

How Much "Potential" Do You Have?

When Billie Jean King was a little girl, she was 60 pounds overweight and she wore glasses as thick as coke bottles. Her friends thought she would be the last person in the world to succeed at tennis, but just look where Billie Jean King is today.

When Peggy Fleming was 13 years old, she was so skinny that she sometimes hated to go out on the ice in front of people. Six years later she won an Olympic Gold Medal for America.

When Mark Spitz was 15 years old, his swimming coach described him as "very average in height and build, and not particularly strong." But in 1972, Mark Spitz astonished the world by winning seven Olympic Gold Medals in a row.

A very average eight-year-old boy named Johnny wrote a promise to himself on a piece of paper: "Some day, I'll be the greatest catcher in the National League." Even in high school his friends called him a dreamer, but today Johnny Bench is busy fulfilling his promise.

When we hear about people like Billie Jean King, Peggy Fleming, Mark Spitz or Johnny Bench, it's sometimes hard to imagine that they once started out as "average" or "below-average" athletes just like everyone else. The truth is, every person starts out at birth with an almost unlimited amount of potential. Even Helen Keller, who started her life deaf, blind and mute, eventually became a tremendous force and inspiration in the world. It's how we choose to develop our potential that makes the difference.

POTENTIAL IS LIKE AN ICEBERG

Scientists tell us that 90 percent of an iceberg is hidden from sight under water. Only the tip (or 10 percent) is visible to the naked eye. Like an iceberg, only a small percentage of your own potential is floating on the surface for everyone to see. The other 90 percent is hiding from view, inside you. Your friends and family may not be able to see it, and sometimes even you might doubt that it's there. But it is.

HOW MUCH POTENTIAL IN A STALE PIECE OF CHEESE?

Sometimes our greatest potential is lying in plain sight just waiting to be discovered. For instance, years ago two scientists named Alexander Fleming and Howard Florey started to experiment with a little piece of green mold... the same kind of mold that you would expect to see on a stale piece of cheese. They noticed that something in the mold killed bacteria. Probably no one else saw much "potential" in their experiments, but before long Fleming and Florey had developed that common

green mold into the wonderful medicine we now call penicillin. Millions of lives have been saved with penicillin, and all because two dedicated men saw the incredible potential in something as small and common as a piece of mold.

HOW DO YOU GET GOLD OUT OF ROCK?

Sometimes we have to dig deep and hard to find our true potential. For example, in 1901 two young brothers named Anderson walked out of the Canadian Wilderness with four tired horses laden with bulging sacks of gold nuggets. The story they told was fantastic! For 21 back-breaking months, the miners had picked away at a rocky Canadian hillside, with never a sign of gold. At the beginning of the 22nd month, they finally decided to quit their labors, give up the claim and go home. The night before they were scheduled to leave, the youngest Anderson talked his brother into "one last week of digging." The very next day, the brothers broke through to a small, rich pocket of pure-gold. Their hard work and persistence had finally paid off.

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

An ordinary piece of iron is worth \$5.50.
The same iron, forged into horseshoes, is worth \$10.50.

Processed into needles, the value of the iron increases to \$1,235.00.

Transformed into beautiful Swiss watch parts, the same \$5.00 piece of iron is worth a quarter of a million dollars!

The same idea applies to our own "potential." The basic materials and resources are given to all of us at birth. It's how we choose to develop them that makes the difference in the end.

HOW MUCH POTENTIAL DO YOU HAVE?

Human potential—your potential—is far greater than any of us can ever imagine. Not just in athletics, but in every area of life.

Like an iceberg, 90 percent of your true potential is probably hidden from view.

Like the mold on a common bit of cheese, your potential is waiting for you to discover it.

Like the gold in a rocky Canadian hillside, it may take months of back-breaking work to bring it out.

And like an average lump of iron ore, you can turn your potential into anything you choose. It can be horseshoes, needles, or beautiful Swiss watch parts.

Billie Jean King made a choice. So did Peggy Fleming, Mark Spitz and Johnny Bench.
You can too.

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