



THE PROVEN  
SYSTEM OF ELITE  
PERFORMANCE  
TO WIN ALL DAY,  
EVERY DAY

# EVERY DAY IS GAME DAY

PREPARE FOR IT • FUEL FOR IT • TRAIN FOR IT • REST FOR IT

**"To say that Athletes' Performance changed my life would be an understatement."**

—Marcus Luttrell, Navy SEAL and author of the bestselling *Lone Survivor*

**"The comprehensive system in this book will help all athletes achieve their goals on the field and off."**

—DeMaurice Smith, executive director, National Football League Players Association

**MARK VERSTEGEN**

founder of EXOS and author of the bestselling *Core Performance*

AND PETE WILLIAMS

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The Proven System of Elite Performance  
to Win All Day, Every Day

**MARK VERSTEGEN  
AND PETE WILLIAMS**

*Authors of Core Performance*

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**To the athletes, staff, peers, and predecessors in the field, and the extended family of Athletes' Performance. We are ONE team, united in the goal of supporting one another to embrace and meet every challenge, succeed in every mission, exceed every expectation, and relentlessly drive ourselves and future generations to higher levels of success. All day. Every day.**

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## Introduction: Your Performance Da

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YOUR BEST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH.

That sounds harsh, and indeed it is. But having worked with the best of the best over the last two decades, I've learned what it takes to be the best.

Anyone can hit excellence for a day, even a week or a month. That's easy. But a high performer is one who does it consistently for years over the course of a career.

You can be talented, work hard, and do all the right things, and it might not be enough. Not anymore. These days, performance is about results. It's not just showing up every day, working hard, and doing the right things. That's great. That's expected. Performance is about showing up every day and hitting the bull's-eye regardless of the situation.

*That's performance.*

Performance is about efficiency. If you've picked up this book, you're either a high performer looking to take things up a notch or someone aspiring to be a high performer. Regardless of who you are, you need to become more efficient in every aspect of your life in order to sustain that high performance and raise the bar every day.

That's why your best isn't good enough. I don't care who you are. My best is not good enough. It's not good enough for my family, my colleagues, or my country. It might have been sufficient yesterday or last year. But it won't be good enough for tomorrow or next year. Instead, what will make us high performers is how relentlessly we hone our lives every day to become smarter and more efficient.

*24/7.*

This book is not about a one-hour daily workout. That's the easy part, though you might disagree during the training portion of this program. The challenge is living a high-performance lifestyle the other twenty-three hours. Can you hit benchmarks over the course of your day, well beyond the gym? That's what it takes to be an elite performer.

Once you install the process you will learn and follow in this book, it becomes part of you, your new normal. High performers always are creating a new norm that was better than where they were a year ago or even last week.

That's why this is not a traditional training book. Yes, you will learn scientifically proven performance strategies to receive huge ROI—both a return on investment (of time) *and* a

reduction of injury.

~~There's a lot to be said for investing an hour or so a day to obtain such a return on investment. Compound interest is a powerful thing. That's why we don't think of training as only what's accomplished in the gym. What about the other twenty-three hours of your day? What about all those little daily opportunities, some perhaps only a few minutes or even just seconds, to help you achieve your high-performance life?~~

Think of training not in physical terms, but rather as the *process* of what it takes to bring your A-game all day, every day, to hit your goals, whatever they might be. We're not here to excel in sports, though perhaps that's a goal for you, but rather to thrive in all aspects of our lives.

For the people we deal with at Athletes' Performance, a group that includes the world's most elite athletes and the world's most elite fighting forces, working hard and doing the right things often are not enough. This applies even when you're the most talented. We want you "piss excellence" in everything you do.

What makes the difference is identifying the inefficiencies in your life and relentlessly honing them to become more efficient. We want to become more efficient in every aspect of our lives.

When we realize that Every Day Is Game Day and approach it accordingly, we win. When we're able to establish this integrated, efficient, twenty-four-hour lifestyle system for sustainable high performance, then we're well on our way to creating our ultimate Performance Day.

All day.

Every day.

## OUR STORY

**ath-lete. n.** 1. one who participates in competitive sports. 2. a person who is trained or skilled in exercises, sports, tactics, or games requiring physical strength, agility, or stamina.

Athletes' Performance, the company my wife, Amy, and I started in 1999, is a global leader in human performance, and we say that with the utmost humility and responsibility. My colleagues and I are eager to support the world's highest performers, leaving no ethical stone unturned to help them achieve new levels of success.

