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LEADING FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

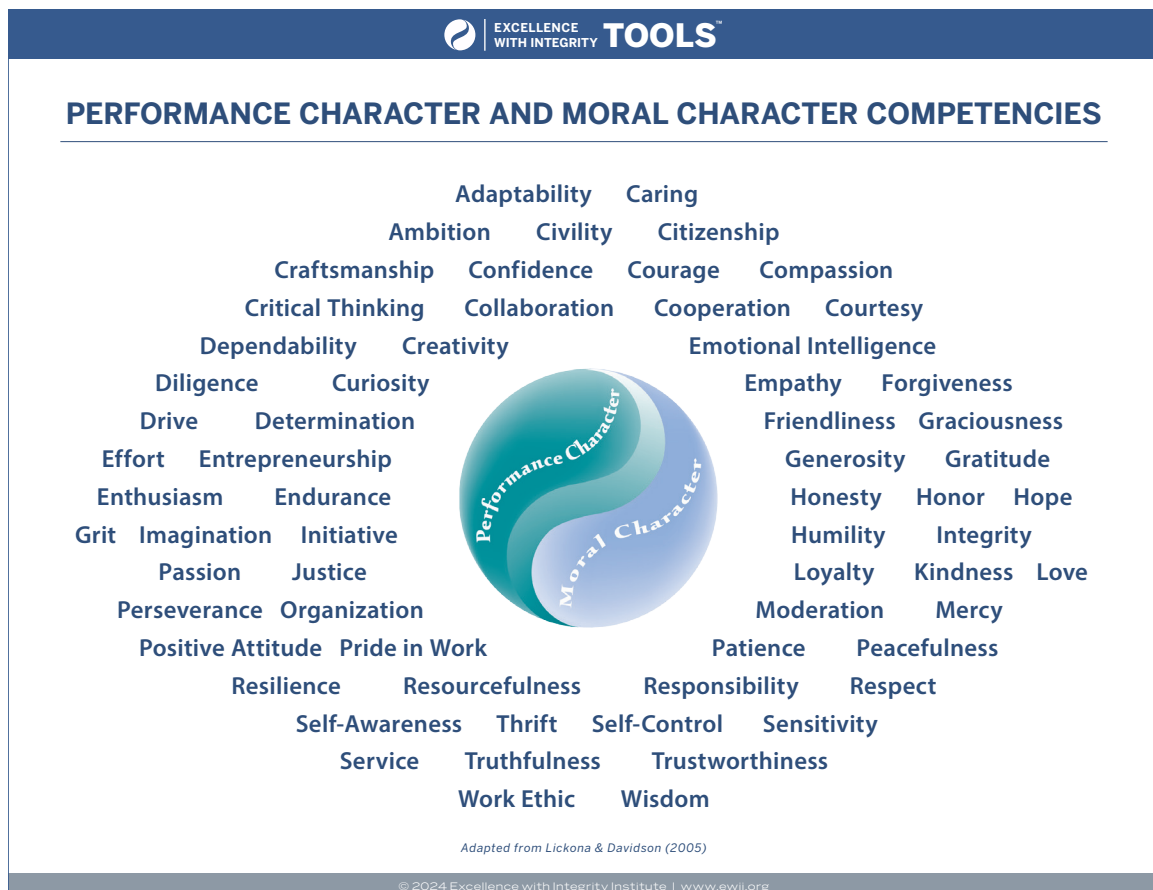Excellence with Integrity™
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EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY INTRODUCTION

THE VISION OF *EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY*

At the Excellence with Integrity Institute we believe that performance matters and that excellence matters. But we believe that these do not need to be achieved at the expense of one's integrity, or in a way that does damage to oneself or others. The vision of *Excellence with Integrity* is both the means and the end-goal. It speaks to what we do NOT want: lying, cheating, stealing, unethical, illegal, or unhealthy behaviors. It also speaks of what we DO want: growth, improvement, success, achievement, balance, joy, and harmony.

Excellence with integrity is the synergy found at the intersection between what we originally called performance character and moral character. Performance character competencies—like perseverance, work ethic, positive attitude, initiative, creativity—are those habits that enable us to achieve our goals. Moral character competencies—like caring, courage, respect, responsibility—are those habits that ensure that we achieve our goals in ethical, fair, and harmonious ways. Moral character habits help protect, grow, and balance our inner-selves and our relationships with others.

EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY TOOLS™

PERFORMANCE CHARACTER AND MORAL CHARACTER COMPETENCIES

Adaptability   Caring

Ambition   Civility   Citizenship

Craftsmanship   Confidence   Courage   Compassion

Critical Thinking   Collaboration   Cooperation   Courtesy

Dependability   Creativity   Emotional Intelligence

Diligence   Curiosity   Empathy   Forgiveness

Drive   Determination   Friendliness   Graciousness

Effort   Entrepreneurship   Generosity   Gratitude

Enthusiasm   Endurance   Honesty   Honor   Hope

Grit   Imagination   Initiative   Humility   Integrity

Passion   Justice   Loyalty   Kindness   Love

Perseverance   Organization   Moderation   Mercy

Positive Attitude   Pride in Work   Patience   Peacefulness

Resilience   Resourcefulness   Responsibility   Respect

Self-Awareness   Thrift   Self-Control   Sensitivity

Service   Truthfulness   Trustworthiness

Work Ethic   Wisdom

Performance Character

Moral Character

Adapted from Lickona & Davidson (2005)

Performance character and moral character are in certain ways interdependent. For example, we need perseverance to ensure our integrity, we need curiosity to experience empathy, we need critical thinking to apply fairness, we need honesty to underlie our enthusiasm, we need patience to manage our drive, we need loyalty to direct our effort, we need diligence to sustain citizenship, we need resilience to maintain civility, and so on.

The fundamental quest to achieve *excellence with integrity* involves navigating the balance, synergy and/or harmony between moral and performance character. Excellence with Integrity is achieved by working hard and smart, by effectively managing emotions and energy, and by maintaining the right perspective. It is achieved by pushing oneself but doing so in a healthy and sustainable way. It is achieved through harmony between our drive for achievement and our need for relationships. In organizations, it is achieved by pursuing the team goals while seeking harmony and balance between the intrapersonal dynamics within oneself and the interpersonal dynamics between and amongst team members.

Mastery of this complex set of relationships is complex and dynamic and thus achieving excellence with integrity is not the same for everyone, everywhere, and at all times. So, where we might conceive of the excellence with integrity as a single standard, it is actually a singular vision with a multitude of pathways and end-points.

Performance character, moral character, intrapersonal, interpersonal—for short excellence, integrity, teamwork & community, and growth & balance—these four domains represent the foundations of a dynamic process for achieving excellence with integrity.

EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY TOOLS™

OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE — A SYNERGY OF:

Excellence
Work Ethic
Goal Achievement
Problem Solving
Innovation

Integrity
Fairness
Respect
Responsibility
Courage

Team Development
Civility
Leadership
Communication
Collaboration

Self Development
Growth Mindset
Engagement
Resilience
Stress Management

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We break these four domains down further into specific competencies around which we focus our development and assessment. These competencies are drawn from our field research and empirical knowledge about factors that contribute to organizational success, or detract from it when missing or underdeveloped.

EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY **TOOLS**™

ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES

EXCELLENCE

- WORK ETHIC
- EFFORT
- ATTITUDE
- DELIBERATE PRACTICE
- GRIT/ENDURANCE
- ASPIRATION/HIGH STAN-DARDS
- GOAL ACHIEVEMENT
- COACHABILITY
- PROBLEM SOLVING
- CRITICAL THINKING
- INNOVATION & CREATIVITY

INTEGRITY

- HONESTY
- FAIRNESS
- EQUITY
- JUSTICE
- ETHICAL COMPETENCY
- HUMILITY
- RESPECT
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- LOYALTY
- RESPONSIBILITY
- COURAGE

TEAMWORK

- LEADERSHIP
- CIVILITY
- COMMUNICATION
- INCLUSION
- EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
- PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS
- OPEN & FLEXIBLE MINDSET
- PRINCIPLED NEGOTIATION
- COLLABORATION
- TEAM-FIRST MINDSET
- CITIZENSHIP

SELF-DEVELOPMENT

- SELF-AWARENESS
- SELF-MANAGEMENT
- PRIORITIES/TIME MANAGEMENT
- STRESS MANAGEMENT
- RESILIENCE
- GROWTH MINDSET
- ENGAGEMENT
- PRUDENCE
- HARMONY
- GRATITUDE
- LIFE PURPOSE

THE OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE APPROACH TO ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY

Thousands of years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that "virtue is the mean between excess and deficiency." This age-old wisdom matters to us today because we would argue that when it comes to achieving *Excellence with Integrity* it is all about finding *the middle ground between too much and too little*.

