

The Tim Ferriss Show Transcripts

Episode 2: Josh Waitzkin

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Tim Ferriss: So Josh, I figure we might as well start at the top and do a little retrospective of what led you initially to write *The Art of Learning*. Of course, that's how I was, in many ways introduced to your work, and then through our mutual friend, Max, ended up connecting. But what was the reason you decided to write that book?

Josh Waitzkin: I initially started thinking about the idea of the book about two years into my martial arts lessons. So I transitioned from chess into studying, into meditating and into studying East Asian philosophy. Then I started to get into Tai Chi Chuan and ultimately into the martial application of push hands and I started to experience this very interesting transition from the principles.

My level just began to translate directly over into the martial arts. I think it was primarily one experience I had that was something around two years into my Tai Chi training. I was giving a simultaneous chess exhibition in Memphis, Tennessee at a fundraiser for my school district and I was 45 or 50 boards at once. I was walking down the middle of this big square of chess tables.

Everyone's playing one game. I'm playing each of them, and about 40 minutes into the simul I had this experience that was so interesting. I began to feel like I was riding the energetic wave of the game, like I was in push hands training. I wasn't playing chess. I wasn't thinking in chess language. I wasn't calculating variations. I was feeling the flow. Feeling my space out behind, like I would in the martial arts and I had this realization.

I was playing beautiful chess, but I wasn't consciously playing chess, that the barriers between these two different arts had dissolved in the mind and that's when I started to conceive of the idea of the book. A lot of the process I spent five years taking notes and I had 400 or 500 pages of notes before I actually sat down and wrote it. A lot of that process was deconstructing what I'd been doing rather intuitively.

So essentially, what it felt like before this translation along parallel learning, which is two rather abstract terms, that's the language that I was using internally when I was first thinking about the book. As if I were just taking the essence of one art and translating it over into another and the process of writing it involved deconstructing what I'd been doing, somewhat abstractly into something that could be replicated more systematically.

Tim Ferriss: So the question that jumps out in my mind, which is a bit of a side perhaps, but in simuls, playing your 10, 20, 30, 40 boards simultaneously -- I'm trying to ask a better question than how does someone do that. But at what point what happens to a chess player when they go from an inability to play multiple boards simultaneously to being able to play multiple boards simultaneously? What is the framework or thinking or experience that someone builds up that allows them to do something like that? Which to the average person seems like a Rain Man-like feat?

Josh Waitzkin: I think it's different for every chess player. One of the beautiful things about chess is that you can approach it in so many different ways and to be world-class what you need to do essentially is express the core of your being through the art. I think that's true of many arts and that's probably something that we'll get into more deeply.

So you can have a very mathematical person who plays chess mathematically. You can have a very musical person who plays chess musically. Someone might be much more kinesthetic, like myself and it's sort of a feeling for flow and hidden harmonies, and almost a physically energetic relationship to chess.

When I first learned to play chess, when I was six years old in Washington Square Park, it was a battle. I loved the feeling of going into a fight with someone and finding these hidden harmonies and finding where these animal passions mixed with this technical complexity, and much later when I'd gotten much better playing simuls, it was a higher level manifestation of that same dynamic.

For me, playing simuls is something akin to juggling a lot of balls and I wasn't playing 40 different games for example separately. The flow of all 40 games would coalesce into one larger sense of flow and it was actually really interesting. Often when I'd give a simul and there'd be a youth competition the winners of the youth competition would play against me, so sometimes kids would cheat. They'd really want to beat me, so they would cheat.

So I'd be walking around this big thing, and then I'd get to the table, and they'd have shifted their positions to try to win because if they could win it would be a big thing. And my experience when that happened was as if you had -- imagine if you had 40 balls up in the air and suddenly they all crash onto the floor. I would know that they would change their position.

Not by reaching the board nor remembering what the position was and then seeing it changed. It would initially be this feeling of the energetic flow had been interrupted and then I'd have to reverse engineer myself back to that one game. That one component of the flow and then I'd remember the game. And then I would remember exactly what position it had been and then I'd say "Ha-ha, this is the position."

Then it would take me two or three times going back around to get all the balls back up in the air and get back to that energetic flow. So actually, for me, giving simuls felt similar to playing one chess game, but that was my own relationship to it. I think that probably if you ask ten different very strong chess players they'd all give somewhat different answers.

Tim Ferriss: Got it. Do you know what blew me away was spending time with a friend of yours, [Maurice], when we went to Washington Square Park and seeing him play a game at least for the first portion without looking at the board. I won't give away too much of the punchline, since we captured it all on a film, but it was pretty amazing.

But his ability to track the board it seemed like by chunking portions of the board into larger gestalt pieces -- I don't know if that's the best way to express it -- but it seemed like his ability to seemingly remember all these disparate pieces was because he had the board broken down into component chunks, as it were. I don't want to take us too down that fine line.

Let's shift gears. What I'd be very curious to know at this point because I know, of course, a little bit of the background, but I want to dig into the details. What type of people do you personally work with these days and why do they work with you? What type of things do you do with them?

Josh Waitzkin: I have three major dimensions to my creative life right now. What made a fourth and I guess the most important one is my son, Jack. He's a little over two-years-old and the love of my life. So that's maybe the most important part of my life, no question about it. I run a nonprofit educational foundation and we have our own JW Foundation, The Art of Learning Project, and we have a couple hundred programs in schools around the country, internationally as well.

So this is integrating these principles that we have been developing in schools working with teachers, parents, and children around this individualized and thematic relationship to learning that I've been developing. So there's one dimension. The other one is I own a martial arts school, a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu School with Marcelo Garcia, who is the nine time world champion.

You know him well, Tim. He's really the Michael Jordan of the grappling world. So there are world class athletes training there. Then I run a consulting business where I'm training people who are at the cutting edge of the finance worlds and this is really interesting work. Because we're focusing on that last 1 or .1% of the learning process, which is really my specialty.

It's highly individualized. It's cutting edge work on their learning process, their idea generation, their creativity, their performance psychology, and their resilience. Fascinating work and what I've discovered it's interesting because I

wrote this book called *The Art of Learning* years ago, and so people are always coming to me to speak about learning.

But much of what I've been focused on in recent years has been unlearning. When I think about that last movement the equivalent, say number ten to number one in the world, to number five to being number one in the world, it's much more about finding subtle obstructions. Finding friction points and releasing them, identifying cognitive biases blocking your way.

It's the movement towards unobstructed self-expression. If you think about your creative process as a hose with a big crimp in it, if you release it, just unbelievable pressure can be released. And a lot of what I'm doing with people is trying to move them from very good to great or from great to truly elite, deeply individualized work. I'm helping them really find ways to express the core of their being through their art, which is as you know a big theme in my life from when I played chess at my highest level.

