

## 5 Mindset Skill Habits — 28 Days Messages

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### Day 1 of 28.

Well done and really glad you're inside this new course.

If you haven't yet reviewed the course video or downloaded the Affirmations Template PDF, the link is at the top of this email.

So day #1 is really about two very important factors.

**#1 - DO THIS NOW.** Download and print out the affirmations PDF. Then edit it to make it your own. You're going to read this EVERY day at least once.

Mine takes literally about one minute to read.

I read mine twice a day. Mornings & evenings. Takes hardly any time at all, but it's critical you do this daily. I've got an alert in my phone's calendar to remind me to read it.

I've got Apple products. Laptop. Phone. Tablet. And in their native app NOTES, I've got my Affirmations. So it's always with me.

**#2 -** You've got to wrap your head around the fact that this mindset training info is very easy. The difficult part is the daily commitment to doing the work so that it becomes a habit.

Once the habit begins to take hold, you start to retrain how you think about yourself as a player.

The retraining is what eventually creates shot choice & tactical clarity during matches.

Ultimately that breeds a new sense of confidence. It's that new confidence that starts to eliminate the lower part of your current skill level range.

And look, I'll be honest with you about the early stages for me when I began habituating these 5 mindset shifts.

I didn't really believe it was going to work. I was skeptical. But I just stayed with it, and within a couple of weeks I started to feel different on the court.

I attributed that new feeling to the habit building. So I just stuck with it. And the payoff for me in the last 12 months is proof this works.

## **Day 2 of 28.**

Assuming yesterday you downloaded and printed out the Affirmations PDF, right?

Good.

OK. The book that's made the biggest difference for me has been "The Confident Mind" by Dr. Nate Zinsser.

Dr. Zinsser is the mental performance coach at West Point. Army.

He not only coaches the athletes ... but the soldiers as well.

The reason I highly recommend his book is because it's written in a style that is super easy for me to understand and then put into action.

I've got more stuff underlined in there than any book I've ever read.

So today's mission is to do 3 things ...

**#1** - Read your affirmations at least once. Better to do it twice.

**#2** - Check out Dr. Zinsser's book [here](#). I've got both the Kindle & Audible versions. It's a great listen on long driving trips & flights.

**#3** - Remember the 3 **Lay The Foundation** drills from the webinar? If not, go back to the Course page shown on top of this email, and you'll find them listed there.

Get your bag of 50 balls, schedule a little time on the court, and do at least one of those drills.

### **Day 3 of 28.**

Hope you're doing well.

So today you're going to practice & visualize your BPR off the court. Your all-important between points routine.

But first ... you've read your affirmations already? If not, get on it.

OK, carve out 5 minutes to do 10 reps of your 25 seconds 4 Parts BPR. [ Whoa. Lots of numbers there ;- ) ]

You remember the 4 parts?

**Part 1** - (5 seconds). At the end of a point, go straight to the hook of a song or a phrase that helps you minimize any emotional response to the result of the last point.

**Part 2** - (5-7 seconds). 3-4 deep breaths from your abs. I keep humming my song.

**Part 3** - (10 seconds). How do you want to start the upcoming point? Not the end result. Just how do you want to start it?

**Part 4** - (5 seconds). A little positive self pump. "OK, here we go". "I love this stuff!". "This is MY time".

You know what I mean. Come up with your own.

10 reps takes about 5 minutes. Visualize yourself on the court. Make it real. Visualizing takes practice. Start today.

### **Day 4 of 28.**

You've already read your affirmations at least once today ... right? Well alright then ;-)

Man I really do love this drill for both singles and doubles.

The counting 1, 2, 3 drill. When was the last time you worked on it?

Schedule a session with a practice partner. You don't need to tell them what you're working on. Just play some points.

If they insist on playing a set or match, then fine. But since you're ONLY focusing on counting off your 1st 3 shots for each point, you've got to totally NOT care about the eventual outcome if it's a set or a practice match.

Make this drill a part of your regular weekly schedule.

Any questions so far?

Keep going. Don't question the process. Just do today's work.

## Day 5 of 28.

Affirmations read? If not, STOP right now and do it.

OK, in your next practice match which is hopefully today you're going to find a weakness in that opponent and totally commit to giving them a steady diet of it.

Even if you know their game inside and out, decide what's their #1 cryptonite. Forget about trying to hone "your game" today and just work that weakness over there ... even if they know what you're trying to do.

Could be a weak stroke or maybe it's a two shot movement pattern they don't like. Up and back? Dropper and then lob over their backhand?

