISHING
UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

UV3134
Rev. Apr. 8, 2013

RESONANCE, LEADERSHIP, AND THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

> *I've always been interested in the mountains. The first time I went to Switzerland, I saw the mountains, and I said, "This is where I've got to be." I dropped everything and found a mountain-climbing school and spent a couple of weeks in Switzerland and learned some basics of climbing, how to cut ice steps in glaciers and basic mountaineering. I really liked that. Clearly, in technical climbing you get in situations where, if you slip, you are dead. You don't consciously seek those situations, but you reach dicey points where you basically can only go forward rather than back. And the level of concentration and thrill of operating at that level is just…you are alive then, and it's almost like your sense of…your visual acuity and sensual acuity dial up tenfold, and you can see things and you are aware of things that you are not aware of in everyday life. That is the part of rock climbing that I really enjoy.*
>
> —Tom Curren, former senior VP of strategic planning, Marriott Corporation

- A world renowned musician performs in concerts all over the globe.
- The world record holder in a swimming event wins the gold medal at the Olympics.
- The CEO of a consumer electronics firm reports annualized growth of 40% per year for the previous 10 years.
- The head of thoracic surgery at a major teaching hospital performs a coronary bypass operation on his 400th patient.

What do all of these people have in common? First, and most obviously, they are performing at the peak of their professions and probably at the peak of their abilities. Second, they are performing at these high levels repeatedly, not just on an occasion here and an occasion there. Third, surprisingly, although they come from radically different backgrounds and are performing in very different careers, they seem to be following a consistent pattern. Interestingly, what seems to work in music also seems to work in surgery; what works in athletics also seems to work in business. Each of the people described above and almost four hundred others like them in a study of world-class performers (WCPs) conducted by Doug Newburg, PhD in Sports

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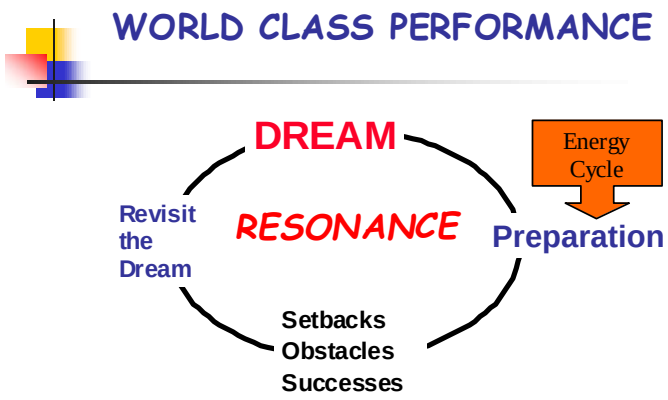
Psychology,[1] seem to be following a pattern of thinking and behaving that is remarkably consistent. From interviews with these world-class performers in various professions, Newburg has developed a powerful model of world-class performance. The concepts in this model relate directly to our discussion of leadership and could help you learn how to perform better, be happier in your work, even engage a simple but powerful definition of the meaning of life, and therefore become a more powerful, centered leader.

World-class performers as used here refer to people who are performing at the pinnacle of their professions. The people in Newburg's study include, for example, a world record holder and Olympic gold medalist in the 100-meter backstroke, a two-time NCAA basketball Player of the Year, an internationally known jazz musician, the director of training in the thoracic surgery department of a major university medical center, military personnel responsible for the lives of highly trained pilots and their equipment, and the CEO of a high-tech retail chain that has grown at double digits for the previous 15 years.

The model that Newburg saw in his interviews consists of the following: first, consistently high performers have an experiential dream. Second, they are willing to work very hard for what they want. Third, they feel a strong sense of personal responsibility for creating the freedoms they wish to enjoy. Fourth, they all encountered significant obstacles. Fifth, they managed their own energy and mental state by staying in touch with their experiential dream. Sixth, when they were performing at their best, they reported an experience of harmony or wholeness, which Newburg calls "resonance" (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Energy cycle.



[1] Newburg received his PhD from the U.Va., where he studied under Bob Rotella. He was employed by the U.Va. Medical School Thoracic Surgery department where he worked as a performance counselor with thoracic surgery residents.

Dreams

The WCPs in Newburg's sample often described two kinds of dreams. The first kind was the kind of dream that most people are familiar with, the thing they wanted to do or be when they grew up. This might be phrased as "a doctor," "a musician," "an Olympic gold medalist," "a CEO of a rapidly growing company," or "a world record holder." Typically, the WCPs referred to these as "goals." Most of us have had fleeting thoughts about this kind of dream, which I will call an "external dream" or "Dext." We dreamed of being pilots or lawyers or presidents or senators. Some of us may have achieved those dreams, and some may not have. One thing is clear from this research: there's more to fulfilling your dreams than a getting a title or making money.

Newburg's WCPs often went further and included in their comments an unusual description, a description of an *experiential dream*—a feeling really—that characterized what was going on inside of them when they were performing at their best and enjoying it the most. A two-time NCAA player of the year in basketball said, "Look, it's not about winning the gold medal. That's my goal, but that's not why my dream that's not why I play. My dream is to play to win at the highest level for as long as I can." An Olympic gold medalist in swimming called his dream "easy speed," the harmony he felt in the water when he tried for 85% but got 100% of his speed. These sample definitions are experiential in that they describe feelings that people have when they are performing at their best, rather than what they are doing or what they are accomplishing.

Experiential dreams or internal dreams have to do with how one wants to feel. Most of us in life are systematically trained to ignore how we feel at the expense of what we are doing. "No pain, no gain" we're told. "I don't care how you feel, just do your job and deliver those results!" "Stop whining and do your job!" What Newburg's subjects reported though is that what's going on inside not only is very important, but it can also significantly influence results.