That's what I was doing when I had a period of being really locked up in my chess career which we can go into in more detail if you want. I was doing the opposite. I was trying to fit in someone else's mold and then ultimately when I transitioned away from chess into the martial arts I returned to that experience of self-expression.

And that's when I really started to understand that very deeply. I think it was the crisis towards the end of my chess career which really laid the foundation for the work that I do today with brilliant [inaudible] who are just trying to make that movement to the equivalent world champion.

Tim Ferriss: To jump actually back to Marcelo for a second, because I've of course met Marcelo and he's just --

Josh Waitzkin: You mean you've gone to war with him, man. I've watched you.

Tim Ferriss: I've gone to war with him, which if there's anything at stake, I don't recommend.

Josh Waitzkin: He's a tough guy. He's caused me a lot of pain over the years.

Tim Ferriss: He's a tough guy, but also a sweetheart of a guy. He's so fluid. What I'd love to hear from you, of course, because in *The Art of Learning*, which some people might be familiar with, they read about your experiences in chess, your experiences in Tai Chi and the parallels between them. And this overarching framework for optimizing mental and physical performance, if that's a fair way to put it, which is *The Art of Learning* through these different techniques and strategies. What have you learned through this third art of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu?

What are some insights or strategies that you've had since moving from Tai Chi, which is some ways similar, but also very different from Brazilian Jiu Jitsu which a lot of people will be familiar with, through the UFC and mixed martial arts?

Josh Waitzkin: All right, I mean the pertinent context relevant to my life. So *The Art of Learning* ends with the 2004 World Championship. It ends describing a narrative of that. It was just an absolutely harrowing and crazy experience. I won't give the punchline, but it was really intense. And after this I had decided I wanted to be a beginner again, to put on a white belt literally and figuratively and so I took on this third major mountain in my life, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu.

I was training out on the West Coast for about a year when I was actually writing *The Art of Learning*. I was training Brazilian Jiu Jitsu twice a day. This was after I'd spent five years taking notes. Then I had a 2004 World's. Then I was writing it. I started training with John Machado out there. Then I came back to New York. I started training with Mark [Mosantos] here, and I started to develop this relationship with Marcelo, who is just the greatest grappler to ever live, and we were doing private lessons. We developed a friendship.

Then he moved to Florida and I would travel to Florida to work with him. And ultimately I made the decision that I wanted to bring him to New York. Mostly because I was at that point planning to make a run for the World Championship in this art, and there was no better to do it than to get my ass kicked by the very best to ever live in the sport.

He's just a wonderful guy and he's just unbelievable martial artist and so we opened up the school together and I've done the mats with him other than when one of us has been injured. There have been a lot of injuries in these sports, all the time. And it's been a fascinating experience.

Marcelo is so profoundly different from me. I'm a really conceptual guy and I think abstractly, of course, with my foundation in chess. Marcelo is one of the most kinesthetically overdeveloped persons I've ever met and of course, overdevelopment and underdevelopment tend to come hand and hand conceptually.

Josh Waitzkin: Can you give me an example of that? What would be an example?

Tim Ferriss: Of overdevelopment/underdevelopment?

Josh Waitzkin: Of kinesthetic, what it means to be kinesthetically --

Tim Ferriss: His physical intelligence is mind boggling. When he'd come fishing with me I'd throw him on stand up paddle board in three foot chop and everyone just flies off of paddle boards when they stand up on them. And he was just beautiful.

He'd find the balance points. I've never seen someone learn so quickly how to handle waves, boats, handling fishing lines, free diving, riding waves on paddle boards.

I've been a stand up fighter for many years, as strong as my core art when I'm doing standup training with Marcelo I caught him with most of the throws in my repertoire one time. I don't think I've ever caught him with a throw twice, which is amazing. I was world class where I'd catch them thousands of times. You almost never see Marcelo get caught more than once with something. It's amazing to see how he relates to the world through his kinesthetic intelligence.

For example, when we were looking for spaces for our school we'd walk into a big room and I'd be thinking about the dimensions, square footage, where this would be, where that would be. Marcelo would know if it felt good or felt bad. He's going to know whether he feels good about you or he feels bad about you and his intuition is incredibly dead on. But he navigates the world through this kinesthetic intelligence and it's been really fascinating having the school with him and diving deep with him.

Because we've been having conceptual dialog for these three-and-a-half years or so and he's really deep conceptually. But I've learned even more deeply the importance of the lesson that there are many paths to greatness. And to take a guy like Marcelo and to try to fit him into a chess player's hyper-conceptual mold would be terrible. And he's so great because of his just unbelievable commitment to doing it his way and he's done things in extraordinary ways.

For example, you know how in these competitive arts everyone's very secret about their repertoires? We have this program, which you know well called MG Action, where people, Jiu Jitsu guys from around the world login to watch all of Marcelo's shows, training sessions, his sparring sessions, his lessons, everything. When he was competing in Abu Dubai is when he got the World Championship and when [inaudible] which is the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu World Championship we were streaming his sparring sessions every night.

So he was visually showing these competitors what he was about to use against them at two weeks, three weeks, at four weeks, and his attitude about this was just completely unique. "If you're studying my game, you're entering my game and I'll be better at it than you." So simple, so pure, and if you think about it, it's really deep. The opposite of what most chess players would do and most Jiu Jitsu guys would do. So he's wide open to constant learning.

The other beautiful thing about Marcelo is people call him the King of Scrambles and if you watch his training style, he's always in transition which is a really interesting idea to think about in a disciplinary manner. Because most people get their egos involved in their training and they're trying to dominate all the time, and to dominate in almost anything, you find that there's no dominance

and you keep it. But Marcelo always lets the opponents move and so he's constantly playing in transition.

And so if you think about what world class martial arts means and you brought, for example, Maurice Ashley and you're playing chess in Washington Square, it's similar. If you're at a much higher level than someone you can always seem mystical because you're doing things which are outside of their conceptual scheme. The way that operates in the martial arts is if you think about it through the lens of frames, if you and I are looking at a position and in your mind, there's this position, this position, and this position so there are three positions.

In my mind if I'm constantly training at the transitions between these positions, these actually expand into these transitional frames and become positions to me. So if I'm seeing 100 positions when you're seeing two, then I can play in your blind spots and I can seem mystical to you because you haven't trained there.

And that's what Marcelo does by spending all of his time in transition, he has cultivated the art to play in the in-between, which is really what level is all about or one of the core things that world class martial arts is all about, playing in transition, in gaps in your opponents' fight pattern.