You have to probe. It's fun :-)

## Day 6 of 28.

I read my affirmations a couple of hours ago. You too? If not, guess what? STOP. Get er done now.

Drill #1. The Look of Fed 50 balls. No peeking. In fact, drop and hit without even looking at your shot.

Keep your head sideways through and after contact. More like a 45 degree angle to the net so that you're face isn't pointing forward after you finish.

25 forehands. 25 backhands. This drill or some form of it when you're playing is a HUGE confidence builder.

Be like Fed. ANY skill level player can do this. Get your bag of 50 balls, walk on over or drive to your tennis facility, get on a back court, and just do it ...

## **Day 7 of 28.**

Affirm. Visualize. 5 minutes. A mini habit that pays off BIG time. Don't ever miss a day.

OK. I'm thinking we might do a weekly comp webinar for just the 5 habits students so that we can hear who's highlighting what in Dr. Zinsser's book - [\*The Confident Mind\*](#).

If you haven't already picked up a copy, I strongly recommend you do. This is the first book on mental skills that resonated with me.

## **Day 8 of 28.**

For me, this has been the habit that's taken me the longest to set in.

Imprinting good shots. Create a short little mental video.

And then recalling the recent imprint when I miss the same shot.

The recall is so important. Rather than thinking what went wrong, just recall the recent imprint. Run it through your mind as a video.

Trust that you don't have to do a lot of conscious technique analysis & correcting.

## **Day 9 of 28.**

The being 'up a break' so-called advantage is a bit of a myth unless you've actually got a big enough serve that you easily hold serve darn near all of the time.

But IF you're frequently breaking their serve, you'll put less pressure to hold your own serve ... which means you'll relax a bit more when you do serve ... which means yeah, you'll hold serve more often.

So let's get better at breaking their serve more often. Let's consistently get that insurance break or two.

How? Practice standing on top of &/or a step or two inside the baseline.

Return serve deep (higher over the net, not harder) ... directly at em.

Force them into having to get out of the way of your return as they're recovering from the finish of their service motion.

Not only will you get a few more short balls from them that you can get offensive with, but you'll also give em the heebie jeebies that they better hit a bigger serve.

That'll equate to them missing more 1st serves, giving you more of their 2nd serves where you can jerk em around the court with deep returns mixed in with dropper returns.

And their double faults stat for the day won't be pretty either.

Same deal for doubles. You two work like dogs when you're returning serve. Keep piling up those insurance breaks.

You can do a ton of 1 on 1 cross court doubles training. It's fun. It pays off.

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## Day 10 of 28.

So here's a truth for you ...

Consistently playing up there inside a really small SLR has to have a level of fitness for tennis that most players aren't willing to experience.

Do NOT be that player.

Simply put, committing to put in the daily work to get supremely fit for tennis is not only a HUGE mindset shift, but the payoff is just insane.

For me, I make sure that when I'm on the practice court for a drill session or playing points or playing sets, whatever, I'll guarantee you this ...

I will outwork you on that day.

And if I see you trying to do the same, I won't be the one to say at the end of our session ... "had enough for today?". I'll wait for you to wave the white flag.

Call me crazy, insane, whatever, but I know the down the road payoff of committing to getting really fit is tangible TODAY.

More wins. Especially in those tight matches.

I've never found a way to motivate someone to do the fitness work.

It's gotta come from you. There's gotta be a hunger, a fire in the belly, a sacrifice here & there ... but the mental clarity you get in matches from fitness training is part of the program.

So, if you want that *really small top of your SLR* in matches, and you know deep down that getting fitter will get you there, then let's dig in and do it.

Let's get on the phone and create a realistic program for you.

[Go here to pick out a date / time](#) that works well for you so that we can do a private 30 minute call.

100 bucks. Recorded. Let's do er. Don't put this off any longer.

### **Day 11 of 28.**

Get out your affirmation. We're going to make a couple of edits.

Review it and find one statement in there that you could make the result even BIGGER.

When I first wrote out my daily affirmations, I knew I had a couple of statements with outcomes that were pretty mediocre.

I eventually went back in and just said screw it ... I'm going bigger with that thing.

Do it right now. What one statement could you cross out and write in a bigger outcome?

Then just start reading that new statement every day and seeing it in your mind happening.

### **Day 12 of 28.**

*"How do you remember this stuff in the heat of battle?"*

That's a question I just got from one of your fellow **5 Habits** students.

The answer is ... for a while you won't.

In the beginning when you're digging into building the habits, everything is top of mind.

Your noggin is working overtime trying to experience this and that and there's frequently just too much conscious thinking going on.

