

# 21 Keys to a Positive Self-Image

*How you see yourself determines  
who you are*



By Kevin Willis, MGCP  
[www.HockeyTough.com](http://www.HockeyTough.com)



*21 Keys to a Positive Self Image*

## Table of Contents

<b>Self-image</b> .....	<b>7</b>
What affects self-image? .....	7
Do you have low self-image? .....	8
Assessing your self-image .....	9
<b>Key #1 – Self image unlocks personality</b> .....	<b>13</b>
How did I develop poor self-image?.....	13
Breaking-free of self-destructive thought patterns.....	14
Exercise for success – recognizing negative thoughts .....	15
<b>Key #2 – Be the person you want to be</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Are you who you want to be? Self-assessment .....	16
The good news.....	18
Exercise for Success – making another choice .....	18
<b>Key #3 – Programming your competitive mind for success</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Reprogramming your competitive mind .....	20
Exercise for Success – acting as if.....	21
<b>Key #4 – Turn failure into success</b> .....	<b>22</b>
What do you believe about yourself and your game? .....	22
Exercise for success.....	23
<b>Key #5 – Use your imagination to drive your success</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Act as if.....	25
Visualize .....	26
Exercise for success – visualize your way to success .....	27
<b>Key #6 – Make obstacles into opportunities</b> .....	<b>28</b>

An attitude of gratitude .....	28
Exercise for success – finding the opportunities .....	29
<b>Key #7 – Identify and eliminate false beliefs .....</b>	<b>30</b>
What are your false beliefs about yourself? .....	30
Eliminating false beliefs .....	30
Exercise for success – turning around false beliefs .....	31
<b>Key #8 – Recognizing stress .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Responses to stress .....	33
Identifying your stressors .....	34
<i>Recognizing stress</i> .....	35
<i>Identify the source of your stress</i> .....	35
Exercise for success – identifying your stressors .....	36
<b>Key #9 – Releasing stress through relaxation .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Relaxation techniques .....	37
Exercises for success – staying calm and centered .....	38
Learn to relax .....	40
<b>Key #10 – Setting goals for success .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Effective goal setting .....	41
Exercise for success – setting your own goals .....	42
<b>Key #11 – Overcoming procrastination .....</b>	<b>43</b>
What are you waiting for? .....	43
Exercise for success – getting started with your goals .....	44
<b>Key #12 – Maximize Your Progress .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Keeping yourself moving .....	45
Exercise for success – building momentum .....	46
<b>Key #13 – The courage to change .....</b>	<b>47</b>
The willingness to change .....	47
Are you courageous? .....	48
Exercise for success – the courage to make changes .....	49

<b>Key #14 – Self-confidence.....</b>	<b>50</b>
Building self-confidence .....	50
Exercise for success – a more self-confident you .....	51
<b>Key #15 – Growing self-acceptance .....</b>	<b>52</b>
Knowing what you can and can't change .....	52
Exercise for success – empowering self-acceptance.....	53
<b>Key #16 – Dealing with frustration .....</b>	<b>54</b>
Choosing to let it go .....	54
<i>Strategy #1 – the 3 Rs</i> .....	54
<i>Strategy #2 – Relax</i> .....	55
<i>Strategy #3 – Redirect</i> .....	55
Exercise for success – evaluating negative emotions.....	55
<b>Key #17 – Dealing with insecurity &amp; uncertainty.....</b>	<b>56</b>
Changing insecurity to security .....	56
Exercise for success – making secure statements.....	57
<b>Key #18 – Healing emotional scars .....</b>	<b>58</b>
Why are you still carrying it? .....	59
Exercise for success – examining your emotional scars .....	60
<b>Key # 19 – Gaining strength from your weaknesses .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Using weakness as a source of strength.....	61
Exercise for success – an honest self-evaluation.....	62
<b>Key #20 – Be happy .....</b>	<b>63</b>
Don't worry – be happy .....	63
Exercise for success – get happy.....	64
<b>Key #21 – Be a winner! .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>About Kevin Willis.....</b>	<b>66</b>



*21 Keys to a Positive Self Image*

## Self-image

How do you see yourself? This is the basis of self-image. Your view of yourself is made up of three parts.

- **Self-image** is how you see yourself in the mental mirror.
- **Self-esteem** is how much you like the person you see in your mental mirror.
- **Self-confidence** is how strongly you believe in your ability to execute a specific task or skill.

The focus of this workbook is self-image, and it is the sum of the thoughts, feelings and beliefs you have about yourself. It is important to have a positive self-image – not only in hockey, but also in life. Negative self-image brings about self-limitation, often in the form of self-fulfilling prophecy.

What you believe about yourself is typically what you manifest in your life. Your self-image leads to expectations that you have for yourself, and it affects the goals that you set. A limited self-image leads to limitation of success. Likewise, a positive and strong self-image can lead to achieving your full potential.

### What affects self-image?

There are a number of things that can affect your self-image – both positively and negatively, including:

- **The thoughts that you have about yourself.** For example, if you think, *I am just not very smart*, you are sending a powerful

negative message to yourself. It is likely you will perform up to expectations.

- **Beliefs you have about your skills, abilities, worth and value.** For instance, if you believe that you have the skills to get the job done on the ice, then your self-image is likely strong and healthy.
- **Feelings you have about yourself.** If you are constantly frustrated with yourself, for example, it is likely that your self-image will suffer.
- **Your internal critic.** That nagging little voice that negatively critiques your every move on the ice can harm your self-image.
- **The situations in which you put yourself.** If you put yourself in situations that are well beyond your skill level, your self-image will likely suffer. If, on the other hand, you place yourself in situations where you can perform consistently well, your self-image will be high.

### Do you have low self-image?

People with poor self-image:

- Often rely on how they are doing in the present moment as a means of determining how themselves.
- Need positive external experiences to counteract the negative feelings and thoughts that constantly plague them.
- Feel that good feelings and successes are temporary.

People with healthy self-image:

- Accurately asses themselves.
- Accept and value themselves unconditionally and without judgment.
- Can realistically acknowledge both their strengths and their limitations.

### Assessing your self-image

Some questions to ask yourself....

**Part A**

1. Do you require social approval?
  
2. Do you only feel good about yourself when you are hearing positive feedback and compliments from others?
  
3. Do you worry about how others see you?
  
4. Are you easily influenced by the comments of others?
  
5. Do you struggle to separate you as a person from you as a hockey player?

	Always	Some-times	Never
1. Do you require social approval?			
2. Do you only feel good about yourself when you are hearing positive feedback and compliments from others?			
3. Do you worry about how others see you?			
4. Are you easily influenced by the comments of others?			
5. Do you struggle to separate you as a person from you as a hockey player?			