There is precedent for this balance between results and experience in other research on business management. The Ohio State Leadership Studies, for example, concluded that there were two main factors in effective leadership: task and process. The "managerial grid" developed by Blake and Mouton was one summary of these findings that encouraged managers to pay attention not only to getting the job done, but also to how they did it.[2] It wasn't enough to get good numbers, but one also had to develop relationships along the way. This dichotomy of task and process also emerged in Lawrence and Lorsch's groundbreaking study of organizational design when they noted that differentiation by task and integration across organizational boundaries was complementary and a necessary force in effective organizational designs.[3]

More recently, Mike Beer and Nitin Nohria at Harvard Business School explored ways in which leaders of change efforts cluster into one of three categories, those who focus on economic results (task), those who focus on organizational processes (process), and those who focus on

[2] Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, *The Managerial Grid* (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1969).
[3] Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch, *Organization and Environment* (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1976).

both.[4] Further, Jack Welch during his extraordinary tenure as CEO at General Electric used a two-by-two grid to plot the talents of his senior executives: one axis was "results," and the other was "process." So while recognition of the need for balance between task and process is not new, Newburg's subjects clarified this distinction: there are two kinds of dreams. One kind of dream is about achievement, and the other is about experience and feeling.

For most people, this second kind of dream, the internal dream or "LDint," is a difficult concept to grasp. In part this relates to our earlier discussion of emotional intelligence and the low capacity many have for recognizing their own emotions and emotional experience. Most people are not skilled at this. The internal dream's basic question is, "How do you want to feel today?" Most people never think about this and would probably find it, at first blush, irrelevant. "It's not about how you feel," they argue, "it's about what you do." It turns out that how you feel can have a big impact on your performance.

The "dream" portrayed in the resonance model is the "internal dream" or LDint. I invite you here to begin thinking about your LDint, and to distinguish it from your LDext or external dream (of doing or becoming something). What is your emotional life's dream? That is, how do you want to feel on a daily basis? A good place to start thinking about this is to reflect on how you feel when you are performing at your best. Can you describe it? Can you put into words the inner experience when you are at the peak of your capacities? Some additional concepts will help illustrate this idea of "Dint."

Best-selling author Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, former chair of the department of psychology at the University of Chicago, spent his career studying a phenomenon he called "flow."[5] He became interested in this as a small boy in a Nazi concentration camp when he noticed how some prisoners found a way to tolerate and even magnify their existences while others seemed to give up easily and die quickly. Later, he found people in many walks of life who exhibited this ebullient energy. In the book by the same title, he said, that flow had several characteristics (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2. Flow characteristics.

1. Time warps: either speeding up or slowing down.
2. One loses self-consciousness.
3. One focuses intently on the task.
4. One performs at the peak of one's abilities.
5. Yet it seems effortless, as if it were flowing.
6. The experience is intensely, internally satisfying.
7. Afterward, one regains a stronger, more capable self.

[4] Mike Beer and Nitin Nohria, "Cracking the Code of Change," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June, 2000).
[5] Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

First, time warps. To a person in flow, time either speeds up or slows down. If it speeds up, the person becomes unaware of the passage of time and suddenly at some point observes, "Wow, where did the time go?" If it slows down, one becomes aware of minute detail as if life were passing by in a slow-motion film. Ted Williams once said he could see the seams on the baseball as it flew toward the plate—as if it were in slow motion. The opening quote of this chapter reflects a time-warp-slow-down phenomenon for a technical rock climber.

Second, people in flow lose their self-consciousness. They are no longer worried about how they appear to others. Concerns about hair, clothing, language, etc., melt away in the face of the third characteristic, intense focus on the task at hand. Fourth, people in flow perform at their peak, at the limit of their capabilities, and yet, fifth, it seems effortless, as if the performance was just "flowing" out of them. Athletes sometimes talk about this, not straining and struggling, yet performing at their best. Mathematicians sometimes say the same: there's a moment when the pathway to a solution appears almost effortlessly. Sixth, being in flow is intensely satisfying. People in flow thoroughly enjoy it. It's a powerful psychological experience. And seventh, when a flow experience is over, one feels enlarged, more capable, more grounded in the world and able to deal with its ups and downs.

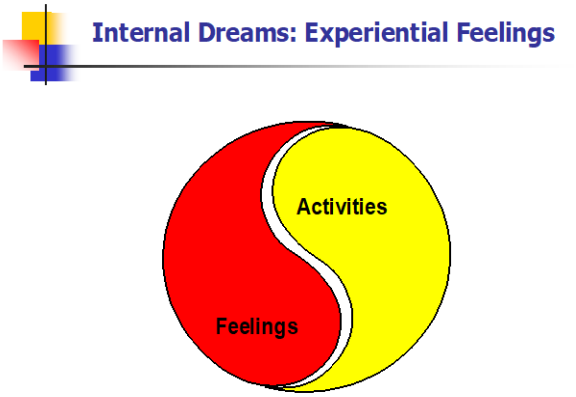
Csikszentmihalyi refers to this phenomenon as flow. Basketball players call it "being in the zone." Eastern religions and languages refer to it as "wa" (being in harmony with one's surroundings). Newburg called it "resonance." Resonance is the experience of being in harmony with the situation and the events in which one is performing to such an extent that one is able to influence those events masterfully, effortlessly, and with great psychic reward.

So, what is your internal life's dream? Is it "to play to win at the highest level" or "easy speed" or "light, unhurried and engaged"? If you cannot answer that question immediately, don't despair. It seems like such a simple task. The first time I heard Newburg speak and describe this phenomenon, I went home and couldn't sleep that night. It took me two years to figure mine out. Perhaps you'll be faster than I was. As you try to identify your Dint, I invite you to begin with reflection on the times in your life when you've felt flow. What were you doing? Where were you? What were the circumstances? How did you feel?