INADEQUATE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	OPTIMAL
Too little or too much Detracts from/prevents growth	Needs increased focus and attention	Just right for desired goals, person, and circumstances

Once you have identified the moral and performance character values that animate your vision, captivate your attention, and motivate your actions, what then must be determined is what exactly optimal looks like in action, in your context, in most common circumstances faced. Achieving **Excellence with Integrity** through the **Optimal Performance Approach** is all about putting your values in action to the right degree for the circumstances and the expectations. Achieving **Excellence with Integrity** is about the right relationship—with ourselves, with our colleagues or teammates, and with our circumstances. Achieving **Excellence with Integrity** is all about choosing the better, choosing that which leads to positive outcomes in both the short and long term, for each individual, and for the team or organization they are a part of.

In the real world putting our values into action defies any one perfect response. What's the right amount or type of communication, honesty, courage, toughness? The answer, of course, is that it depends. Finding optimal is all about the process of establishing high expectations that are also aligned with the circumstances as well as differences in knowledge, ability, and sensibility. That's why we argue: **forget perfect, find optimal**. What's acceptable, what's unacceptable? In most situations, the answer is: it depends. Optimal can—and must be defined—but it is done so by the teams and organizations and their leaders. Also, it is important to emphasize that we are not talking about moral absolutes like lying, cheating, stealing, or harming others, where right isn't situationally defined.

On the continuum from inadequate to optimal, it is essential to define what optimal looks, sounds, and feels like for **your expectations**, for **the circumstances**, and given each person's **capabilities and sensibilities**. When our performance is inadequate it is not that we are a bad person, but that our performance simply wasn't good enough. When our performance

was close to ideal it is not that we are perfect, it is simply that, all things considered, our performance was just about right for the situation and the expectations. Finding optimal is a continuous, ongoing, never-ending process. Individuals who consistently find optimal are those we might consider to be "high-character, high-performance individuals"—they have the habit of putting values in action to the right degree in the circumstances they face.

OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE BEHAVIORS AND PRACTICES

In the book, *Switch: How to change things when change is hard*, one of the main arguments of the authors Chip and Dan Heath is that "**what looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity about what to do better or do differently**." Too often we simply assume that people are resistant, unwilling or unable to make changes in their behaviors. When in fact change is more likely to occur when there is clarity about what to do differently or better. What individuals need is the *what* and the *how*: WHAT should I do differently or better? HOW do I learn to implement this habit or skill in an optimal way amid the real world challenges and circumstances I face?

This is where optimal performance behavior indicators come in. *Optimal Performance Behaviors* provide clarity regarding what the vision and values look, sound, and feel like in action, about what to do better or differently. They represent organization's desired values broken down, refined, and contextualized for particular circumstances and individual capabilities and sensibilities. *Optimal Performance Practices* define optimal expectations for leaders, mentors, or coaches.

Since the factors and conditions for human performance are continuously changing, the quest for optimal performance is ongoing and never-ending—for leaders and those they lead (or mentors and mentees). Consider how the performance capacity of human beings is continuously changing. Even if we are talking about the "same person," in any given time period they are getting stronger or weaker, on any given day they are more or less focused, full of energy or tired, calm or anxious. Some days we are healthy, patient, and focused. Other days we are tired, mad, scared, or frustrated. And, just as human capacity is constantly changing and fluctuating, so too are the circumstances or conditions for performance. Expectations change, pressures grow or diminish, leadership style and strategy changes— all of which impacts optimal performance. Thus, whether we are talking about time management, honesty, hard work, toughness, leadership, communication—or any other competency—what defines optimal will continuously change.

In any and every situation, we must learn the habit of finding optimal. This isn't easy and requires effective leaders and mentors because finding optimal is often not simply choosing between good and bad options, but rather choosing the better course between two good things. For example, working hard, but to the right degree for the circumstances;

communicating the truth, but doing so in a way that is right for circumstances and persons involved. Thus, achieving optimal is an imperfect art and a never-ending process.

