

“Gamers” – long term winners – Your challenge is to apply to yourself.

Preparation:

Every game is important, every hand, in every setting. You choose to engage or not. What do you want to accomplish today?

“mental practice is often more useful than physical practice” - visualisation. If you can learn to think about something in a systematic and detailed fashion, it becomes a part of you. Your mind knows it has been there before, and will know what to do (under pressure). Go through and rehearse your approaches and your responses, now is the time for “what ifs”. To do this well needs concentration and persistence.

(For example, as part of my preparation I get very clear in my mind how I will bid certain types of hands in various situations. Visualise scenarios and hands, experience and confidence is important. I find this equates to well over 80% hands I'll hold, so that I'm only actively engaging my full concentration/judgment on the rest. This saves vital energy and time for when it's needed. And avoids you taking uncharacteristic actions due to the state of the match/pressure/self-doubt, as you know *this what you do* in this situation from your preparation. No second guessing yourself.)

Use your experience (learn from, engage with, trust), do not be used by it.

Self:

It's your game, not what others expect, live from within, not for others. “I care not what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do” (Theodore Roosevelt). See the “the Guy in the Glass”.

Self esteem or courage of conviction has only one enemy, yourself. Yourself is cunning, yourself creates doubts and fears.

You are the most important coach you'll ever have. Only you can integrate this “stuff” into behaviour.

Consistency:

Consistency comes from routines and repetition, from practice. Doing the “right thing” (successful execution) becomes a habit, you develop unwavering trust. (Bridge: and so does partner). Execution (of the tasks) has nothing to do with your actual results.

Confidence:

Confidence doesn't just come to you, you must grab it. Self-doubt is normal, fight through it, persist, then confidence will come. Take control of your thoughts, your responses, take calculated risks, talk to yourself – positive talk. Practice this, again and again.

Poise = “grace under pressure” (Hemingway):

Through self-control and discipline become “un-get-at-able”. Poise allows effective thinking and acting when the pressure is on. Fear tells lies. Think about what you want to do, not what might happen. It's your approach, you control it.

(Early in my bridge career I found major bridge finals always seemed to go so quickly and I thought I was not playing at "my best tempo" in such matches. These books helped me become very clear on how I wanted to play and helped me in achieving this. There is a step

that the bridge player needs to take to apply the books' advice - application to specific bridge situations.)

Pressure:

When you're fully prepared, there should be no pressure, just focus and concentration on the task. Pressure is solely managed by yourself, no-one else. Embrace it.

It's not about knowing what is right, it's about doing what's right. Courage is the strength to *do* what you know is right.

Quitting:

Understand to "quit" (Bridge: to stop playing the very best you can), reduces the pain of the failure of losing. The ego protects itself by saying "this isn't really important to me". Ego encourages the bridge player to "quit" to protect itself. Players who don't quit, hurt more, because they invest more.

(How much of yourself are you willing to invest?..... even if you may lose?)

Greatest Fear:

Is: that you play, you do your very best (be honest with yourself), but don't get the result. Learn that this happens. And learn that investing and doing your *very* best leads to being a long term winner. Don't ever be afraid to lose. Acting when afraid is courageous and is a characteristic of a true competitor.

Be motivated to succeed not motivated to avoid failure.

Losers try to avoid failure, they avoid taking responsibility for mistakes, they have rational reasons for them. (Bridge: They'll always have *their* reasons for what they did or why they didn't do it.)

Losers let pain and tiredness affect their performance. It's often *their* "rational" excuse. Winners recognise their response is always their choice and is focused and thoughtful. No excuses, "burn the ships and fight". Winners learn that intense focus on the task, overcomes pain and tiredness. (Bridge: Personally, from experience this is so true, it so hurts, but the rewards are great.). Intense focus overcomes all distractions. Stay connected, reconnect when needed. Become oblivious to the rest of the world.

Characteristics of Winners:

They do what has to be done, when it has to be done, as well as it can be done. They do it this way every time. They have discipline and mental toughness. They always stay in the present, not past, not future.

Mental toughness is internal fortitude when you don't get rewarded for your emotional investment. (Bridge: are you going to continue to be motivated to succeed or to be more concerned about avoiding future failure/bad boards?) It's about having the toughness to come back with the same energy and with the same (personal) investment. You are always in charge of your actions at every moment - are *you* always driven by internal motivation to be the best you can? For "gamers", it's about attitude not talent.

Focus on competing aggressively and effectively, never focus on losing or what might happen. Think about doing tasks the best you can, embrace the challenge of competition. Never think, or internally talk, "don't lose". (Bridge: This is *why I play*, to have this

opportunity to win this match, embrace the pressure of every moment in the match, embrace the challenge to win, trust in self and execute.) Always do what you think, not what you feel. (Bridge: “I went with my gut feel”, if you have thought this choice through, you have done what you think, not what you feel.)

Will Power:

Will is power. Many value it, few exert it. “Everyone wants to succeed, *few* have the will to do what it takes to succeed. “Will yourself to win”. (Bridge: Do you have the “will”?) You must think and act in winning ways, rather than just want to win.

Luck:

You cannot change luck. Have courage in the face of bad luck, take advantage of good luck. (Bridge: Identify then take your opportunities. Create then take your opportunities.)

Discipline:

Sustained and consistent focus on task needs mental discipline. Courage takes discipline, concentration takes discipline, distraction control takes discipline, discipline is part of the “will”. Positive self-talk and self-trust in the toughest times takes discipline. Relentless determination takes discipline. (Bridge: Discipline is absolutely essential if you are to be a long term winner.)

When things are going wrong, coach yourself, be optimistic about your own ability to deal with whatever comes next. Learn this, do this. Know that this is a choice, a choice that requires personal commitment, a “warriors heart”.

Being a Leader in the Team:

Leaders appeal to the best in each player. They trust in their own way of doing things, and what they have learnt from their experiences. They maintain high individual standards in practice and in competition. They understand humans are imperfect. They influence others through their personal power (eg: their character and courage), they convince teammates that what they want, is the same as what they should want from themselves. They role-model rather than expect performance.

The Winning Way:

Winners say: “I’m good, but I can get better”.

Losers say: “I’m not as bad as the others”.

Winners don’t get bitter, they get better.

Winners are sensitive, in tune with the game environment around them.

Losers are only sensitive to their own feelings.

Winners look the part even when things are tough.

Losers exude poor body language.

Winners have complete control over their choices, and can learn from criticism no matter how unfair it may be.

Winners focus on task not result. The better the concentration, the better the execution of task.

Winners practice concentration. (Bridge: Full concentration, in every game.)

Winners never want a match to finish, they want to embrace every moment, they are disciplined to stay focussed on task, right to the end. (Bridge: this is critical)

Losers look for the finish line, and hope they finish first. (Be aware, stay in the present.)