In my experience, most people have felt flow at one time or another. When I ask executive groups when they have felt flow, the room typically fills with energy and enthusiasm, with much smiling and hand waving as people describe where they were and what they were doing. Some people will mention running, others childbirth, others skiing, some writing computer code, some even calculus! (We acknowledge that some will note that sex seems to have all of the characteristics of resonance, so we leave that out for propriety's sake.) Resonance comes to people from different sources. But living your Dint is not just about playing basketball all day or quitting work to go fishing. Some people will say, "Well, I get flow when I run but not at work. How can I get that at work?" This is a significant question. First, note that the activity and the experiencing of the activity are not the same thing. Clearly the activity and the experience are related—as we have tried to illustrate in **Figure 3**. But it is important to realize that people can and do transport their experiencing from one activity to another. In other words,

one can learn to bring the resonance of basketball or fishing or music or swimming, for example, to another setting.

Figure 3. Activity and experience.



When I was a young assistant professor at the Harvard Business School, a senior colleague who was famous for his teaching skills, took me under his wing. I asked him one day if he would observe me teach. He agreed, and I prepared late the night before, tried my hardest in class, and ran to his office afterward for feedback. His summary: "You're boring!" Ouch! Then he said, "I notice that you play basketball at lunch with the doctoral students." "Yes," I said, "I love basketball." "It's apparent," he replied, "when you come back, your face is glowing, you are floating down the hall, exuding energy! You've got to figure out how to play basketball in the classroom!" When I heard that, I thought, "Hmm, that's dumb. You can't play basketball in the classroom." As I reflected on this, the awareness gradually dawned that yes, one can play basketball in the classroom. There's a tip off. One passes the "ball." Some people fumble it, some make fancy dribbles and fancy shots, everyone oohs and aahs, and then we race down "court" in the other direction. The point is that resonant experiences are transportable and those who learn how to do that significantly improve their performance in a variety of activities. The first challenge, though, is to recognize the sources of your resonance and what it is when it occurs to be able to recognize it and describe it.

Regardless of where their flow came from, most people have concluded that experiencing resonance is a fleeting thing that comes and goes and cannot be recreated. One of the central and most powerful implications of Newburg's research is that there are lots of people out there who are aware of this phenomenon and who are working to recreate it, whether it be in sports, in music, in the operating room, or the board room, on a regular basis. If you're a heart surgeon or a performing musician, when the time comes, you cannot be wondering if you'll be "on" today or not; you need "it" to happen regularly and on cue. You may never get to the point where you can "make it happen" every time; however, there are at least 400 people in the world who are ramping up their percentages.

Some people seem to know immediately what their Dint is. Others struggle for some time trying to identify it. Perhaps you have had a natural awareness of your peak emotional

experiences. If not, you may have to work at it for a while before you can identify—and feel confident that you've identified—what it is that you would like to re-create on a regular basis in your life. We've included an exercise in the workbook at the back of the book to help you work through this question: What is your internal life's dream? But why should you want to do this?

A case can be made that much of human activity is directed at the search for resonance. WCPs have recognized it, they've found a field in which they can experience it, and they've invested heavily in recreating it as much as they can in their lives. Average people, too, seem to be searching constantly for resonance. Look at small children. Their curiosity and inquisitiveness is infectious. At play, they are completely engaged, absorbed in the moment, learning, growing, stretching their boundaries. Somehow, as they grow older, this magic seems to evaporate from the lives of many (not all). Robert McCammon in his book, *Boy's Life*, describes it this way:

> We all start out knowing magic. We are born with whirlwinds, forest fires and comets inside of us. We are all born able to sing to birds and read the clouds, and see our destiny in grains of sand.
>
> But then we get the magic educated right out of our souls. We get it churched out, spanked out, washed out, and combed out. We get put on the straight and narrow and told to be responsible. Told to act our age. Told to grow up, for God's sake. And you know why we were told that? Because the people doing the telling were afraid of our youth and because the magic we knew made them ashamed and sad about what they had allowed to wither in themselves.[6]

As you look around you, how many people do you see who are just "going through the motions?" How many people do you know who have lost their "magic?" How many people do you know who love their work and seem energized and uplifted by it? I believe that most people are knowingly or unknowingly searching for this resonance phenomenon. It strikes me that the modern addictions—drugs, alcohol, gambling, promiscuity, and thrill seeking—are manifestations of this innate human drive for resonance and flow. People naturally want to feel good, to feel productive in the use of their talents, and to do that in an effortless, flowing way.

The problem with these addictions is that they are short cuts to resonance and therefore are false. They miss the seventh characteristic above a sense of growth and expanded capacity. When one gets high on alcohol, drugs, sex, or even the sterile experience of roller coasters and bungee jumping, there comes a time—the morning after—when one realizes that the high was a false one in that there was no growth involved. Unless the individual works to make the resonance experience happen, it becomes nothing more than a short-term engineered, artificial experience manufactured by someone else. False resonance doesn't add to your skills, your strength, and your capacity. In short, you haven't grown, so the attempts to take short-cuts to resonance don't work, they don't provide the real growth upon which one can build regular resonant experiences. This brings us, in the resonance model, to the topic of working for what you want.

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[6] Robert McCammon, *Boy's Life* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992).

Preparation

People who eventually performed at the world class level moved from the formation of a life's dream (Dint) to intense, sometimes extended periods of preparation. Preparation is the *work* necessary to realize a dream. Preparation may include schooling, training, practice, study, scheduling, different experiences, travel, making appointments with experts, reading, and changing one's life-style/structure. The central goal in each of these activities is gaining mental, emotional, physical, and even cosmological mastery in one's chosen arena. The central question here is: What activities will help you experience your internal dream?