	Always	Some-times	Never
6. Do you live hockey 24/7/365?			
7. Do you replay a poor performance over and over in your head?			
8. Do you give yourself negative labels?			
9. Do you blame others for your situation or rationalize that outside circumstances are causing all of the problems?			
10. Do you constantly compare yourself to other players who you think are better than you?			
11. Do you get down on yourself a lot?			
12. Do you usually think you're not good enough?			
13. Do you feel you have many flaws?			

**Part B**

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Some-times</b>	<b>Always</b>
11. Do you feel you are a worthwhile person?			
12. Do you think you have strong hockey skills in one or more areas?			
13. Do you like who you see when you look in the mirror?			
14. Do you feel you are well-liked?			
15. Do you feel good about yourself no matter how you play?			
16. Do you feel like you fit in?			

- If you have more than three checks in the first column, you may have low self-image
- If you have more than five checks in the second column, you may have low self-image.



Even if you don't think you have low self-image, this workbook is for you. Everyone's self-image can benefit from a tune-up now and then.

Let's start by defining your self-image. Circle the words below that you think apply to you.

Well-educated	Mean	Perfectionistic	Thoughtful	Rude	Self-accepting
Inspiring	Timid	Caring	Stubborn	Determined	Ambitious
Warm-hearted	Loyal	Generous	Flexible	Overbearing	Insightful
Impatient	Insecure	Reserved	Unreliable	Humorous	Curious
Hardworking	Proud	Impatient	Affectionate	Integrity	Independent
Lazy	Cheerful	Unselfish	Arrogant	Assertive	Supportive
Stingy	Sensitive	Sensitive	Deceitful	Persistent	Intense
Moody	Dominant	Creative	Honest	Courageous	Indecisive
Outgoing	Stubborn	Moody	Obnoxious	Enthusiastic	Optimistic
Shy	Competent	Self-conscious	Ambitious	Resourceful	Driven
Kind	Greedy	Innovative	Intelligent	Sincere	Selfish
Reliable	Sloppy	Rebellious	Dishonest	Accepting	Realistic
Easy-going	Open-minded	Cautious	Polite	Sympathetic	Orderly
Patient		Satisfied	Confrontational	Trusting	Ignorant

## Key #1 – Self image unlocks personality

We all act in a way that is consistent with our self-image, whether that self-image is accurate or not. Just because you believe that you always choke in games doesn't necessarily mean it is true. But, your very belief in the statement, "I choke in games," makes you one who chokes in games. With that thought and belief, you just created your own reality.

You have a mental blueprint inside of you. This is the collection of thoughts and beliefs you have about yourself. And they may not be accurate. This mental blueprint is made up of your past experiences, the reactions that others have had to you, and reactions you've had to yourself. But whether or not this blueprint is an accurate picture of who you are hardly matters, because *you believe it to be so*. And in believing it to be so, you act consistently in a manner that continues to support the vision you have of yourself.

If your self-image is a poor one, you are caught in a trap, and you may not even realize it.

### How did I develop poor self-image?

It's not something that anyone sets out to do, but it happens, nonetheless. Human beings have a propensity to focus on the negative and give greater weight to negative things that have occurred while downplaying the positive. This is the birthplace of poor self-image.

In identifying with failure and disappointment, you are sending your psyche powerful messages. It's easy to get stuck in this way of thinking. Ask yourself:

- Do I focus more on my failures than my successes?
- When I experience disappointment, am I able to move beyond it?
- When something goes wrong, do I always blame myself?
- Do my mistakes play over and over in my head?
- Do you personalize losses and disappointments? For instance, if something doesn't work out, do you think, "It just didn't work out," or are you more likely to think, "Boy, I really screwed that one up."

If any of these things sound familiar to you, then there is a good chance you are setting yourself up for poor self-image.

### **Breaking-free of self-destructive thought patterns**

Just because this is your current way of thinking doesn't mean that you are stuck in the trap forever. You can break free of the negative thought responses that are breaking down your self-image. Here are some steps you can take to adjust your thinking:

- Realize that how you think about yourself affects how you behave and perform.
- Visualize yourself as a success. When you catch yourself in a negative thought pattern, immediately reverse the thought and visualize success instead.
- Identify your false beliefs about yourself. And then change them to positive images.
- Set goals that will lead to your success.



- Focus on those aspects of your personality that will make you a success.
- When you do have a negative experience, learn from it and use it as a means of propelling you on to greater heights.

### **Exercise for success – recognizing negative thoughts**

Keep a small pad that will fit in your pocket and a pen or pencil with you this week. Every time you catch yourself thinking a negative thought or responding in ways that will harm your self-image, immediately pull out your pad and write down the negative thought. Now re-write that thought to a positive one.

## Key #2 – Be the person you want to be

Who are you, and how does it measure up against who you want to be, not only as a hockey player, but as a person? Let's do a quick assessment.

### Are you who you want to be? Self-assessment

Take a look at the adjectives that you used to describe yourself on page 13. Are there words circled there that you don't want to have circled? Write them in the space below.

Using the same list – are there any that you would like to circle but didn't? Write them here.



Which items that are circled on the list are in line with who you want to be? Write them in the space below.

Are there any things that weren't on the list that you'd like to add? Write them in the space below.

Now take a look at your lists. What is stopping you from being willing or able to describe yourself that way? What is keeping you stuck using the adjectives about yourself that you don't like?

## The good news

Although you may currently feel trapped by your self-image, you don't need to be. In order to be able to be who you want to be and to describe yourself with the adjectives you have chosen, you only need to follow a simple formula.

***Choose to be that which you want to be.***

That's right. It's up to you and it is a choice. If your self-image is poor and you don't like how you appear to yourself, then choose something else. In the self-assessment above, you have laid out a blueprint for your self-image.

What's keeping you from being the hockey player you choose to be? You are trapped in a negative belief system about yourself. But you're not alone. This is a common issue faced by not only athletes, but by human beings as a species. We are trapped in belief systems that are true only because we choose to make them true. And the answer to correcting it lies in simply choosing something else.

## Exercise for Success – making another choice

Are you ready to choose something else in order to become someone else? This week, focus on the blueprint you developed for your self-image in this chapter. Pick the top ten adjectives that you'd like to describe yourself that you don't currently use, and write one affirmation for each. For instance, if you would like to become "ambitious", you might write an affirmation such as:

*I am an ambitious hockey player. I strive to be the best player I can be.*

Say or write each of your affirmations every day.