No performer in any environment we have worked with has EVER gotten so good at this process that they no longer miss the mark or fall short. Total mastery doesn't happen. People can master the mindset, process, or approach for finding optimal, but nobody we've ever worked with has perfectly mastered the skill of things like time management, communication, stress and energy management, self-awareness, work ethic, life balance, etc. These are not things that you master once and then move on. The real world implementation of these skills defies mastery. And, thus, our mantra: *Forget perfect, find optimal*. We must continuously seek new knowledge and new ways of being that get us closer to optimal. Falling short of optimal around any of your indicators is not an indication that you have "bad people" or a "bad group". Rather, falling short of optimal usually means that you have high standards, limited resources, and ever-changing circumstances (of course, it might mean that you are not trying for optimal).

LEADING FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE

The vision of *Excellence with Integrity* requires individuals who have self-awareness, perseverance, flexibility, and a relentless commitment to continuous improvement. It also requires the support and challenge of leaders, mentors, or coaches. We like to think about people pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps, but most often human excellence occurs in the context of a supportive community, and under the guidance of qualified leaders or mentors. Elite performers almost always have trusted coaches to guide them. Similarly, there is a reason that most self-help programs and approaches draw heavily on the support of others. Even the most driven, most disciplined, most honest person has blind spots and weak moments.

Optimal performance requires participants who are *coachable*, and leaders/mentors who embrace their role as coach. Leading for optimal performance is so essential because the quest for achieving *Excellence with Integrity* is a never-ending, dynamic, and difficult process. In our experience even those with great natural ability and capacity require coaching to maximize their potential. In more than 20 years of applied work we simply have no evidence that individuals are born with optimal performance giftedness or naturally mature into optimal performers. They must be coached/mentored, and they must be committed to a process of continuous improvement. And while it's somewhat of an art to find the right approach for the circumstances and individuals, there is also a research-based best practice science to shaping optimal performance habits.

LEADING THROUGH CULTURE AND CHARACTER
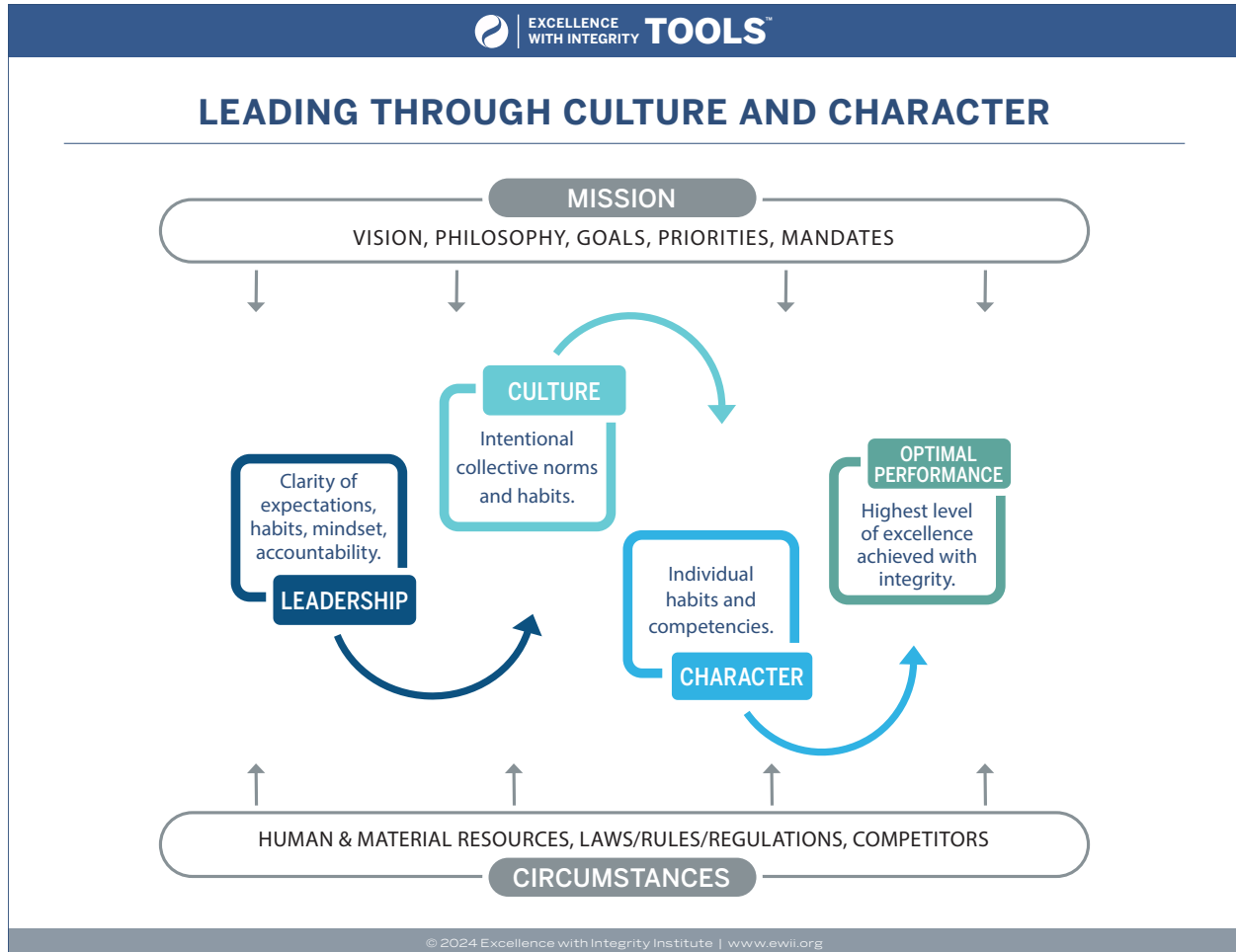
Drawn from extensive research and applied practice, our *Coaching for Optimal Performance* process lays out four essential practices that together lead to achieving optimal performance goals: Clarity, Habit, Accountability and Mindset. Implemented together, these practices create an interactive synergy that underlies consistent optimal performance.

