

## THE BIG IDEAS

**The 12 Elements**  
Of elite performance.

**Obstacles**  
Are good!

**Look for Ways to Improve**  
Constantly.

**You Are What You Think!**  
So think like an elite performer.

**Keep Shooting**  
Lose your right hand? Use your left.

**Reloading**  
What you think after a task matters.

**Attainment**  
Moves beyond accomplishment.



# Attainment

The 12 Elements of Elite Performance

BY TROY BASSHAM · MENTAL MANAGEMENT® SYSTEMS © 2012 · 99 PAGES

“I grew up having the privilege of knowing some of the best athletes in the world in their respected sports. I didn’t just meet Olympic and World Champions, I knew many of these people and learned a lot from them over the years.

I can tell you that the best of the best in sport, business, education, and life, all have one thing in common. They all think differently from the average person. They follow a different set of guidelines and these guidelines, or elements as I refer to them, are what gives them an advantage over their competition. . . .

In life we are competing in many different areas. How well we handle these areas will provide us with an advantage or give us a disadvantage in terms of being successful. This book breaks down the twelve elements that separate the elite competitor from the average competitor. My goal is to give you an advantage and share with you how I used these elements to reach important goals.”

~ Troy Bassham from *Attainment*

The Basshams have quickly become two of my favorite teachers.

[Troy Bassham](#) (the author of this book) is the son of [Lanny Bassham](#). Lanny is an Olympic gold medalist and one of the most decorated shooters in US history. He’s spent the last 40+ (!) years developing his Mental Management® System and we recently profiled his \*incredible\* book [With Winning in Mind](#) (see those Notes).

Troy is an accomplished athlete in his own right—a 12 time National Champion and World Champion in International Rifle Shooting. He’s been helping his dad optimize their Mental Management® System for 20 years and his book is fantastic. It’s almost like a companion guide to [With Winning in Mind](#).

Both Troy and Lanny are great story-tellers and Troy doesn’t waste a word in this densely-packed, 100-page guide to the 12 elements of elite performance. I’ve marked up nearly every page (make that *paragraph!*) of this great book.

I’m barely going to scratch the surface of the goodness from the book. I highly recommend it if the idea of elite performance appeals to you. (Seriously. It’s awesome. Get it [here](#). And, connect with Troy + Lanny and learn more about their Mental Management® System [here](#).)

For now, let’s have fun exploring a handful of my favorite Big Ideas. Hope you enjoy!

## THE 12 ELEMENTS OF ELITE PERFORMANCE

“ELEMENT #1: *Elite Performers are Passionate about what they do. Others like what they do.*

ELEMENT #2: *Elite Performers manage their time and stick to a schedule. Others mismanage their time and don’t have a schedule.*

ELEMENT #3: *Elite Performers focus on opportunities. Others focus on obstacles.*

*“Focusing on progress and not results is the fastest way to reach high levels of success.”*

~ Troy Bassham

ELEMENT #4: *Elite Performers work on all three areas of performance. Others focus solely on their subconscious ability.*

ELEMENT #5: *Elite Performers train with a purpose. Others practice what they enjoy.*

ELEMENT #6: *Elite Performers focus on Solutions. Others focus on problems.*

ELEMENT #7: *Elite Performers focus on what they should do. Others focus on what happened.*

ELEMENT #8: *Elite Performers focus on the process. Others focus on the outcome.*

ELEMENT #9: *Elite Performers give just the right amount of effort. Others try to give it 110 percent.*

ELEMENT #10: *Elite Performers actively build and protect their Self-Image. Others fail to realize the importance of building and protecting their Self-Image.*

ELEMENT #11: *Elite Performers reinforce success or focus on the correction. Others focus on the result and lack of success.*

ELEMENT #12: *Elite Performers focus on Attainment. Others focus on Accomplishment.*

The 12 Elements of Elite Performance.

Those are some \*really\* (!) powerful principles. Troy walks us through each of them in the book. Get the book for the details and great stories + wisdom that bring those elements to life.

