

Nerves of Steel

Dr. Kevin Elko



Kevin Elko, Ph.D., is a performance consultant who has presented to numerous companies and professional sports teams. He teaches his audiences to develop mental strength and focus on their priorities. Elko recently published the book "Nerves of Steel." He has been an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and a writer for Drkoop.com, a consumer health Web site.

10 Lynnview Drive, McDonald, PA 15057

Phone: 412.257.2842

E-mail: dr.elko@earthlink.net

I/R Code: 5000.03

Cassette: A0542

CD: C0542

At the end of each day, you have one less day left in the rest of your life. Our bank account of life consists of steady withdrawals, no deposits. We cannot earn any extra time. Therefore, the time is now for you to listen to see what's inside of you and what really wants to be brought out. You may need strength and toughness to do just that and there is no better way than developing "Nerves of Steel."

Nerves of Steel is about freedom to choose how you are going to think and feel regardless of the circumstances. *Nerves of Steel* is a guide on how to be mentally tough when times call for it and how to stay focused on those things that are truly important. This talk is about helping you see the good in all you do and how to become what you were created to be.

I started out as a football coach and I went back to school at West Virginia University in the evenings to study behavior because I wanted to learn how to be a better teacher and coach. I wanted to find out how I could motivate people better, teach better and communicate better. When I completed my studies at West Virginia University, I interned at the United States Olympic Committee. I then came back to Pittsburgh to work with my friend, Tom Donahoe who wanted me to screen athletes for the Pittsburgh Steelers. We wanted to find the athletes who were the most coachable, the most motivated and were able to focus through adversity. We didn't look at their speed or at their strength, what we looked at was the way they think. We determined that this was the factor that was missing in being a champion. I've now concluded that this is the factor that is missing in being a champion in all areas of life.

I will talk you through a number of steps necessary to develop your "Nerves of Steel." The first step is about taking responsibility. Taking responsibility is one of the key steps to living happily and effectively. If everything you determine has something to do with something outside of you, then there really is not much you can do to control or create your own destiny. Then, you are a victim. This talk is about the opposite of that. This talk is about not being a victim and taking control of your own life. Even

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though you don't always have control of what happens to you, you always have control of how you respond to it. That's your corner of freedom and that's the focus of this talk. By taking responsibility you can decide on how to respond with ability. By living internally you don't let the outside world, the external world, create how you feel or who you are going to be. You can live this phrase, "Live in the world, not of the world."

Then we will talk about intrinsic motivation. Research states that this is the strongest motivation. It is essential in developing "*Nerves of Steel*." Intrinsic rewards are based on passion and internal desire. The first key to developing "*Nerves of Steel*" is to develop what intrinsically motivates you. When you are intrinsically motivated, you perform because you love the challenge or enjoy the activity.

The final part of this is called, "self-talk." We are all always talking to ourselves. There are always thoughts going through our head. Many people prescribe to the *pop-in theory*, which is, that thought just popped into my head. But, you can pop the thoughts you prefer into your head. People believe events cause what they feel, the weather, the traffic, a great day. But that's not true, it's what you tell yourself about the events that determines how you feel. I am now going into "*Nerves of Steel*."

We are going to talk today about the way you think. The way you think has something to do with your health. Internal and External. It has something to do with how you enjoy every day. You touch people's lives, what you say matters. This talk is not about eliminating stress but about getting in touch with it. It comes down to this, this is what you got, now what do you do with it.

I do not have control of events; I have control of what I tell myself about them. Go a step further, expect. That means you better bring your best. Expect tough. Bring your best.

People are successful because they have developed a winning system for themselves and they follow their system to a tee.

Anytime I work with a company, or a player for that matter, they can tell me what they want. They can't tell me what they are ready to do for it. They can all tell me

I want to be a champ, the best there is. The phrase I use every time I talk to an athlete is "*affirmation without discipline is delusion*." If you are not disciplined and you don't have the processes to get it, so what. You never get what you want; you get what you deserve.