It's normal. Don't get overly frustrated. It'll all start to settle down over time and clarity will be the eventual outcome.

The key is to trust that if you keep doing the daily work ... yeah, you'll start consistently playing at the top of your SLR.

I know. You badly really want that result right now.

When I find the magic bullet I'll pass it on to you. Until then ... keep workin ;-)

### **Day 13 of 28.**

*"My next biggest problem was assuming a ball wasn't coming back and it did!"*

Look, this used to really crank up my anxiety level.

I'd hit what I thought was a helluva shot that no one should be able to get.

So I'd just stand there waiting for that to happen. And lots, not a few, but lots of times that shot would get returned.

And now I'm going oh crap. It's a fat sitter around the T and now I have to make sure it really doesn't come back again.

BOOM! 5 feet long. A total choke job.

And of course it's a hair embarrassing and I'd go ... you're such a freakin loser.

Look, what changed for me was thinking that EVERY shot I play over there ALWAYS has a chance to get returned no matter how big of an opening I think have.

That guy over there can ALWAYS guess where you're about to play your beautiful ESPN 11pm Top 10 Shot Of The Day.

You cannot stop them from guessing.

So the worst thinking is you realize they might guess correctly and you decide to go even BIGGER.

Oops.

And thats when it can get pretty ugly.

I now ALWAYS assume it's going to be at least a 2 shot play.

And if I play my first shot with that assumption, (then get ready for the potential next shot), and my first shot bounces twice over there before they get to it, then yeah, where's the ESPN camera crew?

### **Day 14 of 28.**

When is your next 50 ball session?

Today? Tomorrow? Within the next 3 days?

You get the picture. Schedule it. Put it in your calendar right now as a non-negotiable.

### **Day 14 of 28.**

Right now read the following paragraph 3 times ...

*As usual ... I played really well today. I had an instant shoulder prep turn, trusted my initial shot choice, and blew out right through contact as I confidently exaggerated the Look Of Fed - The Fed Head.*

## **Day 16 of 28.**

At some point you have to give up trying to perfect technique, and instead, just give in to trusting that what you've got will get the job done.

IF you habit build that thought. Simplified technique wins the day.

No need to keep tinkering and adding yet another tweak.

For example, what's your new #1 *always works* cue for your forehand?

Mine is to relax my grip pressure throughout the swing and trust I never need to "firm it up". Any needed slight firming happens all on its own.

Right now read the following paragraph 3 times.

*I consistently play at the top of my skill level. I have a tiny SLR.  
This gives me confidence I will always easily execute technique which allows me to discover & feed them a diet of what they don't want me to give them.*

## **Day 17 of 28.**

*"Just like delayed gratification, my outcomes and results are a lagging measure of my really good daily habits."*

A lagging measure. Picked that up from James Clear.

Meaning, habit work (and the results you want) takes its own time to show up.

I used to want the changes I was working on at the moment for my game ... to happen right now.

Obviously they never did, but I still kept hoping and still kept getting frustrated.

I eventually got the picture on habit building. It's made all the difference.

I have no data that proves any of this stuff, but I personally believe that ...

If you really deep down trust in delayed gratification, then your practice time gets more productive and those outcomes you want show up sooner.

So if that statement above at the top is not in your daily affirmations, then put it in there.

### **Day 18 of 28.**

*"I always intend and take MY time to play a high quality shot, and because I have respect for every opponent, I assume my shot will be returned.*

*It might not be returned, but if it is ... that's totally ok, and I'll confidently just take it from there."*

I was coached by Michael Wayman back in 2008 for about a year.

He constantly emphasized for me to stop 'living in the future'.

On my backhand slice approach, I wasn't taking my time with the shot at hand, and instead, wondering what was about to happen in the next couple of seconds ... before I made contact.

Would my opponent guess my approach's target, would I be in a good position if that happened, would ... ?

Yeah.

Michael convinced me that since I had the ball at that moment, I could take my time to execute the shot on balance, on time, and play the shot perfectly ... and just assume it was going to work out.

So, the message today is this ... when you have the ball, take your time with swing technique.

Assume your opponent is going to be there to receive your shot ... and that's totally OK.

Because whatever they play back to you, you'll just confidently take it from there.

And of course those last 2 sentences I got from the legendary Dick Johnson.

### **Day 19 of 28.**

Repeat after me ...

*I have a narrow SLR.*

*I have a narrow SLR.*

*I have a narrow SLR.*

*I have a narrow SLR.*

*I have a narrow SLR.*

*Because I have crystal clear shot clarity.*

*I completely trust my instinct's FIRST shot choice.*

Just imagine if you repeated those 7 sentences 3 times a day.