Now, here's a quick look at a few of my favorites Ideas!

## OBSTACLES ARE GOOD!

*"Focus on the things that you can control and never worry about the things you cannot."*

~ Troy Bassham

*"When obstacles occur, look at it as nothing more than an opportunity to take a negative and turn it into a positive. Every obstacle, every situation you find yourself in, and every hand you are dealt in life is an opportunity to grow. The question is, are you using these obstacles as opportunities to challenge yourself and see what you are capable of doing? Or are you using these obstacles as reasons why you cannot reach your goal?"*

Obstacles.

If we are committed to consistently performing at an elite level we (of course!) will be challenging ourselves. By *definition*, when we do something challenging, we will face *challenges*, aka obstacles, aka what some people call "problems." Right? So it makes NO SENSE to do anything but embrace those challenges and see them as opportunities to grow. Period.

Spotlight on *you*: Are you committed to an elite level of performance? (Good answer! :)

How do you respond to challenges? Do you complain about them or do you get EXCITED about them?! Remember: We don't go to the gym to lift Styrofoam weights. We go there to get stronger and we \*know\* that the only way to do that is to lift heavy stuff. Same with our lives. Our challenges are our weights. They make us stronger. Let's lift them with energy and enthusiasm!

Here's how [Ryan Holiday](#) puts it in his great book *The Obstacle Is the Way* (see Notes): *"It's a beautiful idea. Psychologists call it adversarial growth or post-traumatic growth. "That which doesn't kill me makes me stronger" is not a cliché but fact. The struggle against an obstacle inevitably propels the fighter to a new level of functioning. The extent of the struggle determines the extent of the growth. The obstacle is an advantage, not adversity. The enemy is any perception that prevents us from seeing this."*

[Marcus Aurelius](#) echoes the wisdom (and inspired Ryan's book): *"The impediment to action advances the action. What stands in the way becomes the way."*

Here's to embracing challenges and getting stronger every day!

## CONSTANTLY (!) LOOK FOR WAYS TO GET BETTER

*"Elite performers focus on the process. Others focus on the outcome."*

~ Troy Bassham

"In order to grow, you must constantly look for ways to get better at the things you do. It is an ongoing process that is common to elite performers. They consistently look for ways to grow in areas that will increase the chances of their being successful..."

John Wooden, the famous UCLA college basketball coach who has won more games than any other basketball coach in history, said that the thing that separates the great player from the good player is that the great player works on his strengths. The elite performer focuses on strengths and then focuses on his weaknesses. He makes it a point to focus on how he can improve and grow. Elite performers don't focus on excuses, nor do they focus on winning or losing. The elite performer focuses on progress, and he takes advantage of his opportunities."

Yesterday I read [Pete Carroll](#)'s great book *Win Forever* (see Notes).

Pete is the coach of the Super Bowl-winning Seattle Seahawks and former coach of the uber-successful USC Trojans. His #1 focus? *Always Compete*. For Pete, that means to ALWAYS (but only always!) look for ways to "do things better than they've ever been done before."

It's exactly what Troy is advocating here: "...you must constantly look for ways to get better at the things you do."

When Troy says "constantly" and Pete says "always" they don't mean "sometimes" or "when you feel like it." They mean exactly what they said: CONSTANTLY be looking for ways to get better. ALWAYS look for ways to do things better than they've ever been done before.

That's the path of the elite performer. The path of the master.

Does it sound exhausting? It's not. It's exhilarating.

Here's how [George Leonard](#) puts it in *Mastery* (see Notes): "A human being is the kind of machine that wears out from lack of use. There are limits, of course, and we do need healthful rest and relaxation, but for the most part we gain energy by using energy... It might well be that all of us possess enormous stores of potential energy, more than we could ever hope to use."

And, of course, there's the Wizard of Westwood, [John Wooden](#). [Pete Carroll](#) actually starts his book by sharing an epiphany he had while reading *Wooden* (see those Notes). After being fired for the 5th time, Pete was awe struck by the fact that it took Wooden 16 (!) years of coaching at UCLA before he won his first title. But once he figured out his philosophy, Coach Wooden won 10 NCAA Championships in 12 years.