You don't have to take my word for that. Our training centers in the United States, as well as our staff working around the globe, have had an impact on every sport imaginable. Though we're perhaps best known for our work in soccer, American football, and baseball, our athletes have received most every accolade in sports.

Our high-performance system goes beyond the toughest arenas of sport to the toughest environments anywhere. We have worked with US Special Operations, the world's most elite fighting forces, to meet their needs both home and abroad so they produce results regardless of where they are deployed. We've worked with other tactical athletes, including law enforcement and other first responders, to help them perform at the highest levels.

Whether in sports, in the military, or with first responders, we've demonstrated to the

world's elite how they can do their jobs better at the highest global level, day in and day out. We apply the same thought process of doing things differently to the world's leading corporations, who also deeply value their human capital, helping them to generate greater efficiency and quality of life for their teams.

We've partnered with the likes of Intel, Walgreens, Sheraton Hotels and Resorts, LinkedIn, and other leading companies to set new standards in corporate wellness and employee productivity.

If you've followed one of our previous books or the programs on our CorePerformance.com website, some of the material in this book might sound familiar. Our organization of Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery can be found in these pages.

Since writing this book, we've unified our two communities of Athletes' Performance and Core Performance into one united brand name, EXOS. At the time this book went to press, we were just beginning the transition to our new brand name, so you'll find references to EXOS, Athletes' Performance, and Core Performance in this book.

Our brand is for anyone willing to accept the challenge of taking his or her performance to the highest level possible. This book, however, is meant for what we call our founding audience: the elite performers and those who strive to be elite performers, the same folks who walk through the doors of our Athletes' Performance training centers.

This program is for the elite athlete in sport and elite tactical athletes, which is to say the elite military and first responders such as firefighters, police, and paramedics. It's for dedicated performers who are accountable to those they serve and protect. We have had the honor to support some of these agencies. We hope that this book serves you well since your communities are underfunded and underappreciated.

If you've followed the Core Performance system and are looking to perform at an even higher level, we're proud and grateful that you've turned to us again. You will, however, find it much more challenging, and ultimately more rewarding, to embrace the concept of *Every Day Is Game Day*.

That's because we've pushed ourselves to higher levels of performance every year since our founding in 1999. When the top teams and organizations in sport, let alone the US Department of Defense, turn to us to maximize their human capital, we know we must be at our highest level of performance every day. That's what drives our culture at EXOS.

We don't just teach this culture; we live it.

We've taken the same science we use to help our EXOS family operate at the highest level and have continued to upgrade it based on research and feedback from clients. We're always testing, learning, and applying this research to improve our system in the most responsible and ethical ways for our athletes and organizations.

When we talk about elite performers, it's not just about high-profile athletes in the field. It's also about the management and decision makers who must be on their A-games as well. They're making decisions on how to apply limited resources of human capital to fight the fight and accomplish goals in combat, business, and sport.

The US Department of Defense and top sports teams spend millions on their human capital. An elite tactical athlete is not easily replaced. Nor is a top player in the National Football League or Major League Baseball. The majority of injuries in sport, in the military, and among first responders, however, are non-deployment, non-game injuries. The injuries occur through inadequate training and often are driven by poor lifestyle choices. When an



organization is missing elite performers, whether in the military, business, or sport, the implications can be devastating.

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The value of these elite individuals is so high that you have to be able to keep them on the field of play competing at the highest level for as long as possible.

That's our job, our shared responsibility.

That's also our promise to you for making this commitment. This book isn't about your becoming better at training in the sport of fitness. It's about your becoming the best at what you're uniquely positioned to do.

For no matter what your occupation, goals, or interests, you have the potential to be an elite performer.

Our mission here, just as it is at all our EXOS locations around the world, is to help you become one.

## HIGH-PERFORMANCE DNA

We're the sum of our behaviors. Ninety percent of our actions are driven by habits, whether positive or negative. Who we are today physically, emotionally, mentally, professionally, and financially is a reflection of our behaviors and the choices we've made to this point.

If you've fallen short in one of these areas—and who among us has not to some degree—the reason is that you have not installed what we call the “high-performance DNA” necessary to drive your daily actions. You won't literally change your DNA, but it might seem that way, since you can dramatically change both your body and your performance if you're willing to do the work.

As we mentioned earlier, your best isn't good enough. You must continually strive to upgrade your system.

The goal is to have a longer and more productive career. We work with players in the National Football League, where the average career is 3.7 years. The catch-22 is that it often takes players three seasons to master the league's complex schemes and systems. Unfortunately for many, the physical toll ends their careers just as they're reaching this sweet spot of performance.