Finding optimal using these practices occurs within a specific context and set of circumstances. Optimal isn't the same thing everywhere and for everyone. Thus, leading for optimal performance is informed by and determined relative to:

- the unique organizational mission and values,
- the team's specific goals and objectives,
- the capabilities and sensibilities of team members, and
- the ever-changing day-to-day circumstances faced.

OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE COACHING/MENTORING—FOR CHARACTER AND CULTURE

Many people tell us that they may not have used these words, but these four practices—CLARITY, HABITS, ACCOUNTABILITY, MINDSET—are familiar. The process is obviously more dynamic—and more complex—when implemented, but generally it seems familiar and intuitive.

Here's what's essential about the use of this coaching/mentoring approach: it's *applying* these practices to the CHARACTER and CULTURE needed for optimal performance within your core mission. Whatever your core mission (educating young people, winning games, or running a successful business), focus on Clarity, Habits, Accountability, and Mindset NEEDED FOR it. No matter the setting or goals, our experience shows that there is always a character and culture component that acts as the catalyst for the core mission. So the key is to focus on the values and skills that are missing, or need to be developed to a higher degree, which could be toughness, communication, time management, stress management, focus, leadership, conflict management, or any host of others.

Whether it is toughness, communication, leadership, integrity, or responsibility, leaders desperately need rigorous, real-world knowledge and strategies about them. The Institute's *Excellence with Integrity™* Tools and Strategies help ensure that leaders have the know-how to coach up these character and culture skills with confidence and consistency. Together, technical expertise along with character and culture expertise is the winning combination that ensures *Excellence with Integrity*.

THE CHAMP PROCESS

For shorthand we often refer to the Optimal Performance Leadership process simply as the "CHAMP" Approach: *C*larity, *H*abit, *A*ccountability and *M*indset leading to Optimal Performance.

EXCELLENCE WITH INTEGRITY **TOOLS**™

Clarity, Habit, Accountability, Mindset → Performance
LEADERSHIP PRACTICES FOR SHAPING CULTURE

CLARITY
clear specific expectations for context, resources, abilities

HABIT
intentional, intensive, focused practice, real-world simulation

Performance

ACCOUNTABILITY
support, challenge, reflection for growth

MINDSET
mental preparation, emotional toughness, focus, resilience

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CLARITY of Expectations and Communication

A famous quote says, "Communication works for those who work at it." Leadership for optimal performance requires setting, communicating, and reinforcing clear optimal performance expectations. And, it's a never-ending process. Clarity of expectations and communication for optimal performance includes the following elements:

1) **Identifying the needed value, skill, or competency.** Whatever your core mission and goal, there are essential values, skills, or competencies NEEDED FOR optimal performance. The first step is identifying the essential one(s) that are

missing altogether or need to be developed to a higher degree to achieve core mission and objectives.

2) **Setting clear optimal performance expectations.** Translate the targeted goal or value into concise, clear, concrete *do this, not that*-type action statements that make it clear what the expected behavior looks, sounds and feels like.

3) **Contextualizing expectations for the specific situation, event or circumstances**: clarify the behavior indicators for the current or upcoming circumstances.

