

“Inner Excellence will change your life.”
—Vaughn Taylor, three-time PGA Tour Winner

INNER EXCELLENCE

TRAIN YOUR MIND FOR
EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE
AND THE BEST POSSIBLE LIFE

REVISED EDITION

JIM MURPHY

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Praise for *Inner Excellence*

“*Inner Excellence* changed how I see the world, how I think, and how I play golf.”

—Vaughn Taylor, Three-time PGA Tour winner

“*Inner Excellence* transformed my life—as a caddie, a father, and husband.

This book is a masterpiece.”

—Brandon Parsons, PGA Tour veteran caddie

“*Inner Excellence* has had a dramatic impact on how I approach my life and how I play hockey.”

—Kevin Connauton, Defenseman, Arizona Coyotes

“*Inner Excellence* is an instruction manual that will teach you how to perform under pressure and live the best possible life. It’s something I’ll refer to the rest of my life.”

—Teddy Scott, 20-year PGA Tour golf caddie, 14 years with Bubba Watson

“I read the first edition of *Inner Excellence* ten times. I’ve practically memorized it. Incredibly, this revised edition is even better.”

—Jonathan Michael, Adjunct Professor, Trinity Western University,
Governor General’s Gold Medal award winner

“*Inner Excellence* changed my life.”

—Ryan Dodd, World No. 1 ranked water ski jumper and current world record holder

“Jim is an expert in his field. *Inner Excellence* transcends athletics and will have a profound effect on everyone who applies these methods in their life.”

—John Kehoe, author of *Mind Power into the 21st Century*

“Inner Excellence has profoundly influenced every area of my life.”

—David Bentall, President, *Next Step Advisors*, Adjunct Professor,
University of British Columbia

“And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart
that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

—**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**, *The Little Prince*

“Above all else, watch over your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

—**Solomon, 3rd King of the United Monarchy**

For my father, Donald C. Murphy

To the one who greatly influenced me to

think deeply about what to love

and what to let go of.

I love you. See you soon.

For my mother, Michiko M. Murphy (nee Koyama)

To my role model. I love you.

For Naomi T. Murphy

My sister, my inspiration

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Preface

Koyama Bunpachiro had a difficult decision. Was he prepared to die? Was he ready to sacrifice comfort and pleasure and devote everything he had to the selfless way of the warrior? Would he honor the code?

To be a samurai in feudal Japan was to command honor and respect, embodied from a lifetime of training in moral leadership, duty and grace.

Bunpachiro's life, like every other samurai, included daily training for battle and swordsmanship as well as calligraphy, poetry, art and tea ceremony.

The code of the samurai required total commitment. It would involve putting his country and master above himself, to the extent of imagining he was already dead. It meant waking up every day ready to die.

Bunpachiro chose the samurai way of life—and the acceptance of death that came with it. But in 1867, his entire lifestyle came to an abrupt halt.

When two and a half centuries of samurai rule ended during his lifetime, he went from having incredible power to feeling powerless. His elite status, and everything he'd sacrificed for, was gone. His heart was crushed.

Without a purpose for his life, the bottle became his unsympathetic friend.

If only Bunpachiro had learned what I've discovered, which is that every human heart has the potential for deep contentment, joy and confidence, and training it is the most important thing you'll ever do. Your heart is where all your hopes and dreams, fears and anxieties fade or flourish. It's the source of mental toughness and inner strength. If your heart is built around something temporary that you cannot control, your life will be unstable. Bunpachiro's self-worth was attached to his role as samurai and when he lost it, he lost everything.

As you read this book and examine your heart, what you'll find is that your greatest dream is not realized in having millions of dollars or perhaps a house overlooking the ocean. Your dream is how you think these things will make you feel. Perhaps those things will bring happiness as you imagine people complimenting you on your success, or will bring great experiences as you have your friends over to enjoy your waterfront home. But maybe they won't. Besides, money and material possessions aren't actually what you're *really* after.

If you search your heart, beyond the desire for any measure of success, you'll discover, I believe, that what you really want is to feel truly alive, filled with vitality, purpose and meaning—absolute fullness of life. For most of us, perhaps unknowingly, life has been one long search for this fullness. We want deep, enriching experiences and meaningful relationships, a life where we're not constantly shrinking back in fear. We want to live courageously, learning and growing, fueling a fearlessness that awakens the lives of others.