Those who have upgraded their systems, creating this new normal, can stay in the NFL for eight to ten seasons—or even longer—and still have some of the best years of their careers. By improving their performance and decreasing risk of injury, they receive huge returns on their investments of time working this system.

The same is true with Special Operations forces. Many of these tactical athletes bear the cost physically after serving our country through many missions, even though above the need they continue to master the skill sets, language, and rituals necessary not just to stay alive, but also to execute operations. They bear this cost physically because they've sustained multiple injuries in combat and training. With this system, they can continue this vital role supporting our country into their forties and beyond.

No matter what your field, the goal should be to extend this priceless period in which your knowledge and experience can be best deployed. For too many people in all walks of life, not just the dangerous worlds of the military, first responders, and the NFL, they fail to maximize these high-performance, high-earning years because they do not have a system in place to

reduce the potential of injury and physical deterioration.

~~This isn't a luxury or an option. If you don't have high-performance DNA in the military, you're dead, and perhaps also responsible for the deaths of others. If you don't have it in sports, you're more likely to be injured, underperforming, and unemployed. If you don't have it in the cutthroat world of business, you're bankrupt and financially ruined.~~

High performers look at the world differently. They know time is precious, but are willing to invest small amounts in a precise, disciplined way to minimize the risk of injury and maximize return on investment. It's no different from investing financially.

One example: A proper ten-minute warm-up before a training session aggregates into roughly forty-eight hours of training a year. (That's ten minutes per day, five or six days a week.) Yet that investment of time will pay huge dividends. This ten minutes, which in this program includes what we call Pillar Preparation and Movement Preparation, will make your workouts far more effective and reduce the risk of injury both during that session and long term.

Your sleep ritual, a topic we'll discuss later, is another daily ten-minute commitment that produces huge benefits. By implementing simple changes in your sleep ritual, you will change your hormonal profile over the course of a year.

High performers look for these windows of opportunity over the course of their days. Let's say you're stuck in traffic, a presentation, or a meeting. Take that opportunity to reset your posture and go through breathing techniques that will energize you when you might otherwise feel groggy.

When it comes to training, high performers know that what happens in the gym or on the practice field is a small part of the equation. We can upgrade performance in so many other ways throughout the day in smaller chunks of time. Best of all, it's integrated into our routines, which become our subconscious habits.

We're effectively training ourselves across a platform for high performance.

The four pillars of that platform are Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery. Since every day is game day, you must:

Prepare for It. (Mindset)

Fuel for It. (Nutrition)

Train for It. (Movement)

Rest for It. (Recovery)

**MINDSET:** High performers have a focused mindset that minimizes distraction. That's increasingly challenging in the digital age. They understand their unique individual goals and their "IT," the thing that drives them most, which we'll establish early in this book. Most of all, they're constantly looking for ways to be smarter and more efficient in everything they do. Without a proper mindset 24/7, high performance is impossible.

**NUTRITION:** Food is fuel for the body and brain. It's not about diets or obsessing about portions of carbohydrate, protein, and fats. It's cutting through the latest diet marketing hype and nonsense and consuming what fuels you properly. Period. Proper fueling and hydration strategies improve cognition, energy, and endurance to maximize performance. When it comes to fueling, high performers constantly plan to ensure they will have the proper fuel

available to achieve their IT.

~~**MOVEMENT:** High performers move effectively and efficiently through their professional requirements, as well as physically through all three planes of motion. Their bodies exhibit the mobility, stability, and power that nature intended. By working to counteract the effects of a sedentary society that has us hunched over computers and steering wheels much of the day they create lean, powerful physiques that serve as the vehicles for professional and personal success.~~

**RECOVERY:** Growth happens during rest. It's when the mind and body repair, recharge, and upgrade. Recovery strategies must be employed throughout your day, week, month, and year. Yet they're often ignored in our fast-paced culture, where people assume the answer is working longer and harder. High performers know that it's about working more efficiently, prioritizing recovery, and using it to further fuel successes.

If you've followed the Core Performance program, the four-pronged Mindset-Nutrition-Movement-Recovery strategy will sound familiar. But make no mistake: EXOS is a 24/7 system for high performance that will permeate every aspect of your existence.

It starts with the integration of the system. Recovery is a Mindset. Movement is supported by Nutrition and vice versa. Nutrition and Movement support Recovery. And the high-performance Mindset is a thread woven throughout the entire program. These are not stand-alone pillars—Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery—but rather the integrated strands of being a high performer.

We all have the same twenty-four hours a day. The quality of how we execute this program determines whether or not we're high performers.