Tim Ferriss: Observing and practicing with Marcelo say on the [inaudible] team or the Marcelo team just blew me away. Because if you look at it as an uninformed spectator or even a moderately informed spectator you're blown away by how fast he is and how effective he is. But the nuance of eliciting movement, allowing space to open, manufacturing space by applying pressure, and then leaving it is so subtle and so incredibly effective.

Then you start to notice these principles that carry over to many, many hundreds of possible positions, let's just say. It's really amazing. It reminds me of something I heard once from a musician. I don't know who the original quote is from, but he said that "Music is the space between the notes." And I was like, "Huh, that's a really interesting way to look at it." But what were you going to say?

Josh Waitzkin: I was going to say I think that's a gorgeous quote. Most great arts are defined by that space in-between.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it's like writing. Writing's the same way, right? It's like when in doubt, leave it out.

Josh Waitzkin: Beautiful, and of course, the thing about Marcelo is that it can often seem initially that he's moving so fast. But what's incredible he can also move very slow and do things that you don't see. So the great sleight of hand is practicing the art of illusion when we're not practicing.

It's amazing what can be done with intention, with controlling someone's intention. This is a lot of my training in Push Hands related to finding ways to essentially control someone's intention so that you are ahead of them, even if they were ultimately moving first. You were there before they arrived. It's a fascinating psychological component of really high level training in anything.

Tim Ferriss: I remember an interview with one of the K1 fighters back in the day and they were talking about Peter Aerts. I don't know if you remember the Dutch Lumberjack, huge guy and he seemed fast and I remember what people said. A number of opponents said, "He's actually not that fast. He's kind of a big lumbering guy, but he's so good at predicting timing that he sees you telegraph before you even have the thought to throw the punch. And he beats you to the punch as a result of that. But it's because he picks up on the cues faster than other people."

I thought that was very interesting. To try to bridge this to something else, you work with -- of course I'm not going to mention names -- but you work with some of the most stunningly successful and famous traders and people in finance. I mean some real masters of the universe type folks. What have you found unique about that group of people? Let's just start with that. I'm curious to know what you've noticed being as observant as you are, about that group of folks.

Josh Waitzkin: That's a big question.

Tim Ferriss: It is a big question.

Josh Waitzkin: First of all, I think a core principle to start with is that there are many paths to greatness. Each one of these guys who's really world class is doing it his way and he's harnessing his eccentricities. He's cultivating his or her strengths as a way of life. There's not an excessive focus on weakness. There's just an embracing of deep, deep studying of the preconditions to someone's finest moments to expression and then they build their lifestyles around it.

That's a lot of what I do is help people understand what makes them tick on a very, very deep level, relative to the cognitive biases, where they're locked up and where to [inaudible] come. What kind of external conditions, what kind of internal conditions. The ones who are really at the top are people who have mastered this art of deep introspection and taking the result of these introspective processes and turn them into training systems and into a way of life.

It's fascinating how the process works. What I do with these guys is after I do my initial diagnostic process, I have ways of revamping their daily architecture, the way they live their life. So that they're, for example, aligning their peak

energy periods with their peak creativity work. They're building lifestyles that are relentlessly proactive as opposed to reacting to inputs.

They're building a daily architecture which is based on maximizing their creative process. If you think about this -- to most people a simple case in point is email checking. Most people when they finish a break, even top guys in industries when they finish a break, when they wake up first thing in the morning what do most people do? They check their email.

When they come from a workout they check their email. When they come back from lunch what do they do? They check their email. So what you see is whenever they're coming back from something after a break, they're soaking in inputs. So they live this reactive lifestyle. Their creative processes are dominated by external noise as opposed to internal music.

And a lot of what I work on with guys is creating rhythms in their life that really are based on feeding the unconscious mind, which is the wellspring of creativity information and then tapping it. So for example, ending the workday with high quality focus on a certain area of complexity where you can use an insight and then waking up first thing in the morning creating input and applying your mind to it, journaling on it.

Not so much to do a big brainstorm, but to tap what you've been working on unconsciously overnight. Which of course, is a principle that Hemingway wrote about when he spoke about the two core principles in his creative writing process, number one ending the workday with something left to write and --

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, often in mid-sentence even.

Josh Waitzkin: Right. So not doing everything he had to do. Which most people do, but they feel this sense of guilt if they're not working. You and I have discussed this at length, but leaving something left to write and then the second principle, release your mind from it. Don't think about it all night. Really let go. Have a glass of wine. Then wake up first thing in the morning and reapply your mind to it.

And it's amazing because you're basically feeding the mind complexity and then tapping that complexity or tapping what you've done with it. This rhythm, the large variation of it is overnight, and then you can have microbursts of it throughout the day. Before workouts pose a question, do a workout, release your mind after workout, return to it, and do creative bursts.

Before you go to the bathroom, before you go to lunch, before anything. And in that way you're systematically training yourself to generate the crystallization experience, that ah-ha moment that can happen once a month or once a year. A lot of what I do is work on systems to help it happen once a day or four times a day, and when we're talking about guys who run financial groups of \$20 to \$30

billion, for example, if they have a huge insight that can have unbelievable value.

If you can really train people to get systematic about nurturing their creative process, it's unbelievable what can happen and most of that work relates to getting out of your own way. It's unloading. It's the constant practice of subtraction, reducing friction.

Tim Ferriss: What would be an example? You've mentioned cognitive biases a few times. For those people who may not be familiar with that term what would be an example of cognitive biases and how someone might work on them?

Josh Waitzkin: Right. Well, there are a lot of cognitive biases that are specific to certain disciplines, like chess or finance or philosophy. But if we think about it in terms of everyday life, let's say we make a decision and we then feel the need to justify that decision, and so we make more decisions to justify that initial decision. Then we basically get ourselves into this deep wormhole which is caused by the attempt to justify.

Tim Ferriss: Like Sunk Cost Fallacy.

Josh Waitzkin: Exactly, so in the financial group in the world talking about it these will be Sunk Cost Fallacy, you're right. But it's very interesting for example, for a chess player who makes a certain decision and there's a certain emotional and intellectual and time component to the value we put into the thought process behind that decision. And what we often have to do is release it because the position changes shape.

A very interesting way that it's manifested in chess, which you can think about rather universally, is that there's a certain evaluation to the position. You and I are playing, Tim, and I have a slight advantage in the position. I'm nurturing that advantage. I'm nurturing it and a lot of complexity and I make a slight error and suddenly your position is equalized, right?

So if I'm holding on to the past evaluation emotionally where I had the advantage, then what I'm going to do very subtly, I'm going to reject positions that don't give me that advantage. But if objectively I no longer have an advantage, then I'm going to be reaching too far. Then I'm going to be rejecting the notion of accept which will make my position slip more and more and more and you fall into what I call a downward spiral.