That life is available to all of us, but we so easily get caught up chasing symbols of success rather than the real thing, sidetracked in busyness, losing

sight of what we truly want. Rather than seeking fearless authenticity and personal growth directly, we pursue an illusion and get emptiness instead.

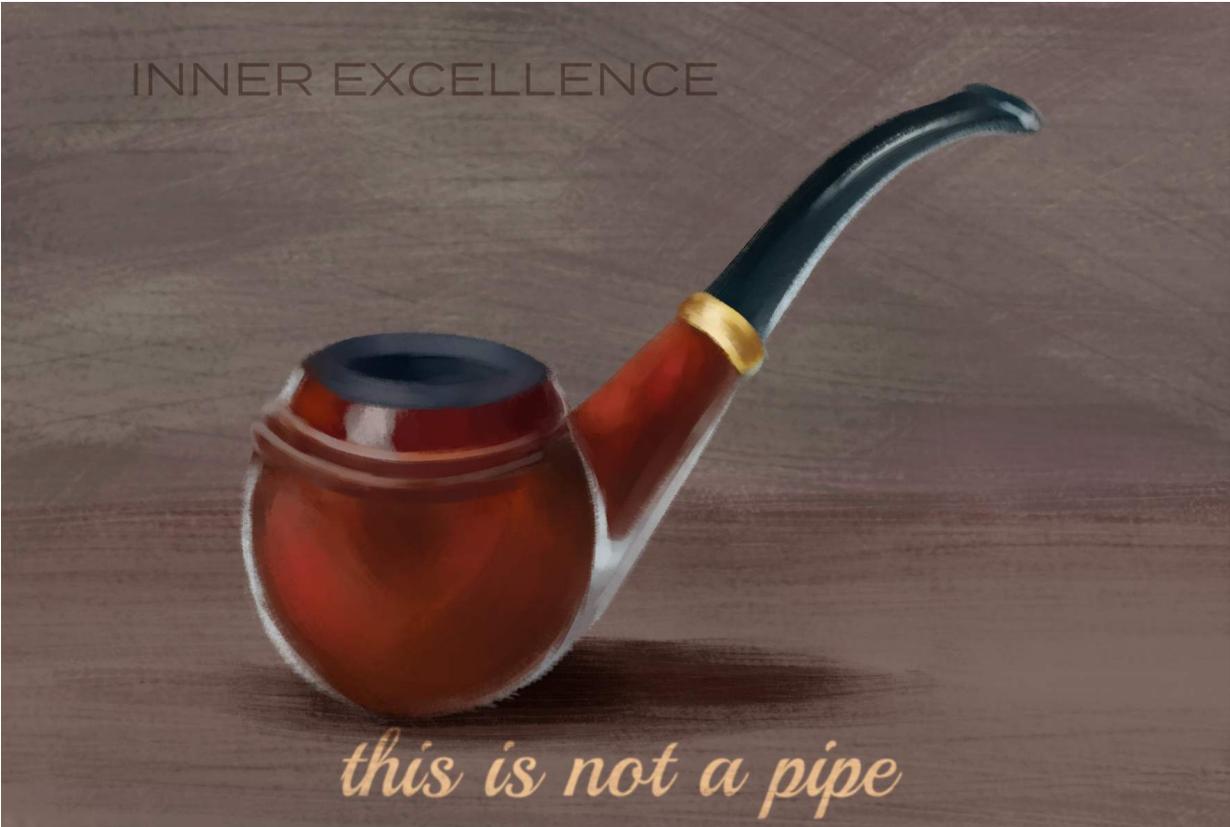
The direct pursuit means developing a new mindset and new skills, ones that lead to inner strength, peace, and confidence, independent of circumstances. Your heart may need to re-orient its bearings and redefine success by prizing something that's more stable and powerful than your feelings or status, letting go of how society measures your life.

You can learn how to perform extraordinarily, under extreme pressure, *and* live a life of deep contentment, joy and confidence. In fact, you'll find that this re-orientation of the heart is the most efficient and powerful way to do so.

Yoshitaka Koyama, (Bunpachiro's son), watched his father, once a great warrior, lose his prominence and become an alcoholic. He saw that his father's identity was wrapped up in status and things he could not control.

Yoshitaka began to think deeply about his own life, about what he truly wanted, and what was most important. He realized that what he craved was not power or prestige—he wanted fullness of life. As a result, Yoshitaka changed the course of his life, from one focused on power over others, to one focused on empowering others. Through this shift he gained deep contentment, joy and confidence and lived an extraordinary life.

This book was written by his great grandson.