Yeah ...

## Day 20 of 28.

There are some matches where it feels like I'm not playing at the top of my SLR.

But what's actually happening is I'm just managing the mediocre.

And I don't mean in an underperforming way.

Instead, I'm winning points, games, sets, and the eventual match by simply filling up the stat sheet with the opponent ... missing way more than I'm hitting winners.

That frustrates some players. They want to get their winners stat column to at least have a few in there for every match.

And that can be the kiss of death.

That *need for speed* can pull you out of a nice unspectacular groove of winning points.

So don't ever think playing at the top of your small SLR needs a boatload of winners to get the victory.

Let it be satisfyingly boring from time to time ...

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## Day 21 of 28.

It's true.

Sometimes ... despite the very best prep, intentions, etc., things **could** go awry.

I used to be the poster boy for allowing pre-match and during match challenges to become the GREAT excuse story.

You know things like ... really lousy weather or court conditions.

Maybe a pretty significant injury where there just might be a tactical temporary work around.

Maybe a really bad night's sleep and you show up for your match in a classic San Francisco summer fog.

Maybe that dude over there is having 'a day'. He cannot miss. And you've tried everything to probe for anything that might cool him off a bit.

Maybe you're sick. Not just a little head cold. No. The doc told you to stay in bed, drink lots of fluids. And of course, you're just stubborn enough to at least get out there and give it a go.

Well, like I said. I used to be the John Steinbeck of excuse stories.

That's far in the rear view mirror now.

I decided that since I've got free will to think any frickin way I want ... why not bring a completely different mindset & attitude to those unforeseen situations?

You can do the same. A different self-talk message is all you need.

## Day 22 of 28.

I don't think I've told the Jack Barclay story recently. If I have, it's worth repeating.

When I first started playing adult tournaments in the mid 1970s in northern California, the tournaments were grouped in to A, B, C, & D skill levels.

I was playing the B's. I'd entered a tournament that was being held on hard courts built on top of a parking lot at UC Berkeley - Cal.

And I'd somehow won a couple of rounds and gotten myself into the quarter finals vs. the #1 seed, Jack Barclay.

Not sure how I came upon an article about Billie Jean that I read the night before I was schedule to play Jack.

And in that article, BJK said the last thing she'd see as she got into bed before a match the next day ... would be a tennis ball.

And here thinking was all she wanted to think about was to focus ONLY on the ball and nothing else.

So, I took that literally when I played Jack.

I never once looked into his face during the match until after I'd won 4,4 and we were shaking hands after the match up at net.

And I learned on that day that I would normally get caught up in an opponent's personality ... too much.

But against Jack, I just had a singular focus on only the tennis ball.

It simplified everything for me.

To this day, even when an opponent is asking me a question like what's the score, I just look to the side of his face.

Yeah I know ... probably sounds a little weird, but for me it helps.

Try it ...

## **Day 23 of 28.**

That's right. You're serving at 1-5. In the finals.

How much positive thinking have you got at the very moment?

Well for me, it used to be a really self critical time. Going over all the times in the set I'd gagged away points.

Lots of low burn self berating.

You getting the picture here? Not a good mindset.

But that's changed recently. And it's changed to what is so ridiculously obvious.

Appear to the world that you're calm. That the score isn't affecting your body language.

OK. Let's work this first point. Let's see if we can just hold serve and force that guy / team over there to have to serve out the set.

Maybe ... just maybe there might be a few nerves in em when they try to.

OK. Good. Nice hold. Take your time on the changeover. Let them be the first off the bench. Let em know you're not rushing to try and break. Let em sweat for a second.

Let's make em play. No need to go big. Just play a clean return of serve right back at em. Make em play ...

Nice. You did and they got a little tight on that 30-40 point and threw in a double.

Your serve at 3-5. Let's just work on this first point. Nothing spectacular. Just good ol blue collar get dirty work. You've got no problem out hustling whatever they play to you.

The message is getting crystal clear in their mind. You're not going to give this away. They're going to have to take it.

Oh look at that.

They just missed the most routine forehand of all time, dropped their racket out of frustration, hands on their hips, shaking their head, and starting to feel ... pissed.

You're not showing any emotion at the end of points. Just moving over to the next side for the upcoming point.

Huh. You hold at love. Switch sides. Their serve at 5-4.

They get a super quick drink of water and take about 7 seconds total for the changeover. You're going through your BPR for the ENTIRE side change.

You take your time getting ready to return serve.

Double fault. It's happening.

