

# ACCELERATE

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PEOPLE LEADING BUSINESS

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HOW ARE YOU  
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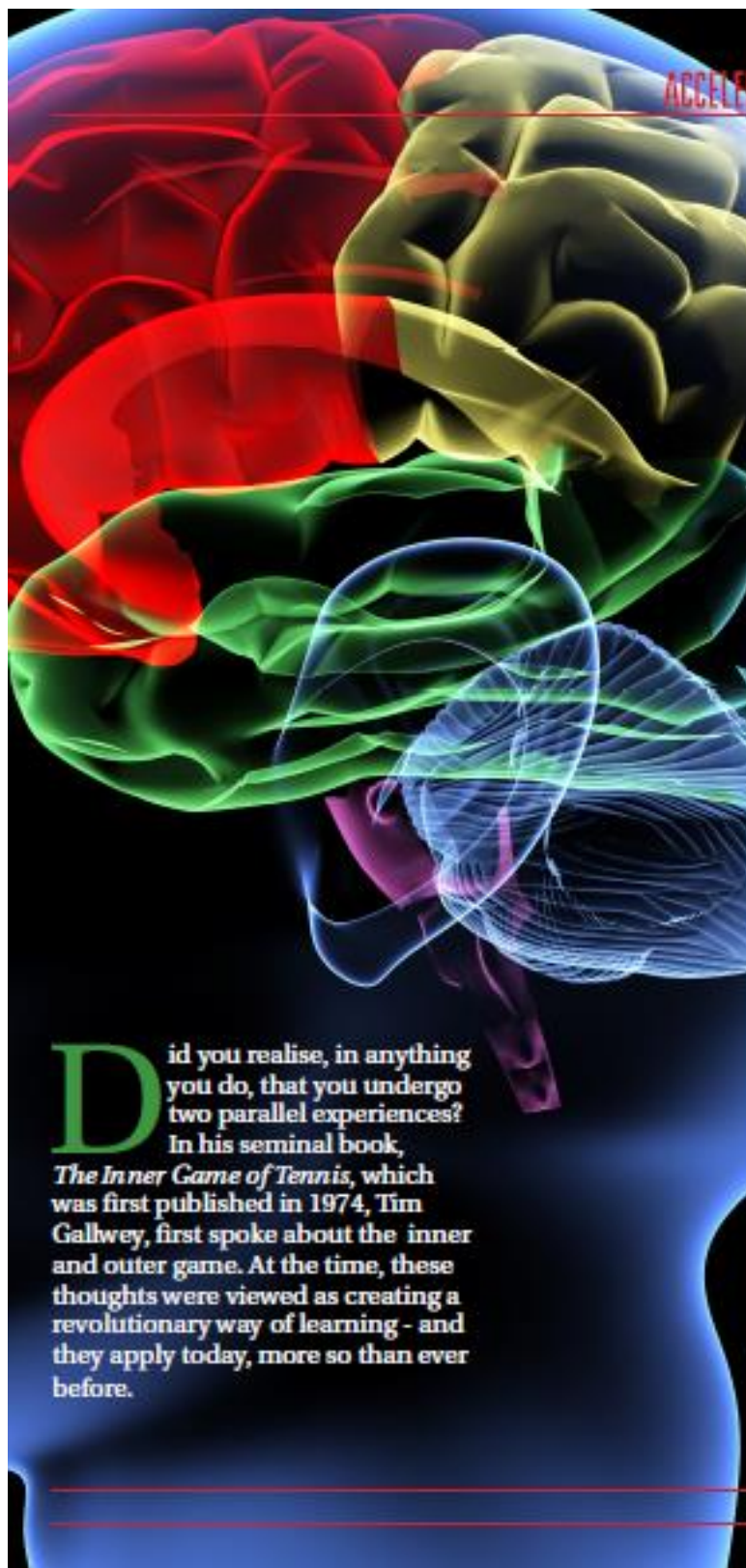
# How are you playing your inner game?

BY ROWENA MORAIS

Tim Gallwey is a best-selling author who created a methodology for coaching and the development of personal and professional excellence. Here, he discusses how we can become more successful by increasing our awareness of the full experience by being fully present and quieting self-interference.







**D**id you realise, in anything you do, that you undergo two parallel experiences? In his seminal book, *The Inner Game of Tennis*, which was first published in 1974, Tim Gallwey, first spoke about the inner and outer game. At the time, these thoughts were viewed as creating a revolutionary way of learning - and they apply today, more so than ever before.



**Timothy Gallwey** is the Founder of the Inner Game and is widely acknowledged as the godfather of the current coaching movement. He developed The Inner Game in the mid-1970s and has spent three decades inspiring successful organisations including long-term clients Apple, AT&T, The Coca Cola Company and Rolls Royce with whom he shared The Inner Game of leadership, sales, change management and teamwork. His bestselling Inner Game series of books set forth a new methodology for coaching and the development of personal and professional excellence in a variety of fields. His books have led many to realise that the Inner Game holds the key to the outer game of their lives.

**Understand that interference within affects your inner game**

The outer game is the one that takes place outside your skin. It is the one where you can see and hear and it occurs in the external arena. The inner game, however, is the one that happens inside you. It is about your thoughts, your emotions, the type of obstacles you face and the ferocity of the struggle. The inner game is a question of identifying where potential is located and the role that interference plays throughout. It is concerned with your internal goals and obstacles whereas the outer game is concerned with external goals and obstacles.

"Both games need to be played. While the games are different, they relate to each other. The goals are independent. You could be a failure at the outer game yet happy as a clam. You could live in a shack yet enjoy every minute of it," Tim shares.

