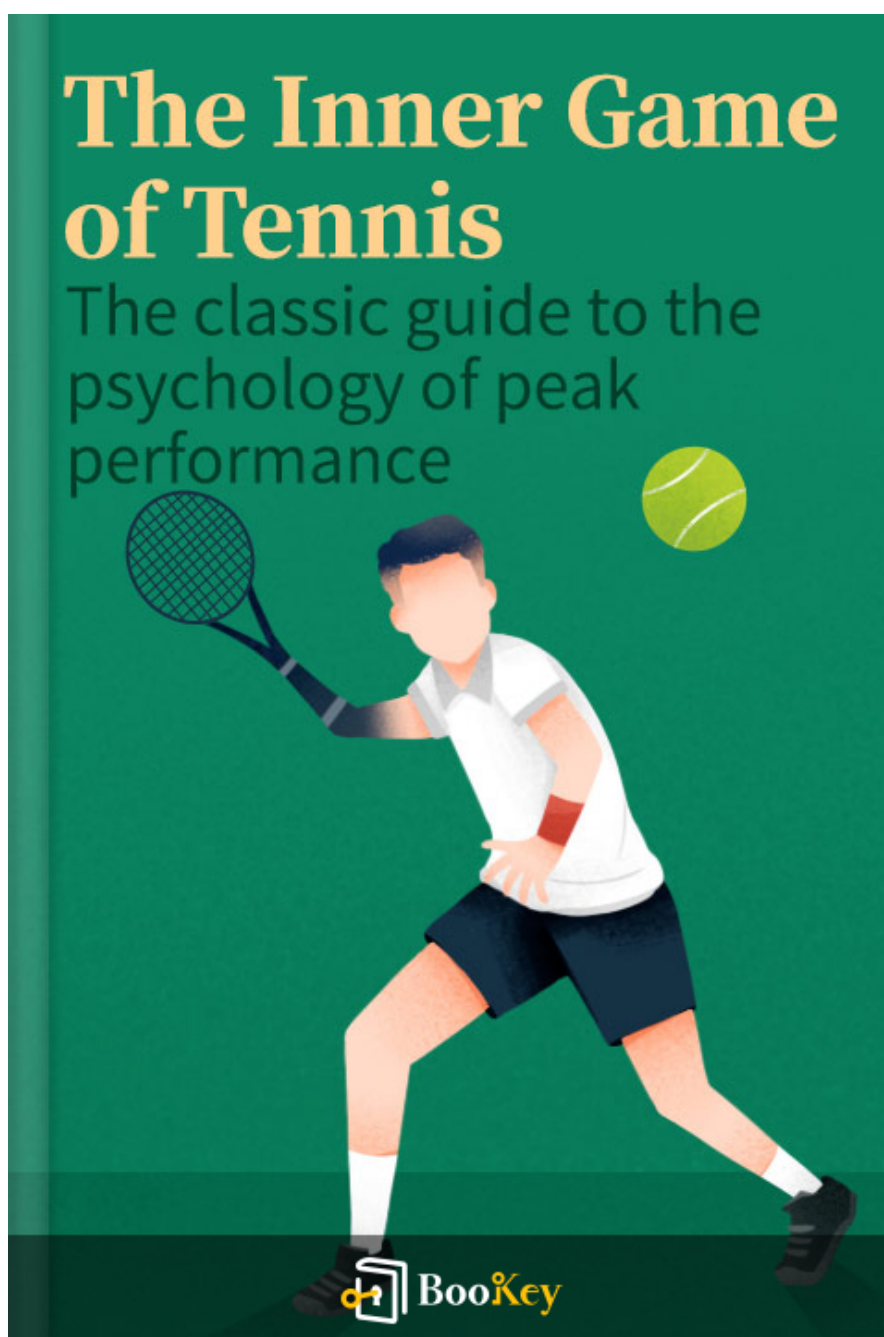


# The Inner Game Of Tennis PDF (Limited Copy)

W. Timothy Gallwey



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# **The Inner Game Of Tennis Summary**

"Master Your Mind to Master the Court."

