

level of performance. The ingredients to bring out a powerful experience of higher performance with peers and self remain as influential today as it did in that tiny gym a lifetime ago. In many ways Tim met us where we were and pulled us into his world. To get more out of us he encouraged with words to move forward, never to harm. He reached high enough to place himself in a new arena. He never knew how he would react to success, but when confronted with a new experience of winning he re-defined his goal and moved himself forward while pulling us with him. Drew took Tim's potential roadblock and re-defined it to bring him back to his goal. Knowing your desired outcome is invaluable. Along the way, by pushing himself to a higher level of performance, Tim assisted others to a keener understanding of life. Lives improved! People he knew and many he would never meet.

I thank Tim, Drew, Students, Parents, Teachers and Coaches who taught me the value of assisting others to a higher level of accomplishment and performance. I am sure all the kids in your life will find their own unique way of Thanking You for reading this book. I know Tim, Drew and I thank each other every time we meet. After all...they earned eternal bragging rights!

Continued...I love words and appreciate their influence and potential to impact lives. I have not always followed grammatical rules in this book, such as ending a sentence with a preposition or the use of they instead of he or she. I beg forgiveness for my informal grammatical approach while leaning toward a conversational delivery.

I also refer to young people as Kids. For me, that magical word has always expressed an appreciation and connection with a critical developmental period of our lives. I do believe this...almost any word use, communication, behavior, intent, decision can't be too bad if fueled by a sincere love for life, people and helping. Fueled by love we can always give our best effort, check if we reached our outcome and make a new decision...fueled by love!

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

**Higher levels of Engagement,
Performance and Happiness...**

Push or pull them forward! Facilitate kid Growth! Parents, Teachers and Coaches know kids have unlimited potential. We also know they get stuck. Engagement, effort and performance can nose dive at home, in a classroom or on a playing field. It can be a temporary experience or a pattern that takes life in almost everything they do. They need an Adult who has the desire and know-how to push or pull them forward!

This book is about how to assist kids toward higher engagement and performance at home, in the classroom and on the field. Bring them toward happiness as the fully engaged and achieving person they seek. Believe me, they want to achieve! They know it will bring them happiness. What they do not always know is how to get unstuck and move forward. You already make a difference. You can add to your already successful repertoire of Adult-Kid interventions toward a higher level of engagement and performance.

Our children have within them, the "stuff" to live a more accomplished and happy life. A life filled with meaningful direction, effort, loving relationships and self fulfilled happiness. They also own a personal idea of what they want for themselves but do not know how to get there. At the very basic level of intervention, they need to believe that one Adult understands, believes in them and can assist, to get them from where they are to where they want to be.

Joined by our school Social Worker, School Psychologist and Guidance Counselor I met Jack at his residential institution. Jack was returning to public school after 18 months of behavior, educational, psychological and medication intervention. Jack had proven successful in his current arena but was showing a tremendous amount of apprehension returning to public school. He, and his mother, were very concerned about his ability to succeed in a new arena. Despite the glowing report from everybody at the institution, Jack was concerned about how to succeed in a place he had only known failure. He was concerned about his performance at the next level.

Samantha was a well-liked, quiet, happy successful student and gifted athlete. She was very accomplished at soccer. An obvious gift to the sport at an early age, she easily joined and contributed to highly competitive teams. At the age of 13 she was asked to play Varsity and earned All League Honors. Samantha had a very supportive family and surrounded herself with the best coaching and training. Samantha did something many kids fail to accomplish after making a Varsity team at an early age, she continued to get better and love the game. Samantha created the perfect package for the next level, college. It was during her high school junior year that Samantha started to flat line regarding effort, interest and motivation in school and soccer. She became more withdrawn and frustrated over choosing a college. Despite all her success she was so apprehensive about college plans that it was turning unhealthy. Performance suffered. Samantha was concerned about succeeding at, what was conceived to be, a higher level.

Josh's mom had raised his 3 older brothers on her own. Josh spent a fair amount of time attending college lacrosse games with family. He enjoyed watching his brothers play a game everybody in his world seemed to thrive on. He loved basketball and was a natural. When 7 years old he could make a behind the back pass off a dribble while running full tilt. Summers were spent playing basketball and lacrosse with his big brothers and friends. All the players would show off their college equipment and a couple had NCAA National

Championship Lacrosse rings. When his day arrived to join the local lacrosse league, Josh made it very clear he did not want to play. He communicated his objection in every conceivable manner any healthy 8 year old can think of. Josh burst into tears and ran to his room. Josh was a gifted athlete and his mom knew he would have fun while experiencing success at lacrosse. Josh was very concerned about his experience in a new arena as a player.