## Key #3 – Programming your competitive mind for success

While you are starting to become aware of the thought patterns that may be keeping you trapped in a poor self-image, there are many thoughts and beliefs that go on beneath the surface – subconsciously.

Think about when you are on the ice. What is happening in your brain? Are you aware of the thoughts that flash through it, or are you on auto-pilot, blissfully unaware that your brain may be sabotaging you? Let's call all of the functions that your brain goes through during a game your **competitive mind**.

Your competitive mind takes over and runs the show whenever you are playing in a game. It is that part of you that consciously thinks about your next move and all of the elements of your game. It is also that part of you that processes everything that happens during the game and assigns value judgments to them. A **value judgment** is a thought process that occurs where you decide whether something is good, bad, or otherwise, and also assigns blame. This is something that happens in your competitive mind whether you are aware of it or not.

The value judgments that you make within your competitive mind are programming your self-image. Each message that your competitive mind receives is saved and downloaded into your self-image. Every time you apply a label to yourself – or listen to a label that someone else applies to you, you are programming more information into your self-image. The more negative input that you allow to be loaded into your competitive mind, the more your self-image will suffer,

which leads to poor performance, which leads to more negative input.....it becomes a causal loop.

Your job, then, is to break free of this loop and change the data that is being programmed by your competitive mind.

### Reprogramming your competitive mind

So, how can you break free of this loop? By consciously interrupting the negative thought patterns that are feeding into your competitive mind. Again, the answer starts with awareness. Pay attention and be aware of the value judgments that you make as you make them.

As soon as you catch yourself making a negative value judgment, do the following:

- **Cancel the negative value judgment.** As soon as you catch yourself making a negative value judgment, stop yourself. You can use a phrase such as “No!” or “Stop!” to remind yourself that your negative value judgment has no place in your mindset.
- **Replace the negative value judgment with a positive one.** For instance, if you find yourself thinking, “I always choke in games,” change it to, “I perform extremely well – my defensive play makes a unique contribution to the team.
- **Affirm your new statement.** As soon as you are able, write down your new mindset somewhere and affirm it to yourself daily.
- **Act as if.** In other words, “fake it ‘til you make it.” So if you are affirming that you are confident in games, but don’t yet feel that you are, act confident. Adopt a confident posture, facial



expression and tone. Soon, you'll be feeling as confident as you act.

### **Exercise for success – acting as if**

Take a look at your ten affirmations. Pick your top one or two. Begin acting as if you are already there. How will you act? How will you feel? What types of things will you do or say? Use the space below to write how you will act when you are acting as if.

## Key #4 – Turn failure into success

Failure is part of the game. It is also a part of life. We can't be successful 100% of the time, as much as we'd like to. Failure, however, can be instructive. Properly channeled, you can turn your weaknesses and failures into your strengths and successes.

Having a failure mindset is something that has been programmed and learned. A **failure mindset** is a belief structure that causes you to believe you will not be successful. Failure mindsets often function independently of the truth or reality. In other words, if you think you can't, then you are probably right – but that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to live with the outcomes of that mindset. Often, your failures are nothing more than falsely programmed beliefs about yourself that you have turned into reality.

### What do you believe about yourself and your game?

Let's take a look at the beliefs that you have about yourself as a hockey player. On page 15, you were asked to write down negative thoughts that you caught yourself thinking. You were also asked to rewrite them as positives. For now, let's just look at those negative statements that you have. Write each down on a separate piece of paper and then ask and answer the following for each statement.

1. Is my value judgment about myself true?
2. Do I absolutely know with 100% certainty that it is true?
3. How do I react when I believe that judgment?
4. Who would I be – how would I perform, how would I feel without that value judgment?

Now, take your initial statement from the top of your paper, and find one or two ways that you can turn the statement around. This gives you a chance to experience your value judgment from the opposite of the original statement. Let's look at a few examples.

**Original Statement:** *I am the worst player on the team!*

**Turnaround #1:** *I am the best player on the team!*

**Turnaround #2:** *I am not the worst player on the team.*

**Turnaround #3:** *There are many players on the team who are worse than me.*

**Original Statement:** *My teammates deserve better from me.*

**Turnaround #1:** *I deserve better from my teammates.*

**Turnaround #2:** *I deserve better from myself.*

**Turnaround #3:** *My teammates don't deserve better from me.*

Turn around your statement in as many ways as you can – be creative. Each is offering you the opportunity to experience a different point of view than your original value judgment.

Finally, ask yourself this: After going through the whole process, do any of your turnarounds feel more true to you than your original statement?

### **Exercise for success**

It's time to get that pad out again and start carrying it around in your pocket. Write the following on the front page or inside cover:



1. Is it true?
2. Can I absolutely be certain it is true?
3. How do I react when I think it?
4. Who would I be without it?
5. Turn it around.

This week, listen to your thoughts. When you hear a negative value judgment, whip out your notebook and look at your four questions and the final statement. Either walk yourself through each in your mind, or, if you have time, spend a little time writing it out on your pad. If there is a turnaround that seems to hold more truth than your original statement, write it down on your pad, and use those statements for your daily affirmations. You can also follow these same steps if someone else makes a negative value judgment about you that you internalize.

## Key #5 – Use your imagination to drive your success

Your mind is a very powerful instrument. What you believe to be true about yourself, you make true. This is a power that can be used to drive tremendous positive changes in your game.

### Act as if

Earlier, we discussed the principle of faking it 'til you make it. If you want to develop one of the qualities that you listed in your blueprint, the quickest route to success is to act as if you already possess that quality. This is an extremely powerful tool to change your mindset and bring home the new, positive qualities that you are striving to reach. Let's take a look at one of the qualities from our list of adjectives. If you would like to become enthusiastic, how would you develop that using the 'act as if' strategy?

**Example: *Enthusiastic***

#### Thoughts:

- *Oh boy! I can't wait to get out there on the ice and razzle dazzle them.*
- *Hockey is so much fun. I can hardly wait to get to my game.*

- *My team rocks! Everyone is so terrific and brings their best to the game.*

### **Body Language**

- Open postures
- Bouncy
- Big smile
- Attentive

On your notepad, write each of your top ten adjectives. Now write your thoughts, body language and attitudes you will have when you possess each of these qualities. Act these out as you go throughout your day.

### **Visualize**

Visualization is an equally powerful tool. Studies have shown that weight lifters who visualize every aspect of lifting a weight – from how they will feel to how they will move and what they will think – can actually improve muscle tone as if they had actually lifted the weight.