4) **Clarifying expectation for particular roles.** It's essential to clarify the above behavior indicators for the particular individuals on your team, based on their current role within the team and their particular capabilities/sensibilities.

5) **Continuously clarifying, contextualizing, reiterating and adjusting expectations as needed.** These steps must be engaged in continuously, not simply at the outset or conclusion of a year, or a project, or other long-term cycle.

Whatever value, skill or practice you have identified as essential—confidence, integrity, etc.—optimal performance development begins with establishing shared expectations *for the group* and *for each individual* (for your role on the team, for a new team member, a veteran team member, the team leader, etc.). This means being specific and concrete when clarifying expectations around *the most common circumstances currently faced by the group* (not in general, but for *this* time period, for *this* group, for *this* setting or situation, etc.).

If, for example, a core value of your team/organization is honesty, identifying it as such is a good starting point. But it's not enough. This value must always be contextualized within your current circumstances and performance expectations. Honesty, for example, isn't one set of expectations; it's actually many different applications. Optimal performance requires clearly setting and communicating important big picture expectations (overall for the organization or team, for this year, etc). It also requires setting and communicating urgent, mission critical expectations (for today, for this project, for this situation).

Contextualizing for the circumstances is essential because what honesty (or any other value needed for optimal performance) looks like when we're under the pressure of the current situation, is likely different than how we might define what it looks, sounds, and feels like in a big picture view of it. Contextualizing in terms of the most current understanding of our current and desired state is the core of setting and communicating clear expectations for optimal performance.

HABIT Development Through Targeted Practice

Habit is formed not so much by knowledge about a skill, as it is by an experience of a targeted skill. Habit is achieved through targeted practice, or what the expertise literature refers to as "deliberate" practice.

Habits are formed from the creation of intense and intentional real-world practice simulations. These simulations begin, as we have argued previously, with clarity of expectations—crystal clear models of what the skills and values look like optimally implemented for the current circumstances and expectations. Deliberate practice is often accompanied by mental training and preparation, the mindset development that visualizes what one can expect and a plan for response. But then one must engage in practice simulations that are equal to, or greater than what one is likely to face in the real world. This practice must be monitored and mentees must be given timely, growth-focused feedback that includes praise and polish (e.g., "this was good because…; this could be better by doing… or not doing…").

The development of habit through targeted practice comes from concentrating on growth and improvement of our existing skills, but also by focusing on adding new skills and developing deficient ones. It comes from practicing not only the things we like, but also the things that don't come easily and that we're not good at. Habits are formed through intense and intentional practice that is more challenging than the "real" challenge. This requires that we deliberately design and monitor the quality of our practice. Habits are formed through consistent and persistent practice done over time.

To summarize, Optimal Performance leadership for HABIT includes the following:

1) **Engaging in deliberate practice of essential skills.** Whatever those skills might be (i.e., honesty, toughness, communication, stress management, etc.), knowledge about them isn't enough. It takes deliberate practice.

2) **Intentionally creating real-world practice simulations.** For a habit to be formed, the practice of the skills must be as close as possible to what will be faced in reality.

3) **Increasing intensity of deliberate practice.** Keeping score, keeping time, tracking progress—monitoring growth is essential.

ACCOUNTABILITY Through Support and Challenge

Expectations have been set. Conditions for deliberate practice simulation have been established. Now come the support and challenge needed to ensure that expectations are met—and course correction when they are not. Accountability through support and challenge is one of the hallmarks of effective leadership for optimal performance. Clearly, great performers in every walk of life hold themselves accountable for meeting their standards and goals. But at some point all great performers require the support and challenge of others—especially around those areas where we struggle.

Accountability isn't simply someone making sure you do what you said you would, but in the ideal it also involves teaching, correcting, and inspiring. Accountability coaches/mentors balance honesty and respect in a way that pushes you and leaves no question about where you stand, but without embarrassing, insulting, or demotivating. Accountability through support and challenge not only points out what you've done wrong, but provides the "do better-do differently" feedback that is specific, tactical, and replicable.

Accountability through a 180-360 feedback process promotes honest self-reflection and ensures that the individual leaves with a sense of what to do better or differently to more optimally meet the standards. The danger of isolated self-evaluation can be over-estimating our strengths; however, it can also be underestimating our strengths and over-playing our weaknesses. Goal partners, accountability pairs, small groups, and the like are needed to create a culture of trust and truth where self-evaluation is healthy and constructive.