Wooden's key? Constantly look for ways to get better. Make each practice as perfect as you could. Focus on the process. Make today a masterpiece.

Here's how he put it: "When I was teaching basketball, I urged my players to try their hardest to improve on that very day, to make that practice a masterpiece. Too often we get distracted by what is outside our control. You can't do anything about yesterday. The door to the past has been shut and the key thrown away. You can do nothing about tomorrow. It is yet to come. However, tomorrow is in large part determined by what you do today. So make today a masterpiece. You have control over that."

*This rule is even more important in life than basketball. You have to apply yourself each day to become a little better. By applying yourself to the task of becoming a little better each and every day over a period of time, you will become a lot better. Only then will you will be able to approach being the best you can be. It begins by trying to make each day count and knowing you can never make up for a lost day."*

Back to you. How can you get a little better today?

## YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK!

*"In order to have mental consistency, you must find the optimal mental thought that yields the best opportunity to have a successful performance and repeat that thought process every single time."*

~ Troy Bassham

"In order to reach the next level of success that you deserve, you must become mentally strong in your thought process. You must think about what you want and not give into the temptation of thinking about why you don't have it. The conscious mind is powerful and it can lead you into the direction of being the person you want to be. You have heard the saying, "You are what you eat," well, I'm telling you that you become what you think!

If you think you won't win, you're right. It's that simple."

Love it.

You are what you eat. And... You are what you THINK!

So, what are *you* thinking?

As Troy tells us, if you think you won't win/succeed at whatever you're excited about in life, you're right. It really is that simple. We need to be as mindful about the thoughts we have and the things we allow into our minds as we are about the food we eat!

Reminds me of [Tim Sanders](#) (see Notes on [Today We Are Rich](#)) who tells us: "In my personal experience, positive thinking is the key to health. I believe my own health is shaped by my thoughts the way a sculpture is shaped by its creator. I am very careful about my mind diet and consider myself a healthy-thought nut."

Here's to being a healthy thought nut!

## KEEP SHOOTING

"The more you think about something happening the more you improve the probability of that thing happening. This is what Karoly Takacs did better than anyone else. He never doubted what he could achieve, but focused constantly on what he needed to do in order to put himself in a position to achieve his goals. His story is one that is told throughout the international shooting communities around the world. While many will use his story as one that proves you should never give up, I think it's Karoly's ability to think about what he wanted and do what he needed to do to achieve it that is the bigger lesson learned."

Karoly Takacs is a superhero. Here's the story.

It's 1938. Karoly is the world's best pistol shooter. He's favored to win the Olympic gold in 1940.

Karoly is a Sergeant in the Hungarian Army. During routine training, he had a tragic accident. A defective grenade went off in his hand. His right hand. His shooting hand.

He spent a month in the hospital, depressed that his lifelong dream of winning the Olympics had disappeared in an instant.

Then he decided to win anyway.

He secretly started training every day, learning how to fire a pistol with his LEFT hand. Fast forward to the 1939 World Championships. He shows up. His friends in the community embrace him and are so happy he's come to watch them compete. He lets them know he'll be competing. Of course, they're very surprised to hear this.

They're even more surprised when Karoly WINS. (Wow.)

His Olympic dreams are back. Then World War II cancels the 1940 and 1944 Olympics. No problem. Our 38 year-old hero shows up at the 1948 Olympics in London. The favorite asks Karoly what he's doing there. Karoly tells him he's there to learn. Then he wins the gold. And does so again four years later in Helsinki.

\*rubs eyes\*

Wow. How's that for tenacity?

Troy's big (!) distinction: The fact that Karoly *refused* to give up is, obviously, remarkable. But Troy tells us that what we *really* want to focus on is "Karoly's ability to think about what he wanted and do what he needed to do to achieve it."

All that brings us back to YOU.

What do *you* want?