Presuppositions (Assumptions)

The quality of your *life* is based on three elements:

1. Your inner world of thoughts and feelings, beliefs and desires.
2. Your frame of reference (mindset) from which you see the world.
3. Your relationships.

How you think and feel is the result of the assumptions and beliefs that have formed in your heart (and subconscious, which we'll get into later).

These assumptions and beliefs create a certain mindset that impacts how you relate to yourself, to others, and to everything in your life.

The quality of your *performance* is also based on three elements:

1. Your *belief* about who you are and what's possible for you.

2. Your ability to *focus* and be fully engaged in the moment: heart, mind and body (note: heart and spirit will be used interchangeably).

3. Your *freedom* to play like a kid, curiously exploring possibilities, excited for challenges that may arise.

The three elements that determine your quality of life, and three elements that determine the quality of your performance, are deeply interwoven.

I started writing the first version of this book in 2004 after moving to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona to live a life of relative solitude. I got rid of my television and over half my possessions, with Winston Churchill's words endlessly floating across my laptop's screensaver:

Those destined for greatness must first walk alone in the desert.

I went to the desert to live deliberately, in solitude, so I could live out Churchill's words. Words that also penetrated my heart were from Henry David Thoreau, who went into nature as well. Like Thoreau, I wanted to...

...front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when it came time to die, discover that I had not truly lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms.

I ended up spending five years in full-time research, interviews, and writing, two and a half years of it in the desert. I was obsessed with learning

how the best in the world performed with confidence and poise under the most pressure. The main question I studied—and posed to sport psychologists all over North America—was this: How can an Olympic athlete train for four years, for an event that may last less than a minute, and have peace and confidence under that kind of pressure?

As I dove into research, I realized that helping athletes win a world championship or Olympic gold medal would be meaningless unless it

improved their quality of life—their inner life. So I started to study two main concepts:

How to have extraordinary poise and mental toughness under extreme pressure.

1. How to live the best possible life, one with deep contentment, joy and confidence.

2. In the desert I had an astonishing insight. I realized that the pursuit of extraordinary performance and the pursuit of the best possible life are the same path.

This realization changed my life.

I only wish I had learned it when I was playing in the Chicago Cubs organization. I could have performed with so much more freedom and confidence. I was playing the wrong game, but didn't know it.

Most of us have been playing the wrong game our entire lives. We've been focusing on short-term wins, temporary happiness, and surface-level achievements, when we were created for so much more. We've been playing a zero-sum, finite game, with a winner and a loser, a beginning and an end, when it's really an infinite one. Life is meant to be a journey

connecting with others, growing together, discovering new and amazing things, rather than a game of constant comparison and competition, always trying to fit in or be successful. We've been setting our sights too low, going for the low-hanging fruit on a single bush, when entire orchards await.

Which game have *you* been playing?

The best possible life—absolute fullness of life—is one with extraordinary experiences, deep, meaningful relationships, and, most of all: love, joy and peace. These three “resources” lead to an abundance of fruit that multiplies into so much more: peace becomes patience, patience becomes kindness, then goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and, ultimately, self-control.

Whatever dream you may have, I believe that in the end, what you really want is to be filled with love, joy and peace and all the other powerful resources that come with them. It's an extraordinary life and it's available to all of us, but the cost is high. It takes clear intention and devotion, and the willingness to be vulnerable in order to develop your inner world.

To develop your inner world is to transform your heart, so that what it loves most is powerful and meaningful. This enables you to grow in *belief*, *focus* and *freedom*, the three key elements of extraordinary performance. It enables you to direct your thoughts and create mental patterns around extraordinary possibilities and what you're most passionate and excited about—what you were born for—rather than being caught up in worry, stress or anxiety.

Most of us have had it backwards, trying to be successful in order to be happy. If we focus on improving our inner world, however, we'll achieve far more. We can have joy and peace, purpose and power—which will maximize our performance as well. But we need to get the order right if we

want extraordinary performance over the long term—and an amazing life: heart first, performance second. Inner world first, outer world follows.

Besides, an extraordinary outer world is worthless without a meaningful inner one, is it not?

The journey toward the best possible life starts with adjusting the lens through which we see the world. According to Dr. Darrell Johnson, PhD, Teaching Fellow at Regent College:

Every human being has a vision of reality; every one of us looks out at life from a frame of reference. We all have deeply held presuppositions about the nature of reality. We may not be able to name those presuppositions but they're there. They're reflected in the way we treat people, the way we spend time and the way we spend our money. Or to put it more simply, every single one of us wears a set of glasses. These glasses were given to us by our families, by our childhood experiences, by the books we've read, by the experiences we've had, by the movies we've seen. These visions of reality affect the whole of our lives.