And to make this already long story somewhat not any longer, you win the set in a TB. He / she / they are going ... what the heck just happened?

And it's never a guarantee, but your thinking helped you have a chance when you were down 1-5.

You didn't get down on yourself. And most importantly ... you didn't look ahead. You simply trusted in your BPR and didn't mentally wander.

That's because you've practiced your BPR ... daily on and off the court.

Nice going ...

So keep the faith. The tennis scoring system gives you this opportunity. Trust in it.

And in tomorrow's email ... let's talk about the reverse when that opponent over there is serving at 1-5. Right. How do we close it out right then and there?

## **Day 24 of 28.**

So I used to deploy the 'Hope' strategy ... a lot.

And if I had an opponent serving at 1-5, man o man, talk about some deep sincere hoping ... dude just please give me this game.

Because I certainly don't trust I can win it on my own terms.

The BIG mistake we make is allowing that thought to be front and center.

I now trust in my BPR. Big time. And if I waver at all, I literally shake my head slightly to get any hope thinking outta here.

My thinking is this ... they've got the pressure. And the 4th part of my BPR is that little self pump, right.

I'll say to myself you got this. This is your time right here. They've got the pressure. I LOVE THIS!

That's right. Once again ... we have free will to think anyway we want. So think about the right things.

Is it a guarantee? Of course not. And there's the rub. We want a total guaranteed formula.

They're ain't one.

You have to be OK with that reality. That's right. You might not get the "W" today despite your best efforts.

So YOU have to control your thinking to give yourself the best chance to get over the finish line.

You can do this ...

### **Day 25 of 28.**

One of my pet peeves with some of my students is what they do in their practice session warmup.

At the 'T' standing. Rooted. Chatting about whatever.

The chatting part is fine. But the no moving of the feet isn't.

So look. The practice session warmup can be social but you gotta also tell your noggin what's important.

(1) Move the feet even though you're just tapping the ball back and forth.

Literally a little tippy toe, never stopping, constant moving the feet so that the incoming ball from your practice partner is ALWAYS to your side.

You're never reaching too far away or allowing the ball to be played directly at you.

Your hands are soft on the racket. The squeeze meter is barely registering.

Spacing.

(2) Your vision is ONLY on the ball. Not your pal over there. Only on the slow moving ball. Despite the slow incoming ball, your shoulder / racket prep isn't casual. It's instant.

(3) You're lightly blowing out (exhaling) right through the exact moment of contact as you keep your eyes locked at that contact point. There's NO pre-contact peeking.

And yes, your feet haven't stopped moving.

(4) When you move back to the baseline to continue the warmup, it's rinse and repeat. 50% swing speed for a minute or so.

We don't go from tapping to full on 100% possible swing speed. We take the swing speed up gradually.

And now your brain has been re-trained for today. It keeps getting the same message every time you play.

Soft hands. Spacing. Instant should prep. Blow out. Look of Fed.

Repeat. Trust in your instinct's first shot choice. Commit to it.

**Day 26 of 28.**

Imagine this ...

What if tennis was judged subjectively?

What if style ONLY mattered?

What if 'smooth' was the most important element the judges looked for?

That's right. Fed would've won a gazillion Slams.

One of the things I like to do in practice is nothing more than feel 'smooth'.

No over hitting. Just flat out pure rhythm hitting.

Super soft hands. Around 70% possible swing speed.

No tension through contact.

Lengthening that calm exhale through and past contact.

Huh. Maybe that'd be a cool way to play in our matches ;-)

Guess what? Practicing 'smooth' regularly is a major contributing factor to building a very narrow ... SLR.

## **Day 27 of 28.**

Wow. Here you are. Day 27 of habit building 5 mindsets.

What's the #1 change you've noticed so far in your game since the first day?

There might be more than one, but what would you say is the biggest change so far?

I'm really curious. Let me know. Hit Reply. [brent@webtennis.com](mailto:brent@webtennis.com)

## Day 28 of 28.

Guess what? You're just getting started.

You've been in this now for 28 days.

Dang! BIG time congrats. If you've gotten what I hope you have ...

Better control of your thinking, better control of your BPR, shot choice clarity, and so on ... then this isn't like riding a bike.

It's a daily practice. 5 minutes. Every day. It's a lifestyle.

Once I started getting some minor outcomes / results that were what I was hoping for ... I knew this was the key. Mindset training.

So yeah. I really hope this has helped. Let's stay in touch.

Keep going ...

The next question I have for you is about fitness.

If you need to shed a few to more pounds, then seriously, let's look into that because it's another tangible that's totally in your control for minimizing your SLR.

*Brent*

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