So this relates to a lack of presence which really connects to a cognitive bias, an addiction to a past evaluation as opposed to a present one. So that's a very simple example of a cognitive bias. A mental addiction, a thought construct, something that we hold to be true because of some complicated twist in our mind that's no longer actually true.

And so of course, a very simple antidote to most of this is presence. If we can look at a moment or a chess position or an investment decision or any decision with very clean presence, outside of emotional inertia, then we can often slice through just amazing amounts of fat with very, very simple decisions or if you think about the learning process, for example.

This is one thing I love about your approach to learning, the language that you and I use is -- I call you a master of deconstruction. You look at the way people approach different sports and you find the biases, the false constructs and you find the way to learn a very straight path to learning as opposed to people getting mired in all sorts of tangled webs of complexity which are essentially caused by cognitive biases. Isn't that how you'd put it?

Tim Ferriss: No, I think that's true and I obviously appreciate the kind words. I think you and I have very complimentary approaches and like you've said before, I tend to focus on the 80/20 analysis as it applies to people getting up and off the ground as quickly as possible to stay in the top 5-10% of the general population. Where what's so cool about our conversations, what I enjoy so much in part, is that you're really focusing on that final leap.

How do you go from being great to being the best? They're very complimentary skill sets. What I'm looking at is a way to unearth cognitive biases and just as a side note for people who want to look into this you can go to Wikipedia and search cognitive biases and there's a long list which is pretty fun to read. There are a number of books about these types of things too. Think Twice I think is another one.

The question that I ask myself -- and I'm always interested in the questions that people ask themselves, because I find to my mind that that internal dialog is what defines your day-to-day thinking and what you think you become. So it's so critical that you ask yourself the right questions, and in my mind, or I should say rather when I'm trying to deconstruct say a sport, all I'll ask is to start with what rules are people following that are not required?

So outside of the law and science and even within science and within law reality is negotiable. So a good instance of that is the high jump, and the Fosbury flops. Dick Fosbury who's really the first guy to go backwards over the high jump, and up to that point there'd been straddle kicks and all sorts of different approaches, and he was ridiculed at first and then he was called a cheat because he won the gold medal and now everybody uses that approach.

So having a list of questions, who's good at this? Who shouldn't be, is another one that I love to ask because you might know someone. For instance, you were talking about the different styles in chess or Jiu Jitsu, where in chess, as in a

reference to your first book, you have attacking chess players. Then you have very different stylistic differences and you've got very quantitative players.

And for the TV show, for the Tim Ferriss Experiment I did an episode on poker, and I've avoided poker my whole life because I viewed it as a game of chance. And I had a former computer science guy who said, "No, no, no I'm not going to teach you to be lucky because I can't teach you to be lucky. But I can teach you to run some probabilities and only bet when you have a good likelihood of a positive outcome."

What was so fascinating is you look at a guy like that and you'll find a highly quantitative -- say hedge fund managers for instance, or investors of different types, tech investors who go to the World Series of Poker and they run the numbers. That's how they play. And then are other guys who are completely seemingly fly by the seat of their pants. They're very kinesthetic. They're playing an intimidation game. They're very physical.

So asking myself for instance, who's good at this, who shouldn't be? If the assumption is you have to be very good at math to be good at poker. Who admits to using no math which might be misinformation and let me look into how they do it. Then the second question is how have they replicated their results? Are there other people they've taught to do what they do to try to separate out the nature from the nurture where possible?

But I want to come back to the finance guys, just for a second, and to ask you about rituals and routines. Then I'm going to ask you about your own. But what are some habits and it doesn't have to be across the board with all these guys because they have such different personalities and approaches. But with some of these really super high level finance guys who are managing tens of billions of dollars what are some of the habits that you've observed that you find interesting or rituals?

Josh Waitzkin: For me, it's like describing the keystone habits that I recommend for people to internalize in the field? [inaudible].

Tim Ferriss: Yeah.

Josh Waitzkin: First of all, meditation. Where we're speaking about this theme of cognitive biases or basically observing your mental dictions the moment that they set in. Meditation is as deep and as powerful a tool as I could possibly describe. Maybe six or seven years ago when I was first talking about meditation with guys in the finance world it seemed like some woo-woo strange thing for them to take on. But as more and more people are integrating in their process, you wouldn't believe how many of the most powerful players in the world are meditating very deeply.

It's just an amazing way of deepening the creative process, deepening presence, expanding your energetic relationship with the world, gaining insight, and realizing that most of the thinking that we do basically springs from mental addiction. And much of people's lives are spent in an emotional swirl which is a reactive one. And having a relationship to presence which allows you to see through the illusion of that emotional swirl or of those mental addictions, meditation is an incredibly powerful tool, which I know you know quite deeply.

I've been meditating since I was 17 or 18 years old. It's a big part of your life as well, Tim. So that's a very, very important habit. The idea of waking first thing in the morning and turning your mind to creative work, pre-input as opposed to checking email and getting reactive, opening up your channels to the unconscious mind first thing when you wake up in the morning, and doing the same, ending the workday with quality, hugely important.

I remember when I went skiing with Billy Kidd who is one of the great downhill racers from back in the '60s Olympic ski team. He's an awesome dude. Now he skis out in Colorado wearing a cowboy hat, just a timeless guy, brilliant dude. And he was saying to me years ago when I first skied with him, "Josh, what do you think are the three most important turns of the ski run?" I've asked that question to a lot of people since.

And most people will say the middle because it's the hardest, the beginning to get up momentum really describes the three most important turns of a ski run are the last three before you got in the lift and it's a very, very subtle point. For those of you who are skiers, that's when the slope is leveled off, there's less challenge. Most people are very sloppy. Then they're taking away a lot of the muscle they've been using. They have bad form. The problem is that on the lift ride up unconsciously you're internalizing bad body mechanics.

As Billy points out, if your last three turns are precise, then what you're internalizing on the lift ride up is precision. So I carry this on to the guys who I train in the finance world, for example. Ending the workday with very high quality which opens up, for one thing, you're internalizing quality overnight. We're nurturing themes as well as skills.

It's one thing to learn skills but the higher artist has to learn themes or meta-themes that will ultimately, spontaneously tap into the internalization of hundreds of what I would call local habits. If you're practicing quality, you're deepening the muscle of quality and you're also focusing the unconscious in that complexity which we then tap first thing in the mornings.

This is a core habit, journaling, certain post-mortem processes, ending your day with a reflection of the quality of the work, where the core is, complexity that you're wrestling with, hugely important.

Tim Ferriss: Would you do that immediately after the end of the workday per se, before bed? How do you time that if someone wanted to try these themselves?