Many top competitors visualize in the moments before they perform. For instance, prior to putting, Tiger Woods visualizes the shot in his mind. He feels the putter in his hands, hears the head of the putter as it makes contact with the ball, sees and hears the ball going into the cup, and then hears the roar of the crowd. He employs all of his senses in his visualization. Tiger Woods is one of the best and most consistent putters in the game of golf.



You can use your five senses and your inner eye to visualize your way towards developing the characteristics that you have chosen for yourself in your blueprint. To visualize, act as if in your mind. What will your facial expression and body language be? What will you believe to be true about yourself? How will you think? Visualizing is mentally acting as if to bring about positive change.

### **Exercise for success – visualize your way to success**

Each day, find a quiet spot and get comfortable. Close your eyes and visualize yourself and how you would be and present on the ice if you possessed the traits to which you aspire.

## Key #6 – Make obstacles into opportunities

In spite of your best efforts, you often encounter obstacles as you pursue your goals. So, what do you do when you run into an obstacle? Do you:

- Get angry that there is something in your way ~or~ do you see it as an exciting new challenge that can help you to improve?
- Get frustrated and walk away ~or~ find creative ways to overcome it?
- Blame others for putting the stumbling block in your way ~or~ thank them for giving you a stepping stone that will lift you even higher?
- Sink lower ~or~ fly higher?
- Decide your skills aren't good enough ~or~ learn new skills to overcome the obstacle?

As you can see, the obstacle is seldom the problem. The problem often lies in how you choose to deal with the obstacle.

### **An attitude of gratitude**

Maybe you've been looking at the whole obstacle thing all wrong. Maybe it isn't something that the universe puts out there in order to watch you fail. Perhaps the obstacle is there in front of you for one reason and one reason only – so that you have the opportunity to overcome it and be even more successful.



Think about an obstacle that you have encountered during hockey that, had you not encountered it, you would not have developed a new skill. Aren't you lucky that obstacle (or should I say opportunity) presented itself so that you could improve?

Perhaps instead of shaking your fist at the heavens the next time you encounter a stumbling block, you should grin and shout, "Thanks for the opportunity!"

### **Exercise for success – finding the opportunities**

It's time for your pad again. On a sheet in the pad, write these words. "Thanks for the opportunity!" As you come upon obstacles this week, repeat the phrase to yourself. Write the obstacle on your pad and brainstorm the ways that you will overcome each.

## Key #7 – Identify and eliminate false beliefs

You are probably walking around with a lot of false beliefs about yourself and others. That's because you rely on inaccurate or partial information that you use to make value judgments. False beliefs about yourself can lead to self-limitation and negative self-image.

### What are your false beliefs about yourself?

In a previous section, you worked with asking yourself four questions whenever you encountered a value judgment. The first two questions – Is it true, and can I be 100% certain that it is true are the questions to ask yourself to identify false beliefs.

### Eliminating false beliefs

The first step to eliminating your false beliefs is recognizing them. You're working on that. Be aware as you go throughout your days how you think about yourself and what you believe. Beliefs arise in the form of judgments and reactions to situations as they arise. There are some warning signs that you are entering into false beliefs.

- You become anxious during situations where there is no threat.
- You feel that there are events outside of yourself preventing your success.
- When you set goals, you immediately decide that you can't achieve them.
- You procrastinate or place blame.



Your false beliefs about yourself have become habits. They exist because you allow them to. You need to break the habit. How? By taking action to eliminate the false belief. Choose to eliminate the belief, and trade it with a positive one. If you can, take action that is the opposite of your belief – in other words, fake it until you make it.

### Exercise for success – turning around false beliefs

After identifying your false beliefs, pull out your pad with your four questions and turn around. For each belief, ask yourself the four questions and turn it around. Affirm the turn-around that is more accurate than the false belief.

Complete the following worksheet:

1. List a false belief you'd like to eliminate. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is a positive memory that you can use to replace it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is a negative self-belief that I wish to cancel?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What positive statement can I make to replace it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



5. How will I affirm my new belief? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. How will I visualize my new belief? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Key #8 – Recognizing stress

Stress can mess with your mind. Learning to relax and release stress will help you to pay closer attention to your thoughts as they arise. Eliminating stress will also help you to better focus so that you can release negative thought patterns.

When you view things through a lens of stress, worry or anxiety, negative belief systems become magnified. Not only that, but stress causes a fight or flight response, and all of your problem-solving mechanisms kick into that instinctive place that is sometimes known as the reptilian brain. The **reptilian brain** has been described as that part of the brain in which our most unpredictable, primitive behavior exists.

The problem with shifting into your reptilian brain is that your thought processes cease to be rational. If you are in a truly dangerous situation, then this fight or flight response is appropriate and can save your life. If you are playing hockey, on the other hand, then the less control you have over your thought processes, the less control you have over your game. Since controlling your thoughts and emotions is the key to unleashing your mental power on the ice, stress can throw up a huge roadblock to this process.

### Responses to stress

People typically respond to stress in one of three ways:

1. They go into overdrive. People who exhibit this response are keyed up and have a short fuse. They may feel angry or jittery, and will be overly emotional.

2. They withdraw. People exhibiting this response go into a shell when stressed. They shut down and show very little energy or emotion.
3. They freeze. People with this response freeze under pressure. They are unable to do anything. On the surface, they appear to be paralyzed, but under the surface there's a lot going on. They are highly agitated and not thinking clearly.

Just taking a look at the most common responses to stress gives you a good idea why stress can hurt your mental game so much. Imagine responding in any of ways above during a game of hockey. What would the likely result be?

### Identifying your stressors

The key to avoiding shifting into your reptilian brain is to catch the stress before it has a chance to settle in for the long haul. To do this you need to do two things:

1. Recognize the stress in its early stages.
2. Identify the source of the stress.

### Recognizing stress

On the following list are some signs and symptoms that you might be stressed:

<b>Physical</b>	<b>Mental/Emotional</b>	<b>Behavioral</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pain</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worry</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inability to control behavior</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jitters</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anxiety</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Angry outbursts</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapid heart rate</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fear</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crying</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Upset stomach</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of emotional control (moodiness)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social withdrawal</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chest tightness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anger/frustration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conflicts with others</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unusual sweating</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inability to focus</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Changes in sleep or eating patterns</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty breathing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sadness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procrastination</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diarrhea or constipation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Irritability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nervous habits (like biting fingernails)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get sick easily</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor judgment</li></ul>	

### Identify the source of your stress

Sometimes the stress you are feeling in a given moment has nothing to do with what is actually going on right then. Stress comes at you in all aspects of your life – you may experience stress at home, at school, in our social relationships, or with your teammates.

