

Trying Being More Thoughtless!

Chances are the room full of athletes from around the region began to wonder why they woke up early on a Saturday morning to hear a mental performance consultant begin speaking like this: "Okay, um, welcome. Uh, today we're going to talk about mental toughness, um, on the court." He began touching his chin out of apparent nervousness.

And then, just as the group started looking around, wondering if they could get their money back, Ed Tseng broke out of character and said, "Okay, so know that little voice inside your head that began judging me just now? We're going to talk about that today."

The audience let out a relieved laugh when they realized Tseng was merely proving a valid point through his monotone monologue. Tseng's message to over a dozen mostly tennis players at the Palm Aire Country Club was simple: "The only thing that ever gets in people's way is too much thinking."

Each time someone – including this writer – asked, "How do you learn to think less?," Tseng responded, "We automatically think less when we are in the moment and our minds are clear."

Tseng is a 40-year old New Jersey-native who was the 2005 USTA Pro of the Year who now travels the country teaching amateur and professional athletes, as well as business leaders and students how their minds work.

"We cannot control what thoughts come into our heads, but we can control which ones we give attention to and make them grow, and which ones we don't make a big deal of, and therefore have no power over us. Most people believe



that their feelings come from something outside of them, for example their opponent, the spectators, the weather. But the truth is that none of those things can affect how you feel...only your thinking can do that. Once you realize it's all from you, then you're in control," he said.

Tseng tells a story about Pete Sampras' response to someone who asked how he dealt with the highs and lows during a match: "It's part of the game, it doesn't concern me."

Tseng says it takes awhile to increase our physical conditioning, but he says our mental conditioning can change overnight "by 500% if we understand how our minds work. We have the power."

He says we come in the world operating from clarity, and then many of us cloud our minds with too much thinking over time. "We don't lack clear thinking, we block it. Have you ever seen or heard kids second-guess themselves when they're learning to walk?"

Other Tsengisms:

- "Nothing holds a thought in place except you."
- "Bad dreams don't have power over us – so why do we let negative thoughts control us during the day?"
- "We have 60,000 to 100,000 thoughts a day – 90% are the same as the day before!"

The crowd listened intently – from twin 10-year old rising stars, to a team of women from Pinellas County. A fitness trainer. A golfer. All with one thing in common: They think too much. And to each one, Tseng had the same message: "Don't believe everything you think!" RAY COLLINS

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