

JUDY
SWALLOW

WINNER
WINNER

FINDING THE GOLD THAT LIES WITHIN

Inner Winner: Finding the Gold That Lies Within

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BEING AN INNER WINNER

What does it mean to be an “Inner Winner”?

Not all of us aspire to be Olympic athletes or gold medalists. It is a goal shared by a select few. But I do believe that the desire to win at life is a shared goal. Who wouldn't want to live a life that is in alignment with our deepest dreams and heart felt desires? Just as the athlete needs to train and dedicate time and energy to their endeavor, each of us must do the same to live a life that is the expression of our true self.

Being an Inner Winner is doing whatever it takes to achieve the goal, to challenge and overcome every obstacle on the path. To live authentically and attuned to your highest aspiration takes similar dedication. Ascension in any field requires self-care and love.

“Open your eyes, look within. Are you satisfied with the life you're living?”

Bob Marley

Self-awareness and introspection can reveal what's hindering the actualization of the best life you imagine for yourself. It is the start of being an Inner Winner. It is the quality of being *soul-y* responsible for yourself and the willingness to do what it takes to achieve the dream.

When I was in my mid-30s and in the second year of the Transpersonal Psychotherapy Training Program, I had an extraordinary moment where I realized that I am responsible for my life. I wasn't consciously aware that I was blaming others for not living the life I wanted to live. In fact, my *if only* list was long, and something I believed to be right and true: *If only my parents had done this; If only that coach nurtured my talent more; If only people had told me how smart and beautiful I am...I would be more this, that or the other.* I felt justified in feeling that others were responsible for my pain. It's true that they may have contributed to my lack of self-worth, self-love, and self-esteem, but I was the one perpetuating the beliefs.

That is the value in paying attention to your thoughts, feelings, and to your life circumstances as they begin to reveal what is going on beneath the surface of the conscious mind. No one, not my parents, not my teachers, not anyone or anything in my world or environment, past or present, caused my problems. I stopped the blame game, or at least began to. I was truly on the path to soul and sole responsibility for my life.

“You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.”

Swami Vivekananda

After each moment of enlightenment that I experienced, it was the resulting self-awareness that led me to see what I needed to keep working on and understand in order to further transform my *default setting* of fear to one of faith, faith in myself. The moments of enlightenment, plus the continued persistence and tenacity to gain deeper insights was what led me to cultivate an inner strength to live the life I desired. Inner winning was occurring more and more; I was finding the Gold within: self-value and self-worth that

became the foundation on which I stood.

Have you ever noticed that life is always presenting us with the opportunity to see ourselves and what is really going on inside? I am not speaking of when we are doing our day to day—when the world as we know it is comfortable and predictable. I'm talking about those times when we want to stretch our limits, create a dream, challenge our personal status quo—when we need to face our personal truths, whatever they may be, moments when we know that we're living a lie and we choose to acknowledge it or say it doesn't matter: *I will pretend all is fine*. Can you see that these are the times when the qualities of who you truly are, come into play and show how well you are doing at being an Inner Winner, your own champion?

A particular moment I had a few years back, revealed to me how I was really seeing myself. I was watching *The View* on TV. As I was watching it, I began to imagine myself having written a book and being interviewed on the show. For some reason, I was unable to visualize myself speaking clearly, nor could I articulate what the book was about. I was babbling and unclear. I was astounded. Just visualizing this scenario showed me that my self-image surely wasn't one of being an Inner Winner. There was no way I was ready to receive my dreams when I still saw myself as inept.

Yet, what a fabulous moment this turned out to be! Something had changed. I noticed that I didn't feel ashamed that I was still not completely confident. I didn't berate myself; I didn't feel defeated. Like an athlete who has more work to do to get to the top of the podium, I simply had more work and training to do. I had the tools and enough experience to keep chipping away at the fear that was still stopping me from genuinely showing up in my own life and in the world.

When I coach, I do not ask my clients to do something I am not willing to do myself in the vein of overcoming fear, worry or doubt. They have chosen figure skating as their arena and path to learning many life lessons. The challenges of the sport—of achieving the necessary goals, requires them to consistently choose to go beyond their comfort zones. I ask them to have their *Olympic Gold Medal Moment* every step of the way, because they need to make the choice to either be an Inner Winner, or allow the fear and uncertainty to stop them. It's not easy. But what a victory when they challenge the fear and own their truth. I ask them to become aware of their thoughts and self-talk so that they can take their power back and declare what their choice will be. It's one of my most favorite things to teach them—what my spiritual teacher taught me about “monkey mind.” In my interpretation and experience “monkey mind,” translates to fear, doubt, and worry—all the *what ifs*. It's what I call the FDW highway. Becoming aware of those thoughts, observing their contribution to what I was feeling, and how I was reacting to a situation was so powerful. It reminds me of this quote:

“I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened.”

Mark Twain

I hold myself accountable to this same process. As a result, I have been able to ascend many personal mountains, and I acknowledge how many *gold medals* I've actually achieved so far. It is so important to take stock of the victories while working on challenges. Step by

step, I began all those years ago, and it has brought me here; summiting toward the mountain peak, that up to now is the greatest actualization of my journey from fear, and its many names-into love and all its amazing gifts-the writing of my story and publishing this book.

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