Optimal performance requires clarity about what to do, how to do it, along with chances to practice doing it—and a deep understanding of WHY the new and different way is the better way. Why? Why should I do it that way? When I know what to do, I have practised how to do it, and I understand why to do it, then I can instinctively react when faced with a similar situation. Accountability requires both challenge ("that's not good enough") and support ("here's what you need to do better or differently").

To summarize, Optimal Performance leadership for ACCOUNTABILITY includes the following:

1) **Providing support and challenge on the development of essential skills.**

2) **Providing constructive criticism and "do better-do differently" feedback that is specific, tactical and replicable.** Accountability isn't simply punishment. Creating a culture of continuous improvement through constructive criticism and coachability is all about the feedback for growth needed to improve.

3) **Using performance data for accountability, teaching, correcting, and inspiring growth.** Real performance data is essential. It provides the path to growth and improvement towards individual and collective potential.

Mental Preparation and MINDSET Formation

Mindset is all about the mental preparation practices designed to develop focused, tough-minded individuals who understand and accept that reaching our shared goals will not be a straight line. Mental preparation practices are designed to emotionally visualize likely situations, to frame and reframe mistakes and missteps, and to focus on controlling what's controllable—and letting go of what's not within our control.

In her book, *Mindset*, Carol Dweck presents the research on the importance of having "growth-mindset" for thriving in every aspect of human development and performance. A growth-mindset is a way of viewing new challenges, seeing them as opportunities to learn, grow, and improve. If we have a growth-mindset we believe that in and through any new, different, or difficult situation, we can learn, grow, and improve in a way that leaves us stronger and wiser, with new skills and strength of character than we would ever have developed without the experience.

Dweck shows in her research how the "growth-mindset" differs from a "fixed-mindset." It's the fixed-mindset that causes most of our fear and anxiety. A fixed-mindset is one where you tell yourself that you can't do it, because you don't have what it takes. With a fixed-mindset you tell yourself: "Some people are born with the ability to do this, but not me." With a fixed-mindset you come to think that your potential for learning and improvement is fixed, set, and therefore you are not able to grow, change, and improve.

Mindset is essential for optimal performance because nobody is going to achieve perfect mastery. In essence, optimal performance approach is all about growing, learning, improving, failing faster, and making adjustments in pursuit of optimal. Expectations have been set for the circumstances, for the goals, and for the various roles of team members. Only rarely in the real world do things go as planned. Thus, the mindset for optimal performance is one of visualizing prior to entering the situation, and preparing mentally to make the adjustment, to grow and let go, to focus on what's in our control.

A growth mindset approach is also strengthened and enhanced by emotional toughness. Author Jim Loehr describes the importance of emotional toughness indicators like *emotional flexibility*, *emotional responsiveness*, *emotional resiliency*, and *emotional strength*, which contribute to the overall mindset needed for optimal performance. These emotional toughness indicators include being aware of our emotions and choosing positive responses, being able to take a punch emotionally and bounce back quickly, and using past experiences to develop high tolerance for hard times, tough situations, and difficult odds.

Our goal as optimal performance leaders should be to use the experiences and challenges of everyday living to stretch and strengthen the muscles needed for the challenges faced, and as preparation for the ones we face in the future. We're looking to stretch and push those we lead just enough: too much and you get injury, too little and you get weakness.

You're a strength coach, using every single experience of life to develop inner strength and capacity they need to survive and thrive.

To summarize, Optimal Performance leadership for MINDSET includes the following:

1) **Developing a *forget perfect-find optimal*, *grow-and-let-go* growth mindset.** Optimal performance is all about growth, improvement, and the pursuit of our goals and expectations.

2) **Visualizing situation response scenarios.** Mentors prepare mentees mentally on what they will face and how to respond, to visualize success and response to failure and setback.

3) **Continuously refocusing on controllables, reframing challenges, and emphasizing quick recovery.** Mindset development focuses and refocuses continuously, seeking to efficiently manage emotions, energy, and failure.

CONCLUSION

Whether you're a coach, an educator, a parent, a supervisor or a CEO, mentoring for optimal performance is an essential skill set. Leading for optimal performance requires Clear Expectations, Mental Preparation, Deliberate Practice, and Support and Challenge—*Clarity*, *Mindset*, *Habit*, and *Accountability*, which together lead to *Optimal Performance*.