Preparation can take months, years, even decades. A well-known jazz musician told of renting a remote farm with a small barn behind the house in his early years. For more than a year, he would spend eight to ten hours a day in the "shed," as he called it, playing scales on a baby grand piano. His new wife said it was not a very pleasant time. He seldom bathed, changed his clothes, or got a haircut. About halfway through his 15-month "shedding" period, he decided to learn to play with both hands, so he crossed his hands and began his self-invoked training regimen again. Co-performers observing him on stage reverse hands and continue without missing a note were flabbergasted at his virtuosity. So by virtue of his preparation, when he emerged from the shed, he had developed complete freedom of expression. He could express freely through his fingers on the keyboard into music what he was feeling inside. It did take 15 months of concentrated effort on top of years of study and practice.

The time spent in preparation to excel becomes irrelevant if the preparation is on target and in line with the realization of one's life's dream. But remember, the internal dream, the resonance, is different from the external dream, the goal. Good preparation provides momentary glimpses of resonance and how it might be during the "real thing." Additional preparation, then, is the work required to lengthen those experiences and to make them more frequent, to increase the probability of making them happen again, to increase the glimpses of resonance to a designed recurring lifestyle in which resonance is a regular experience. What does it take to prepare that diligently? How does someone become so dedicated to excellence that he or she can work that hard?

The Energy Cycle

The answer lies in their management of their energy. Most people focus on time management, but WCPs focus on managing their energy. There are several aspects to developing world-class performance. First, the WCs in Newburg's study talked a lot about freedom. Freedom, it turns out, is very important to world-class performers. Those in Newburg's sample, in their various ways, talked about the need to feel free, to be free, and to behave freely. They talked about *freedoms of*, *freedoms to*, and *freedoms from*. While these are similar, we can see some nuances in the way WCPs talked about their freedoms.

Freedom of has to do with freedom of expression. It is a kind of release from the inability to perform. Freedom of expression for an artist or musician, for example, has to do with a developed capacity to put on canvas or into notes an accurate representation of what one sees, feels, and experiences inside. Freedom of has to do with a developed capacity for performing. There is a freedom of performance that resides in an athlete who can jump high enough to stuff a basketball in the hoop or who can swish the ball consistently from 30 feet. There is a freedom of performance that resides within a surgeon who has done repeatedly and successfully what the body in front of him or her on the operating table needs to have done. Those of us who wrestle with our abilities to perform, whether it's at work, in conversation, in writing, in conducting a meeting, in coordinating a complex project, are still developing our freedoms of. Freedom of is a freedom of performance or expression.

Freedom to, on the other hand, has to do with overcoming and moving beyond the parameters and constraints that inhibit us from performing what we know how to do. We may have the ability internal to us, that is, the freedom of performing, but if we aren't invited to the key meeting or if we are restricted from the big tournament or if we are unable to see patients, we may not have the freedom to do what we know we can do. Organizational regulations, customs, traditions, expectations of others, financial constraints, legal guidelines, and other external factors all can prevent us from doing what we are able to do. Unless we have developed a set of freedoms related to managing our external environment, we may not have the freedoms to be in situations where our freedom of can be exercised. One well-known musician, for instance, says that he puts up with and is paid a lot of money for the hassles of traveling from city to city, wrestling with agents, airlines, motels, and difficult schedules—all just so he can be free to perform when the lights go down and the spots come up on stage. What he does then, he says, is for free.

Freedoms from relate to conditions or states of mind that keep one from performing at the highest level. These might include lack of confidence, depression, a sense of mediocrity or anonymity, ignorance, and lack of motivation. Freedoms from are in one sense enablers of freedoms of. If one is free from doubt, free from fear, free from analysis-paralysis, one may develop freedom of expression.

The key thing about the WCPs' view of freedom is that they have accepted, fully and deeply, the responsibility for their own outcomes. There was no sense of entitlement in the interviews. Rather, these WCPs were very aware that it was their responsibility to learn new ways to prepare (practice) and to develop the determination to see that preparation through. This awareness of the freedom-responsibility link stimulated an intense desire to learn, to search for new ideas about how to expand their freedoms.

When a person identifies freedoms that he or she wants to achieve and accepts the responsibilities that come with winning that freedom, he or she begins exploring. This may mean reading, taking courses, creating new experiences, building new relationships, and/or going different places. Implicit in this exploration is the understanding that, as Alcoholics Anonymous says, "Insanity is expecting different results while continuing to do the same thing." WCPs

understand that one needs to find, learn, and do something different in order to get from where they are to where they want to be. They realize the connection between freedoms and responsibilities. This exploration leads to lots of new ideas.

The new ideas may come from conversations, films, readings, research, taking classes, new experiences in new places, or re-framing old experiences in new ways and places. WCPs are open to and are always searching for new ways of framing who one is, what one wants to do, and how one can go about doing that. In a sense this search for new ideas is developing a freedom from ignorance, ignorance from not knowing who one is, what one wants to do, and what one enjoys doing.

We all, to some degree, engage in this search. In fact, one way of thinking of career development is as a series of explorations down alleys, some of them blind, in which we try things, reject the ones we don't like, and pursue the ones we do like. WCPs explore these various possibilities with a passion in the search for answers that will help them reach their dreams. Many of us unfortunately have given up on the possibility that we could experience regularly the kind of internal thrill we've had when we've been in flow.

The second main issue in the energy cycle is becoming aware of and managing energy enhancers and energy drainers. Time management specialists focus on the hours spent on various activities and talk about balance. Heart surgeons working 100-hour weeks cannot afford the luxury of balancing time. One in particular focuses much more heavily on managing his energy. He pays attention to the things that drain his energy and the things that enhance his energy. He tells a story, for example, of choosing how to walk from his office to the operating room. The direct route is the "back way" through a narrow, bare hallway, often stacked with boxes and other storage items. It's dirty, dusty, and dark. But faster. The alternative route is more circuitous, around a carpeted hallway, and then across a balcony that overlooks the large foyer that includes patients coming and going, and occasionally someone playing the baby grand piano there. By careful self-observation, he noticed that when he took the direct route, his mood and energy had declined somewhat by the time he got to the OR. When he took the slightly longer route, he was more upbeat and encouraged, his spirits were higher and his energy was enhanced.