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## About the book

In "The Inner Game of Tennis," W. Timothy Gallwey invites readers on a transformative journey beyond the tennis court and into the intricate realms of the mind. This groundbreaking work is not solely about mastering the techniques of tennis but rather delving into the profound psychological battles one encounters between their own ears. Gallwey cleverly unveils the ubiquitous conflict between Self 1, the analytical and critical mind, and Self 2, the instinctive and confident player within us, offering a profound shift in perception that transcends sport. Through insightful anecdotes and practical techniques, Gallwey presents a revolutionary approach to harnessing self-awareness, focus, and relaxation, enlightening readers on how mastering the "inner game" can elevate their personal and professional lives. This compelling read is an invitation to challenge the confines of mental barriers and unlock a realm of potential that resides just beneath the surface.

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## About the author

W. Timothy Gallwey, an esteemed author and trailblazer in the realm of sports psychology, hails from a diverse background that seamlessly blends the analytical prowess of an Ivy League education with hands-on coaching experience. A Harvard alumnus, Gallwey initially carved out his career on the hallowed courts of Harvard's tennis team during the 1960s, a period marked by both athletic excellence and a burgeoning interest in understanding the mental aspects of performance. His groundbreaking work as a coach and author of "The Inner Game of Tennis" heralded a new paradigm shift, inspiring countless athletes and professionals to delve into the inner mechanics of focus and self-awareness. Gallwey's insights tapped into the distilled wisdom of Eastern philosophies and Western methodologies, revolutionizing how individuals approach both professional and personal challenges, leaving an indelible mark that extended beyond the boundaries of tennis to myriad fields, fostering a deeper inner dialogue and self-understanding for countless individuals worldwide.

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## chapter 1 Summary:

This excerpt explores the concept of the "Inner Game" of tennis, focusing on the dynamics between two selves—the conscious mind (Self 1) and the unconscious, intuitive body (Self 2). The narrative begins with Mr. Weil, a character overwhelmed by instructions and overthinking his tennis strokes. The protagonist, a tennis coach, realizes that over-instruction can hinder a player's natural ability to correct mistakes. Through experiences with students like Dorothy and Paul, the coach discovers that allowing learners to absorb visual images and trust their instincts often leads to better performance than through traditional verbal coaching.

The text delves into the state of mind when a player is "on their game," likening it to being "out of one's mind" where the conscious mind (Self 1) steps back, allowing the intuitive mind (Self 2) to execute actions without interference. This state, described as "mindlessness" or being "in the zone," is characterized by heightened awareness and reduced self-instruction. The author suggests that peak performances in sports occur when the mind is still, and parallel experiences are drawn with various activities like music or art, where overthinking disrupts the natural flow.

The concept of "trying too hard" is examined through analogies and anecdotes, highlighting that real effort is about letting go rather than exerting conscious control. Joan, a character who struggles with hitting the tennis



ball, exemplifies how focusing on the process rather than the outcome removes self-judgment, allowing her natural abilities to manifest. The idea is to minimize judgmental thoughts—those that label actions as good or bad—and instead engage in nonjudgmental awareness, which observes actions objectively and reduces mental interference.

The narrative presents judgment as an internal dialogue where Self 1 commands and criticizes, leading to tension and conflict with Self 2. It suggests that the relationship between these two selves is crucial to translating knowledge into action, advocating for trust and letting go of preconceived labels. This philosophy is illustrated with the metaphor of a rose, which is nurtured without judgment through all stages of growth, symbolizing the importance of accepting one's current state as part of natural development.

Ultimately, the excerpt articulates that freeing the mind from judgments and conscious over-effort creates an environment where the body can perform optimally. By practicing the principles of nonjudgment, mental focus, and trust in one's abilities, individuals can learn to play "effortlessly," achieving a harmony that reveals their true potential both in tennis and beyond.