This way of thinking about your experiences as two different games was not an intentional exercise on Tim's part - it evolved. In his early days, one of the first few jobs he held was as a tennis coach. He was an educator, but between jobs, Tim started instructing tennis.

**The traditional methods of teaching were not working**

"I was a tournament player as a kid and captain of the Harvard University team. I had the skill and could teach. I taught the way I was taught which is to tell people what they should do and what they shouldn't do to get the desired results. One afternoon, it was just one more person with a bad habit with their backhand. Instead of starting with instructions, I just threw the balls and I was shocked when I saw the backhand changing itself. The voice in my head was self critical: I missed my chance.

I should have taught him first and then, he would have given me the credit. If he was going to learn without me teaching, this was going to upset the tennis teaching economy... and that was really the beginning of the inner game," said Tim.

A realisation began to kick in, and questions he never thought to ask before, started to bubble up: What was going on inside the head of the student while the ball was coming at them? What were they thinking, feeling, wanting? It started to become instantly and embarrassingly obvious. They doubted themselves. They doubted that they could put it all together. There was judgement about how badly they were doing. This was a state of mind fostered by traditional teaching, this was not the state of mind of an Olympic champion. They were not thinking that they were focused.

The sushi chef is working on himself while doing his job excellently, he is being present. He is busy slicing the fish but it doesn't mean that it tastes or looks better. It is not the job that requires your full attention, it is you that requires it.



Tim began to see that the traditional methods were creating doubt and students were getting used to it and went along with it. So began his process of assisting students to learn through the experience itself.

#### **I stopped teaching, I stopped judging and things changed**

He stopped instructing. He began to facilitate and help these students to make sense of the experience itself.

"I stopped teaching. It took a while just not judging, instructing, sewing doubt but they got better. I learnt how to help. The ball was the teacher. I have to be aware of my action and of the result - that is what teaches me. My job was to help the person increase their awareness of what was happening. It was not a series of shoulds and should nots. I asked, "Where did the ball hit on the racket? I would say don't hit it in the middle, just notice where it hits," he clarified.

What Tim began to realise was that students didn't need his feedback and him telling them that they were doing a good job. The best way to do things was to approach it the way a child learns to walk, talk or ride a bike. It was about increasing the awareness of the student to what was happening.

Tim is guided by the strong belief that people have more

potential than they think they do because he sees the gap between their performance at its usual, worst and at its best.

"There's a big gap in some things more than others. What proves it is that when I didn't teach, I stopped judging and when I stopped, so did they. There was no more fear because there was no judgement. It was with the subtraction of something that I came to the realisation that there was more in there," Tim said.

"It is the result of interference.

we face is that we spend time trying to understand, trying to hit the ball. But we shouldn't try to understand - we should just be aware. For then, we are no longer being judged as to whether we understand or not. Which leads me to question why it is that we have such a strong desire to over-control and how can we deal with this. Tim feels that over-control is about trying to manage those things you don't control, such as other people. And over-control comes from doubt.

Talking to Tim, you slowly come

## Be present. It requires your full attention.

It is parents, the school, it's the wrong answer, and before you know it, you don't put your hand up anymore. The CEO asks everyone whether things are clear. Are there questions? There are none because we have learnt that the goal is to look good, not to understand what he has said."

#### **Our desire to over-control**

Responding to this effectively is about reducing the fear of not knowing. How do you do that? It's the same as how it's done on the tennis court. The problem

to realise that you have learnt very effectively how to get in the way of what you really want.

#### **The inner game at the workplace**

All of this has the potential for real impact at the workplace. The inner and outer games are just as relevant here as it is in our personal lives. The question I asked is how could you help reduce self-interference in leaders - the critical step in ensuring the evolution of the workplace. To which Tim posed these questions:

- Isn't wanting to look like a leader, an interference to lead?
- Is a leader allowed to say I don't know?
- Who or what leads the leader?
- Is it always clarity that leads him? Or him wanting what's best? Or is it fear?
- Can it be doubt which leads to over-control or is it, instead, many assumptions? Is it doing it as it was done before?

The point Tim makes is that efficiency can be taught and it goes on like so until someone says "we did it like that 20 years ago and it needs to change". An effective leader needs, firstly, to be free and to be in charge of his own life, to get his job and the position he seeks. It makes it, then, his choices and his responsibilities. Which leads to the point that every single person, in charge of his own life, is a leader in his own life.

When you take this point further, you can open up entirely new questions like :

- Does a leader of a corporation lead a more demanding job

than a leader of his own life?

- What would happen if people were treated as the leaders they are indeed?
- Would they start to think differently, make different choices and recognising that, start to be responsible for their own life?

#### Tapping into our natural potential

How do we tap into our natural potential for learning, performance, and enjoyment? How do we approach anything so that regardless of how long we've been doing it or how little we know, it becomes an opportunity for betterment and fun? Well, according to Tim, that calls for the re-definition of work.

"Work means doing. If you step back, you will see that while work is taking place, some other things are taking place as well, things that are not recognised as work like evolving, learning, or the opposite. When you become less like a human, you become

more confused. Any time you take action, you are either learning or the opposite of that. You are moving either between misery or ecstasy. You are either terrified, scared or angry or you are fulfilled, joyous, satisfied. And you need to see that knowing beats believing. You know by direct experience, by awareness. You need to know what is going on with you, while you pay attention to what is happening outside and you can learn how to increase awareness and thereby, increase the clarity of your choice."

If you take the time to gain awareness of what is happening inside, you will then gain awareness of what is happening in others. Your roadmap to success must, therefore, include a recognition and a plan around the two different games we play, in the experiences we face.

Do you know how your inner game is affecting your outer game today? ■