When we do so, we achieve the Performance Day.

## THE PERFORMANCE DAY

There are countless fitness and nutrition books. We've written five of them that we daresay are pretty damned good, respected by our peers and passionate performers.

The shortcoming with those books, including our own, is that they are meant for those whose professions and lifestyles do not require a 24/7 commitment. You're not held accountable for literally your entire day. Your success or failure is graded almost exclusively on how well you follow a workout and nutrition program. For most people, making a commitment to such a program produces massive change, which is a wonderful thing.

For an elite performer, it's not enough.

The difference for our clients and with this book is the concept of the Performance Day. Within EXOS we've often referred to this as the "perfect day." Unfortunately, many outside our community think of a perfect day in terms of lounging on a white-sand beach with a loved one, sipping frozen adult beverages while being caressed by warm ocean breezes.

The Performance Day is where champions are made. It's the idea that we're making a 24/7 commitment to being high performers across Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery from the moment we wake up until the time we go to bed. Plus, since we're following proper sleep rituals, the Performance Day extends to the time we're asleep.

In this program, you will create *your* Performance Day from when you wake up until you go to bed. Ninety percent of our actions run in our subconscious, so we have to work hard to

upgrade our daily rituals.

~~By doing that, you will have an actionable way to keep score of your daily performance.~~ You'll create what we call an achiever mindset, the mindset of those who want to be even better tomorrow than they are today.

In this program, we're going to grade ourselves every day. There's a tendency to think professional athletes get graded only on game day. In reality, they're graded every day in practice. Whether they get an opportunity to compete on game day depends on how they perform during that preparation.

For most of us, there's not even that subtle distinction between the importance of practice and game day. Every Day Is Game Day. There is no dress rehearsal. You have to hit all targets and goals every day.

In this program, we'll grade ourselves on training (Movement) and fueling (Nutrition). But we'll also grade our performance starting with our morning ritual, ending with our evening routines, and including how we positioned ourselves for an improved tomorrow. When we can do that for a twenty-four-hour cycle, we've achieved the Performance Day.

We're not asking you to be perfect. The goal is to make the best decisions possible out of every given situation. If you improve your environment in terms of Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery, you'll be in a better position to make effective decisions.

You are a function of your behaviors, which are driven by choices. Eighty percent is the new 100 percent. If you can be 80 percent successful in your choices 100 percent of the time, that's effective.

Nobody is confident of hitting 100 percent 100 percent of the time. But you can be confident of reaching 80 percent 100 percent of the time.

When you've done that, you've achieved a sustainable performance system, a Performance Day.



# 1 | PREPARE FOR IT

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WHAT IS THE ONE THING CALLING YOU TO ACTION RIGHT NOW? ALL OF US HAVE that one thing that drives us, the motivation to get out of bed in the morning. Perhaps it's a number of things, but chances are that even then they're tied to one driving force that calls you to be an elite performer.

So what is it? What is your "IT"?

At EXOS, we define IT as our purpose. Defining that purpose, that IT, dictates your performance game plan.

Once we have identified IT, we can Prepare for It, Fuel for It, Train for It, and Rest for It. The key is not to think of IT as a goal or end, but rather as a mantra, a statement that summarizes who you are, what drives you, and where you want to be.

That simple IT statement, as little as five words, will guide every decision and action over the course of your Performance Day. It provides the context for everything you do or choose not to do.

In just a moment, we'll go through a brief exercise to create your IT statement. It should be a solo effort. Don't enlist help from anyone, even a significant other who might know you better than you think you know yourself.

After all, you are the expert in everything "you." You know best how *you* have succeeded and where things haven't worked out. This is a process to help inspire the choices you make in life, tapping into that expertise to help you develop purpose in everything *you* do. You will turn to this IT statement several times a day throughout this program.

This IT statement will be the driver of your decisions and habits across the Athletes' Performance system of Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery. Without the best foods the brain will not have the energy or nutrients it needs to operate properly. Without Recovery it can't think differently. Without increasingly challenging Movement, the critical circuits in the brain will not be activated to promote new thinking. Finally, without adapting this Mindset, your old thoughts will not let go to allow new ones to be created.

In other words, without adopting the integrated approach of Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery, you won't create the proper brain environment to have a chance to become a high performer. Mind over matter is not enough.

This IT Illuminator process is designed as a guideline to align your motivations with your behavior to reflect what is most important. Taking fifteen minutes to go through the exercise defines what is important and builds the confidence to live in alignment with your IT. It creates a context to view your daily decisions so that your actions reflect what you're trying to achieve.