Each Kid found themselves in different places with the same desire to grow. Each Kid is reaching for more but appears stuck. Each Kid expresses their needs and wants in different ways, but the desire to grow is there. They need a healthy minded Adult who understands and skilled at moving Kids to a higher level of engagement and performance. It does not matter if you are meeting a Kid at an institutional setting and literally escorting their return to public school, a Coach assisting to the next level of play or a Parent reaching to a son. Kids find themselves stuck and need an Adult who can meet them where they are and move forward to where they want to be.

Everything starts with meeting Kids where they are. Make a CONNECTION. Develop your connections with constant ENCOURGEMENT in special areas of their development such as, PAYING ATTENTION TO THEMSELVES, the internal conflicts preventing personal growth. Emphasize their UNIQUE special talents. Give them RESPONSIBILITY for their outcomes. Search for their GOALS and discover BELIEFS to support them. Encourage them to strengthen and value RELATIONSHIPS along with the liberating influence of FORGIVENESS. Hearing such messages from an understanding Adult in Authority opens the world to new possibilities.

The foundation of a successful Adult intervention is to make a solid Adult-Kid connection. Meet them where they are. Every Kid is at a different place in their development as a son/daughter, student, teammate, member of any group or program striving toward a common goal. A healthy connection breeds opportunities. It gives

birth to a wide spectrum of Adult communication and behavior focused on higher Kid performance. Make a connection and continue to develop it!

Pay attention to Adults who consistently move Kids to higher levels of engagement and performance. You will probably discover how much they encourage. They stray away from negative communication. They listen and respond to Kids individually. They constantly communicate optimism. They become a Kid magnet. Kids are eager to connect with them, get their fill of encouragement and move forward. Encouragement is a powerful tool to move Kids forward. What do we encourage our Kids to do?

Encourage kids to pay attention to themselves. Teach them to pay attention to their internal world. Encourage them to notice internal struggles that remain hidden. Internal resources desperately seeking a way to live. Internal struggles attempt to be noticed all the time. If internal wants have to struggle to be heard, they will find a way to be noticed in the most inappropriate ways. Teach them to pay attention to themselves!

Encourage their exploration by reminding them of their total, immeasurable uniqueness. They truly are special and they need to hear it from us! They cannot hear it enough. Just hearing a positive affirmation of the special being of “you” is a powerful connection. It is a powerful force to move forward. What is their most perfect day? Encourage them to establish their wants and goals. The daily activities, leading to the Big Picture. It makes today special!

Give them responsibility for all wants, goals and life outcomes! Tell them you believe they can make it happen. It is their responsibility. You will be there to remind them of their goals. You will be there to point out when they attempt to hide from success with time honored escape routes of ownership. But in the end, they have the responsibility to act, fail and act again. You will be there to encourage and guide.

Encourage them to explore successful Beliefs that support personal wants and Goals. Beliefs fuel Goals. Too often, we encourage goal setting without supportive Beliefs in self, abilities and our planned path. As a result, we quickly fall back into old thoughts and habits that led us down a path we did not want to follow. Beliefs that parallel and support Kid Goals will fuel effort, engagement and performance during times of discouragement. A healthy Belief can achieve anything!

Encourage them to respect relationships. Teach how to cultivate friendships. Identify useful relationships that promote growth and happiness. Show how to separate from people who do not share the same passion for life. Teach and demonstrate forgiveness. It will give them a lifetime of loving, nurturing connections!

As we give Kids such powerful messages, I invite Adults to consider Adult Beliefs regarding stuck and low performing Kid behavior. SELF IDENTITY is a model to organize Adult Beliefs. It is highly useful and efficient to fuel productive Adult-Kid intervention toward higher performance. It places Adults in a more productive state when confronted with inappropriate and unproductive Kid behavior.

Self Identity is a successful Adult Belief about Kid development. It is how Kids identify their role as a son/daughter, student or member of a group/team. Self Identity is the process of learning how to earn adult approval, acceptance and love. It is what Kids tell themselves about their potential. It is how they feel about themselves. Self Identity is what goes on in the inside. What goes on in the inside is going to be played out on the outside. Focusing on Kid Self Identity is an amazing process with powerful results.

Add to your toolbox additional motivational strategies and communication skills. Highly effective Adults can identify personal Kid MOTIVATION strategies. It is a very non-threatening and persuasive tool. An Adult can structure their communication that appeals to personal motivational strategies and gently move Kids toward higher performance. In addition, there are COMMUNICATION

STRATEGIES that reduce Kid resistance. Communication tools to reduce highly emotional states that prevent positive listening and processing. With Kid resistance low, they will intently listen to your message of moving forward to higher levels of engagement and performance.