Here is how you live internal. In 1996, the United States Hockey Team was expected to win a gold medal in the winter Olympics. They didn't, they didn't have the focus. The team that won it was the Czech Republic. Their captain was a guy I met when I worked with the Penguins. His name is Jaromir Jagr. Jagr wears the number "68" on his shirt because 1968 was the year of the Russian occupation of Czechoslovakia. Guess who the Czech Republic played for the chance to advance their dreams and achieve the gold medal? Russia. Jagr dedicated that game to his grandfather and to everyone who lost their lives during the occupation. Do you think the Czechs were nervous on the ice? Sure they were. But on that night, the Czechs used their "*Nerves of Steel*" to turn their butterflies into positive adrenaline. They showed more determination than any other hockey team. What's your "68" or your main purpose for living?

Professional golfer Gary Player is an example of a person who excelled in a profession through thousands of hours of practice that took place behind the scenes. "I would do anything to hit a golf ball like you," someone once said to Player. He quickly answered, "Would you get up at 6:00 a.m. every morning and hit 1500 golf balls?" The man replied, "No." Player replied, "Then you wouldn't do anything to hit a golf ball like me."

Ken Griffey, Jr. is consistently one of the best hitters in baseball every year. He tells himself the same thing when he is batting regardless of who the pitcher is, "See the ball, hit the ball." That means nothing matters but his focus.

I'm working with the Penguins. One afternoon, I'm talking to Peter Skudra, a goalie for the Penguins. They were preparing to face the New York Rangers who were led by hockey legend, Wayne Gretzky. "It will be hard stopping Gretzky, he's the greatest player of them all," said Skudra. I thought for a moment and I said, "Peter, you don't have to stop Gretzky, you have to stop the puck.

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Gretzky isn't the problem. Stay focused on the puck. See the puck and stop the puck. You'll be fine." We shut him out! Don't react to what's out there, living internal.

I went out to the NFL combines in Indianapolis. I interviewed this guy for the Steelers. I said, "Did you ever face adversity?" He answered, "Yes," he had. He said that he played four years for North Carolina State with a separated shoulder. I asked him if he had ever missed a game and he replied that he had not. I asked, "Did you ever miss a practice?" "Never," was his reply. "How did you do that," I said. Every day I went to practice and said, "If my mother can go to work with cancer, than I can play football." "I lost my mother last month," he said. I closed the book I was writing in and I looked at Tommy and Coach Cowher and said, "I do not need to interview this man any more." That guy's name was Torry Holt. His first year he was in the Super Bowl, his second year he was in the Pro Bowl, and his third year, in the Super Bowl. He knew how to think. If I'm going to hire you, I need to know the way you think, the way you focus. I'll teach you how to do your job. I want to know your attitude.

When I talk about 68 and intrinsic motivation, it is something that you have to keep looking for. It may not be something that you can quickly find and it may be something that you have to look for over and over because as one develops through life, grows through life, one's 68's change. But really, what life is all about are the moments we recognize it.

If you are ever in New York City and have a chance to visit the Hard Rock Cafe, look in the left hand corner of the restaurant and you will find a framed letter hanging on the wall written by the late Bruce Lee, the most influential and famous martial art/movie star who ever lived. Bruce wrote this letter in 1970, long before he had reached the pinnacle of his career:

"By the year 1980, I will be the best-known Oriental movie star in the United States. I will have secured to my name 10 million dollars. In return, I will give the best possible performances I can every time I am in front of the cameras. And I will live a life of peace and harmony."

By all appearances, If Bruce Lee's life had not ended tragically; he probably would have achieved or even surpassed his goal. Lee's letter was short and simple but contained some complex attributes. Bruce had a vision to attain his dreams – to be the best-known oriental movie star. And most importantly, he realized he had to give up something of equal or greater value before he could gain his riches – *I will give the best performances I can every time I am in front of the camera.*

Jim Carrey, the comedian, wrote himself a check for twelve million dollars. He said that he would be a twelve million dollar actor. He used to sit in the hills of California and look at that check. His father passed away and he folded the check and put it into the casket with his father. One month later, he signed *Batman Forever* for twelve million dollars.

What you think and how you think has something to do with your health. People who age well live the Serenity Prayer:

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference."

A study done by the University of California Berkley says that one of the major causes of heart disease is not "Type A" Behavior, it's anger. The Buddhist say that you will never be punished for your anger; you will be punished by your anger. One of the strongest correlations with colon cancer is anxiety.