Your IT statement could revolve around family, career, or health. It doesn't matter as long as you dig deep enough to get at the core of what is most important. If you're like some of our clients who face life-and-death decisions daily, you might need two IT statements: one for "home" and one for "away."

Once you have created this IT statement, repeat it several times a day. It will be part of your morning and evening rituals. You could print it out and place it on your nightstand, bathroom mirror, refrigerator, or desk. Perhaps you will take a favorite photo and emblazon the IT statement onto it. Don't just repeat it to yourself, though. Visualize the benefits of living your life that way. Writing just a key word from it on your wrist before a big event helps you quickly visualize why you are there, especially in critical moments.

Why is this IT statement so important? Our minds operate in three ways. There's the conscious process, the subconscious process, and the creative nonconscious process. It is through these areas that we create and maintain a vision of ourselves, which, for better or for worse, dictates our corresponding "realities." If we continue to see ourselves in a negative light, our subconscious will cause our performances to be consistent with our current image of truth and reality. That translates into negative performance. On the other hand, a more positive view will translate into positive performance, as the deeply held self-image responds to your positivity.

Since the Athletes' Performance program is an integrated system, it will do us little good to install the right habits across our Movement, Nutrition, and Recovery if we don't improve our Mindset. In fact, it becomes much more difficult to do so if we don't have that driving force, that IT statement, to guide our actions.

Mindset is where we have an opportunity to influence ourselves twenty-four hours a day. Our current reality will define our future only if we allow it. World-class athletes remain that way as long as they maintain world-class habits. Likewise, people who struggle in specific areas continue to struggle because of their habits and decisions.

Decisions are a result of the repetition of negative or positive actions and thoughts. Through the IT Illuminator process, we will define what's most important to us, create this anchor IT statement, and reinforce its power by looking at the advantages and disadvantages to living (or not living) along those lines.

The reason this is so important for high achievers is that you need to find a driving force that goes far beyond the scope of diet and exercise books. You must be guided by a far deeper reason—and you are, whether you realize it or not—than just wanting to pack on ten pounds of muscle or lose twenty pounds of fat. That's the breakthrough. When you're able to govern all of your daily actions and decisions by whether they align with this IT statement, that's when you tap into the power of being a high achiever.

Let's discover this IT statement by going through the following exercise. From the words on the chart [here](#), write down the ten that jump out as most valuable and meaningful to you at this moment in your life. You don't have to pick one from each category; you could have multiple from one category and none from others. If you wish to add a word to a particular category to make it fit yourself better, feel free to do so.

## IT Illuminator

Write down ten words that are meaningful to you. Then circle the three that are most meaningful to you right now.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Create a statement that tells a story about living your life in the best way possible.

Enter your IT Statement here.

<b>Physical Performance</b>	<b>Pain</b>	<b>Appearance</b>
Endurance Fitness Strength Power Speed Resilience Personal Best	Relief Pain-Free Freedom Activity Movement Function Prevention	Lean Choice Comfort Confidence Attractiveness Youthfulness Tone
<b>Health</b>	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Energy</b>
Vitality Longevity Health Quality of Life Feel Alive Aging Spirituality	Family Commitment Responsibility Giving Connection Support Presence	Energy Empowerment Restful Focus Alertness Vitality Enthusiasm
<b>Emotional Well-being</b>	<b>Work Performance</b>	<b>Challenge (New Things)</b>
Balance Presence Motivation Calmness Happiness Contentment Optimism	Focus Efficiency Productivity Communication Creativity Success Organization	Evolve Try Open Exciting Accomplish Challenge Goal

This is a uniquely individual process, but perhaps it would help to use an example. Let's say we have a thirty-nine-year-old married father of two. He's a high achiever, a leader in his field, an accomplished athlete by any definition. We'll call him John.



John chose one word from each of the nine categories but, again, feel free to choose whichever ten words best fit you; you can pick multiple words from the same category. Here are the words John chose: Strength (Physical Performance), Freedom (Pain), Lean (Appearance), Quality of Life (Health), Family (Relationships), Focus (Energy), Optimism (Emotional Well-being), Success (Work Performance), Evolve (Challenge). John added his own word—Prolific—to round out his ten.

From the ten words you chose, circle the three that are the most meaningful to you right now. The three words should reflect what is important in your life.

John chose Focus, Family, and Freedom. His reasoning was that Family is the most important aspect of his life; Focus gives him energy (and also was listed under Work Performance, so it had a two-pronged meaning for him); and Freedom from pain, as listed in this context, is important. But John also thought of Freedom in terms of the ability for himself and his family to have the opportunities to experience everything life has to offer.

