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Book Review: The Fearless Mind by Dr. Craig Manning

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The Fearless Mind: 5 Essential Steps to Higher Performance
By Craig Manning

Reviewed Kylan Rutherford

Dr. Craig Manning claims, “A fearless mind is achieved when we have cleansed ourselves of the barriers that prevent us from reaching our greatest potential.” In his book, The Fearless Mind, he sets out to teach readers how to overcome these barriers.

Manning gives a powerful perspective on developing psychological skills from the perspective of a tennis player and coach. While pursuing a professional tennis career, he came across sports psychology. He was fascinated by it, and ultimately switched his life’s course and headed toward a PhD in psychology. In The Fearless Mind, Manning explains important and complex mental skills in context of athletic training and development; these mental skills are readily accessible to any situation that involves mental exertion.

Manning outlines five areas of our mind that he believes, through experience, can help anyone reach a higher level of performance in all aspects of their lives. These five areas are (1) motivation, (2) controlling anxiety, (3) concentration, (4) confidence, and (5) decision-making. He defines high performance as “when those factors within our direct responsibility are being controlled and mastered.” In each section of his book, Manning explores one of these areas and gives powerful guidance on what common traps we let our minds fall into, how to get out of those traps, and how to excel.

Manning’s approach to helping readers develop a “fearless mind” builds on a concept he introduces as a “Mental Skills Journal.” This journal provides a structure to set goals, as well as recognize, and evaluate progress in all areas of life. He refers to this simple rubric as “the greatest tool [he has] employed as an athlete, coach, and sports psychology consultant.” Getting the most out of his book requires readers to actually write out their own Mental Skills Journal and keep track regularly of their goals and progress. This may require a bit more effort than a casual reader is hoping to put forward, but the bottom line is that it works.

Dr. Manning was recently a BYU Devotional speaker. His remarks build upon the ideas explored in his book and give a more explicit spiritual take on developing a fearless mind. Listening to his devotional, along with reading his book, will provide powerful guidance to achieve higher performance in all facets of one’s life.