My friend Shane called me and told me his dad had cancer and asked me to pray for him. I said, "If you need anything, call me." He called me a few weeks later and said, "Kevin, he has days." I said again, "If you need anything, call me." I left on a trip and when I came back there was a message on my answering machine from Shane. "Kevin, call me." "Here's the call," I thought. I call him and he said, "Happy birthday." I said, "How is your dad?" He said, "The cancer is gone." I said, "Shane, what are you talking about?" He said, "First of all, there were a lot of people praying for him, but secondly he quit his job." He managed a car dealership parts department and he hated his job. He quit it. He started flying these little ultra-light

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planes. When he would leave the house his wife would say, "That's dangerous." And he would reply, "What's the difference, I'm dying." He kept flying. He got his pilot's license and started enjoying life everyday. He outlived his doctor's prognosis and further tests revealed that his cancer was in remission.

I'm speaking at a place called KidsPeace. It's a place where kids go if they are emotionally challenged. I arrive in Allentown and nobody is there to meet me. I call and find out the phones are down. I go out to this cab and say, "Take me to KidsPeace." He said that there were 38 KidsPeace Buildings and I told him to take me to anyone of them. When I arrive I finally locate Rich, my contact person, and he apologizes saying that there were many problems there that morning but I was to speak to the faculty at 2:30 p.m. There are 500 kids living on campus and at 2:00 p.m. they tell them that they weren't going home and that they had to come listen to my talk. They march into the auditorium all fired up. I'm thinking, good, real good! Then I said to myself, "Kevin, go deliver your talk." I delivered it. I get done and about 12 kids line up to talk to me. The first one is a girl and she is crying. I said, "Why are you crying?" "I didn't want to come to this talk, it's my 18th birthday and I was going to party with my friends after school. I'm at KidsPeace because I was shot in the chest, point blank range, by a drive-by shooter. I don't know him but I have hated him every day of my life until today. Today you talked about forgiveness; this is the first day I forgive him. Thank you for coming." What I went through for that day, all I went through for that minute; do you know what I call it? A bargain. You've got those minutes. Everything comes down to moments. That's what you look for, those moments.

There are two groups of people. The first group are ducks. They walk around all day and here is what you hear, quack, quack, quack, quack. They go to the bar after work every day to complain and what do they call it? Happy Hour! What do we have? We have miserable! The second group is called Eagles. Let me tell you about Eagles. Eagles choose what they want to think. They think about how they are going to think. They have attitude and they

know that this point might have something to do with their health.

Let me take it to the next step. If you are listening to someone and they're downloading, and complaining, and quacking to you, don't you think it's sticking? Garbage in, garbage stays. I don't believe garbage in, garbage out. If you are in the duck pond and they are quacking, what you're paying to be in there is not free, you're walking in it. Get out of there!

This woman was admitted to a nursing home by her children. She did not want to be there. She was sitting in the common room and she saw this gentleman. She looked at him and said, "You look like my third husband." He said, "How many times have you been married?" "Twice," she said with a twinkle in her eye. It comes down to about that. If I've got something, I can sit back and join the duck pond. They are always looking for members, but here's what you pay for being there, one day.

I work a lot in the investment industry and after September 11th I was in New York quite a bit. No one would tell me after September 11th that their wealth is their money would they? No, your wealth is your time. This isn't dress rehearsal; this is it! You're going to get what you spend for this day, one day. Don't waste it.

I spoke in Oklahoma City for the State Conference for Exceptional Children and I got blown away. On the day Timothy McVey was executed, they interviewed a woman who lost her daughter in the Federal Building. "Did you get any relief from the execution of Timothy McVey?" "None," said the woman. The interviewer said, "I don't understand." The woman replied, "If a poisonous snake bites you, do you address the wound or chase the snake? I never chased that snake. I got no relief from that at all."

There was a woman who tragically lost her three-year old son in a San Diego, California, McDonald's restaurant when a man walked in and sprayed the restaurant with machine gun bullets. She discussed in a magazine interview her focus on life after that awful event. She stated that she put the past behind her because it could not be brought back. She stated that she did not focus on the future because there was no way of knowing how much

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future is left. She said she simply focused on each day as it arrived, lived each day to its fullest, and considered each day on earth a gift, or a present.

They asked Aristotle Onassis, one of the richest men in the world, what he would do if he were broke. He said that he would borrow \$500 and hang out with millionaires. Give me six months and I'll be a millionaire again. I think it's true of anything, Here's what I've got, what do I do with it. That means live your life internally. Did you ever hear this phrase, *Live in the world, not of the world?* I can't let what's out here decide what I'm going to think, or how I'm going to feel. I've got to decide that.