Topic	Summary
Inner Game Concept	Explores the dynamics between the conscious mind (Self 1) and the intuitive body (Self 2) in tennis, highlighting how overthinking can

Topic	Summary
	hinder performance.
Struggle with Over-Instruction	Illustrated through Mr. Weil, who is overwhelmed by too many instructions, impeding his natural ability to play.
Learning through Intuition	Coach learns that trust in instincts and visual learning often yields better results than verbal instructions.
"On One's Game" State	Describes peak performance as "mindlessness," where Self 1 steps back, allowing Self 2 to function unhindered.
Balancing Effort	Discusses the concept of "trying too hard," where real effort involves letting go of conscious control.
Judgment and Performance	Minimizing judgmental thoughts improves performance; Joan's story illustrates focusing on process over outcome.
Inner Dialogue of Judgment	Portrays Self 1 as judgmental, causing tension with Self 2; suggests nurturing a harmonious inner relationship.
Metaphor of the Rose	Symbolizes nurturance without judgment, highlighting growth and acceptance of one's current state.
Philosophical Insight	Ultimately, freeing the mind from judgments creates an optimal environment for performance, promoting trust and mental focus.

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## chapter 2 Summary:

In this narrative from a tennis lesson at John Gardiner's Tennis Ranch in Carmel Valley, California, we explore the dynamics between Self 1 (the conscious, judgmental mind) and Self 2 (the body's natural ability) through the experience of a businessman named Jack. Struggling with his backhand, Jack seeks advice from a coach after being unable to correct his swing despite input from several tennis professionals. The peculiar situation highlights Jack's lack of control over his own movements, which seems ironic given his professional success in managing complex business tasks.

Unlike traditional coaching methods that focus on direct instructions, the coach adopts a strategy centered on awareness. Jack is asked to observe his backhand swing in a window reflection without being told what to do. Through this observation, Jack realizes firsthand that his racket lifts too high, a detail he had not genuinely perceived despite being told numerous times. With newfound awareness, he effortlessly adjusts his swing, hitting topspin backhands consistently and naturally, without any conscious instruction or judgment. Jack's experience exemplifies a learning process where awareness, rather than judgment or explicit teaching, leads to effortless improvement.

The text delves deeper into the philosophy of this learning process, explaining that in tennis, as in life, heightened awareness of what



is—without the interjections of judgment—is crucial. Much like how one can track a ball by simply watching it, knowing the position of the racket requires a felt sense rather than a cognitive thought. The coach emphasizes that seeing and feeling one's actions—a non-judgmental awareness—unlock latent abilities and learning.

Furthermore, the text discusses how interference from Self 1 often leads to over-effort and tension. This is demonstrated through the anecdote of a lesson where positive and negative thinking are critiqued. Compliments are shown to activate Self 1, leading to tension and diminished performance, whereas a neutral observation of results leads to better awareness and outcomes.

The narrative concludes with the idea that both positive and negative judgments can distort perception and hinder the natural learning process. True improvement is achieved not by constant self-reform, but by allowing the innate intelligence and coordination of Self 2 to operate freely. By trusting this natural process and minimizing interference from the judgmental mind, learning and performance become more spontaneous and effective.

This philosophy encourages a shift from trying hard to allowing, trusting one's inherent capabilities. Through practical experimentation, learners can experience the difference between forced performance and the effortless



"letting it happen," discovering their own potential free from the constraints of ego and self-judgment.