It is a rewarding feeling to bring a struggling youth to a higher level of performance. It is far more engaging for an Adult and Kid to discuss ways to move forward rather than talking, talking and talking about the problem without a direction toward higher engagement and performance. Any Adult, reading this book, believes Kids can live a more accomplished life. You are probably somebody that consistently moves Kids to a higher level of performance already. It is exciting to think that, in addition to what you already do, there are additional successful strategies to consider. I invite you to consider the strategies suggested in this book and use what is appropriate to your already successful approach. Strategies to build rapport, establish belief systems that enhance engagement, accomplishment, goals to motivate effort and growth, tools to improve Self Identity and additional patterns of communication to reduce resistance to Adult healthy messages. It is exciting to discover how effective you already are and how much more effective we can be. Lets move on toward enhanced Kid engagement, growth, performance, accomplishment and above all...happiness!

Voices outside the cave gave him hope. Up till now, he would not allow himself the thought of moving beyond his darkness. Shadows, stagnant air, sudden burst of deafening noise followed by unpredictable stabs of time, never leading to rest, comfort or safe thoughts. It seemed like bombs going off in his head. He was hungry but never starved. Food eased the pain but hardly brought joy. Hushed voices told him he was not alone but, never offered warmth, acceptance or companionship. The outside world was calling. The bombing had stopped, for now.

Despite the late day Sun he felt chilled. He rubbed his arms and saw others, his own age, do the same. He noticed others, his own age, that did not rub their arms. For some reason, they seemed comfortable and talked with kids, who did not rub their arms. The arm rubbers seem bothered by almost everything. He walked amongst the arm rubbers who offered little cheer. Being with arm rubbers seemed like the thing to do. Without questioning his decision, he just felt arm rubbers would accept him.

As more kids filled their area he overheard the arm rubbers talk about the bombing. Each described the bombing as something different. It was loud, unpredictable and confusing. Definitely something to stay away from while recognizing the need to be near it. It seemed to leave them uneasy about moving out of the cave. Stumbling closer to non-rubbers, he noticed no mention of bombs, loud noises. They talked about doing different things. There were games to be played, watched and people to cheer for. There were festivities to attend, language to learn, people to help and work to be done. Arm rubbers never mentioned any of this stuff.

He wanted to join the non-rubbers. He reluctantly gathered himself and clumsily meandered in their direction. To his surprise he was not rejected. At least they did not order him to leave. They smiled at him, offered their names and asked questions. He had far less to say and smile about. Some of the stuff they talked about was new to him. Some stuff was not new but seemed new. A familiar voice in his head told him only idiots would do what non-rubbers do. He looked for the voice but knew it was nowhere in sight. He was confused. No idea where those thoughts came from but a feeling of where they started. His thoughts told him there was little value in what they do, what they appreciated, activities they engaged in, how they talked, walked or held themselves. These thoughts fueled his emotions and dominated his being. Yet, he wanted what they were, but felt confused and afraid.

He eventually found himself circling the outside of the group. He felt stuck between both groups. It seemed like he did not belong to either group. One was easier to feel part of than the other. It felt better believing non-rubbers were stupid and useless, but there was a pull toward them. Confusion and fear...where did he want to be, what did he want out of this.

He was afraid to join, play, participate. Afraid to let people know he wanted to join, be a part of, without running the risk of failure and rejection. The cave had not taught him how to belong to them and the outside world while learning who he was. Fear and confusion dominated his being. His tightly wound self was exhausted from working overtime to maintain who he was. Knowing full well it was not what he wanted, he reluctantly returned home. What to do...no other adult to connect with. Anger festered giving birth to isolation. His only option...dream and try again tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow...one of those voices will be an Adult who cares and can point to several paths he would choose to take!

CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Security, acceptance and love...

The foundation to a higher level of engagement and performance starts early in life and, hopefully, never ends. I refer to this process as Identity Development. It is the process of identifying who you are. How do you fit in where you are....at the moment! As Parents, and Adults in Authority, we guide and support this process without a road map and, for the most part, do an awesome job.

Developing our identity starts during the early years. Kids seek security, acceptance and love. Identity Development is very dependent on our Parents or a close Adult Authority figure. Kids develop an identity that will be accepted by their parents. If Identity Development is successful, connections with like-minded peers and Adults become comfortable and healthy. They are able to connect with healthy minded Kids, Adults and large groups of Kids organized to play at school, on a team and approach Teachers in school.

If it does not work, they keep trying. If it still does not work, we end up with an angry, lonely, confused, anxious Kid who has little reason to trust Adult Authority. This worse case scenario demonstrates an identity that develops to be rigid, highly resistant to change, Adult intervention, new frames of understanding, beliefs of self and his world. The Kid exists in a world of confusion. Behavior and thinking is cautious with a highly protective shield of self.

Fortunately, most Kids find an identity that works in the family system they live in. This identity allows them to navigate outside