Every time I see someone do something remarkable I think of Emmitt Smith. He ran 237 yards against the Philadelphia Eagles. I said, "Tell me, what were you thinking?" "Nothing, nothing at all" he said. I said, "What about those crazy people?" He said, "Kevin, I never noticed them. I was lost in what I was doing, nothing else mattered, and that was it. I was focused." Living Internal. 78% of the people allow something outside of them to tell them what they're going to think, what they're going to feel.

A bunch of us went out after the Miami game, and I was talking with a physician who does heart surgery. He said, "I can do 25 micro-stitches in 25 seconds." I said, "What are you thinking about when that's going on." He said, "The heart, nothing else." "I make one mistake they're dead." "That's all I got on my mind, what's in front of me." Living internal.

Martin Luther King is doing a march in Alabama. They said to him, "If you do that march we'll turn the hose on you, if that doesn't work, we'll turn the dogs loose on you and if that doesn't work we'll beat you with clubs." He replied, "You turn the hose on us, you turn the dogs loose on us, you beat us with clubs and when you're done, we'll still love you." He lived internal, he was a leader.

Daniel Goleman came out with an excellent piece of work called *Emotional Intelligence*. He said there is a very small correlation between IQ and success in practically every field. New York Time's bestseller, he's out of Harvard. He talks about your ability to focus through

adversity, your ability to live internal and how about this, your ability to listen to people.

What if you weren't programmed to think? I always tell this story. My mother told me, "You better never go into a woman's purse." If she saw me looking at a purse, she would say, "What are you looking at?" I said, "Nothing." I've never been in a woman's purse, never. Conditioning!

Every time I was bad I had to go spend some time with my Grandmother, I spent my youth with her. I grew up in Brownsville, Pennsylvania. I came home one day and found my dad crying. He told me that they had just brought my grandmother back from Mercy Hospital and she had a week to 10 days to live. I rode my bike down to see her and she was playing the organ and singing hymns. I sat down next to her and said, "Dad said you're going to die." She said, "Who told him that?" I told her that the doctors had said so. She snapped back, "They're not God, so I'm not going anywhere until I'm ready to go." She lived three more years. She did not allow a force outside of her to be her reality. She trusted her internal source much more.

I live out in Bridgeville. I had one of these lawn care services come look at my lawn. They drove away, didn't even say goodbye. So, I called them and they told me I didn't even have a yard, I had a shell and there was nothing they could do for me. My neighbor, Jake has a really nice yard so I go over to see him. I told him what happened with the lawn service. I asked him if he had any tips for me. He told me that I should keep planting grass, don't pull weeds." It worked. I got a pretty nice yard. Just keep going. Just keep on doing your 68.

I went to the University of Miami with Butch Davis. When I got there the cover of *Sports Illustrated* said, "Miami should close football." We had a player murdered that year; we had a player killed in a bayou jet crash. Here is what we did. We got a picture of what we wanted to see happen and then everyday we closed the gap between what we had and that picture.

Let me tell you about leadership, this is what I learned about Giuliano when I was in New York. They knocked down two buildings in his back yard and here is what

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he said. "New York was here yesterday, we'll be here tomorrow, and we'll be here for a long time to come." What he knew was that he is freer than those people flying those planes. He has the freedom to decide what he wants to think. They were prisoners to their own insanity.

I am frequently in New York City. I'll tell you about my training after September 11th. I was in my office in Sewickley and someone comes knocking on my door about 7:15 at night. They say to me a US Jetliner had just crashed a few miles north of Pittsburgh and to get up to the crash site as soon as possible. I'm in the US Air Club with family members who are waiting for the loved ones to come off the plane. They're not coming. It's 3:00 a.m. and this guy has been sitting at the bar since 7:00 p.m. waiting to see if his wife had made it. I knew she didn't. An executive comes in and says he has an announcement to make. There are no survivors! This man comes off the bar stool and goes towards the executive. I don't know what's going to happen but that guy is about a step from me and I'm about to get flattened. There is somebody off to his right, he stops and looks. It was a woman who was crying hysterically because she lost her husband. The guy didn't know what to do. He fell on his knees and held her. He spent the next three hours going around that room holding people. He got it like that! New York got it like that! We need each other. He got it that quick. He knew how to heal and start trying to heal someone else. It happened to him, bang. On September 11th, you could see all the devastation back here. When I went up to New York you could see the spirit, you could feel it.

