



SHOW ME YOU MEAN IT
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PILLAR 05 OF 06 • SOLID MINDSET AND MENTAL TOOLS

MINDSET

Train your head like you train your guard. Read every night, write with intent, and never trust a tired thought.

SHOW ME VERSION

PRO VERSION

11 MIN READ

01

WHY IT MATTERS

Being good at Jiu-Jitsu isn't enough on its own anymore, and anger and insecurity only carry you so far.

A complete athlete also has confidence, good self-esteem, a growth mindset and detachment from the outcome. Those are skills, and you train them like any other. You'll need them most when you're exhausted, losing, or surrounded by people telling you the only thing that matters is winning. If you haven't done the reflection beforehand, you won't know what to say back.



FROM THE COACH

Preparing for Abu Dhabi, I went deep: temples, Buddhist texts, Catholic scripture, some Islam, some philosophy. You don't need to go that far. You do need a consistent effort on your mindset, every week.

RICKY

02

THE STANDARD

NON-NEGOTIABLE

- **Read 10 minutes every night.** At least one book every month or two, depending on your reading speed. Audiobooks count. Zero doesn't.
- **Start with Mindset by Carol Dweck.** Parents read it too.
- **One weekly reflection, in writing.** About 20 to 30 minutes, once a week (twice at most), on a prompt or on what you read. Reflection, not a diary of what happened.
- **No decisions on a tired thought.** Sleep on it first.
- **No phone in the first or last hour of the day.** Sitting with discomfort is part of the training.

I won't be following up on this, so this one's on you. I can't check on every athlete every night, and I won't read what you write. I might ask "How's the book?" or "Are you writing?" If the answer is "not for two weeks", I won't be upset. These are your goals, and I won't fight you if you don't take them seriously. I'll just take them as seriously as you do.

03

HOW TO DO IT

STEP 01

READ EVERY NIGHT

10_{MIN}

READING EVERY NIGHT

1

BOOK EVERY MONTH OR TWO

\$20

ABOUT WHAT A BOOK COSTS

Books are a requirement for any serious athlete. They develop how you see things and how you work on the inside. Ten minutes a night is a small commitment, and it fills the time you free up by keeping the phone out of your first and last hour (see [Sleep](#)). If reading is hard for you, go slower or use the audiobook. Ten minutes still counts.

STEP 02

FOLLOW THE BOOK LADDER

In this order. That's several months of reading.

BOOK 1	Mindset, Carol Dweck. The must-read for every athlete I coach, and for parents. Audiobook is fine. Finish it, then tell me what stuck with you.
BOOK 2	The Obstacle Is the Way, Ryan Holiday, or Atomic Habits, James Clear. The first fires you up and gives you a framework for challenging yourself. The second shows you how to build the routines in this guide and make them stick. Read one, then the other.
BOOK 3	Ego Is the Enemy, Ryan Holiday. Harder and more abstract. It makes you face your own biases, which is why Mindset then Ego Is the Enemy is the most important order.
BOOK 4	Stillness Is the Key, Ryan Holiday. Calm, focus and being present. Pairs well with Competition Day .
THEN	Anything by Ryan Holiday. Ask me for more when you're done.

STEP 03

WRITE WITH INTENT

Your nightly reading is the input. The weekly reflection is where you work through it: once a week, twice at most, about 20 to 30 minutes, on one prompt or on what you read or watched. Most athletes would rather read, because writing is harder. That's why it works. Keep it reflective (fear, losing, blame, identity, goals); technique goes in your short [training log](#) after each session. What you write is yours; I won't read it, so be completely honest. The prompts and the video exercise are in the [Journal](#).

STEP 04

WE TRY, WE LEARN

WE TRY, WE LEARN. I THINK THEREFORE I AM. I TRY THEREFORE I LIVE.

Written during my camps. We still use both today.

To get better at any skill there are only two actions: try, and learn. That's the root of everything I coach. There is no "do", only "try". A "do" only exists looking backwards. What you control, every round, is the try.

You will be surrounded by fixed-mindset voices, often from people who mean well:

- "You're losing your reputation."
- "How could you lose to that guy?"
- "You didn't try. You have to try your best."

- "The only thing that matters is winning."

Have your answers ready, out loud or in your head:

- "I tried something new. Now I know what doesn't work yet."
- "A win only proves I won that day, against those opponents. It doesn't guarantee tomorrow."
- "I'm measuring myself against my own best, not a medal."
- "The work changed me whether I won or not."

STEP 05

LET GO OF THE OUTCOME

To win, you must do your best. That doesn't guarantee victory. It guarantees peace, free of regret. Some things you control and some you don't. Worrying about a car crash on the way to a comp does nothing for your performance. It only takes energy away from what you can control.

THE CONTROL CHECK

BEFORE A COMP, SORT IT OUT

I CONTROL

- My preparation
- My sleep, food and warm-up
- My effort every exchange
- How I respond to a bad call
- What I learn from it

I DON'T CONTROL

- My opponent
- The referee
- The bracket and the timing
- What people say after
- The result

Losing hurts. Not because it says anything about your worth (no external event can measure that), but because you didn't get what you wanted. Feel it. Then go back to the "I control" list.

STEP 06

EXPECT THE HARD WEEKS

In a hard camp it's common to feel emotionally overwhelmed, sore and flat, even when you love the sport and you're doing everything right. Greg Souders calls it "sad boy, angry boy". That's normal, and it passes. It doesn't mean you're weak and it doesn't mean the plan is wrong. It's when insecurity kicks in, and the next two tools are how you get through it.