Next, using these three words, create a statement that tells a story about living your life in the best way possible. Try to steer the statement toward a vision of what your life will become rather than what specifically you will do to get there.

John managed to do both with his statement. He wrote, *I will provide Freedom for my Family to acquire meaningful experiences together by maintaining Focus to take advantage of opportunities.* His reasoning was that if he stayed *focused* on providing *freedom* for his *family*, all of his daily actions would be driven by a vision of giving himself and his family all of the wonderful opportunities in life.

In the grid [here](#) there are four boxes. Let's go back to the vision of your ideal life you created with the three words you circled. Think about all the disadvantages to *not* living in alignment with your description of your best life identified in the previous steps and write them down in the top left box.

For John, this was simple, though a bit scary. If he did not rediscover his focus at work and in the rest of his life, he would not be able to provide the freedom and opportunities for himself and his family. He considered what impact that might have on the lives of his children and even his marriage. He thought of his recent athletic performance and how that had gone downhill. He marveled at how poorly he was eating and how infrequently he was training and how that would impact his quality of life down the road, or even how long that road would be. It was not a pretty picture.

Intention Statement:

DISADVANTAGES

ADVANTAGES

NOT LIVING IN ALIGNMENT

LIVING IN ALIGNMENT

Now think about all the advantages of *not* living in alignment with your description of your best life and write them down in the box at the top right of the same grid.

John struggled to come up with anything to write in this box. He shrugged, figuring there was a sort of comfort level in the status quo. His family seemed relatively happy at the moment, and he felt somewhat accomplished at work, though he was mistaking being busy for being productive. He knew such a good-but-not-great situation was not sustainable and that something was going to give. Either he was going to keep toiling harder and less efficiently at work, taking more time away from his family, or he might become so inefficient that his career would suffer. Neither option was attractive.

After ten minutes, John's "advantages" box remained nearly empty. Clearly there was little advantage to *not* living with his description of his best life.

Next, think about all the disadvantages of living in alignment with your description of your best life and write them down in the box at the bottom left of the grid.

John could not come up with much to write in this square, either. He figured the process of getting refocused and going all in with the Athletes' Performance program from a Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery standpoint might require an uncomfortable transition period. He would need to overhaul his nutrition, reestablish some good habits around movement, and commit to recovery rituals every day, week, month, and year. But that seemed like a small price to pay.

Think about all the advantages of living in alignment with your description of your best life and write them down in the box at the bottom right.

This time, the words flowed quickly for John. He thought of a future where his children had the opportunities to flourish and he and his wife could enjoy all of the things they'd talked about for years. He thought back to when his career and athletic performance were at their peaks and realized that he should—and could—establish a new benchmark for success. He did not have to settle for the status quo and could break out of his current vicious cycle that slowly was robbing him of his most precious commodity: time.

*I will provide Freedom for my Family to acquire meaningful experiences together by maintaining Focus to take advantage of opportunities.*

Take a look at the upper left and bottom right boxes. If you don't live your life in alignment with the statement you just wrote using your three words, the contrast between the life you want and the one you might have could be large. With a few simple changes moving forward you can ensure that the bottom right becomes your actual life in the future.

Now take a look at the upper right and bottom left boxes. These boxes represent your barriers to living your ideal life: bad habits in the upper right, and automatic, nonconscious excuses and perceptions in the bottom left.

Finally, take a look back at everything you've written. Study it and take a moment to soak it all in. Now, using five words or less, create your IT statement to capture all of the emotion, intent, purpose, and power of what you've written.

Focus was a key word for John. It tied him to his broader vision of providing freedom and opportunity for his family. But it also had a more practical application. In the age of digital distraction, he found it challenging to keep from constantly checking his digital devices and immediately dealing with everyone who wanted a piece of his time. Social media, texts, and instant messages all took chunks of his time and his attention. As a result, he often felt busy but not like he was getting a lot done. In fact, he felt constantly behind on work. His time management, for years a strength, was now a weakness. His nutrition and athletic performance also suffered.

John figured if he could remain focused on family freedom, he could make his vision a reality.

Thinking about everything he had put down on paper and the intent behind it, John came up with his five-word IT statement: *Stay Focused For Family Freedom*.

The key word in John's IT statement was *For*. Had he gone with "Stay Focused On Family Freedom," the statement would have been one-dimensional and less powerful. By going with *For*, it became both a vision and an action statement. He even capitalized *For*, even though it technically was not grammatically correct, to emphasize its importance. (John even could have gone with "Stay Focused *Four* Family Freedom," a reference to the four pillars of the Athletes' Performance program: Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery.)

