



# **THE MIND GAME OF MMA**

**KEVIN SEAMAN**

# Lesson Two: Building Your Mental Toolbox

*“Our Mind always leads us in the direction of our dominant thoughts.” -Kevin Seaman*

## A Question Of Balance

I ask every athlete and coach these two questions, and I am now going to ask you. First, “In competition, how much of an athlete’s success is attributed to their physical ability and how much is based on the mental aspects that an individual possesses and utilizes?” My question has been confirmed with a variety of statements, 50/50, 30% physical and 70% mental are the usual, yet all will admit that the mental component is critical to a the outcome. I have trained amateur and high-level Pro fighters for decades and I know the kind of ass-busting physical commitment that is required during a training camp to get in “fighting shape”. If you have a great coach you work both offense and defense. You work hard to be in peak condition, you work your standup, your footwork, your takedowns, your clinch, and you work your grappling game.

Now here’s my second question. “So, what do you do to train your Mind Game?” At this point most people just stare off searching for an answer. I have the answer! First of all, winning is a state of mind. If you aren’t training the mental aspects needed to be the best in competition, you’re at most training at 50% of your potential.

As a teacher and coach of martial arts and martial athletics for over 35 years it is obvious to me that prior to, and during competition the mental aspects that are used by the performer are absolutely as crucial as are the physical qualities. It is what

we call a critical success factor, which we will cover in complete detail later.

## **A Mental Toolbox**

In this book, I will give you some valuable keys utilized by many of the top athletes in the world and formulated by some of the leading coaches. Let's start by building a Mental Toolbox, filled with the basic tools necessary to become the fighter or coach that you want to be. Here are the first five tools. As we progress through each lesson, we will add to your Mental Toolbox.

**#1 A Belief in Yourself and Your Team-** Your beliefs are based on the references you focus on, which in turn support that belief. These references (experiences) can be first hand (personal), second hand (you were told, you read, you saw), or imagined references and can substantiate your empowerment, giving you confidence or also create the opposite effect, depending on your mindset. Our mind works by moving us in the direction of what we focus on. Focusing on our losses (what we don't want) supports the belief that we will lose again and directs us toward all the possibilities surrounding our losses. In contrast, when we focus on our wins, we create a sense of strength through the possibility of continued victory. **Our mind always leads us in the direction of our dominant thoughts.**

*"If you believe, then you have already taken the first step towards your achievement."-Rickson Gracie*

**#2 Visualize To Win-** See it, then achieve it. Athletes have long used mental imagery prior to an event, just as warriors have before engaging in battle. Did you know that your subconscious mind can't really tell the difference between experiencing something vividly in your mind and actually doing it? In fact, the

neuro-receptors in your brain respond almost identically. Your thoughts, self-talk and inner visions (visualizations) are electrochemical events that affect your performance on every level. Visualizing is a skill that needs to be honed, just like footwork, throws, positioning, locking and striking. When visualizing, focus on these four keys- Vividness, Frequency, Consistency, and Duration. When using the four qualities for visual success of vividness, frequency, consistency, and duration, you will see amazing results in your overall performance. This may just be the missing key that will unlock your potential and take you to a level you've never before achieved. When you see yourself performing with intensity and emotion over and over, focused on the outcome you expect, your subconscious accepts that as real. Your BELIEFS, become your REALITY. It will be convincingly apparent by your outward confidence that you are completely committed toward your directive, and you will perform as though it were another victory. See it first in your mind's eye and then achieve it in your LIFE.

**#3 There Are Voices In My Head-** Did you know that research has found that we talk to ourselves nearly 50,000 times a day, everyday? That's nearly 375,000 times a week, 1,500,000 times a month, and 19,500,000 a year. In fact, you're talking to yourself right now. You're probably saying something like, "That's amazing! I didn't know that " or "How's that possible?" Just as you talk to yourself, so does everyone and this "self talk" is many times what directs you in your actions. Sometimes these inner dialogs aren't dialogs at all, they are in the form of emotions, pictures, scenes and thought messages. And, despite all the media stimulus shouting out at us constantly, conversations with our coaches, friends, family, co-workers, and acquaintances, etc... Guess WHO we listen to the most attentively? Ourselves! Not only that but, most of what the majority of people say to themselves is negative in context. "This sucks, why's this always gotta happen

to me? God, I hope I don't get injured before the fight. What's this knucklehead's problem? Why can't I just once get a break?" Sound familiar? This internal dialog goes on both on a cognitive level, as well as subconsciously. So, pay particular attention to your internal voice. Always state things in the Positive, Personal and Present tense. Tell yourself exactly what you want...never what you don't want! **Example:** I don't want to blow this fight. **Better Example:** I always do the very best I can. I got this one in the bag. I'm in the best shape. I've beat this guy! Remember our FIRST Tool in this section?

***"When you start by doing what's necessary, then you begin doing what's possible, then before you know it you're doing what most people consider the impossible!" - Kevin Seaman***

**#4 Never, Never, Ever Give Up-** There is a defined procedure to developing what we know as Mental Toughness. Here are four of many, of the mental qualities necessary to be the fighter you want to be. Each of the four qualities will support each other, strengthening your behavior and mindset synergistically.