Josh Waitzkin: I find at the end of the workday the problem with doing these things right before is then you're sort of consciously going to bed thinking about these things. That's why I find you want to release. The very core idea is when you go home, as best you can, unless you're red hot inspired release your mind from the work. It's very important to give your stress a recovery. Core habit, you want to be turning it on and turning it off.

And you can teach people that turning it off is a huge part of teaching them to turn it on much more intensely. Stress and recovery workouts, interval training, and meditation together are beautiful habits to develop to cultivate the art of turning it on and turning it off. So if you're undulating your heart rate, for example, between 170-172-174, and say 144, the practice of lowering your heart rate over the course of 45 seconds is akin to falling asleep, releasing your tension.

And then as you're pushing your heart rate back up, you're letting it turn on. So you're using a physical metaphor to train at the art of turning on incredible intellectual energy and then turning it off. Marcelo Garcia, who we were talking about, one of my most beautiful memories of him in the World Championship right before going to the semifinals, [inaudible] this bleacher. Everyone's screaming and yelling. He's sleeping, asleep on the bleacher, can't wake him up.

He took a stumble into the ring. You've never seen a guy more relaxed before going into a world championship fight, and then he can turn it off so deeply, and man, when he goes in the ring you can't turn it on with any more intent than he can. And his ability to turn it off indirectly aligned with how intensely he can turn it on, so training people to do this, have stress and recovery, undulation throughout their day.

And then thematically this ties into again, this internal proactive orientation, building a daily architecture which is around understanding your creative process as opposed to reacting to things, feeling guilty that you're not working, really teaching people to tap into their internal compass. So those are some of the core themes that I would bring up first. I could spend three hours talking about this subject.

Tim Ferriss: Let's do it. We'll have a Part 2. The meditation I wanted to touch on for a second, as you know I've been taking that very seriously for particularly the last six months or so. And I received an email the other day from the teacher that I used for a transcendental meditation and there are many different types of meditation. I'm curious. I'm going to ask you about how you format your own meditating in a second. But in many types I have my issues, my likes, and dislikes as it relates to almost all of them.

But I received an email with a link to an article, and the title is "Bridgewater Founder Dalio Credits Transcendental Meditation for His Success." And for those who don't know he's the founder of the world's largest hedge fund, Bridgewater Associates. They have what, \$100 billion plus under management I think. And his quote is, "Meditation more than any other factor has been the secret to whatever success I've had." That is a helluva endorsement.

So for me, it's been getting over that resistance to what I perceived as a woo-woo new age type thing and the ability to view it almost as just a warm bath for the mind, a warm taking of a mini-vacation from my own brain in a way. Which may or may not -- depending on who you ask -- be the most helpful way to look at it, but I found that a very useful lens through which to view it. If there is a particular type of meditation you follow what is it? How do you personally meditate? What do you think of or not think of? How long do you do it, etc.?

Josh Waitzkin: When I was 17-18, I started studying very simple, contemplative, acquiescent Buddhist sitting meditation where I'd focus on my breath and this is when I was late teenager. Then I started getting involved with Tai Chi and I started studying East Asian philosophy very deeply. And this is where I got increasingly into moving meditation, which is the most deep practice or the practice that I've personally done most deeply.

Tai Chi for meditation so that the meditative form of Tai Chi is the essence of the art and then the fighting application was what I was competing in. And so I spent many years meditating four, five, six hours a day with Tai Chi. Today I combine my Tai Chi practice with sitting meditation again.

Most people when they enter meditation what I suggest they just practice very simple sitting meditation following their breath. It's a practice that doesn't have to be very complex. They can for example, just sit cross-legged or comfortably in a chair and follow their breath and it's very interesting. Because they'll notice after one or two seconds that their mind starts racing off and usually what happens when you have really driven guys who are trying to meditate for the first time and their mind races off, they get all pissed off.

Ah, angry, frustration, they feel like they're failing at meditation. And one of the most important things to do is to embrace the fact that meditation isn't about perfection. It's about the return to breath so when you find your mind racing, you observe that, and you return to your breath and that's a tough emotional hurdle for a lot of guys. It's very interesting because over time, you know the metaphor of basically the mind is a wild stallion that over time you're taming and ultimately learn to still it.

It's racing. It's bucking. It's pulling against any kind of line you put on it. But ultimately the circles get smaller and smaller and you learn to observe when

your mind is getting caught up in some kind of mental or emotional addiction more and more quickly and fluidly. And the return to breath becomes easier and easier and it's very interesting. By the way as a competitor because I relate to the theme of channeling the emotion or fear whatever's rising as a world class competitor in the same way we might speak about meditation. I spoke at a conference on Grit recently and it was very interesting for me because for the most part --

Tim Ferriss: Grit, G-R-I-T?

Josh Waitzkin: G-R-I-T, yeah, which is a first core educational principle in a lot of charter schools these days. It's hugely important, teaching kids to be resilient. It's very interesting because when I hear people speak about resilience -- and this is we're moving a little bit aside from meditation, but we'll bring it back. The focus is on, for example, overcoming difficulty, suffering, learning to basically push through. What people don't realize is that world class performers what they've done is they've reoriented their relation to the suffering to the point of resistance.

They've learned to embrace it. They've learned to see the beauty in these moments where there's pain because that's incredible room for growth. I think that a lot of what you learn to do in meditation is observe the addictive you might be defining something and if you want to you can simply alter that definition, so you can change your relationship to pain, or the rain, or a huge storm, or fear, or anger. So for example, people from the outside will use the term fearlessness.

But if you speak to any great soldier or SEAL team member or fighter, or UFC guy, mixed martial arts, a great world class fighter, they'll tell you that they feel fear. They just know how to sit with their fear and how to work with it, channel it. So the idea of fearlessness is a false idea which is imposed from the outside by a spectator.

And when you observe world class performers what they've learned how to do is harness fear, nerves, anxiety, bring them in, embrace them, have a working relationship with them, and channel them into intensity, and meditation is an incredible form or vehicle. You can do this because you learn to observe where you have addictive relationships and you realize they're not absolute. And you can actually transform your relationship to any of these thought patterns, thought constructs, cognitive biases, or emotional patterns.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I was looking at a quote as you mentioned that because I wanted to get it right, but it's one of my favorite quotes from Cus D'Amato who trained boxers like Floyd Patterson, Jose Torres, most famously perhaps, Mike Tyson and he would say, "The hero and the coward both feel the same thing, but the hero uses

his fear, projects it onto his opponent while the coward runs. It's the same thing fear, but it's what you do with it that matters."

