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# The Inner Game Of Tennis: The Classic Guide To The Mental Side Of Peak Performance



The Inner Game of Tennis

*The Classic Guide to the  
Mental Side of Peak Performance*

W. Timothy Gallwey

Foreword by Pete Carroll,  
head football coach, USC



## Synopsis

How to improve your game and discover your true potential by increasing your concentration, willpower and confidence Described by Billie Jean King as her 'tennis bible', Timothy Gallwey's multi-million bestseller, including a new introduction from acclaimed sports psychologist Geoff Beattie, has been a phenomenon for players of all abilities since it was first published in 1972. Instead of concentrating on how to improve your technique, it starts from the understanding that 'every game is composed of two parts, an outer game and an inner game'. The former is played against opponents on the court, but the latter is a battle within ourselves as we try and overcome self-doubt and anxiety. It is often won or lost before a ball has been hit. Gallwey's revolutionary approach, built on a foundation of Zen thinking and humanistic psychology, will teach you how to develop your concentration, work on your gamesmanship and help you break bad habits. You will also learn how to trust yourself on the court and how to maintain clarity of mind throughout the match, giving you a clear psychological advantage over your opponent. Whether you are an amateur or a pro, The Inner Game of Tennis is essential reading for overcoming the self-doubt, nervousness, and lapses of concentration that can keep a player from winning. It is guaranteed to change the way you play tennis forever. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As most people can guess by the title, the "inner game" of tennis is the game that takes place in the

mind of the player and is played against barriers such as nervousness, self-doubt, etc. To gain clarity on the mental problems in tennis, the book looks at the concepts of "Self 1" and "Self 2". Self 1 is the name that is given to the conscious ego-mind which likes to tell Self 2, you and your potential, how to hit the ball and play the game. Or, to put it another way, Self 1 is the "teller" and Self 2 the "doer". I found this to be an interesting idea, as we have all caught ourselves talking to ourselves or have seen others talking to themselves during a game. If you ask someone who they are talking to, they will usually say "I'm talking to myself." This, of course, implies that there are 2 "selves", "I" and "myself"- and so is born the idea of Self 1 and Self 2. Pretty astute observation in my opinion. Now according to the book, to achieve peak performance, the key is to resolve any lack of harmony between the two selves, as it is the contrary thinking of Self 1 which causes interference with the natural abilities of Self 2. This requires the learning of several inner skills, such as the art of letting go of self-judgements, letting Self 2 do the hitting, recognizing and trusting the natural learning process, and so on- which is what much of the book spends discussing. I highly recommend this book for anyone who plays tennis (or any other sport for that matter) as it does a great job in dealing with the fact that many of our difficulties in tennis are indeed mental in origin. Other helpful books for tennis players I've come across include *Treat Your Own Tennis Elbow*.

I remember clearly the first time I read this book. It was the summer before 9th grade, almost two decades ago. I'd been playing tennis for about a year. My trusty wooden racquet in tow, I had taken lessons, read every how-to book and tried to follow all the step-by-step pictures. Also, I was getting soundly beaten by friends who'd be playing longer than myself. I found the book in the library and was surprised at how thin it was. Then I noticed there were no pictures. I thought "What kind of tennis book has no pictures?" I started to read there next to the shelves and my life has never been the same. I wound up captain of my high school tennis team, all-state selection, and along the way crushed the bums who used to beat me. Now I'm almost 30 and a tennis has-been but still play a pretty good game. And whenever I go on the court (be it tennis, basketball, squash) I apply the same principles. I stop trying, stop forcing. Quiet the mind and let it happen. As others reviewers have written in this space, this book will transform your game. It will also broaden your appreciation for what the human body can do. It will enrich your life. This is a classic and indispensable work.

This book cuts right through to what all tennis players inherently know, your success on the court is directly related to what is going on in your mind. You realize that your body knows how to play, and needs no gratification or instructions by your inner critic. The less you interfere, the better your body

will perform. When your mind is quiet and trusts your body's abilities is when it has the freedom to perform. My game improved dramatically since my first match after I read the book, one technique is to occupy your mind into silence by focusing it on something. The thing I focused on was the spin of the ball as it came to me. When I began to concentrate on that, my mind was silent and focused on the ball. When I do this, the ball seems slower and bigger. All of my strokes improved by doing this. Another thing I got out of this book is to let go of all of your lessons and ideas of how to move your feet, how to hit the ball, how to angle your racket head. A match is no time to ponder these things it is a time to do them. When in a match, just let your body do what it knows how to do. Don't focus on details, just focus on the goal of making a good tennis shot. All of this is wonderful, but the best thing this book has to offer, is giving the reader the understanding of how to learn in a natural way without your inner voice giving approval or disapproval. And that is a skill that will apply to all things in your life. I can't wait to read the Inner Game of Work.

Gallwey's book was an instant classic when it first came out. It was somewhat revolutionary at the time as few sport psychology books were available for the tennis public. It still makes good bathroom reading and it still applies to a general lifestyle, not just about tennis. However, there are currently more practical mental toughness or mental zone books out there which are easier to read and use. Still Gallwey's book is interesting philosophy more than psychology as he works with your automatic and analytic selves (self 1 and 2) which conflict each other. Gallwey addresses why negativity and self-analysis inhibits the creative, automatic self. Readers become more aware of how being in the "zone" really works. Recently, there have been advances in sport psychology which pushes some of Gallwey's ideas a bit out there although he is still on the right path. I would recommend "Zennis" (Peter Spang) over the "Inner Game" since it is more practical.

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