**Emotional Flexibility-** Going with what comes. This quality is the ability to make the very best out of every experience and outcome. Being flexible is remaining balanced and resourceful, accepting responsibility for your outcome, rather than being defensive, blaming and rigid. These latter behaviors are a sign of weakness, and are the result of fear-based emotions. Much of this pertains to how you process the experience, your internal dialog and your ability to manage your emotional state.

**Emotional Strength-** This is all about having a sound belief in yourself and what the outcome will be. To remain emotionally strong means doing so under extreme pressure, to continue to maintain your fighting spirit even under seemingly impossible odds. To harness your greatest strength when the emotional pressure is the utmost, and resist and exert to your full potential in spite of it. Emotional Strength is, in essence, expecting more out of yourself than anyone possibly could.

**Emotional Responsiveness-** This is the ability to remain engaged and connected with the moment and respond without hesitation. All habits are built through repetition. Your emotional responsiveness will be a product of your habits. Visualizing a successful outcome repeatedly in your mind substantiates your desired result and this familiarizes your subconscious with what you want to achieve over and over. Hesitation often comes from internal conflict in beliefs, emotions and personal values.

**Emotional Resiliency-** Resiliency is not giving up, bouncing back, staying on track, using that very moment when your actions didn't give you the results necessary to get the long-term results you desire. Resiliency is the ability **to tap into** your emotional power, not allowing it to **tap you out** of your objective. Remember, the key is to not just see your goals, but to feel the emotions connected to achieving your goals and never, never ever give up on your key goal.

**#5 Take A Personal Inventory-** What exactly makes a person perform better? It's hard to pinpoint exactly why one person excels far beyond his or her competitive peers. What winning combination do these "Top Achievers" possess that sets them apart? Why is the margin sometimes so pronounced? Why did Michael Jordan stand out? What allowed Gretzky to dominate on the ice? Why is the name

Rickson associated with greatness? What were the qualities that made Ali the seemingly unstoppable champ?

Let's not stop at sports, there must be one distinct feature that sets the top achievers in every field in a category of excellence that is exponentially unique! I've heard some say, it's genetics. But, is it?

Over 40 years ago, the world famous Martial Arts Master, Bruce Lee studied this same query. Lee was totally obsessed with the question of what made the superior athlete, technician, or warrior. I began reading about Bruce Lee and studying with his protégé Dan Inosanto, over 25 years ago. This is where I first learned about Mixed Martial Arts (Lee was one of the pioneers) and the concept of how to concentrate on improving the defining "*Qualities or Attributes*" that made someone a top achiever or champion. Really, it is these attributes that create the combination that is superior.

So, what are attributes? Attributes are strengths that attribute to or help make up who you are, sort of like personal assets. In order for us to have a clear distinction of our capability, aptitude and our potential, we need to consider what our areas of strengths and weaknesses may be. So far, I have identified some of our necessary skills in the areas of mental imagery and internal communication. We have also confirmed that our beliefs are in part relevant to our own perception of our strengths and deficiencies. These are some of the elements that contribute to the make up of our identity, of who we are. But, it goes much deeper than that. Our attributes can be both psychological and physical in nature and can be naturally adopted skills and traits, or specifically learned and cultivated. I believe that all attributes can be improved to some degree. It also appears that there are certain

attributes that are absolutely crucial, if not critical, for any marked success in given field. When we have that critical combination of attributes, necessary to succeed in our chosen endeavor developed to a level outstanding to that of our competition, we increase our chances for success beyond what we would have ever believed possible! A study at Harvard University concluded that in every career endeavor there is a set of 5-6 specific skill sets known as Critical Success Factors (CSF), that are crucial to the high level success of that challenge. It goes on to say that if one of these CSF's is inefficient, it will bring down the level of the remaining factors. These Critical Success Factors are important to recognize in yourself and others, and may hold the key to your personal development potential and a better understanding of your opponent.

*"In life you perform things in a manner which develops the body asymmetrically, so in training you must develop the body symmetrically."*  
*- Bob Gambitta*

So let's take inventory. First you must identify what qualities the most outstanding people in your chosen field possess that make them outstanding.

Now, write their names and next to their name list these qualities/attributes.

Identify and write which of these qualities you believe are Critical Success Factors.

### **Outstanding Competitor Qualities That Make Them Stand Out**

Now investigate your personal qualities and areas of necessary improvement introspectively with absolute honesty. Think about this and put together an



inventory list of your best and worst qualities. The BEST way to improve to the level necessary to become the fighter/ athlete you want to be is to be brutally honest. If you have difficulty seeing a clear picture of your list, ask your coach or training partner for input. **You are on the way to making some of the most important distinctions for improving your future success and performance that you have ever made in your LIFE!**

Now that you know what you possess, strengthen it. Now that you know what needs improvement, change it. The best way to improve something (or strengthen it) is to simply find the activities that most exemplify that skill and do them, as much as possible. Revise the level of intensity and difficulty when necessary as your specific skill evolves. This attribute specific cross training will do more to improve you than you would ever imagine. Don't believe me! Believe yourself and try it. Start NOW! Turn the page and READ the next chapter!

How To Purchase:

## The Mind Game Of MMA

12 Lessons To Develop The Mental Toughness Essential  
To Becoming A Champion

By Kevin Seaman

With a foreword by Professor Phil Migliarese III

The Mind Game Of MMA is also available on Amazon!

Purchase the hard copy by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Purchase the eBook by [CLICKING HERE](#).