I started meditating and gave up meditating many, many times because I had the response that you mentioned about Type A personalities. I'd be sitting there and I thought the objective was to quiet my mind and I'll come back to that in a second. So when I failed at quieting my mind because it would be ticking off the to-do list or being like, "Oh, that fucker who said A, B, and C to me the other day." I would harp on these ridiculous things and I'd get then pissed.

And I'd get pissed that I was getting pissed and get up and have a coffee and storm out of the house which didn't seem like a productive meditation session. I actually started doing it consistently when I kept it really short.

A friend of mine recommended this where I would number one, be comfortable. So I would sit down, but to avoid back pain I would actually lean against a wall which is very commonly thought of as a big no-no, so I'd lean against a wall to keep my back straight. I would listen to one music track. I would listen to one song every morning, the same songs as a cue and would pay attention to my breath and focus on being an observer of my thoughts, but not trying to control them at all.

So if all I did was think about my to-do list the entire time, that's fine, as long as I'm paying attention to my breath. That non-attachment to an outcome i.e. controlling my thoughts was very helpful. And the format that I followed subsequent to that we can have a longer conversation about why it finally clicked, but the short answer's accountability. I had a teacher who was going to give me a hard time if I didn't do my meditating and then report back. It was 10 to 20 minutes twice a day.

What I found was by allowing the thoughts to occur and not judging myself -- because let's say I'm thinking about email or the grocery shopping I need to do - - just letting that happen but getting good at observing it, I was able to then have more emotional awareness later which would prevent cognitive biases and bad judgments. So what I mean by that is as a concrete example, I'm an impatient guy.

I always have been ever since I was literally a little kid, like 12 or 13 years old. If I was at the restaurant with my mom and dad and the server didn't come over and pour water after we'd been gone dry for five minutes, I'd get up and walk into the kitchen and grab a pitcher and walk out. I'm really impatient and I get angry. I get angry about things that I view as deliberately slow and sloppy and that anger can be harnessed sometimes into really productive aggression.

But it also wears you down at both ends. So what I found is after meditating consistently for even a week or so, when that anger would start, I was better

observing Tim, as a third person. Like, "Oh, look at that, Tim's getting angry about something really small and stupid." As opposed to simply becoming angry, and then causing problems for myself, whether it's just internal or interacting with other people. So I agree with you completely on the meditation.

Josh Waitzkin: I love that image of you as a 12-year-old racing into the kitchen bringing out the water. That's a great metaphor for your life today. You'd race in there and you'd get the water and you slice right through them. I love it.

Tim Ferriss: So let's do a couple rapid fire questions that are all tied into this stuff, but we can just do short questions with a couple of short answers. Complete the following statement, "My favorite time of day is blank."

Josh Waitzkin: My favorite time of day is holding my son in my arms after I've woken up with a 20-30 minute journaling session. I get my son. I bring him downstairs and I give him his bottle of milk and I hold him and I look at him in the eye and I tell him how proud I am of him. We talk about what he's thinking about and what he's working on when he has some milk. I think it's the most magical part of my day, these days.

Tim Ferriss: That's in the morning?

Josh Waitzkin: Yeah, I wake up about a half-an-hour before him. I do a big creative burst. As a parent your sleep patterns change pretty dramatically, but I've found this rhythm where I wake up where I do that burst and then I just love that first morning energy time with him. And we have this deep connection while he's having his milk and talk about things.

Tim Ferriss: What time do you wake up?

Josh Waitzkin: I usually wake up around 7:05 and he's usually awake around 7:30-7:35.

Tim Ferriss: I'm endlessly fascinated by morning routines so this might seem really digging, like I'm digging into the minutiae. But when you wake up it sounds like you wake up and you have 30 minutes to journal before bringing your son downstairs. Do you brush your teeth, drink a cup of coffee, any of that before you journal or do you just roll out of bed, walk into the office, and sit down to write.

Josh Waitzkin: My routine is that I roll out of bed. I brush my teeth. I go downstairs and I sit down with my journal and I start writing and I immediately apply myself to a reflection that I have targeted in my mind in the evening or late afternoon before and I just let it rip. I have a big creative surge. Then once I hear my son I go get him and then I have my breakfast usually a bowl of oatmeal after he has his milk and then I have a cup of coffee about a half an hour after that.

Tim Ferriss: Cool. Related to you strike me as a happy guy. Obviously we all have our challenges then and again, like the place I'm getting remodeled at the moment which I won't go into a diatribe at the moment. I'm very excited about it. It's my 12-year-old, Tim, wanted to go get the water pitcher that's not being very helpful right now. What are three things, could be two, three things that you believe you need in order to be happy? That could be for you. It could be for people in general. I'm just curious how you would think of that or answer that question.

Josh Waitzkin: One of the great things about you and I being different and having a conversation is that you tend to be very good at picking up bullets and lists of three things and that's not how my brain works. I can tell you the essence of how I relate to that question. I'm not going to give you the three bullet answer because that's just not how this brain operates.

I have built a lifestyle being around true to myself. Maybe a big reason is because of my mom used to always tell me as a kid to follow my heart, follow my dreams. I never made decisions for money or for external things. I always trusted that if I was true to myself, these things would follow. And so my professional life, my foundation, my school, I only work with people who I feel are ethically aligned, who have a good energy, who I feel really good about intuitively.

I keep empty space in my life. I rarely have more than one or two meetings a day. My life is about quality and not quantity and it's about depth and not breadth. My businesses are based on doing very, very deep and very excellent work with just a handful of people. And so I really like to cultivate quality as a way of life and I believe that when you're not cultivating quality, you're essentially cultivating sloppiness.

So the idea of building the musculature of quality and being like a heat seeking missile, I take great pleasure in observing the beauty of the little moments in life. So for me, my lifestyle is based on working out every day. I just focus on structuring a day that will allow for my creative process to be rich. I'm present with my son. I have my office is at home. I'm with him in the morning. I'm with him and see him throughout the day. I'm with him and give him his bath and read him a story at night with him.

I've eliminated almost all travel that takes me away from my boy. Going to conference my wife, and my baby are coming with me. I really build a life around being true and I don't build it around anything material. That's really the essence of how I personally relate to this question. Of course, there are different solutions for everybody, but this works for me.

Tim Ferriss: This is something that is being true to one's self, I think that most people struggle with. I think it's a goal that most people have at least in the abstract, but

I'd love to dig into some concrete details of that and perhaps you could share an example of something you've changed. Like maybe where you got slightly off the path and made a correction to be true to yourself and what that looked like.

Josh Waitzkin: Well, for me, a very clear example is my public life. I was a young kid, fell in love with chess. I won my first national championship when I was late eight, early nine. When I was 11, a book came out, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, and then when I was 15, the movie came about my life based on the same book that my dad initially wrote.