What causes stress for one person may not cause it for another. Stress is a uniquely individual thing that depends largely on your



perceptions of events and relationships. For instance, one person may become extremely stressed out over a writing assignment in school, while another person may be really excited to get the opportunity to do something that they love. In this example, both students had exactly the same experience – but they perceived and interpreted it differently. One was stressed, one was not.

So what is stressing you? Let's take a moment to take a moment to look at some of the things in your life that bring you stress.

### **Exercise for success – identifying your stressors**

Get out your notepad. At the top of a page, write the word "Stressors". Now, close your eyes and think through the events of your week last week. As you go over each event in your mind, pay careful attention to your body's responses to them. Are there some where you can actually feel the anxiety in your body? Write down each of the things that caused you stress and rate them either a 1 – mild stress, 2 - moderate stress, or 3 – extreme stress.

## Key #9 – Releasing stress through relaxation

You've identified what is causing you stress. Now what? How can you relieve your stress? By relaxing.

It sounds like a simple formula, but relaxation, especially in the face of stressors, is a learned skill that takes practice.

Learning to relax in stressful situations shifts you away from your reptilian brain and takes you back to a place of emotional stability where you can come from your center and make good decisions while focusing on the moment.

### Relaxation techniques

There are many techniques you can learn that will help you to relax, even in the most stressful of situations.

1. Breathe. As soon as you notice stress setting in, take a moment to take a few deep breaths. If you can, remove yourself to a quiet place and close your eyes. If you're in the middle of the game, this obviously isn't an option, so just take a few deep breaths. As you inhale, imagine that you are breathing in relaxation. Feel the breath moving downward through your body, pulling relaxation with it. Consciously un-tense your muscles. When you exhale, picture your stress flowing out of your body with your breath. Do this until you begin to feel relaxed.
2. Recite a mantra. A **mantra** is a word or phrase that you can use to help yourself key in on relaxation. It can be something as

simple as repeating the word, “calm” over and over to yourself as you breathe in and out.

3. Go to your happy place. This can be done, even on the fly. If you are stressed, take just a moment to go to a place in your mind where you are at your happiest and most relaxed. This could include things like hiking in the mountains or playing on a beach. Take a moment to place yourself in that situation.
4. Take a time out. If necessary, remove yourself from the situation for just a moment – even if this means that you are turning your back on the situation. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Exhale slowly. Do this two more times. On the third exhale, open your eyes and turn back towards the situation.
5. Use a relaxing sigh. Sit or stand up straight and let out a deep sigh of relief. Let the air flow back in naturally. Do this 8-10 times.
6. Slow breathing. Many people find that deliberate, slow breathing can be calming. Concentrate on breathing slowly and calmly, thinking of your slow breathing as soothing your entire body.

### **Exercises for success – staying calm and centered**

In your day-to-day life, there are exercises you can do that will help you to be in a more calm and relaxed state. Below is an exercise called Progressive Relaxation that you can do daily. Try doing it once a day.

1. Find a quiet, comfortable place with dim lighting. Play relaxing music. Tape the steps, or have someone read the following steps to you as you relax.
2. Lie on your back and close your eyes.
3. Feel your feet. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and sink into the bed. Start with your toes and progress to your ankles.
4. Feel your knees. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
5. Feel your upper legs and thighs. Feel their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
6. Feel your abdomen and chest. Sense your breathing. Consciously will them to relax. Deepen your breathing slightly and feel your abdomen and chest sink into the bed.
7. Feel your buttocks. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
8. Feel your upper arms. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
9. Feel your shoulders. Sense their weight. Consciously relax them and feel them sink into the bed.
10. Feel your neck. Sense its weight. Consciously relax it and feel it sink into the bed.
11. Feel your head and skull. Sense its weight. Consciously relax it and feel it sink into the bed.



12. Feel your mouth and jaw. Consciously relax them. Pay particular attention to your jaw muscles and unclench them if you need to. Feel your mouth and jaw relax and sink into the bed.
13. Feel your eyes. Sense if there is tension in your eyes. Sense if you are forcibly closing your eyelids. Consciously relax your eyelids and feel the tension slide off of the eyes.
14. Feel your face and cheeks. Consciously relax them and feel the tension slide off into the bed.
15. Mentally scan your body. If you find any place that is still tense, then consciously relax that place and let it sink into the bed.

### **Learn to relax**

The key to overcoming a stress response is relaxation. If you can learn to catch yourself before stress takes hold of you, then you can continue to think rationally and avoid slipping into your reptilian brain.

## Key #10 – Setting goals for success

Goals provide you with a roadmap of where you'd like to go. Having this roadmap in place can positively affect your self-image. Knowing where you are going and having something to work towards can give you a positive sense of identity. Successfully meeting your goals can help you to build positive feelings about yourself that are rooted in authentic achievement.

Has there ever been a period of time in your life where you haven't had goals? Perhaps you don't have any particular goals now, or maybe your goals aren't clearly defined. Lack of goals can be associated with a lack of purpose or a feeling of aimlessness. When you have goals, you have a purpose. And having a purpose gives you a reason to step outside of your comfort zone and develop new skills.

### Effective goal setting

In order to get the most out of the goals you set for yourself, there are several things to keep in mind. Effective goals are:

1. Yours and no one else's. Set goals for yourself – because it is something that YOU want. If your goals are because someone else wants them for you, then you won't be very motivated to achieve them.
2. Measurable. If your goals are measurable, then you can judge your progress towards achieving them.
3. Achievable. This doesn't mean that you should set easy goals – only that they should be realistic. For instance, a goal to lose 100 pounds in three weeks would not be achievable.

4. Demanding. Your goals should stretch you and cause you to grow. A well-set goal requires you to step outside of your comfort zone in order to expand it.
5. Flexible. As conditions change, your goals will change. Your goals need to have the flexibility to change with changing situations and times.
6. Specific. Big, broad goals are fine. But in order to achieve the big picture, you need to set specific goals that move you in the direction of your large goal. Set benchmarks (or mini-goals) that you will meet on your way to your larger goal.
7. Deadlined. Goals that you will achieve “someday” aren’t specific enough. Give yourself a realistic timeline with benchmarks to measure your progress on the way.
8. Written. Writing your goals down gives you something to refer back to. Keep your written goals where you will see them. Then you will be less likely to forget them.

### **Exercise for success – setting your own goals**

Get out your notepad. What would you like to achieve as a hockey player. Brainstorm and write as many as you can come up with. Now pick your top three from this list. Write them in your notebook making sure that you use the above guidelines, using one sheet per goal. Next, write a plan to achieve them incorporating mini goals and milestones along the way. At the bottom of each page, write an affirmation about achieving your goal as an “I am” or “I have” statement. Say or write your affirmations every morning. And get started on meeting your goals.