This same surgeon has paid careful attention to how he feels after he eats. Step-by-step he has eliminated from his diet those things that drain his energy and retained those foods that enhance his energy. We've included a brief exercise in the workbook to help you begin thinking about how you manage your energy. This, again, is another extension of the self-awareness concept introduced in the chapter on emotional intelligence. Most people don't pay attention to how they feel and what causes that. The surgeon above is a man who pays careful attention to his energy and what influences it.

The fundamental question related to the energy cycle is: "What are you willing to work for?" The word "willing" covers a lot of territory. By "willing," we mean that you

> In truth, most of us, compared with the WCPs, have a shallower understanding of the connection between freedoms and responsibilities.

understand that your freedom in this area depends on you and you alone taking responsibility to make it happen, that you are intensely interested in learning whatever you can about how to perform in this area, and that you are willing to manage your energy to make it happen.

These three components of the energy cycle feed into each of the four steps in the resonance model. It takes energy to define and clarify your dream, it takes energy to practice over and over again until you can do something, it takes energy to overcome obstacles, and it takes energy to develop the mental focus that allows you to revisit your dream without external inducement.

Most of us dream about the various freedoms discussed above. We think, wouldn't it be nice if I had Tiger Woods's endorsement contracts, or if I could sing like Bette Midler, or if I could manage a business like Jack Welch. In truth, most of us compared with the WCPs have a shallower understanding of the connection between freedoms and responsibilities. We may be envious or even frustrated because someone else has won their freedom and we haven't. What we lose sight of is that WCPs have worked years—maybe decades—to win their freedoms. Again, we come back to the central question here: What are you willing to work for?

Maybe we recognize the connection between freedom and responsibility and have made a conscious choice that we are not willing to pay the price for developing those freedoms. In this case, we may not be frustrated—we have just chosen a simpler, gentler, easier path, and if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that we are content with the consequences—not performing at the further reaches of our potential and living with limited freedoms. This is a choice. It is, in contrast to Scott Peck's book, *The Road Less Traveled*, the road more commonly traveled.

My colleague, Alex Horniman often notes, "Excellence is a neurotic lifestyle." Many find this statement irritating and uncomfortable. It may only be so to those who have lost an understanding of the connection between freedoms and responsibilities. What Horniman means by this is that to perform at one's highest level, one must dedicate a significant portion of one's life to developing that freedom *of*. Michael Jordan, for instance, was cut from his school's basketball team in his early high school years, but became so dedicated to improving himself that he began cutting school classes in order to play basketball. Surgeons spend years and years of rigorous schedules, developing almost obsessive study habits in order to get through medical school and then surgery residencies in order to be able to perform in the operating room. Successful chief executives in the private sector often spend longer hours than most of their colleagues, working evenings and weekends. To some, it seems that they are obsessed with their work. To the extent that a neurosis is a fixation on a particular aspect of life, then there is a striking similarity between what "normals" might call neurotic behavior and the focused existence in which world-class performers live.

In many respects this level of commitment is similar to that of effective leaders regardless of their profession or career. When a person becomes really deeply engaged in a cause, an issue, an activity, or a theme, people begin to notice and to respond even if the person is doing nothing intentionally to lead others. The commitment becomes infectious and leadership happens.

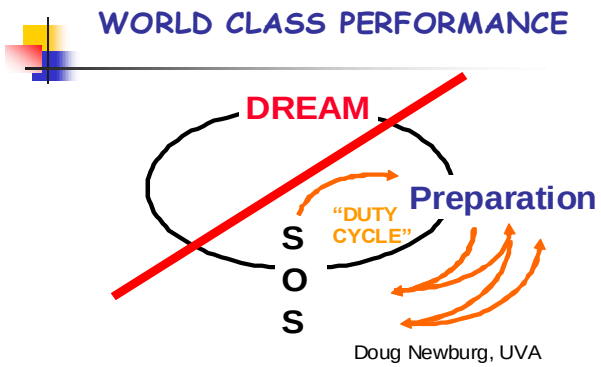
Likewise, when a WCP becomes committed to developing a freedom, he or she begins to work diligently on the responsibilities associated with achieving that freedom. Pretty soon they develop freedom of, then freedom to, and then experience freedom from. Usually, however, the aspiring WCP runs into a wall.

Setbacks, Obstacles, and Successes

Unfortunately, lengthy and intense preparation does not guarantee realization of one's dreams or goals. Many prepare hard and then encounter major setbacks. Perhaps the preparation and training doesn't produce the result one hopes for, but an injury instead. Or the research study doesn't yield new insight, but disappointing statistics. Or traveling to a performance site creates fatigue rather than energy. Maybe the experts you went to see didn't lend much insight. Or the hard workouts don't produce more speed or better accuracy. Or the team meetings produced nothing but heat and friction among the members.

What often happens at this stage, according to Newburg's subjects, is that they believed that if they only could work harder, they could win. Then they began to bounce back and forth between Preparation and Setbacks as illustrated in **Figure 4**. Running into an obstacle, they redoubled their efforts and worked harder. Frequently this created a sort of vicious cycle: work harder, setback, work harder, setback. And in the course of this repetitive ping-ponging, the energy, the commitment, the motivation for the dream became faded, fuzzy, or even lost. When the practice becomes mechanical, the study becomes drudgery, the exploration becomes a task, a chore, and loses its energy, and one is on the path to mediocrity. This is what we call the "Duty Cycle" because the language a person uses in this phase is usually sprinkled with "I have to go do this," or "I gotta go practice." Whenever you hear yourself using duty-cycle language, obligatory language, beware! It's a good indicator that you're caught in this Ping-Pong phase and that your energy is draining. It's not the way to world-class performance nor to world-class leadership.

Figure 4. Preparation and setbacks.



