

THE BIG IDEA

Alan Stein Jr. spent years in the gym with the best players on the planet, and the separator was never talent. It was a **relentless respect for the fundamentals** — mastering the basics in the unseen hours, staying self-aware enough to know exactly where you stand, and being fully locked in when it matters most. The first five minutes of any conversation are just another rep of the same fundamentals.

THE GOLDEN RULE

None of this is easy, even though all of it is basic.

Mastering the fundamentals, staying self-aware, and being present are all simple to understand and hard to sustain — that's exactly why most people won't do them, and why the ones who do stand out.

FRAMEWORK AT A GLANCE

LEVEL 1 • SETUP		LEVEL 2 • DEEPER	
Fundamentals	The basic, repeatable skills nobody wants to grind on — but the elite never stop refining.	Self-Awareness	Knowing exactly where you are and where you're trying to go, like a GPS for your life.
Confidence	Earned in the unseen hours through repetition, not given.	Next Play	The mentality that lets you reset instantly after a win, a loss, or a curveball.
Present	Being where your feet are, not living in the last conversation or the next one.	Locked In	Full presence — catching your mind the moment it wanders, and bringing it back.

WORD / CONCEPT DEEP DIVES

01 NOT A JUDGMENT — A READOUT

Self-awareness isn't beating yourself up over weaknesses, and it isn't only cataloging your strengths either. It's not a one-time assessment you complete and move on from. It's an ongoing, unbiased read on exactly where you are right now — strengths, blind spots, fears — paired with clarity on where you're trying to go.

ELITE MOVE:

Run your own GPS check before a high-stakes conversation. Name, honestly, where you actually are right now and where you're trying to end up in the next five minutes.

"Before I walk in, let me get honest about where I am and where I want this to land."

02 RESET, DON'T REPLAY

The next play mentality isn't ignoring what just happened or pretending a bad call, a lost sale, or a rough season didn't sting. It's not toxic positivity. It's the discipline of asking one question the instant something goes sideways: what's my next play?

ELITE MOVE:

The moment a call goes badly, say "next play" out loud or in your head before you pick up the phone again. Don't relitigate it in the moment — just name it and move.

"That one's over. Next play — what do I need to bring to this next conversation?"

03 BE WHERE YOUR FEET ARE

Being locked in isn't the absence of distraction — even elite performers get mentally hijacked by the past or the future. It's not a permanent state you unlock and keep forever. It's the awareness to catch yourself the second your mind drifts, and the discipline to pull it back.

ELITE MOVE:

The next time you catch your mind wandering mid-conversation, say to yourself, "be where your feet are," and physically re-anchor with eye contact.

"Be where your feet are."

3 ACTION ITEMS

1 Run the Two-Coordinate Check.

Before your next important conversation, name exactly where you are and where you want the conversation to go.

2 Practice a Next Play Reset.

Pick one phrase you'll say to yourself the instant something goes wrong today, and use it the very next time it happens.

3 Catch One Mental Hijack.

Today, notice the first moment your mind drifts from the person in front of you, and bring yourself back on purpose.

FEATURED GUEST

Alan Stein Jr.

Keynote speaker, performance coach, and author of *Next Play*, *Raise Your Game*, and *Sustain Your Game*. For over fifteen years, Alan worked courtside with some of the highest-performing basketball players in the world, and now translates the habits that separate the elite into practical strategies for business leaders and teams.

CONNECT WITH ALAN STEIN JR.

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**You'll never improve
something you're unaware of,
and you'll never fix something
you're oblivious to.**

Alan Stein Jr.

from Episode 036: FROM THE NBA TO
BUSINESS: ALAN STEIN JR.'S BLUEPRINT
FOR ELITE PERFORMANCE



CARRY FORWARD QUESTIONS

1. Am I actually locked in right now, or is my mind already three steps ahead?
2. Am I working the fundamentals of this conversation, or reaching for something flashier?

BONUS DEEP DIVE • THE SCIENCE OF BOUNCING BACK

Alan only touched on it briefly — teaching his own kids the emotional regulation and resiliency skills he wishes he'd had at their age. But the next play mentality he lives by isn't just a mindset trick. Here's what the research actually says about what Bryan and Alan talked through.

Positive Emotions Speed Recovery. Tugade and Fredrickson's research found that resilient people use brief positive emotions to recover faster from stress physiologically, bouncing back quicker instead of staying stuck in a setback. [View Source →](#)

Bouncing Back Is Measurable. Smith and colleagues built the Brief Resilience Scale specifically to measure someone's ability to recover from stress, treating next play as a trainable capacity rather than a fixed trait. [View Source →](#)

Reframing Pays Off At Work. A 2025 workplace study found employees trained to consciously reframe stressful situations showed sustained gains in job performance and fewer counterproductive behaviors a month later. [View Source →](#)

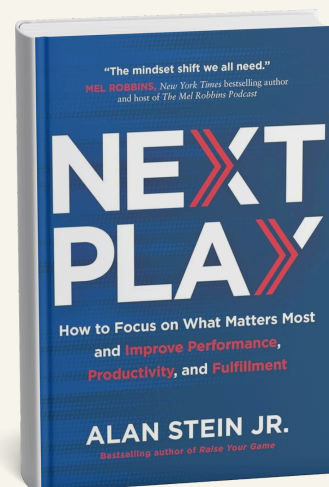
FEATURED RESOURCE

Next Play by Alan Stein Jr.

A compact, practical guide to building a next play mentality across the micro moments, macro transitions, and goals of everyday life. If this episode's reset mindset resonated, Next Play gives you the fuller playbook.

GET YOUR COPY

- Amazon: [Next Play: How to Focus on What Matters Most and Improve Performance, Productivity, and Fulfillment](#)



BY BRYAN BUCKLEY

THE 1ST 5 MINUTES

Alan Stein Jr. spent years watching the world's best athletes win the moments nobody sees.

The 1st 5 Minutes applies that same relentless respect for fundamentals to the opening minutes of every business conversation — because how you start still decides how the next fifty-five go.

[Get the Book → bryanbuckleyspeaks.com](https://bryanbuckleyspeaks.com)



TURN YOUR 1ST 5 MINUTES INTO YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE — LEVERAGE OR LOSE IT.

Bryan Buckley is the leading authority on the 1st 5 Minutes of a business conversation — 5X author, speaker, corporate trainer, and podcast host. He helps sales professionals and leaders develop, deepen, and master their business communication skills so every conversation counts.

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