Feature	Description
Setting	The lesson takes place at John Gardiner's Tennis Ranch in Carmel Valley, California.
Main Characters	Jack, a businessman, and his tennis coach.
Central Issue	Jack struggles with his backhand and has struggled to correct it despite advice from multiple professionals.
Self 1 vs. Self 2	Examines the dynamics between the conscious, judgmental mind (Self 1) and the body's natural ability (Self 2).
Coaching Approach	Shifts from traditional direct instructions to awareness and self-observation.
Experimentation	Jack observes his swing in a reflection, realizing his mistake without explicit instruction.
Learning Process	Improvement through awareness without judgment leads to effortless adjustments and better performance.
Philosophical Insight	Heightened awareness of present actions—without judgment—equals improved ability.
Self 1's Interference	Judgments often lead to over-effort, tension, and diminished performance.
Role of Judgments	Both positive and negative judgments skew perception and hinder natural learning.
Conclusion	True improvement comes from allowing the innate Self 2 to operate unhindered. Shift from trying hard to trusting inherent capabilities.



# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Awareness over Judgment

**Critical Interpretation:** In the journey of life, just as in the game of tennis, there exists a silent power in fostering awareness over judgment. By stepping back from the incessant chatter of Self 1—the conscious, critical mind—you embrace the moment with an enriched sense of presence. Consider your life's challenges as a backhand swing, each one presenting a chance to pause and simply observe without preconceived notions. As you let go of the inner commentary and trust in your body's innate wisdom, you unlock an effortless flow where growth happens naturally. This mental clarity enables you to engage deeply with experiences, inviting organic, unforced progress in your personal and professional endeavors. Through the lens of awareness, you find that success is not about stringent control but rather about allowing your true capabilities to surface untethered by doubt or critique.

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## chapter 3 Summary:

The chapter delves into the mental and physical aspects of learning tennis, emphasizing the importance of allowing the body, referred to as "Self 2," to learn and perform actions naturally without the interference of overthinking by the conscious mind, or "Self 1." The premise is that learning is more efficient when the body is trusted to absorb and imitate actions through observation and experience, akin to how children naturally learn complex activities, like dancing, by watching and mimicking rather than through verbal instructions.

The chapter suggests that while some basic knowledge and role of Self 1, the conscious mind, is necessary, its primary function should be to set goals and allow Self 2 to achieve them. This process is likened to letting a child play with a ball: they don't hit it perfectly the first time, but through play, their body learns through feedback and repetition. The conscious mind should provide a clear image or feeling of the desired outcome and then step back without interference, allowing the body to respond and adapt naturally.

An analogy is drawn between learning tennis and other skills, such as dancing or swimming, where too much conscious control can hinder natural, fluid performance. For example, children at a party learn new, complicated dance moves effortlessly by watching and feeling the motion, not by verbal instruction or conscious thought. Similarly, after watching professional



tennis matches, players often find their own skills improve dramatically without analytical effort simply by absorbing the professionals' actions.

Instructional advice for teaching tennis to beginners highlights the importance of focusing on results over specific stroke instructions. For instance, instead of critiquing individual elements of a player's forehand, encouraging them to visualize the ball landing deep in the court can lead to natural and immediate improvements in form and power. The chapter illustrates this through a case where a player, Sally, improved her game by envisioning the result she wanted rather than dwelling on her mistakes.

Experiments are suggested to bridge the understanding between conscious control (Self 1) and natural learning (Self 2). One involves serving a ball towards a target with conscious effort, then trying again with relaxation and visualization. The latter often leads to hitting the target more quickly as the body responds to the vision rather than explicit instructions.

The chapter moves on to discuss strategies like "programming by identity," where players adopt the role of a skilled player to unlock latent capabilities, widening their understanding of their actual potential, much like an actor embodying a role. It suggests players experiment with different playing styles, such as defensive or aggressive, to break habits and explore new aspects of their skills.



In terms of technical stroke instruction, the chapter simplifies the goal of hitting a tennis ball over the net and into the opponent's court. It highlights that while stroke mechanics are essential, they should not be overwhelming. Using topspin as an example, it illustrates how understanding and utilizing the natural properties of a moving ball can make game play more consistent and automatic.

Ultimately, the chapter argues for a balanced approach where Self 1's role is to frame the right goals and provide models for Self 2 to learn from, relying on imagery and feeling rather than abstract words. This encourages a natural learning method that can lead to more fluid and effective performance in tennis, paralleling the organic learning seen in nature or through spontaneous human imitation.



# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Trusting your body's natural ability

**Critical Interpretation:** In life, much like in tennis, there is immense power in trusting your body's innate ability to learn and adapt without excessive interference from your conscious mind. Picture your journey as a dance where your instincts lead the way. Instead of micromanaging each step, envision the end goal and allow your natural capabilities to execute the process. This balance between setting clear intentions and letting go translates into a more fluid, authentic performance in whatever you pursue. Whether you're tackling a new skill, navigating a challenge, or aiming for personal growth, learning to trust the organic process can unlock a new level of potential. By focusing less on the nitty-gritty of how each action is executed and more on experiencing and visualizing the outcome, you create space for your innate abilities to flourish. Like the child who learns to dance just by feeling the music, you too can reach new heights by allowing yourself the freedom to respond and adapt naturally.

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## chapter 4:

and negative evaluations keep the player from staying relaxed and aware, hindering their ability to adapt and learn from each new experience naturally.

### **The Inner Game of Learning: A Summary**

#### **Step 1: Observation**

Start by observing your tennis game without judgment. Focus on understanding your strokes as they are now. For instance, if your goal is to improve your serve, watch how you stand, grip the racket, and the motion of your swing. Allow yourself to experience the natural rhythm of your movements without making any corrections. This non-judgmental awareness creates a conducive environment for spontaneous improvement.

#### **Step 2: Programming**

Once you've identified an area for improvement—say, increasing power in your serve—program yourself for this improvement. Visualize yourself executing the desired stroke effectively. Watch videos of professional players, like Stan Smith or Billie Jean King, to absorb their techniques. This

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mental programming helps to set a clear intention and lets your subconscious mind learn by imitation.

### **Step 3: Let It Happen**

This step emphasizes trusting your body's ability to learn and adapt. After programming your mind with the desired change, continue to practice without consciously trying to control your movements. Allow your body to experiment and find the most natural way to achieve your goals. Stay relaxed and avoid instructing yourself verbally, which can cause tension. Let your body find the right way through trial and error, keeping anxiety and effort at bay.

### **The Old Way of Learning Revisited**

In contrast to the Inner Game, traditional learning often involves criticizing past behavior, instructing oneself with rigid commands, trying hard to force change, and critically judging every performance. This method often leads to frustration and blocks learning by creating tension and preventing natural adaptation. Instead, the Inner Game approach, with its emphasis on observation, visualization, and letting go, encourages a more organic learning process that aligns with how children naturally acquire new skills.

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## Conclusion

The Inner Game approach to learning emphasizes a return to natural, childlike learning by observing without judgment, visualizing desired outcomes, and trusting the body to adapt. It avoids the pitfalls of over-criticism and forced effort, offering a more relaxed, efficient, and enjoyable path to improvement. By fostering an environment of inner focus and relaxed concentration, players can effectively break old habits and develop new, more effective patterns without the stress and strain of trying to control every movement.

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## chapter 5 Summary:

This chapter explores the concept of learning through inner awareness and concentration, primarily within the realm of tennis, but with principles that can be applied to various aspects of life. The text highlights a four-step process to cultivate spontaneity and effective learning by reducing negative thinking and over-analysis, which often hinder performance. This process involves:

- 1. Observation of Existing Behavior:** Start by observing your actions without judgment. For instance, notice how your backhand lands or how your racket follows through. This detached observation helps identify areas for improvement.
- 2. Programming with Image and Feel:** Instead of commanding yourself, visualize the desired outcome. Imagine the ball's path and let your subconscious (termed Self 2) process this as a problem to solve.
- 3. Letting It Happen:** Trust your body to execute the desired behavior without conscious control. Efforts should come naturally, flowing like a river, as you remove the interfering influence of Self 1—your conscious mind.
- 4. Nonjudgmental Observation of Results:** Observe the results calmly,



without emotional attachment. This approach enhances concentration and learning, requiring reprogramming only if outcomes differ significantly from your visualization.