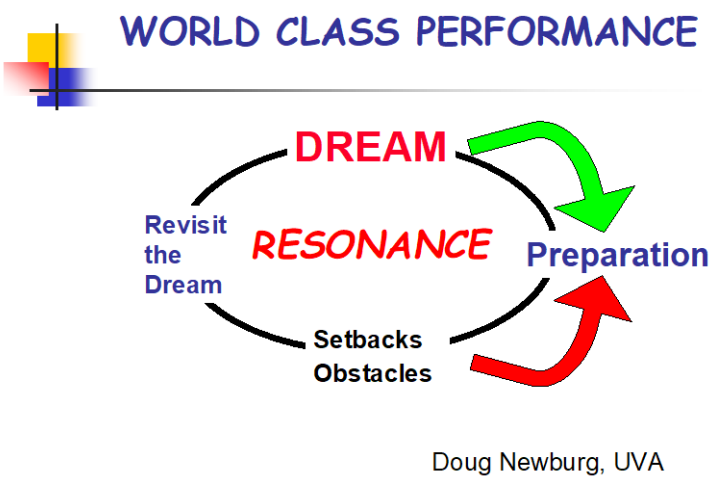
Many people, it seems, become trapped in this preparation-setback cycle, lose heart, and begin exploring other ways of making ends meet. The aspiring actor or actress becomes a waiter and buys a car and slowly becomes a prisoner of obligations and, paradoxically, of the ancillary, diverting small successes into areas other than the dream's. When one experiences some small positive feedback in other areas, the temptation to divert energy from the dream and into the alternative activity grows slowly and insidiously. Then one day in a moment of clarity, one wonders how one got where one is and how one had let go of one's dream. Maybe one never realizes the loss, and never asks. The key question related to setbacks and obstacles is, "What keeps you from experiencing your internal dream daily?"

There's another way in which, paradoxically, succeeding at one's external dream can lead to alienation from one's internal dream. Often, people who succeed in their external dream are promoted. This may be a good thing or a bad thing. Golfers, for example, who win tournaments, are suddenly put upon for corporate outings, endorsement meetings, requests to design courses, invitations to appear on late-night television shows, and so on. If they are not careful, they find themselves playing less often and less well. Perhaps they have realized their Dext, but they may be losing sight of their Dint, the feeling they get when they play well. Only if they do what the WCPs in Newburg's study reported as common means of breaking through the setback/obstacle/success barrier can they be assured of continuing to live their internal dream.

Revisiting the Dream

When WCPs lost sight of their dreams, their efforts became mechanical and something less than world-class. Perhaps they did "well enough" to make a living or to continue on in their chosen profession, but at a more mediocre level. On the other hand, when they were able to remember and focus on their internal dream, the way they wanted to feel, they were able to move ahead with a sense of clarity, purpose, and commitment. Distractions became less enervating, obstacles became less formidable, and setbacks became less depressing. The difference is that the WCPs came back to the hard work, the preparation *from the dream side instead of the setback side,* as illustrated in **Figure 4**. It's much easier to work hard when you have mentally and emotionally connected with how you want to feel, with your vision of what you're seeking, than from the disappointment of another setback.

Figure 5. Preparation from the dream side.



There is a mental or perhaps an emotional discipline here. It may be an aspect of emotional intelligence. It is not easy to consciously change your mind-set, to refocus on your external and internal dreams and find renewed energy for the preparation; nevertheless, people who do this report an infusion of enthusiasm, a more relaxed approach, and a certain "letting go" that allows them to perform better. One Olympic swimmer who had previously set a world record listened to the media and became convinced that unless he won the gold medal, his career would be lacking. In his final heat at the Olympics, he "tried hard to win the medal," and ended up losing by 0.06 of a second. While the silver medal is nothing to sneeze at, he was very disappointed. The next day, prior to a four-by-medley race in which he had the lead leg, a team mate reminded him, "You should go swim the way you did to get here, don't worry about winning." At that point, he said he determined to focus on how he felt in the water, the easy speed he had enjoyed frequently while training, and not to focus on winning. A few moments later, less than 24 hours after losing the day before, he broke his own world record on his leg of the medley, and his team won the gold medal. This demonstrates the way in which revisiting one's Dint can have a better influence on performance than focusing on one's Dext.

When the preparation doesn't seem to be working and the setbacks and obstacles seem insurmountable, WCPs are able to break through the barrier consistently by revisiting their internal dreams. This means pausing, getting out of the vicious failure-try-harder "duty cycle," revisiting one's definition of the internal dream, refocusing one's mind and attention on the joy that the dream brings, and letting go of the outcome. Paradoxically, by doing this, one performs better. Golfers often recognize this concept. If one tries too hard to do all the things that one must do to hit the ball well, one becomes paralyzed. George Plimpton, as a writer for *Sports Illustrated*, was once allowed to play three PGA tour events as research for a story, later a book. This excerpt from that book makes the point that focusing on the outcome and trying harder often leads to disastrous results:

> When I am playing badly, far more massive speculation occurs: I often sense as I commit myself to a golf swing that my dogy changes its corporeal status completely and becomes a *mechanical* entity, built of tubes and conduits, and boiler rooms here and there, with big dials and gauges to check, a Brobdingnagian structure put together by a team of brilliant engineers but manned largely by a dispirited, eccentric group of dissolutes—men with drinking problems, who do not see very well, and who are plagued by liver complaints.
>
> The structure they work in is enormous. I see myself as a monstrous, manned colossus poised high over the golf ball, a spheroid that is barely discernible 14 stories down on its tee. From above, staring through the windows of the eyes, which bulge like great bay porches, is an unsteady group (as I see them) of Japanese navy men—admirals, most of them. In their hands they hold ancient and useless voice tubes into which they yell the familiar orders: "Eye on the ball! Chin steady! Left arm stiff! Flex the knees! Swing from the inside out! Follow through! Keep head down!" Since the voice tubes are useless, the cries drift down the long corridors and shaft ways between the iron tendons and muscles, and echo into vacant chambers and out, until finally, as a burble of sound, they reach the control centers. These posts are situated at the joints, and in charge are the dissolutes I mentioned—typical of them a cantankerous elder perched on a metal stool, half a bottle of rye on the floor beside him, his ear cocked for the orders that he acknowledges with ancient epithets, yelling back up the corridors, "Ah, your father's mustache!" And such things, and if he's of a mind, he'll reach for the controls, (like the banks of tall levers one remembers from a railroad-yard switch house) and perhaps he'll pull the proper lever and perhaps not. So that, in sum, the whole apparatus, bent on hitting a golf ball smartly, tips and convolutes, and lunges, the Japanese admirals clutching each other for support in the main control center up in the head as the structure rocks and creaks. And when the golf shot is on its way the navy men get to their feet and peer out through the eyes and report: "A shank! A shank! My God, we've hit another shank!" They stir about in the control center drinking paper-thin cups of rice wine, consoling themselves, and every once in a while one of them will reach for a voice tube and shout: "Smarten up down there!" Down below, in the dark reaches of the structure, the dissolutes reach for their rye, tittering, and they've got their feet up on the levers and perhaps soon it will be time to read the evening newspaper.[7]

Preparation is essential *and* it can be like a well-used battery: eventually it runs down. Unless there is a way of reenergizing one's efforts, the obstacles begin to have more power than the dream, and they win. Take for example, the experienced heart surgeon who one afternoon has his 403rd operation scheduled. That morning he lost a patient. Does patient 403 understand the frame of mind the surgeon is in just before her operation? If the surgeon is not able to get past the setback experienced earlier in the day, he may not be able to perform at the world-class level that afternoon, something that you or I as patient 403 would like to know in advance, I'm sure. If

[7] George Plimpton, *The Bogeyman* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

the surgeon has a means, external or internal, of revisiting his internal dream, he may be able to revitalize his emotional, mental, and physical self before the 403rd operation. In this case, when the patient died, a call went out to Doug Newburg, who came in and interviewed the surgeon. The basic question was, "Why did you become a heart surgeon?" At first, this is an unpleasant, uncomfortable conversation. Most people find this line of inquiry too touchy-feely or too soft. Pushing back in time, however, with Newburg's nudging, eventually the surgeon recalled his original dream. The key question related to revisiting the dream is, "What will it take to regain your dream?"

As a six-year-old boy, the surgeon said, he heard a commotion in the house during the night and ran to the living room. There, standing in the doorway, he watched his grandfather die of a heart attack. The boy felt helpless and vowed he'd prepare himself so that would never happen again. That's why, he said, he became a surgeon. At that point he has reconnected with an emotional experience that has shaped his career. The experience of revisiting his dream has given him a new mind-set. Then the two of them, the performance counselor and the surgeon, go to visit patient 403. After several minutes of inquiry, also viewed skeptically at first, about *why* the 65-year-old woman wanted to live longer, she pauses, and said that she had two grandchildren and that she wanted to go swimming with them. The surgeon at this point was able to connect his internal dream with her dream and in the process was energized. As it turned out, the surgeon reported later that in surgery he felt as if he were having an out-of-body experience—he could see his hands tying the sutures, flying nimbly, yet it didn't feel like his own. He had a resonance experience. Patient 403 survived the operation and several months later sent him a picture of her swimming with her grandchildren. After several iterations of this, the surgeon has learned to manage his own re-connection with his Dint. He keeps a drawer full of pictures of people with whom he's connected his dream and who have gone on to connect with theirs. When he's down or in an obligatory duty cycle, he pulls out the drawer and looks at one or two pictures and reconnects with his internal dream, the emotional reason why he's doing what he's doing. It is a powerful motivator.

By revisiting the Dint, the WCP can approach preparation with a renewed vigor and sense of purpose and, more importantly, enjoyment. By developing the internal capacity to reconnect with the joy of fulfilling one's Dint, WCPs bring energy, enthusiasm, and the freedom of together in ways that allow them to perform at their best.

This is true, too, of people who go to work in the work-a-day world where we might not often think about world-class performance. Whenever we begin to think that our work is a drudgery and that our energy is lost, we can revitalize our efforts if we will pause and revisit the choices we made that got us to where we are—more particularly, how we want to feel as we are engaged in that activity. Fundamentally, if we understand and use the principles of the energy cycle above, we realize that we have *chosen* to be where we are.[8] If we allow ourselves to stay in the drudgery mode, the duty cycle, we will not do our best and our opportunities will shrink. If, on the other hand, we are able to reenergize each day by revisiting and remembering that, of all

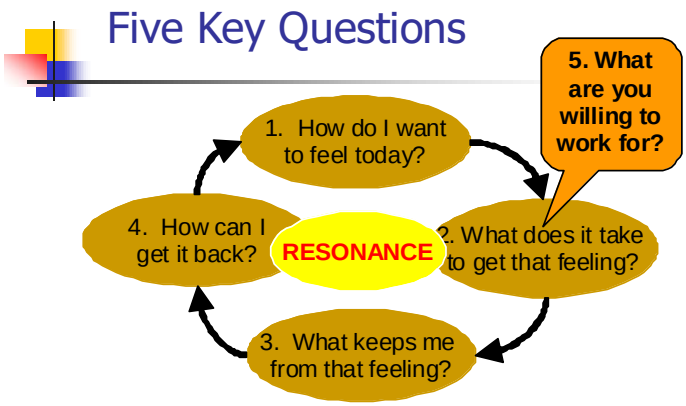
[8] See William Glasser, *Choice Theory* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), for more details on the power of this fundamental concept.

the choices we had before us, we chose this path and this work and the way that it makes us feel inside, then we can invigorate ourselves and our work. When that happens, when we remember how we are working toward a way of being, something special happens.