## Key #11 – Overcoming procrastination

Why do something today when you can put it off for tomorrow? This is the procrastination mindset, and it can harm your self-image. If you are always waiting until tomorrow to get started or to work towards your goals, then you never feel as if you are achieving anything. A healthy self-image is rooted in genuine achievement. If you procrastinate, then you aren't achieving – you are planning to achieve.

### What are you waiting for?

There are a number of reasons why people procrastinate. And the solutions to procrastination lie in those reasons. Let's take a look at the reasons people procrastinate and how to overcome each.

1. You think you "have to". When you think you have to do something, then you feel as if you are being forced to do it – not because you desire change, but because it is what you should do. There are no shoulds or shouldn'ts in life. When you feel that you have to do something, your first instinct is to rebel. Procrastination is your way of rebelling against what you have to do.

How to overcome have tos: Replace "have to" with "want to." Don't do it because you should. Do it because you choose to. Realize that you never have to do anything that you don't want to. Instead, you choose to do it because you want to enjoy the benefits, or because you want to avoid the consequences. If you can set it in your mind that everything you do is a choice, you can remove "have to" from your vocabulary.

2. You're thinking of the ending rather than the beginning. And that can be overwhelming. While you want to focus on the outcome of your goal, you first have to take steps towards starting it. Once you get moving, momentum comes into play.

How to overcome this: Don't think, "How can I finish this?" Instead think, "How can I get started." Once you have a starting point, take that first step.

3. You will accept nothing short of perfection. If you believe that you have to do everything perfectly, then you will be unlikely to ever get started. A perfectionist mindset leads to stress, and stress leads to procrastination.

How to overcome perfectionism: Give yourself permission to be a human being. Realize that you will not be perfect and that it is okay. What matters is that you are making your best effort.

### **Exercise for success – getting started with your goals**

For each of the three goals that you have written in your notebook, take a look at your plan of action. Answer the following:

1. Do you have a starting point? If not, write down your first step towards meeting each goal.
2. Do you feel this goal is something that you have to do? How can you change that perception?
3. Are you willing to accept something less than perfection from yourself? Ask yourself which is more important – that you make your best effort, or that you do everything perfectly.

## Key #12 – Maximize your progress

Congratulations. You are well on your way to achieving the goals that you have set for yourself. Now it's time to fine-tune them so that you aren't wasting time or energy focusing on things that aren't important.

It's easy to get lost on your way to your goals. Daily life intrudes. Other things come up.

### Keeping yourself moving

Achieving your goals requires effort and forward momentum. Just getting the ball rolling provides some motion. Newton's first Law of Motion suggests that objects in motion stay in motion. There are, however, actions that you can take to assure forward progress.

1. Focus on your plan every day. Each day, ask yourself which part of your action plan you will undertake. This focus will help to impel you forward.
2. Have systems in place to monitor your progress. Measure progress against your short-term goals and benchmarks you have set.
3. Make a contract with your coach, parents or a teammate. When you enter into a contract, you are far more likely to maintain your forward progress.
4. Require more of yourself as time goes on. As you see yourself progressing towards your goals, you will gain motivation. Use this motivation as a springboard to require more and more of yourself in your progression towards your goals.

5. Reward yourself. As part of your action plan, set rewards for yourself when you reach your benchmarks. Make the reward something that will motivate you, and only give yourself a reward when you have achieved your mini-goal.
6. Narrow your focus and set priorities. Decide what is important. Focus on that, while eliminating those things that have little importance to achieving your goal.

### **Exercise for success – building momentum**

Think of yourself as a rock rolling down hill. The closer you get to the bottom of the hill, the faster you roll. Look at each of your three goals written in your notepad. Ask yourself:

1. How can I reward myself for a job well-done?
2. Am I focusing on things that aren't important in achieving my goals?
3. What can I do today to move me closer to my goals?
4. How am I doing? Am I making progress? Do I need to make more?
5. Who can I enter into a contract with to impel me forward?

## Key #13 – The courage to change

Change is scary for most people. When you contemplate change, you are entering the realm of the unknown. Some questions you may ask yourself as you are thinking about making a change include:

- How can I be sure that the changes I make will result in positive outcomes?
- Will I be better off or worse off for having made the change?
- Will we be able to change?
- What if I fail?

It is very easy to get stuck in a comfort zone where you are unwilling to make changes. Even people who are extremely unhappy with their current situation are likely to stay in it, because at least they know what the outcome will be. For many people, they'd rather stay miserable with the known than to boldly step into the unknown.

### The willingness to change

It takes tremendous courage to be willing to change. Often, the first step into the unknown feels like jumping off of a cliff into thin air. The question is this: Do you step off the edge tentatively and fearfully, worried that you fall or do you run and take a flying leap with your arms wide open, ready to fly?

What is the worst thing that will happen if you attempt to make a change? Take a look at one of your goals, and picture the very worst-case outcome of making that change. What is it? Most people discover

that their worst-case scenario is that it doesn't work out, and they start over.

Consider a goal that you set but didn't meet and ask yourself – what did you really lose? Did you gain anything for having made the attempt?

### Are you courageous?

Do you consider yourself to be a courageous person? On what do you base this assessment? Most of us have far more courage than we ever give ourselves credit for. Every day, you perform small acts of courage that you may not even realize? Don't believe me? When was the last time you....

- Talked to a stranger?
- Stood up for yourself?
- Tried something new?
- Smiled at someone?
- Showed up for a game?

All of these things are acts of courage. In each case, you face the potential for disappointment, hurt or rejection. And yet, you perform such acts of courage every day. Make a list of small acts of courage that you make as you go about your daily life. Give yourself credit for the courage it took to do each.



### Exercise for success – the courage to make changes

Now that you know you are far more courageous than you ever gave yourself credit for, use that newfound courage to stride towards your goals. Complete the following:

Today I would like to change \_\_\_\_\_

This change is scary because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The absolute worst thing that could happen if I made this change is

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What have I lost if the worst happens? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What have I gained if the worst happens? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the best that could happen? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have the courage to make this change because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Write your affirmation for change here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Key #14 – Self-confidence

Self-confidence and self-image are closely linked.

- **Self-confidence** is your belief in yourself and your abilities.
- **Self-image** is the thoughts and beliefs you hold about yourself.

Having self-confidence leads to a healthy and realistic self-image. Being confident in your ability to continue to strive for your goals helps you to maintain forward momentum. Many people who stop short of their goals do so because of a critical lack of self-confidence.