So I was really thrust into the spotlight, without me wanting to. I was just a young passionate artist. I loved playing chess and competing in chess. I was put out there and I had paparazzi following me everywhere. I was really living in the spotlight in a way I wasn't necessarily emotionally prepared for. I felt in my teens how that challenged my love for this art because my love for it was so pure initially.

That tension that fight to stay true to my art taught me some very deep lessons. After I finished high school I took off and I left the country, largely to study chess very deeply undistracted from publicity. I moved to Eastern Europe. My girlfriend at the time was from Slovenia. No one knew me out there and it was a beautiful life.

I just left the public world, and since then when I came back, I've had these periods where I've been exposed to publicity. And I've been in periods where I've been deep in a cave and moved away from it. I think this is a very clean example. Other than you, very few people drag me out [inaudible].

Tim Ferriss: Throw a net over the bear and drag him out of the cave.

Josh Waitzkin: You have a way of doing that to me, but in a beautiful way. I've found that the privacy of my life, not doing things, not getting caught up in the swirl of fame, or seeking external adulation is a very important thing for me, personally. Everyone's different. But for me, maybe I have a little bit of oversensitivity to this because of my youth, because I was out there so intensely as a young guy. I think it really challenged my love for the game.

There's an example of the kind of decisions that I'll make and I think it's very important for me to live the vast majority of my life privately. I don't do very much that will allow me to be recognized on the street and live my life as a celebrity because I've gone down that path and I love my privacy. I also built a career around my businesses, working with people who are similar, who are not seeking the limelight. We're not out there on television every day.

We're world class, but no one around them other than people very close have any idea that they have been so incredibly successful in a monetary way. They

try to raise their kids not to be spoiled. The kids are gritty kids. They're great philanthropists, really good people. And I love, I'm very drawn to people who have been enormously successful, but don't get caught up in the external crap that comes with success and are real, who are living their life tapped into the love. That's how I try to live.

Tim Ferriss: What are the books -- let's just stick with books for a second -- that you've either most gifted to other or most recommended to other people. Because there are many people listening to this probably who won't necessarily have the opportunity to interact with the types of high level folks that you and I are so fortunate to have a chance to interact with. But they can do that vis-à-vis, books, or narratives, documentaries, etc. What are some books that have a formative impact on you?

Josh Waitzkin: So if we go back to when I was 17-18, Jack Kerouac has a huge impact on my life, *On the Road*, *Dharma Bums*. His books were initially tapped me into the idea that life could be ecstatically beautiful. Then I moved into studying Taoism, so Lao Tzu, the *Tao Te Ching*, hugely just unbelievable deep. But of course the translation of that book that you read will be formative and my favorite translation is the *Gia-Fu Feng* in the English translation of the *Tao Te Ching*.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, I think one of the most important books ever written by Robert Pirsig who has become a very dear friend over the years. When *The Art of Learning* came out, my publisher asked me, "Who would you love to read this book?" And I said, "Well, the one person I'd really want to read that book is Robert Pirsig."

He lived a deeply secluded life, but they somehow managed to get him a copy of the book. He got it in a big bushel from his publisher and he read it and contacted me and wrote. I was so honored that he was moved by it and he and I over the years have developed really interesting dialog. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is one of the most important books in the world to focus on quality than inequality, learning to find art in anything, deeply, deeply brilliant, philosophical book.

Shantaram, one of the most beautiful novels I ever read by Gregory David Roberts, is one I've gotten to know very well, just an ecstatically beautiful book. Of course, I'm also a lover of fiction. I mean Hemingway has been -- he's probably the most important writer of my life.

Tim Ferriss: Any particular novel stand out for you of his?

Josh Waitzkin: I think that *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is just an exquisite novel, *The Green Hills of Africa*, amazing. His short stories are utterly magnificent. I think we have *The Green Hills of Africa* is one of the most underrated books that he's written. His

complete collection of short stories, there's one magnificent gem after the next. Of course, *Old Man and the Sea* is the one everybody thinks about and it's a beautiful book. I guess if I had to have a favorite it would be *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, for those people who are listening you also want insight into his writing style, *A Moveable Feast*.

Josh Waitzkin: It's a magnificent book, yeah.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, also.

Josh Waitzkin: That's where Hemingway really speaks to his writing process, it's fantastical.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, it's so fascinating.

Josh Waitzkin: You know there's a great book by the way, Tim, I think you've read which I think it's *Hemingway on Writing*. Have you read this book?

Tim Ferriss: I did read it, yeah. I also read that.

Josh Waitzkin: Ah, if someone wants to get to know Hemingway it's just a fantastic compilation of all of Hemingway's writing in letters, in his books, in his articles, everywhere, put together thematically. Basically Hemingway on the writing process, I think it's one of the most important little collections on creativity that I've ever run into. Absolutely brilliant book.

Josh Waitzkin: And it's really short. I remember I read it on Kindle on a short flight that I had and just jammed right through the whole thing. One of the recommendations was write drunk, edit sober and I realized that write drunk, edit sober does not translate to podcasts very well. The last podcast that I did with a buddy, Kevin Rose, if you record drunk and try to edit sober it doesn't really actually work the same way.

Tim Ferriss: That's interesting. Let's do a couple more questions because this has been fun. If you had to run out of your house and just take a handful of things with you, obviously your family is safe, so that's accounted for. What would you take and why?

Josh Waitzkin: In what kind of situation? Like in a very dangerous situation?

Tim Ferriss: You don't have to fend for yourself with weaponry or create fire with flint or anything like that. There's a fire in your house, so you just have to get out to the street and then you'll obviously sort things out later. But assuming your family is safe what would you take with you, just what you can carry basically?

Josh Waitzkin: That's a really great question. I actually had that experience years ago when I was playing chess and it speaks to how crazy I was. I was studying chess with this brilliant Russian grandmaster name Yuri Averbakh. who I actually wrote about in my book. I was on the fifth floor of a walkup. It was an old one bedroom. I had my first apartment and we were deep, deep into chess study and there was a huge fire.

And I looked out and there were five fire engines and dudes screaming at us and we had to go out the fire escape. And I ended up going back in and grabbing my computer with all of my chess notes. It was just a random thing to do. It was so unimportant. It speaks to how different I've become and it had been seconds from being up drafted, blowing the whole building up. Yeah, so I wouldn't do that. I don't know, man. Honestly when you asked me that question now if I think that my family was safe, I have nothing material that I would grab.

Tim Ferriss: That's great. That's a very stoic response in the most positive way. All right, my man. I'm going to ask you one more and I'll give you the choice of two questions. Let's do that. So the first option is what did you want to be when you grew up, so when you're a kid and now how would you answer the question? What do you want to be when you grow up? That's question number one. Question number two is if you had a committee of three people living or dead to help you make decisions, who would you choose and why?