STEP 07

CATCH THE BLAME PATTERN

Under pressure (a losing decision, brutal training, nerves before a big comp) almost every athlete blames something outside themselves before looking inward. The ego doesn't want you to be the problem. In month two of most camps, a lot of us end up thinking one of these:

- "This School isn't good enough."
- "I need better training partners."
- "Your program isn't working."
- "I'm not getting better."
- "I'm never going to win Worlds."

It's either self-deprecating or externally deprecating, but something is getting deprecated. Wanting to change Schools in the middle of a block is usually the same pattern. When you hear yourself say one of these, use the next tool.



FROM THE COACH

I've done it too. In a hard block I caught myself thinking "my coach doesn't support me". It felt true. It was fatigue.

RICKY

STEP 08

SLEEP ON TIRED THOUGHTS

When you're upset and in pain, remind yourself: this is the suffering the goal requires. It's normal and it's okay. Thoughts like "I'm not good enough" or "my partners aren't good enough" usually aren't true. You're just exhausted. The less aware you are of this, the easier it is to spiral. Let it build for two weeks and you walk into class and blow up at your coach: "You don't care about me, this School isn't good enough, I'm never coming back." That's when real problems start.

THE TOOL

SLEEP ON IT

1. **Notice the thought.** "I'm not good enough." "My partners aren't good enough." "My coach doesn't care."
2. **Label it.** "That's fatigue talking."
3. **Decide nothing tonight.** No texts, no posts, no quitting, no big conversations.
4. **Sleep.** A proper night.
5. **Check it in the morning.** Nine times out of ten: not true.
6. **Still true after a few good nights?** Then bring it to your coach calmly, with a possible solution. See [Communication](#).

STEP 09

PUT THE PHONE DOWN

Less phone means more time as a human being, feeling your feelings. That's uncomfortable, and that's the point: dealing with discomfort is part of mindset. It shows on competition day more than anywhere (see [Competition Day](#)). If you won't put your phone down to get better at Jiu-Jitsu, even if you don't think it matters, I'm not the right coach for you. I'm telling you it will make you better.

STEP 10

USE OUR TOOLS

On top of the books, read our mindset site: mindset.bjjau.com (<https://mindset.bjjau.com/>), **Already Dead: a mindset for the world-level competitor. We Try. We Learn.** It puts my philosophy alongside Carol Dweck, Ryan Holiday, James Clear and Musashi. It has poems to read before training or competing, two debrief questions for after every session and every loss, a slow breathing tool (in for four seconds, out for six), a daily meditation practice, a pre-match routine, and the daily habits that hold it together.

SHOW ME AND PRO

SHOW ME YOU MEAN IT

TEN MINUTES AND ONE BOOK

ABOUT \$20, OR FREE FROM THE LIBRARY

- Read Mindset by Carol Dweck, 10 minutes a night, every night.
- One weekly reflection, about 20 to 30 minutes, kept for yourself.
- Use the sleep-on-it tool every time a tired thought shows up.
- Read the mindset site once, properly.

PRO

A SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST, PLUS THE WORK

ROUGHLY \$250 TO \$350 A SESSION, OFTEN IN PACKS OF 3 OR 5

- Sessions with an accredited sports psychologist. I did five. A pack is usually cheaper per session than booking singles: five sessions is roughly \$1,250 to \$1,750. Those are estimates, not quotes, so do your own research, get quotes and check whether your private health extras cover part of it.
- The full book ladder, one a month.
- The same weekly reflection as everyone (more writing isn't the Pro step), plus any exercises your psychologist sets.
- Five to ten minutes of meditation or breathing daily.
- A pre-match routine you've rehearsed, used at every comp.
- Philosophy, if it grabs you. Ask me where to start.

COMMON MISTAKES



"I'm not a reader." Then read slower, or listen. Ten minutes with an audiobook counts. Zero doesn't.



Writing what happened instead of what you learned. A list of moves isn't reflection. Answer a question, then the follow-up. Moves go in your training log.



Treating a loss as a verdict on your worth. It's information. We try, we learn.

- ✗ **Acting on a tired thought.** The angry text, the post, the "I quit". Sleep first.
- ✗ **Blaming the School, your partners or the program in month two.** Look inward first. Wanting to change Schools mid-block is usually this.
- ✗ **Bottling it up, then blowing up at your coach.** Often the night before a comp. Bring it up calmly, early, with a possible solution.
- ✗ **Logging reading you didn't do.** An honest cross helps your plan more than a tick that isn't true.
- ✗ **Numbing nerves with the phone.** Sitting with the feeling is the training.

06

CHECKLIST

DO THIS

EVERY WEEK

- ☐ Read at least 10 minutes every night.
- ☐ Did my weekly reflection (200 words) and answered the go-deeper question.
- ☐ Caught myself blaming something outside me, and wrote down what I could have done.
- ☐ Slept on a tired thought before acting on it.
- ☐ Said "we try, we learn" after a bad round, and meant it.

NOT PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Hard camps come with hard days, and some sadness and frustration is normal. But I'm a coach, not a psychologist. If low mood sticks around for more than a couple of weeks, you stop enjoying things, you can't sleep or eat, or you have any thoughts of hurting yourself, talk to a parent and your GP, and reach out:

headspace (ages 12 to 25)

headspace.org.au (<https://headspace.org.au/>)

Kids Helpline (ages 5 to 25, 24/7)

1800 55 1800 · kidshelpline.com.au (<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>)

Lifeline (24/7)

13 11 14

An accredited sports psychologist (Pro)

Search the Australian Psychological Society directory: [Find a Psychologist](https://psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist) (<https://psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist>). Expect roughly \$250 to \$350 a session, often sold in packs. Fees vary, so compare a few.

The book that started it

Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Everyone reads it, parents included.