Resonance

That something is the resonance introduced above. The sense of seamless harmony with one's surroundings so that internal experience and external experience are one and the fulfillment of performing at your best without strain. "Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony," said Gandhi. Phil Jackson, award-winning coach of the Chicago Bulls and the Los Angeles Lakers basketball teams—a lesser philosopher to be sure—noted, "Winning is important to me, but what brings me real joy is the experience of being fully engaged in whatever I'm doing." When we call this insight tritely, "the journey not the train station," we underestimate the power of this concept. When we realize the importance of giving at least equal time and attention to our experience as we do to our attempts to achievement, we begin to see how valuable this idea is (**Figure 6**).

Figure 6. Five questions.



Conclusion

In fact, it is so valuable that I assert it gives us a powerful answer to one of life's fundamental questions, "What is the purpose of life?" The resonance answer to this question is fourfold: (1) to identify the area in life which resonates for the self, (2) to invest in the ability to create it and reproduce it, (3) to experience and enjoy the resonance by performing at one's highest potential, and then (4) to help others find their source of resonance. First, the question is, Can you before you die, figure out what it is for you that creates this flow or resonance experience? In my experience, many people never figure that out. Second, if you discover your resonance, do you have the energy and determination to invest in your capacity to recreate it?

Third, when resonance occurs, will you have the presence of mind to recognize it and acknowledge that life doesn't get better than this? By definition, if you are focused, performing at your best effortlessly, enjoying it and learning and growing at the same time, what more could one ask for? And fourth, if you can help others discover and recreate their resonance—at home, at work, at play, wherever, what a wonderful kind of leadership that will be in the world!

Some may be concerned that this resonance model is a selfish concept. I disagree. One may resonate as Mother Theresa did in the service of others. Further, if one is helping others find ways to experience resonance repeatedly, how could this be a selfish thing? Others may note that this is a religious view of the world, that somehow, it negates deity. I disagree. If one resonates teaching the gospel or in doing missionary work, I say, hurray. Knock yourself out! The key is, can you figure out what it is for you that produces this resonance before you die? And if you are lucky enough to do so, are you willing to work for the freedom of recreating it regularly? The resonance model clearly allows for religious experience as well as scientific focus, fine arts expression as well as business achievement.

Sadly, it seems, too many go through life and never identify what resonates for them, never find the endeavor that engages them and calls on their best efforts, never experience in more than fleeting ways, the deeply satisfying experience of resonance. What more positive cause could there be for aspiring leaders than to find resonance in their own experience, invest in the capacity to recreate it, to enjoy it when it happens, and then to help others find theirs?

One final question: "What about people who have a dream but seem destined never to achieve it?" Take, for instance, basketball players who never make the NBA or students who never get to medical school, or managers who never become CEOs. In some cases, we observe almost pitiful attempts to carry on in spite of clear evidence that the dream will not happen. First, I will note that many of these people are following a Dext, not a Dint. They are concerned about becoming somebody or something *instead of* focusing on how much they enjoy their work. Who's to say that the former collegiate basketball star playing in Italy is not enjoying his work? Who's to say that the pharmacist who once wanted to be a doctor is not engaged in helping others improve their health? Who's to say that the middle manager frustrated in her attempts to be promoted cannot enjoy her work with her present subordinates or seek a larger job in another company? Who's to say that the writer or the artist who struggles to make ends meet (the external measures of success) are not resonating in their work? The difference lies in where we place our attention—on LDext or LDint?

Yet sometimes, we have to revise our dreams to deal with reality. Clinging to an unrealistic LDext is in a way one's own loss of freedom and avoiding the responsibilities that come with seeking freedom. Finding resonance is also about finding what we can do and doing that to the best of our abilities. And when that happens, life is enormously rewarding. If we have felt that ourselves and are investing to recreate it more voluminously in our lives, perhaps we can understand why some who seem to be at the end of their careers hang on for a little longer, seeking out of their lives that last ounce of resonance. On the other hand, we might also ask, "How could you transport your resonance to other activities?" If you don't know what it is, that's

a problem. If you know what it is and repeatedly lose sight of it, that's a problem. If you haven't figured out yet how to reconstruct it and how to reconnect with it, that's a problem.

Principles of Effective Leadership Introduced in this Note

1. There is something called "flow" or "resonance" in the world where people perform at their best in an effortless, fulfilling way in harmony with their surroundings.
2. Most people have experienced resonance or flow or the zone at one time or another in their lives.
3. Despite common belief, flow or resonance can be enhanced and repeated.
4. World-class performers have dreams.
5. There are at least two kinds of dreams in the world, internal dreams (LDint) and external dreams (LDext). We need to pay attention to both kinds.
6. Some people have a natural dream, others have dreams given to them by their parents or churches, and some people have to rediscover or build their dreams.
7. World-class performers work hard to create their dreams.
8. World-class performers manage their energy as much or more than their time.
9. World-class performers are very aware of the relationship between freedoms, responsibilities, ideas, and learning.
10. All aspiring world-class performers run into setbacks, obstacles, and alternative successes that get in the way of living their dreams.
11. The way world-class performers get past their obstacles is to revisit their dreams, particularly their Dints.
12. Leaders who resonate and can help others resonate can produce extraordinary results.
13. One way to define the purpose of life is to suggest that people should find their resonance before they die, invest in their capacity to recreate that resonance, enjoy it when it happens, and help others find their resonance.

Questions for Reflection

1. When have you resonated? What were you doing? How did it feel? How might you recreate it in your work?
2. What is your internal life's dream?
3. What are you willing to work for?
4. What helps you realize your LDint?
5. What keeps you from realizing your LDint?

6. How can you reconnect regularly with your LDint?
7. What drains your energy?
8. What renews your energy?
9. What would happen in your work group if everyone were resonating regularly?
10. How might you take the lead in moving toward resonance in your work group?