The most extraordinary performers and individuals who ever lived, perceived their circumstances in remarkably similar ways. They had a lens through which they viewed the world that was similar to each other's but very different from everyone else's.

This book will help you understand how those amazing individuals trained their minds (and oriented their hearts) so that they were always learning and growing, and how you can train your mind and heart to do the same.

In order to have both sustained peak performance and fullness of life, we must examine who we are, how we're put together, and what drives us. In my five years of full-time research (post-Master's degree) the same component stood out for both peak performance and having an extraordinary life: the heart. Learning that the heart (or spirit) is the key driver for both was the turning point in my research.

The heart is where we store our hopes and dreams, beliefs and assumptions. Out of the heart comes good or evil, love or fear. It's the source of our deepest motivations and greatest power. If we want to develop confidence and poise under pressure, as well as deep contentment and joy, we need to challenge the assumptions and beliefs we have in our hearts—to see if they are really true. We all have a story we've been telling ourselves over our entire lifetimes, based on assumptions and beliefs that have formed in our hearts. Some of these are empowering and true, some are not. We also have beliefs that allow us to see possibilities and beauty no one else can.

When your life is based on the Truth with a capital T, it expands every day—like the sun's rays filling a welcoming sky—revealing unknown beauties. On this powerful journey of *Inner Excellence*, we're going to direct what you think and how you think towards what's powerful and permanent.

First, however, we must let go of the assumptions (we'll call them presuppositions) that may have limited our lives without our knowing it. A life with unlimited possibilities is only possible when the assumptions that guide our lives are also free from limits.

Here are some old presuppositions we're going to drop (and the reasons why):

I am my thoughts.

Sometimes terrible or shameful thoughts flash through our minds that are not true and have nothing to do with who we really are.

My value is based on my results.

You may have grown up in a culture or family that has instilled this in you, but your self-worth does not increase or decrease based on your performance.

The best performers were born that way.

Whatever abilities you were born with can be improved far beyond what you've imagined, largely through hard work, deliberate

practice on specific skills (that I will teach you), and learning to direct and control your desires.

Here are ten new empowering presuppositions that will form the basis of the mindset you'll develop as you read this book:

1. Every circumstance and every person you encounter is here to teach you and help you—it's all working for your good.

You were created for glory (infinite, inherent worth).

The life you've been given is meant to develop your character and prepare you for that glory.

2. Your life is a reflection of your beliefs.

The foundation for extraordinary performance, joy and confidence—

and the primary skill to learn—is how to believe.

Beliefs are the control panel of your life, a subconscious thermostat, keeping your life in line with your comfort levels. To improve performance (and your life) in a consistent, powerful way, you must change your beliefs about who you are and what's possible.

3. Self-centeredness is the root cause of fear.

It leads to self-consciousness (concern about what others think of us), overanalysis, and ultimately, self-rejection.

Our greatest obstacle is getting in our own way through arrogance or self-rejection, both of which come from self-centeredness.

4. We all have the same deep needs and same deep desires.

Every human heart desperately wants to be loved and accepted; most of what we do is done in order to meet this need.

Our deepest need is for unconditional love and our greatest desire is to be fully known and fully loved.

5. Everyone does the best they can with what they have (in their hearts).

That is... according to their background, their understandings, their beliefs, their fears, their wounds, and their voids.

Whenever someone (including yourself) acts in a way that is painful or hurtful, it is because they lack resources such as love, joy and peace, looking through a self-centered lens of fear or pain.

6. The map is not the territory.

The world you see and interact with isn't reality; it's the one your mind created, based on the way you've interpreted and processed the events in your life so far.

The pipe you saw at the beginning of these presuppositions is not

actually a pipe. It's a picture of a pipe. That may seem like a silly distinction, but actually it's quite important (as Rene Magritte shared

[with us in his 1929 painting, *The Treachery of Images*](#)).

7. You are not your mind.

Your mind is a part of you that you need to train. You can learn to direct and control your thoughts, just like you learn to control your body.

The greatest freedom you have is where to place your thoughts. As you realize that you are not your mind, you will be less attached to the useless, negative thoughts that come every day, and direct your mind towards empowering ones.