Josh Waitzkin: These are great questions, man.

Tim Ferriss: Thanks and, by the way, I'm borrowing them really from every good interviewer I've ever come in contact with.

Josh Waitzkin: Do you want me to answer both of them or do you want to answer one of them?

Tim Ferriss: You can answer them both.

Josh Waitzkin: These are two very different questions. I mean this is tough, man.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, and if they -- I'm just trying to be respectful of your time, but if you have time, and you have some thoughts on both, let's go for it.

Josh Waitzkin: When I grew up when I was a kid I wanted to be a professional baseball player. I loved something about the sport. I spent a lot of my life as a competitive from age basically six until 35 I was basically a professional competitor in my field. But my mom always said to me that she felt like that was a phase and that I was a healer. That was always her language.

And a lot of what I do today is try to figure out how to help people to express themselves in as pure a way as possible; artistically in a way that gives them joy. I think that my plan is sometime in the next four or five years -- I'm 37

now. I'm thinking about it when I'm 40-41. I guess that would be three, four years now. I'm getting old.

To turn my mind to taking everything I've been doing in these different laboratories and apply it to a world changing education initiative. Helping children fulfill themselves in a very deep way I think is an essential calling. I'm not going to say it's my end game, but that's the next major chapter I think of my life that I'm building towards.

I'm laying my foundation for many years now and we do beautiful work, but I have an allergy to scaling if it's going to dilute quality in any way. So I've been sort of building up the groundwork to ultimately be able to do something hugely important in education, so I think that that's going to be the core of how I would -- I'm building towards that in a few years. In terms of the committee of three people --

Tim Ferriss: Just to interject for a second. That's also I think my calling, and of course, we've spoken at length about this. So if you need co-conspirator, count me in for that one.

Josh Waitzkin: Yeah, dude. Let's plan on this. Let's say four or five. We have to figure what it's going to be made. Four or five years we'll team up and we'll take the world by storm in education [inaudible].

Tim Ferriss: Sounds like a plan, man.

Josh Waitzkin: All right. I love it. It caps that movement away from self. As a competitor you're fighting in many ways there's something about the focus inward on one's self and becoming a parent I've definitely felt this movement away from it. My son is -- just my love for me so transcends anything I ever felt before. It's been really important to experience. When you become a dad, man, then we're going to have some fun.

Tim Ferriss: I can't wait.

Josh Waitzkin: Looking forward to your sleepless nights.

Tim Ferriss: Oh, man. Yeah, you're going to see battle weary Timbo. I need to work on my polyphasic sleep. Is there a committee of three people? What are your thoughts?

Josh Waitzkin: Well, one person who would be on that committee is someone who I know a very deep friend of mine who happens to be in the finance world. His name is Dave. I can't speak about what his last name is, but just a deeply meditative spirit, great wisdom. As an insightful human being that I've ever known in my life. I think that that he would definitely be on that list. Can we say outrageous characters like Gandhi?

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, go for it, yeah.

Josh Waitzkin: I think of Gandhi, Lao Tzu, and Buddha. If you need to be at certain -- I don't know, man. I don't know if I can answer this question very intelligently.

Tim Ferriss: That's a perfect way to end.

Josh Waitzkin: Yeah, I don't know and Tim, of course, you man you give me so much crap in life. I'd call up you because you'd definitely be one to slice through all the nonsense, yeah. And my mom, that's the most important one, my mom. She has given me the most deep advice in my life. I mean mom is the one person who has really embraced these crazy decisions that I've made when I left arts when I was one of the tops of those fields because of some strange calling I had inside. I think you can be at top [inaudible]. She's my hero. My mom's the greatest person I've known.

Tim Ferriss: Awesome, man. Well, this has been a lot of fun. Obviously, we're going to have a lot more conversations. Is there anything you want to -- any parting thoughts, advice, suggestions, anything like that that you'd like to impart? If not, we can call it a day. But the mic is yours if you have anything that you'd like to add.

Josh Waitzkin: No, I love this. This has been really interesting. I guess if I'm going to close with a thought it would be that one thing that I've been doing in the last year since writing *The Art of Learning* is I've been exposed to the most brilliant thinkers in these fields. I've studied the patterns behind them and I've studied the people who study them. And one of the things we have to be wary of in life is studying the people who study the artists as opposed to the artist himself.

Pirsig, the author who I mentioned, he uses a great term. The philosophers and philosophologists, the philosophologists are the ones who are basically philosophizing about the philosophers as opposed to do doing philosophy. And the vast majority of philosophers today actually are just philosophologists. Similarly you and I have discussed there's the writers and there's a literary critic. There's the artist and the art critic and I think we have to be very careful when we study excellence and we're thinking about our path to excellence.

That we're studying and we're tuning in to the direct experience of people who have actually been there as opposed to the armchair professors who are talking about it. Because if we spend our life in the trenches and we spend our life studying that last .1% of the learning process, what we see is that that final passage to excellence is really about navigating that razor's edge where you have to be willing to go right up against a potential enormous blunder.

You have to improvise, for example, trust your intuition in moments where all the objective, mathematical faculties you've developed are telling you

something else, but your intuition is operating a higher level. You have to really be willing to go up to the brink of disaster to succeed in moments where you're, for example, fighting in the finals of the world championship or in the very last seconds of the Super Bowl or NBA finals.

And in navigating these things, the armchair professors will often have the exact opposite of good advice. And so what I would say for one thing, listen deeply, internally to the core of your being and build your game plan from there. Trust your gut and then build the lifestyle around listening to that and cultivate the love. And that's the other thing I'd say. Whether you're talking about the beginning of the learning process or the very final surge or surges, think about the love.

Think about parenting, cultivating resilience, cultivating excellence, cultivating creativity. What the armchair professors all forget about is the love and that's what I see consistently with people who've found the most pleasure, the most happiness and created the greatest art is that they have a profound passion for what they do. Not only the big moments, but the little moments. The moments that others would call pain. They learn to love practice. They learn to love the point of resistance. Don't forget about the love. I guess what that's what I meant to say.

Tim Ferriss: That's a beautiful way to end this, man. Well, Josh, I am sure we'll be talking. Next time we'll have some wine and --

Josh Waitzkin: We're good to go.

Tim Ferriss: Yeah, I hope everybody checks out obviously *The Art of Learning* and really keeps an eye on what you have coming when you decide to push stuff out of the cave.

Josh Waitzkin: Thanks, brother. This was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it.

Tim Ferriss: All right, buddy. I'll talk to you soon.