The text emphasizes trust in the body's capability, advocating for a shift from trying hard and being judgmental to a relaxed state where actions become almost automatic. It highlights the tendency of individuals to revert to conscious control (Self 1) due to ego satisfaction, despite seeing better results with the spontaneous approach (Self 2). This shift captures the essence of "letting go," allowing players to experience relaxation and improved performance.

Practicing concentration by focusing on sensory inputs such as watching the ball's seams, listening to the sound of impact, and feeling the racket's position helps deepen awareness and enhance performance. This not only trains the mind to concentrate effectively but also fosters a sense of engagement and fascination. The text discusses the pitfalls of trying to control the mind consciously, advocating for parking the mind in a focused state for peak performance.

The chapter concludes with the significance of concentration in both sports and broader life experiences. Concentration, described as a focused state of awareness, enables deeper understanding and appreciation of one's surroundings, whether it's the rhythm of a tennis match or the beauty of



nature. By practicing concentration, one develops the skills necessary to improve in tennis and various life aspects, achieving a higher level of consciousness where more of what exists becomes knowable and enjoyable.

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## chapter 6 Summary:

The text delves into the mental dynamics of concentration, particularly in a tennis match context. It explores how the mind, when left unchecked, often drifts into the past or future—dwelling on previous mistakes or anticipating potential failures—thus detracting from present performance. The narrative stresses the importance of staying in the "now," suggesting that practice and awareness, such as the physical act of volleying or the mindfulness technique of focusing on one's breathing, can aid in sharpening concentration. These methods help convert a fragmented awareness into a heightened, more efficient state of play.

Through practical exercises, like varied-speed volleys using a ball machine, players learn to adapt and improve reactions, thereby deepening their present-moment absorption. This intense focus can, paradoxically, alter the perception of time, making complex and fast-paced activities seem more manageable. Meditation is advocated as a tool to further enhance alertness, potentially transforming challenging scenarios into opportunities by expanding the temporal window within which actions can be perceived and executed.

The narrative transitions to illustrating a broader lesson about personal development and self-worth. It critiques society's emphasis on performance-based validation, arguing that self-worth should not be tied to



achievements. It suggests recognizing and resolving internal conflicts of desire can lead to a more profound satisfaction and enjoyment in activities like tennis, which, too often, become arenas for profound internal turmoil rather than simple sport. By discerning these internal games, such as "Good-o" (striving for excellence and validation) or "Fun-o" (playing purely for enjoyment), individuals might find what genuinely motivates them.

In summary, the text offers a reflective perspective on improving concentration and self-awareness in tennis and life, advocating for a mindful presence that prioritizes the moment over societal pressures or personal insecurities. This way, individuals may achieve not just better performance but also a more fulfilling engagement with their pursuits.

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## chapter 7 Summary:

In the narrative provided, the author reflects on a pivotal journey from his days as a tennis player to his understanding of deeper life philosophies later in life. The journey begins with a vivid memory of a significant match point from 20 years ago, an event that left a lasting impression, although its true significance wasn't immediately clear to the author. Initially driven by a desire to prove his worth through tennis, this ambition gave way to academic pursuits as he entered college.

During his collegiate years, the author played varsity tennis while grappling with the correlation between self-confidence in academics and tennis. A pattern emerged where academic struggles often translated to difficulties on the court, indicating a broader issue of self-doubt affecting performance in multiple areas. By his senior year, he began questioning the value of competition, recognizing intellectually—yet not emotionally—that tennis wasn't an ultimate measure of personal worth.

After college, the author embarked on a career in education, developing an interest in learning theory. In 1970, while teaching tennis, he began integrating principles from yoga into his teaching, which significantly improved both his students' and his personal performance. This approach, eventually known as "yoga tennis," laid the groundwork for what later evolved into the Inner Game method.