What do you need? What do you want, do you want respect, give respect. Do you want someone to be attentive to you, go be attentive to them. Do you want someone to think you have something special, think they do. Go give it away; you've heard what I'm telling you for years. It will come back to you, it always does.

I'm speaking in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania. A guy walks up to me and says that all his life, he wanted to lose weight. He tried every diet. My little girl's kidney failed and she needed my kidney, but the doctor said that he wasn't taking my kidney until I lost weight. I lost 101

pounds in six months. Intrinsic motivation, what drives you? What gets you going?

Four per cent of the athletes in the NFL who are millionaires right now end up millionaires; ninety-six per cent lose it and within two years fifty per cent are bankrupt. Eight out of ten people who hit on the lottery are more broke after they hit. Here is what that's about. It's not their lifestyle. It's like all these people who go on fad diets, it's not their lifestyle, it's not who they are. Along those lines whatever you want, you have to be it. You can't do it. We are not human doings, we are human beings. Eighty per cent of all small business started are out of work in five years. Ninety-four per cent of the franchises aren't. Because they have disciplines, they have franchises, they are turnkey. So, what's your franchise? If I give you money, can you do that for me? I'm going to give you one discipline to think about to help you get what you said you want as your 68. When you want something, give it away and it will come back to you. This guy has something called the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas. His name is Dr. Karl Menninger. He was doing a talk once and someone ask him what he should do if he's depressed. He said, "Find someone more depressed than you. Nurture them." I don't think he's right about depression, I think he's right about everything. If you don't like what you're getting, look at what you're giving. I know this doesn't go over with everybody, I know some people have an investment in being right where they are, even when they're miserable. I understand that and I do think there is an investment in being a duck. But if you don't like what you're getting, why don't you look at what you're putting out. I urge you to think about this, if you complain to someone on a regular basis and it's not changing your situation then look at your complaining.

I'm with the Pittsburgh Steelers and a man comes in and says, "Hi boys, my name is Garth Brooks. I want you to come over to my concert." Garth took the front two rows of the Pittsburgh Civic Arena and told the people in the back rows to come on down, he had their seats. A little girl gave him a flower and he gave her a guitar. We had an idea of what we were going to get but this is what

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he gave us. When someone thinks of a Garth Brooks in your business, do they think of you? You tell me?

I read an article in the Harvard Business Review that said one of the major motivators, if not the major motivator, in the work place is appreciation. You know that's true.

This guy worked for a major company and he would go around all the time and try to catch people doing something well. I say most managers are what I call seagull managers, they just fly in every once in a while, crap on people's heads and fly out. This guy is doing something different. He would try and catch them doing something special and give them little stickers. The sticker read "D.W.D.," which stood for "Damn-Well-Done." When he passed by, people were influenced to perform their best. When he retired, the company organized a retirement party and it was the largest crowd a company retirement party ever attracted. During the party, everybody chanted, "D.W.D."

Let's talk about gratitude. Listen closely to this phrase; *people who are happy do not have gratitude because they are happy, they are happy because they possess gratitude.* They're not happy because of the good things that happen to them, they look for the good things that happen in their life. Whatever you think about expands. Once you start being a little bit miserable about the world in short order, you're a lot more miserable about the world. Once you start being a little bit grateful for what you have you'll end up being a lot more grateful. I don't believe anything good comes to you until you're thankful for what you have. Or let me say that differently, I don't think more good comes to you until you're thankful for what you have.

An AIDS patient was in the hospital and was very, very ill. A nurse went in to check on him and he was not in his bed. She frantically looked for him and he had collapsed in the garden right outside his room. So the nurse picked him up and said, "Joseph, what are you doing?" He said, "God, I just love to feel the sun on my face." Looking for things to be thankful for. Not only am I asking you to give away what you would like to receive, but also I'm asking you to develop these eyes to look for what's right. If you

want to find what's wrong you really don't have to work hard; the news, the traffic, the newspapers, the television, you'll find it. This is something different. Develop eyes to look for what's right.

When Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, his first line was, *one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind*, almost everybody remembers that. Here's the one they forgot. *Good Luck, Mr. Gorsky.* That's all he said, it got lost. He told the story about two years ago in Orlando. They thought he was wishing the Russians good luck in the space race. It had nothing to do with the Russians. When he was a little boy he was passing ball in his front yard. He missed the ball and it went over in the neighbor's yard, the Gorskys. Mr. and Mrs. Gorsky were fighting and in the middle of the fight she screamed at him, "The next time I'm going to have sex with you is when that little boy next door walks on the moon." It's a true story and that's a dry spell.

Don't worry about what you get, focus on what you give. The rest will take care of itself. Processes, McDonalds have them, great teams have them. What's yours? Put that one in there. As we talk about our 68, don't talk it, go be it. They have a phrase down in Texas; "He's all big hat, no cattle." Saint Francis of Assisi said, "Go preach the gospel, use words only when you have to." Eleanor Roosevelt said, "If you have to tell somebody you're a lady, you probably aren't." Don't have to tell, let them look at you and say, that's hers, that's his. Because everything she does speaks so loudly, everything he does lets me know. Go be it!

I have to tell you that when I ran my practice and when I had my education this is really the only thing I strongly hold onto in psychology. Here it comes. What you think causes what you feel and I can change what I think. I love what Satchel Paige, the great baseball player said, "No one will ever shrivel my soul by making me hate him. They're not making me hate, they're not making me mean, they're not making me angry, and I'm going to be the same man. They're not affecting me." That's how he played that game, that's why he won that game. That's why he led us. What you think causes what you feel. I can change what I think and I can change what I feel.

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This guy's name is John Plummer; he napalmed a village in Viet Nam. He was told that the village was empty. There was a Pulitzer Prize picture of this little girl running out of the village with her back on fire. It was in all the newspapers, it was in all of the magazines. John Plummer's life did not work after this day, he drank constantly, he could not hold his family together, and he went through two marriages. He found out this little girl whose back had been on fire was a woman, she was in New York City for a Veteran's Day Parade as the Marshall. He drove to meet her. When he got there, she wasn't there. He inquired where she lived and he found out that she lived in Montreal, Canada. He drove to her door, she came to the door and he said, "I'm John Palmer, I caught you on fire, I napalmed your village, I gave the orders." She dropped her eyes, looked up and said to him, "Mr. Palmer, my wounds healed a long time ago. Isn't it time for yours to heal too." He said he floated off the porch. His life works now, he's a clergyman. I got this suspicion about that story; I think that woman forgave John Plummer for that woman. If somebody hurt you, why would you allow them to keep doing it by holding on to it? Aren't they doing it over and over again? It isn't about them, it's about you. Your time is your wealth.

I talk with people about different mood stages, high positive, low positive, high negative, and low negative. Let's start with low negative, frustrated. When I was a kid we used S&H Green Stamps, you filled a book and then you traded it in on a prize. Let's go with low negative, frustrated, every time we're frustrated, boom, that's a stamp. Bad day on the job, stamp, couldn't quite get there, stamp,

trouble with a co-worker, stamp; now my book is filled and I'm going to trade it in on my prize which is choking somebody, telling somebody off, getting drunk, eating too much. We come to high negative, which is rage, and this just damages relationships. Now we come to low positive, calm, even, when I see someone who is successful, this is where they're sitting. They don't get high; don't get too low they're right there in low positive, steady. Now let's talk high positive. Have you ever been to a motivational seminar and the next day you can't remember what they say, and you just need a good nap. Now that's kind of the problem with the high positive part, it's not real when they're screaming at you, you just can't believe it.

Let's go over what I told you. We talked about living internally, we talked about taking responsibility in getting your 68, we talked about giving it away, and we talked about staying in this low positive state, not real high, not real low. I want you to think of this term, *let's*. Let's stay out of the duck pond, let's forgive, and let's get over our need to be right. I want you to think about it for just a second. People practice going into a gym to be physically fit, people practice their spirituality. This isn't something you get one time, you practice it. Disciplines. Practice how you think. Find people who are healthy, maybe different than you; maybe have a different way of looking at things. We tell our kids to choose their friends wisely, and we hang out with schmucks. That makes no sense. Are you living the way you tell your kids to? It's a good way to go.

I want to close this talk with something my father used to say to my mother every time she left for the beauty shop: "Best of Luck to You."