

## Chapter 1: Moment of Clarity

"I dumbed down for my audience to double my dollars / They criticized me for it, yet they all yell 'holla.'" —



I didn't show up to that game as a coach.  
I showed up as a dad.

But everything about me still coached.  
My posture.  
My presence.  
My silence.

It all said something—  
even if I didn't.

And what it said was clear:  
This matters more than breath.

Cole sat next to me.  
Jersey pulled. Knees twitching.  
Said his stomach hurt.

I told him it might be nerves.  
Told him to breathe.  
Told him he'd be fine.

He wasn't.  
His shoulders curled.  
His breaths skipped.  
His face pale.

Nine years old.  
And already  
he couldn't breathe.  
Over a game.



The coach had hyped them.  
Said they were better.  
Said they had to win.

Cole believed him.  
Not because he said it well—  
but because he said it first.  
And because I didn't say anything different.

That's the part I can't forgive myself for.

He couldn't breathe  
because I taught him winning  
was oxygen.

Not in words.  
In posture.  
In silence.  
In what I didn't stop.

And it wasn't just him.  
Same game—  
I'm in it with a parent.



Sideline back-and-forth  
about a rule.  
A rule I know cold.

I say something.  
He says something.  
I come back—tight in the chest,  
a little louder.

Not loud.  
Not belligerent.  
But loud enough to lose the plot.

Because while my son  
was unraveling next to me,  
I was arguing  
in a 9-year-old rec game  
like it was the playoffs.

Like there was a scout in the stands.  
Like pride was on the line.  
Like I had something to prove  
to a man I didn't even know.



I had become  
what I swore I wouldn't:

Not just a dad.  
Not just a coach.  
But a part of the problem.

The kind that  
praises control,

sells poise,  
but never checks for breath.



The ride home was quiet.  
Not sad.  
Not scolding.  
Reflective.

That silence  
was the sound of a mirror breaking.

And I didn't try to tape it back together.  
Didn't fill the car with lessons  
or silver linings.  
I just sat with it.

The lie I'd modeled.  
The image I'd passed down.

A coach  
preaching freedom  
while performing pressure.

A father  
saying "play free"  
while modeling control  
in every breath he held in.



That was my moment of clarity.  
Not a decision.  
A fracture.

The kind you don't notice right away.  
You just know something's off.  
That your balance is gone.  
That what used to feel whole  
now feels dangerous to stand on.



So I studied.  
Not drills.  
Not plays.

Learning.  
Unlearning.

I became a ghost in my own film room.  
Watching myself on the sideline—  
every cue, every correction,  
every flinch of disapproval  
masquerading as leadership.

Late nights.  
YouTube spirals.  
Podcasts.

British guys.  
Canadian dudes.  
Talking motor learning like it was Miles Davis.

It didn't feel like theory.  
It felt like truth I forgot.  
Like someone describing a house  
I used to live in  
before I knew how to name the rooms.

Ecological dynamics.  
Constraints-led approach.  
Perception-action coupling.

They weren't teaching me to coach.  
They were reminding me  
how we learn.



I saw it everywhere.

In how we played in the '90s—  
blacktops, not clinics.  
Curiosity, not correction.  
Chaos, not control.

In how Max used to move  
through the world  
before the hospital rooms.

Before appointments turned time  
into task.  
Before “good boy”  
replaced “what did you feel?”

In how Cole  
lit up when I backed off.  
When I let the moment breathe

instead of instructing it into submission.



Max Potential wasn't born from branding.  
It came from breath.  
Or more honestly—  
the lack of it.

It came from realizing  
I was teaching my sons  
to equate love with performance.  
Approval with posture.  
Care with correction.  
And calling it parenting.  
Calling it coaching.

That's when it all clicked.

The missed shots weren't the problem.  
The drills weren't the answer.  
The problem was me.

My silence.  
My presence.  
My breath—  
held too long.



Now?

I still coach.  
I still train.  
I still teach.

But I sit different.  
I watch different.  
I breathe.

Because I know  
what silence costs.  
And what presence protects.

I've watched joy collapse  
under the weight of my expectations.  
Watched posture become pressure.  
Watched kids turn into shadows  
of what they think you want.



I'm not here for applause.  
Not trying to go viral.  
I'm trying to last.

Because I remember  
what it feels like  
to not be able to give your kid  
his breath back.



There is a particular kind of silence  
a father carries  
when he's failed to protect the one thing  
he didn't know he was supposed to.

And now I carry that silence like scripture.

Not to shame myself.  
But to remember the weight of that moment  
every time I'm tempted to speak  
when I should stay still.

Because I've lived on the other side of breathlessness.  
Not metaphor.  
Not mindset.  
Real.

A few days before Max passed,  
I took him to the hospital  
for what we thought would be a routine transfusion.  
We packed light.  
We thought we'd be home by dinner.  
We didn't come home.

His oxygen kept dropping.  
They put a mask on him—  
but try keeping a mask on a three-year-old.  
He kept pushing it away.  
He didn't understand why we were making it harder to breathe.

So I sat with him.  
For hours.  
For days.  
Trying to help him breathe.

Holding the mask.  
Whispering calm.

Offering breath  
in all the ways I knew how—  
except the one way he really needed:  
for me to take it for him.

And I couldn't.

So when I say  
I know what silence costs,  
it's not theory.  
It's memory.

When I say  
this matters more than breath—  
I mean that literally.

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I'm here  
so the next kid  
can breathe.

So their chest doesn't tighten  
in the layup line.  
So their joy doesn't collapse  
under the scoreboard.  
So their worth isn't measured  
in win percentages  
or a coach's tone.

■

I didn't show up to that game as a coach.  
I showed up as a dad.

But if I'm honest?

I didn't really show up at all.  
Not fully.  
Not how it mattered.  
Not in the way that could've  
changed the weather in Cole's lungs.

■

Now?

Now I breathe first.  
Then I speak.  
If I speak at all.

Because presence  
without pressure  
is a language too.

And I want my sons  
to be fluent in it