What do you need to do to get it?

THAT's what we need to focus on. NOT on whatever problems we might be facing.

We're inevitably going to experience setbacks and challenges in pursuit of elite performance. Period. When that happens, we need to discipline ourselves to focus on what we want, the *solutions* to the problems—not on the problems themselves.

Who needs a right hand to succeed?

We just need a right mindset.

## RELOADING

*"What you allow yourself to think about after a task matters."*

~ Troy Bassham

"Top performers protect their Self-Image by having a planned thought process after performing a specific task. The process has three steps to it and is referred to as reloading. The purpose of reloading is to refresh the brain with the thought process of what you want while not getting caught up in what just happened. Successful people do not become engulfed in poor performances; they only focus on what they should do and not on what happened."

Reloading. This is REALLY cool.

Troy and his dad have a TON of unique, powerful ways to master ourselves and create the Self-Image necessary to rock it. This is one of my favorites.

The (super) quick story: We need to be REALLY aware of what we allow ourselves to think about after we perform a task (whether that's rifle shooting in the Olympics or teaching or having a chat with a colleague or interacting with our family before dinner or whatever).

Three steps: 1. Evaluate. 2. Rehearse correction. 3. Let it go!

You do something. Time for a quick evaluation. How'd it go?

If it was great, you say, "GREAT!" to yourself. If it was OK you say, "OK." If it was less than awesome, you say, "Needs Work."

By saying "GREAT!" you imprint your awesomeness. (Very important.) As Troy advises, "If you perform a task well, you should feast on that performance. The Self-Image needs self-praise in order to grow."

When we perform at a less than stellar level, we MUST not drive that negative performance deeper into our minds by getting all emotional about it. Things like, "I'm an idiot!" "Why do I always mess up when it matters most?" are NOT helpful.

Elite performers simply DO NOT allow those toxic thoughts into their minds. Period. Neither can you if you're committed to rockin' it. We must exert the mental discipline to focus our minds. Troy tells us to simply say, "Needs Work."

What do you think about when you say, "Needs Work" to yourself? You think about how you could have done it better. THAT's what we want to rehearse—imagine doing the task a little better and then, rather than imprinting your negative behavior, you imprint a positive rehearsal.

*"Elite performers work hard  
in preparation and easy in  
competition."*

~ Troy Bassham

<— That's truly genius. In fact, Troy tells us this is the most important piece of mental advice anyone can provide: "What you allow yourself to think about after a task matters."

After rehearsing your correction, you simply let it go. Done. No ruminating. You recognized you needed a little work (no big deal), quickly rehearsed an optimal performance and LET. IT. GO.

That's reloading in a very tiny nutshell. Try it out!

(And, of course, get the book for more goodness!)

## ATTAINMENT

"If you want to reach the top level of your ability, you must focus on attainment. Becoming great at what you do doesn't stop at learning your craft. Attainment means mastering your craft, being able to focus consistently in pressure situations, having the confidence that you can succeed, and setting and reaching your goals. If you focus on the success points, build on your ability and incorporate these strategies in your plan, success becomes probable, not just possible."

Attainment.

That's the name of the book and our ultimate objective.

Troy walks us through the three ways to describe attainment.

The essence: We need to move beyond accomplishment (which is incredibly important) and get to the level of attainment—achieving our goals, mastering our crafts AND becoming the type of person capable of replicating our success in other domains and throughout our lives.

Here's to mastering the elements of elite performance and attaining our highest potential!

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
*Chief Philosopher*

If you liked this Note,  
you'll probably like...

[With Winning in Mind](#)

[Wooden](#)

[Mastery](#)

[The Obstacle Is the Way](#)

## About the Author of "Attainment"

TROY BASSHAM



Troy Bassham is an accomplished competitor winning 12 National Championships, setting 4 national records and is a former World Champion in International Rifle Shooting. He is a Senior Master Instructor and is the Director of Program Development at Mental Management Systems. Get the book [here](#). Connect with Troy [here](#).

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](http://brianjohnson.me).