8. The problem is not the problem, the problem is the way you're thinking about it.

You're not happy or sad because of your circumstances, but rather because of what you *think* about your circumstances.

How you feel originates almost entirely from what you think; the state you enter caused by how you think about a problem is the real problem.

9. There's no failure, only feedback.

Success and failure are highly interrelated, equally important, and labeled as opposites by our culture.

Your ability to learn and grow and maximize your potential is directly correlated to your ability to embrace failure.

10. The person with the most control of their inner world has the most power.

Mastery of the ego is the great challenge (and greatest opponent) in every competition.

Selflessness—complete surrender—of the attachments, concerns and fears of the self, is the central component to extraordinary

performance and cornerstone to creating beliefs that lead to absolute fullness of life.

Note: Inner Excellence definitions for some of the terms throughout the book are provided in the glossary.

These presuppositions are a crucial part of the mindset you'll be developing the rest of your life. You'll be learning a lot of new information and because much of this is new to you, it may seem overwhelming at times. Don't worry, my professional athletes have achieved extraordinary success through this process, and most have felt the same way at the start.

Remember, this is a lifelong journey. This is a manual you will refer back to many times.

As you go through the book, mark this section to keep these presuppositions and principles in mind. Commit them to memory and take notes, especially in the first few chapters as we analyze the challenging obstacles that we all encounter. As you do, you'll begin to notice how these perspectives will help you gain mastery over your greatest challenges. This will set the foundation for the tools and skills you'll learn throughout the rest of the book. Ok, it's go time. Let's do this!

Introduction

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by an offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.

—C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

In the early hours of June 27, 2011, Ryan Dodd woke up in an alley outside a bar in a rough part of town in Flint, Michigan. He had a fractured skull.

Only hours before, he had been standing on top of the podium after one of the biggest victories of his life, holding the “King of Darkness” gold medal high in the air.

Professional waterski jumpers hit the ramp at 70 miles per hour and fly over 200 feet. Ryan was used to facing danger, but never so much as that night.

At the hospital, he was diagnosed with a fractured skull and bleeding in the brain in three areas. He was rushed to the trauma center for emergency surgery to alleviate pressure on the skull. Twelve hours later they were able to stop the bleeding.

After a miraculous recovery, Ryan not only skied again, but he excelled.

He won his first event back on the water in May the following year. Several weeks later he then won the next (and biggest) event of the year, the Masters, which he’d never won before. He went on to have the best year of his career.

Ryan continued to improve and in 2017 he broke the world record, became world champion, and number one in the world. Over the past four

years (2016-19) Ryan won 87% of the tournaments he entered. In August 2019, on a Sunday afternoon just outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, he won his third world championship in a row.

How did Ryan go from waking up in an alley with a fractured skull, to getting back on the water and achieving things he never dreamed possible?

Interestingly, his workouts and training volume stayed about the same.

Yet, there was a fundamental difference between Ryan pre-head injury and Ryan post-head injury, one that helped propel him to the top of the world rankings and the world record. Ryan found a different way of living in the world – one that changed how he thought about his performance and entire life.

This book is about that difference.

It's a completely different way of seeing the world, one that transforms not just how we think, but what we think about. It's a different lifestyle, one that revamps our hearts from seeking temporary, surface-level goals to seeking powerful, permanent ones. It completely reverses how we pursue peak performance.

Ryan's life and performance dramatically changed by changing one thing in his life: he learned *Inner Excellence*. This book will teach you what Ryan and other world-class athletes have learned: how to train your mind for extraordinary performance and fullness of life.

Whether we're athletes or not, we're all performers. We all "compete" to have good days, handle adversity well, get in a rhythm that flows with peace and purpose, and get great results. We also all have a certain mindset from which our performance—and daily life—flows.

Your mindset is your overall attitude and way of thinking that comes from how you perceive yourself and the world. These perceptions create certain attitudes and ways of thinking that become habitual. It orients your heart around what you believe is important and possible in your life. Your mindset sets the tone for everything you do.

The mindset of *Inner Excellence* is this:

I compete to raise the level of excellence in my life, to learn and grow, in order to raise it in others.

We don't pursue peak performance for the trophy or adoration, but to discover something within us and experience something we've never experienced before. We compete for the competition itself, to fully experience the moment and feel fully alive. We do this to help others—

including our opponents—do the same thing, so we can all learn and grow and raise the level of excellence in our lives. We crave adversity and challenges as a means of seeing the truth about who we are in that moment and therefore who we can become.