### Building self-confidence

One of the keys to self-confidence is setting and achieving goals. One of the keys to achieving your goals is self-confidence. As you achieve your goals, your self-confidence grows. As your self-confidence grows, you are able to set and achieve higher goals. Self-confidence and goals are like building blocks that stack one on top of another, taking you higher and higher. How to build self-confidence?

- Focus on your present successes. Everyone is successful in some small way every day. Be aware of those successes that you have and use them to build your self-confidence.
- Don't let others undermine your self-confidence. People will try. And it has nothing to do with you. When someone attempts to undermine your confidence, it only says something about you if you let it. It is your choice whether or not you let it roll off of your back, or whether you internalize it and let it slowly eat away at you. It's important to realize that when



someone makes a cutting remark, it is about their own insecurities – not about your failings. Don't allow someone else's insecurities to become your own.

- Build success on success. Use each success as a stepping-stone to take you higher.

### Exercise for success – a more self-confident you

In what ways was I successful today? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

How can I use that success to help me achieve higher goals? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Statements people made to me that made me doubt myself: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Do these statements really say anything about me? \_\_\_\_\_

What would be a more accurate statement they could have made about me? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## Key #15 – Growing self-acceptance

So far, we've discussed self-image and self-confidence. But what about self-acceptance? Self-acceptance is the ability to accept who you are, and to know what you can and can't change about yourself. The ability to accept yourself is essential to an overall positive self-image. For instance, knowing that you are not perfect and accepting that about yourself is a form of self-acceptance.

### Knowing what you can and can't change

As much as we'd like to, there are things in our lives over which we have no influence or control. Below is a list of things you can influence and things you can't.

<b>Things I can control or influence</b>	<b>Things I can't control or influence</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My attitudes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everything else</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My behaviors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Every one else</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My thoughts</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My emotions</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My beliefs</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My choices</li></ul>	

It's a pretty concise list. You have control over yourself, how you respond to things, and how you present in the world. Everything else is outside of your influence. The behavior of others is up to them.



The thoughts and words of others are up to them. The key to self-acceptance is learning to accept that over which you have control – yourself --while not worrying about that over which you have no control – everyone else.

And, if everyone else is outside of your circle of influence, then why would you allow yourself to be influenced by anyone else? The short answer – you can't. If someone else has "influenced" your decisions, all you've done is made a choice based on what others said or did. Ultimately, the choice was still yours.

Knowing this is empowering. Because by knowing that you are 100% responsible for everything you think, say and do, you can make authentic choices for yourself. And in making those choices in the full light of knowledge of your responsibility for each of them, you begin to accept yourself. If you can't accept yourself as you make choices from that knowledge, then it is time to make other choices.

### **Exercise for success – empowering self-acceptance**

Choices I made today that I was proud of:

Choices I made today that I wasn't proud of:

Choices I will make the next time I am presented with the opportunity:

## Key #16 – Dealing with frustration

Negative emotions such as frustration and anger can get in the way of our success, leading to poor self-image.

Negative emotions are a part of life. At some point, everyone has to deal with them. But, as we learned, continuing to carry the frustration with you is a choice. When faced with a negative emotion, you have two choices:

1. Carry it with you.
2. Let it go.

### Choosing to let it go

Many people are surprised to realize that letting go of frustration is as simple as making a choice to let it go. If you are equipped with strategies to facilitate making that choice, then it becomes easier when you are faced with frustration – or any negative emotion – in the moment.

#### Strategy #1 – the 3 Rs

1. **Recognize** that you are frustrated or experiencing negative emotion.
2. **Regroup** by telling yourself to stop. You might say something like, “STOP! I will not choose to let frustration get the better of me.”
3. **Refocus** on the task at hand, forcing your mind away from what just happened and into the present moment.



### Strategy #2 – Relax

Use some of the relaxation techniques found in the stress and relaxation chapter. Take a deep breath or give yourself a mini-time out to get your head back into the game.

### Strategy #3 – Redirect

Negative emotion requires a lot of energy. Take that energy and redirect it towards something positive. For instance, if someone checks you and steals the puck, take the energy from your frustration and direct it into your focus on the game so that you can play harder.

### Exercise for success – evaluating negative emotions

Think back to the last time you go really frustrated in a game, and answer the following:

Did my game improve or get worse? \_\_\_\_\_

Was I able to let it go right away? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a better way I could have responded? Describe it. \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

How can I use my frustration to propel myself to success? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

## Key #17 – Dealing with insecurity & uncertainty

Here’s a secret. In spite of how others might appear, no one is supremely confident. We all have insecurities, and we all feel uncertain at times. But when you let your insecurities and uncertainties get the better of you, then your self-image will suffer.

Insecurity and uncertainty is rooted in worries about “what if...” The truth is, there is no way of knowing.

### Changing insecurity to security

You can, however, develop a secure response when insecurities arise. See the table below.

Insecure statement	Secure response
What if....?	What if – what is the worst that can happen?
Suppose....	Why expect the worst? Nothing is for certain.
If only I had...	Next time I will...
If only I hadn't...	From now on I will...
I wonder what would happen if I had...	I did what I did, and agonizing over it won't change a thing. I'll do my best.



### **Exercise for success – making secure statements**

- Pay attention to your thoughts. How often do you make an insecure or uncertain statement to yourself?
- When you catch yourself making such a statement, write it down on your notepad, and then write a secure response.

## Key #18 – Healing emotional scars

As we go through life, we store up emotional scars. We carry with us past hurts and slights, which drag down our self-image. It brings to mind the story of the two monks:

*Two monks were making a pilgrimage. During the course of their journey, they came to a river where they met a beautiful young woman. She was afraid of the current, so she asked the brothers if they might carry her across the river.*

*The younger of the brothers was offended at the very idea and turned away with an attitude of disgust. The older brother didn't hesitate, and quickly picked the woman up on his shoulders, carried her across the river, and set her down on the other side. She thanked him and went on her way.*

*The monks resumed their walk, the older enjoying the beautiful countryside, while the younger one grew more and more brooding and distracted until suddenly he burst out, "Brother, we are taught to avoid contact with women, and there you were, not just touching a woman, but carrying her on your shoulders!"*

*The older monk looked at the younger with a smile and said, "Brother, I set her down on the other side of the river; you are still carrying her."*

## Why are you still carrying it?

Which monk are you? Are you the one who chose to put down the emotional baggage and move on, or are you the one who chose to brood and worry? Which monk had a more enjoyable trip?