### John's IT Illuminator

Write down ten words that are meaningful to you. Then circle the three that are most meaningful to you right now.

1. Strength
2. Freedom
3. Lean
4. Quality of Life
5. Family
6. Focus
7. Optimism
8. Success
9. Evolve
10. Prolific

Create a statement that tells a story about living your life in the best way possible.

I will provide Freedom for my Family to acquire meaningful experiences together by maintaining Focus to take advantage of opportunities.

Enter your IT Statement here.

Stay Focused For Family Freedom.

<b>Physical Performance</b>	<b>Pain</b>	<b>Appearance</b>
Endurance Fitness Strength Power Speed Resilience Personal Best	Relief Pain-Free Freedom Activity Movement Function Prevention	Lean Choice Comfort Confidence Attractiveness Youthfulness Tone
<b>Health</b>	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Energy</b>
Vitality Longevity Health Quality of Life Feel Alive Aging Spirituality	Family Commitment Responsibility Giving Connection Support Presence	Energy Empowerment Restful Focus Alertness Vitality Enthusiasm
<b>Emotional Well-being</b>	<b>Work Performance</b>	<b>Challenge (New Things)</b>
Balance Presence Motivation Calmness Happiness Contentment Optimism	Focus Efficiency Productivity Communication Creativity Success Organization	Evolve Try Open Exciting Accomplish Challenge Goal

Your vision, your IT statement, no doubt will be much different from John's. That's important, because this needs to be a personalized process. Those who make their own arguments for why they want to change their unhealthy behaviors inevitably do so. We are more likely to believe what comes out of our own mouths than from experts', as the arguments we come up with are the most compelling for establishing importance, confidence and readiness.

People don't mind change, which is good since high performers recognize that change is the only constant, but they hate being told what to do. People like to choose, and the purpose of the exercise is to help you choose from this menu of descriptive words to form a statement that's relevant on a personal level.

When people are at Point A in their life and don't see the need for a Point B, they stay at they are. When people are at Point A in their life and see a Point B that they think is better, they change. When people are at Point A in their life and see a Point B, which they think is better but perceive it to be too difficult to manage, they lose motivation to change and enter a state of ambivalence (*I want it but it's all too hard! Or I can't see myself doing that!*).

Does your IT statement describe your motivation in life right now? If not, go back and try again. Remember that you are not doing this for a twelve-week fitness program. You are learning the science and creating your system of sustainable performance for the rest of your life.

# YOUR PERFORMANCE DAY

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## An Around-the-Clock Look

Now that you've defined your IT statement to power everything you do, let's create a game plan to achieve it, starting with your Performance Day. We will break down Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery in depth later, but for now let's take a quick around-the-clock look.

Tomorrow's success starts today. Since your day begins literally at midnight, sleep is a powerful part of your Performance Day and why we will build around it. What follows are not suggestions or a best-case scenario. This is what you *must* achieve, day in and day out, to instill yourself with the high-performance mindset.

### MORNING RITUAL

You're actually most in control of your day during this time frame. It sets the tone for your success. Think of your morning and evening rituals as two bookends that you have full control over. Actually, as you'll discover in this program, it's possible to have more control over most of your day than you think, especially once you have these strong bookends in place. There's a high degree of chaos in between. The goal is to make the best decisions during those periods.

**MINDSET:** Upon waking, take a minute to give thanks for family, friends, career, and everything that's right with your life. Consider how your efforts today will elevate others. Visualize this upcoming Performance Day, the tasks at hand, and how you will accomplish them. Ponder the vision for who you are becoming and how you will navigate the day at the highest level. Take a few moments to visualize the benefits of living your IT statement. You could keep a printout of it on your nightstand, but presumably you'll have it memorized. Our friend John from the previous section will repeat *Stay Focused For Family Freedom*. Repeat your IT statement periodically throughout the morning ritual, visualizing the benefits of living it.

**MOVEMENT:** Your body has been at rest, which is a good thing, but we must get your fascia moving. Fascia are the connective tissues running from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet and into every cell of your body; they organize your powerful muscles. We can do this through what we call Movement Prep exercises (see [here](#)). We also want to engage in some soft tissue work, such as rolling on a hard foam roller (see [here](#)) or by using a massage stick (see [here](#)).

**NUTRITION:** Though you might not feel thirsty, you're dehydrated after sleep. Drink 16 ounces of water upon waking. You should place a glass of water on your nightstand or bathroom sink before going to sleep (and drink from it during the night if you awaken).