With newfound confidence, the author decided to test his skills in a tournament against top-tier players. Despite initial self-doubt upon witnessing the stature and perceived skill of other participants, he persevered through matches, experiencing both victories and nerve-wracking challenges. A critical moment of introspection led him to question the ramifications of losing versus winning, realizing that overcoming internal obstacles merited higher priority than external outcomes.

This realization marked the emergence of the "Inner Game," a concept that prioritizes self-mastery over competitive success. The author concluded that meaningful competition enables one to discover and extend their latent capacities, with the process of striving often proving more rewarding than the tangible victory. Competition, he recognized, can be an avenue for cooperative development where each participant challenges the other, fostering mutual growth.

Through discussions about surfing and competition with his father, the author unveiled a key insight: real benefit lies in overcoming challenges rather than defeating an opponent. Here, true competition aligns with cooperation, where both players aid in each other's growth by presenting and overcoming formidable obstacles. This understanding liberated the author from superficial metrics of success and led to a holistic appreciation for the game and life.



As the narrative progresses, the author shares the transformative perspective that has since guided his approach to tennis and life. He differentiates between the outer game, concerned with external achievements, and the inner game, focused on self-awareness and potential realization. The author suggests that while both games operate concurrently, prioritizing the inner game allows an individual to transcend anxieties tied to external validations, cultivating a deeper understanding of self and appreciating the interconnected challenges life presents.

By shifting the focus from external validation to internal growth, individuals can experience liberation from their insecurities, finding fulfillment in self-discovery rather than solely in conventional success. Ultimately, the narrative emphasizes the universality and applicability of inner game principles across life, encouraging a strategic shift in priorities for holistic development.

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## chapter 8:

### ### Chapter Summary

The chapter delves into the concept of applying the inner skills learned in tennis to everyday life, emphasizing the importance of maintaining calmness amid rapid and unsettling changes—a quality referred to as "Unfreakability." This quality is not about ignoring danger, but rather maintaining clarity to respond appropriately, contrasting with "freaking out," which occurs when the mind becomes upset and cannot perceive clearly.

#### **Types of Freak-Outs:**

1. **Regret about the Past:** This type of freak-out involves dwelling on mistakes, leading to self-criticism and self-doubt. It detracts from present action and creates anxiety, wasting valuable energy.
2. **Anxiety about the Future:** This is a major cause of nervousness and tension, particularly illustrated in a tennis player's concern over losing points, which spirals into broader fears about other aspects of life. A real-life scenario presented involves the author's anxiety over a book deadline, demonstrating how future worries can create pressure and inhibit performance.
3. **Dislike of Present Events:** Annoying stimuli or situations can lead to



this type, where the mind finds events unpleasant, leading to escalating frustration and a distorted perception of reality.

**Dealing with Freak-Outs:** The key is to maintain focus on the present, as calmness allows for a distinction between real and imagined dangers. The chapter warns against the simplistic notion of "positive thinking" as a remedy, claiming it adds mental blur rather than clarity.

**Attachment and Letting Go:** A central theme is attachment, particularly to the desire to control situations or outcomes. True freedom comes from letting go of these attachments. A Zen anecdote highlights this perspective—acceptance of what is, exemplified as letting things be, rather than manipulating them.

**Freedom and Self-Improvement:** The chapter draws parallels to self-improvement, cautioning against constant striving to change oneself. Instead, it encourages appreciation of one's current self, trusting innate potential rather than forcibly shaping it.

**Personal Anecdotes:** The author shares experiences, such as a near-death encounter with hypothermia, to illustrate that letting go—whether it's a fear of death or a poor tennis shot—can release untapped energy and focus. This surrender can break attachments to outcomes, fostering a state of detached concentration.



**Inner Game and Concentration:** Concentration is described as fundamental and applicable in all life situations, not just sports. Heightened consciousness is the goal, as it enables fuller experience and understanding of life, which leads one to true satisfaction.

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