Carrying your emotional baggage with you is a choice that you make. It is easy to get trapped in the emotional pain of past hurts without ever realizing that you have the ability to set that pain aside simply by choosing to.

If your emotional scars come from the words or actions of others, ask yourself this: why am I allowing someone else to have such tremendous power over me?

Carrying around emotional baggage takes tremendous energy that could be spent elsewhere to make positive changes in your own life. If you're ready to set down that baggage, there are a number of things you can do to help yourself along the way.

1. Refuse to allow others to have that kind of power of your emotions. Reclaim your emotions for yourself.
2. Forgiveness is an act that you undertake for yourself – not for the other person. Many people don't understand what forgiveness is – and they refuse to forgive others thinking that they are harming those who have hurt them with their lack of forgiveness. This couldn't be further from the truth. Lack of forgiveness hurts only one person – you. True forgiveness comes when you say, "I am no longer going to allow my life to be affected by you. I release the energy that I have been directing towards being angry with you and reclaim it for myself."

3. Learn from your mistakes – and the mistakes of others. In every seemingly negative situation, there is something positive to be gained. Look for that kernel of the positive and hold it up in gratitude for the opportunity to have the lesson that you learned or the gain that you received.
4. Get out of the past and focus on the present. All pain arises from thinking about the past or worrying about the future. Bring your focus to right now. Is there anything in this very moment that is causing you pain, or is your pain associated with a memory or worry? Stay here, now.

### Exercise for success – examining your emotional scars

What are the emotional scars that you are carrying with you?

1. In your notepad, list five things that have brought you pain for a long time.
2. Why are you choosing to carry the pain? Do you gain anything from it?
3. What will you lose if you choose to let it go? What will you gain?
4. Who would you be and how would you feel without that pain?
5. Is the pain that you feel a pain that is right now in the present, or does it arise from events of the past?
6. What would you do with the energy that you are directing at your anger if that anger was no longer there?
7. Who do you need to forgive to relieve the pain?

## **Key # 19 – Gaining strength from your weaknesses**

We all have weaknesses. To expect that you won't is to set yourself up for pain and disappointment. It's time to accept that these weaknesses exist.

In job interviews, one of the most dreaded questions from a prospective employer is, "Tell me your weaknesses." Nobody likes to own up to their true weaknesses, and a typical response to such a question is, "I work too hard!" That is a response that is crafted in order to present oneself in a positive light to the interviewer. But it usually isn't very truthful.

### **Using weakness as a source of strength**

When you are evaluating your own weaknesses, it is essential that you are unfailingly honest with yourself. This is no easy task. No one likes to admit to failings – even in the privacy of their own head. And yet, without an honest assessment of your weaknesses, you will never be able to turn them into strengths.

Look at it this way. Without weaknesses, you would never have a need to grow or improve. If you were perfect in every way, you would just always be stuck right where you are. What fun is that?

If you change your thinking – viewing your weaknesses as a gift you have been given to give you direction and help you set goals, then you can turn your former weaknesses into your strengths.



### **Exercise for success – an honest self-evaluation**

This is for you and no-one else. Answer the following questions.

In what areas do I need the most improvement?

Where am I the weakest?

How can I improve and become better and stronger?

## Key #20 – Be happy

In the 1980s, a simple little song by the unknown singer, Bobby McFerrin, became an instant hit. It was called “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” Here’s an excerpt:

*There is this little song I wrote*

*I hope you learn it note for note*

*Like good little children*

*Don't worry, be happy*

*Listen to what I say*

*In your life expect some trouble*

*But when you worry*

*You make it double*

### Don't worry – be happy

Sounds simple when put that way, doesn't it? People have spent their entire lives searching for happiness. They buy stuff, go places, and cultivate relationships looking for that one thing that will finally make them happy. And they never are. What they don't realize is that happiness can't be found in people, places or things. You are about to learn the secret to happiness that so many people spend their entire lives seeking but never finding. *Happiness is in you and nowhere else.* Like everything else in your emotional life, it is a choice you make.

True happiness comes from making the choice to step away from the pain of the past and the worry about the future and revel in this moment that is right now. If you are truly focused in being present in each moment as it arises, it is impossible not to be happy a significant portion of the time. And a happy person is one whose self-image is positive. Here are some tips for making happiness part of your daily life:

1. Focus on the present.
2. Don't look to others to make you happy.
3. Don't expect that every moment will be absolute bliss.
4. Don't wait "until" to be happy – choose it now.
5. Act happy.
6. Try to contribute to the happiness of others every day.

### Exercise for success – get happy

- As you go throughout your day, check in with yourself to see if you are focused in the moment, or whether your mind is wandering to the past or worrying about the future. When you catch yourself doing these things, gently bring your attention back to the moment.
- If you're feeling down, put a big smile on your face and let out a belly laugh.
- Choose one person each day and attempt to contribute to that person's happiness.
- If you do experience negative emotion, don't stuff it. Go with it and let it pass through you. Soon you'll be feeling happy again.

## Key #21 – Be a winner!

It's time to put the finishing touches on your shiny new positive self-image. Ready for the words of wisdom? Here they come....

***Even when you lose, you win.***

Life brings challenges. To expect a life without them is insanity. As with everything else, it's all in your perspective. Is a challenge a curse, or is it a blessing? When are you more likely to gain skills in hockey? When you play a really easy team that you can beat easily, or one you play hard but lose to an extremely skilled team? So – even when you lost, you won, right? You won by developing new strategies and skills as you played against better, stronger, faster opponents.

Being a winner doesn't mean that you win all of the time. Instead, it means that you continue to move forward and build a positive self-image no matter what the outcome is of any situation.

You have it in yourself to be a winner. The choice is, and always has been, yours. What will you do with it now that you know the secret?

## **About Kevin Willis**

In 1980, the United States Men's Olympic Hockey team beat a stronger faster, more physical Russian team to win the gold medal in the Lake Placid Olympics. Watching that historic moment in sports sparked a lifelong passion for the game that has led Kevin Willis to become Master Mental Game Coaching Professional and Level 5 USA Hockey coach with more than 20 years of playing and coaching experience.

While pursuing his Masters in Coaching, Kevin wrote the thesis, "The Mental Game of Hockey." He was surprised to discover that very few books or articles had been written on the mental aspects of the game. As a result, Kevin began developing Mental Game Coaching workbooks, workshops and one-on-one coaching specifically designed to help hockey players improve their mental game.

Kevin is the founder of HockeyTough.com, and is a certified MGCP (Master Mental Game Coaching Professional) who works with players, parents and coaches to bring a new level of mental focus to the game of hockey.