As for breakfast, it's not just a cliché: It is the most important meal of the day. Actually, your postworkout fueling is more important—more on that in a moment—but breakfast is a strong second. There's no excuse for skipping breakfast, and it's important that you break the fast that started when you went to dinner by eating within thirty minutes of waking.

Breakfast boosts metabolism, fuels the brain, and provides energy. Consider drinking breakfast in the form of a nutrition-dense smoothie. Or eat something simple, such as whole grain toast with natural peanut butter, low-fat Greek yogurt, and a banana. Or try oatmeal with berries, almonds, and a hard-boiled egg. Another good option is an English muffin with scrambled eggs and avocado with 100 percent fruit juice. Whatever you choose, your

breakfast should include high-fiber carbohydrates, lean protein, healthy fats, and color coming from fruits and vegetables.

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## Morning Ritual Summary

### Mindset

Visualize Performance Day

Repeat IT statement and visualize benefits of living it

### Nutrition

Drink 16 ounces of water

Breakfast or preworkout fueling

Multivitamin/fish oil

### Movement

Movement Prep

Soft tissue massage

### Recovery

Targeted breathing

Working out first thing in the morning is the best time for many people. You've accomplished something while most are asleep and avoided the potential of something interfering with your training session later in the day. We'll provide pre- and postworkout nutrition options shortly.

This also is an ideal time to consume a multivitamin and some fish oil. Multivitamins cover any deficiencies your diet might be lacking. Fish oil provides powerful omega-3 fatty acids, which have anti-inflammatory properties, regulate blood sugar, and are essential for good cardiovascular health and mental clarity.

**RECOVERY:** Even though you just woke up, it's still time to recover. Take this time to extend your breath. Breathe in through your nose for six counts, hold for four counts, and breathe out through your mouth for ten counts. This extended breath out slows your breathing, reduces stress, and induces calmness. Repeat this pattern ten times to calm your nervous system and decrease cortisol production. This targeted breathing can be done during the Mindset or Movement portions of your morning ritual.

## LATE MORNING RITUAL

There's a tendency to view the part of the day between breakfast and lunch as a time to put your head down and simply hammer through tasks, regardless of your profession or athletic career. As a high performer, however, you still must incorporate the pattern of Mindset-Nutrition-Movement-Recovery throughout the late morning hours. Here's how:

**MINDSET:** As you leave home—or even if you operate out of home—visualize the

performance athlete you want to be. Consider how you will perform the next few hours. Repeat your IT statement several times and visualize the benefits of living it.

**NUTRITION:** There are likely five to seven hours between your breakfast and lunch. Eating smaller meals more often controls appetite and regulates blood sugar. It improves concentration, eliminates mood swings and overeating, and maintains muscle mass. Have a midmorning fueling that includes a combination of colorful high-fiber carbs, protein, and fat.

Try fruit, veggies, nuts, sunflower seeds, or beef jerky. If you have access to a blender or shaker bottle, a shake or smoothie consisting of fruit and whey protein also is a good option. Note that we use the word *fuel*, never *snack*. Snacking is synonymous with junk food, or at least what you give the dog. Fuel powers your brain and body for success.

By having this midmorning fueling, you'll find you won't need your typical lunch. It likely will be smaller, but should again consist of high-fiber carbs, lean protein, healthy fats, and color.

Wherever your morning takes you—or even if you remain at home—continue to drink water. Even minor dehydration impairs concentration, coordination, and reaction time. Drink  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 ounce of water per pound of body weight per day to maintain hydration.

**MOVEMENT/RECOVERY:** It can be difficult to maintain good posture while spending a chunk of your day sitting down, whether driving, receiving briefings,

## *Your Performance Day Sample Meals*

### TIME—MEAL

7 a.m.—Oatmeal, berries, 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons flaxseeds

9:15 a.m.—Preworkout shooter

11:15 a.m.—Postworkout shake

12:15 p.m.—Turkey sandwich on 100 percent whole wheat bread with 6 ounces turkey, avocado, and piled with other vegetables, along with a spinach salad with olive oil and vinegar dressing

3 p.m.—Apple with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup nuts

6 p.m.—5 ounces grilled salmon,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup whole wheat couscous, steamed asparagus drizzled with olive oil and lemon after cooking

9:30 p.m.—1 cup low-fat cottage cheese and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup berries

or sitting in meetings. That's why it's important to check your posture a couple times each morning. Are your shoulder blades pulled back and down? Is your chest elevated? Are you "sitting tall"?

## Late Morning Ritual Summary

### Mindset



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