

When You See the Best, You'll Ignite It!

Your job as a coach is to fill those you serve—your downline, business associates, students, children, and yourself—with this belief system centered on unconditional faith.

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To give unbridled passion, spirit, and effort to a worthwhile goal we must step beyond the comfort zone into the **challenge zone**. It is in this uncharted territory that we open up the possibility of overcoming a lifetime of fear and doubt.

In the challenge zone we position ourselves for truly extraordinary moments of inner triumph where real transformation can occur.

Coaching is all about facilitating this kind of transformation whether in your network marketing business, in your relationships, or in yourself.

I had the unforgettable experience of coaching an athlete who found the courage to move into the challenge zone. Our relationship taught me that only when you see the best in others do you have the chance to inspire it.

Throughout his swimming career, Ron was the kind of young man who caused coaches to shake their heads in disappointment and throw their hands up in frustration. Like that distributor you signed up several months ago who you knew had all the tools to build a dynamic organization, Ron was blessed with considerable natural ability. But he skated by, never digging deep to bring out his true potential. His attendance at practice was as unpredictable as the weather. Just when you'd begin to think he

had turned the corner in his commitment, he would disappear for days at a time, negating any progress he'd made in conditioning and focus. He had enough talent to do pretty well even with his half-hearted effort, and he was friendly and easy going, never confrontational or angry. He simply didn't seem to care that much.

Ron joined my team as he was about to enter his senior year in high school when he and the rest of his former club merged with ours to create a real United States Swimming powerhouse. I had seen him at meets over the years and knew of both his talent and his reputation for lackadaisical training habits. What I didn't know when he walked onto my pool deck that September afternoon, was that buried beneath Ron's happy-go-lucky exterior beat the heart of a champion. There was a spirit filled with passion and energy within him just aching to come out.

He was just frightened, like all of us when we hide from our possibilities.

What if he gave his best, and it wasn't good enough? What if he fully committed himself and failed? It was so much easier to amble along on talent alone, protected by the invisible comfort zone called "unrealized potential."

Ron's past coaches had tried to needle him into caring, a strategy that clearly did not work over the long term. Occasionally just out of spite he would respond with an "I'll show you!" effort, but quickly he would slide back even further into his blasé attitude.

I have never believed in sarcasm as a motivator because the energy it evokes comes from embarrassment, fear, or revenge. These emotions can generate short-term results, but not long-term thriving inspiration. From the moment Ron joined our team, I focused on his potential and praised him for every effort that moved him a little closer to it.

When it comes to coaching, what you focus on is what you create!

You must see what's possible in the people you coach, even when they don't see it themselves.

After his first week with the team, Ron came to me after practice and said, "Coach, I'm having so much fun here! You really believe in me, don't you?"

I responded, "Ron, you've been a joy to have here this week. You've got everything it takes to be the CIF champion if you decide it's something you truly want. You could have an **amazing** senior year. The greatest fun in life is to put your heart and soul on the line one hundred percent and to discover what's really inside of you. I **do** believe in you, and I'm really excited to be your coach."

He smiled and turned just a tad red. But I could see the positive impact of the faith I had expressed in him far outweighed any embarrassment he felt receiving such big compliments.

After that talk, Ron became a dream for me to train. In all my years of coaching, never had I worked with an athlete who tried harder and had more fun doing it. Many of my athletes were incredibly hard-working, but so often these dedicated kids were extremely tough on themselves emotionally. They would beat themselves up about one poor practice or performance, completely forgetting weeks of outstanding efforts. But when Ron made the decision to go for it, he placed his full faith in me **and** in himself. On the rare occasions when he didn't have his usual snap and power, he never let his positive spirit dissipate. As a result, he had few sub par days and bounced back from any disappointment almost immediately. More than any swimmer I'd ever had the pleasure to coach, Ron looked inside himself to determine his success rather than evaluating himself by what everyone else thought or what happened on the outside.

Even on days when he didn't turn in his fastest practice times, he was able to feel good about his effort. With this fresh, centered spirit, Ron improved dramatically.

By the time the high school season began, Ron was performing workout sets and drills I had never seen accomplished before. And he loved every minute of it. He came to practice each day with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye that seemed to say, "Come on, Coach, let's see what we can do today!" Where years of cajoling and ridicule had left him uninspired and uncommitted, he responded to praise and positive energy with boundless enthusiasm.

His attitude and effort had quite an effect on the entire team. For the first time in his life, Ron knew what it felt like to be admired. He became our team leader because of his extraordinary example. His enthusiasm was infectious, and all the kids seemed to have more bounce in their steps and worked harder while complaining less. Practices had never been so fun and so effective.

It was hard to believe how swiftly the year had flown by when we arrived at East Los Angeles City College for the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) High School Championship prelims. Ron was to swim three events, the two hundred-yard individual medley (fifty yards of each of the four competitive strokes), the one hundred-yard backstroke, and a leg on his school's medley relay. With all my heart, I wanted this young man to experience a moment of great triumph at his high school championship. He deserved no less.

The prelims were the qualifiers for the finals that would take place three days later. Because of his fine performances during the dual meet season, Ron was seeded in the top three in both of his individual events, though there was no clear favorite. The top swimmers were closely bunched within a few tenths of a second of one another.

In the sport of swimming, just as in network marketing, top performers work extremely hard. These determined kids rise each morning around 4:30 and hit the water by 5:00 a.m. for a two-hour workout before school. Then, after a full day in classes, they come back for an evening workout, another grueling two-hour test of stamina. On top of their endless hours in the pool, they lift weights four days a week. As a result, during the season, they are dead tired. The entire training strategy points at one shining light at the end of an exhausting tunnel—the taper and peak period. This is the three weeks or so before the big meet when they stop morning practices and gradually reduce the intensity of their afternoon

workouts. With the added rest, their muscles and spirits begin to rejuvenate, and they prepare psychologically for their best performances. It is a very exciting time for a swimmer. With a couple of days to go before the target competition, the kids begin to feel so much energy they could pop! The last big step is to “shave down.” The night before the big meet the kids shave the hair from their arms, legs, back, stomach—some even shave their heads, though most opt for a cap or short haircut. When they hit the water after shaving they feel incredible—it’s as if they are suddenly lighter than air. It’s truly an amazing sensation and a huge boost mentally and emotionally.

For the preliminaries, Ron and I decided that he would not shave down. Though it was slightly risky, we felt confident he would easily qualify in the top eight anyway, and then would have an extra edge when he shaved for the finals.

The day of the prelims finally arrived and we were psyched! Ron’s goal for the two hundred-yard individual medley was 1:57.9, and I secretly hoped he might go as fast as 1:55.9 in the finals if everything went perfectly. He had never broken 2:02 before, but we both were visualizing the best. In his prelim heat he started off the race looking strong, but his timing seemed a bit off when he reached the breaststroke leg. The effort was there, but he tired as the race progressed and really struggled the last twenty-five yards. His time was 1:59.9, and though it was a personal best, I could see his disappointment when he came over to me to talk about the race. Indeed, I was worried because he had really looked tired in the last half of the event, and the finals were only a few days away. He had worked so hard, and our hopes were so high, what if we had overestimated his ability? What if his goals were way out of reach? As he looked to me for answers, I could sense a tinge of doubt creeping into his mind.

I did my very best to instill more confidence in him than I actually felt at that moment. I smiled at him and said with great conviction, “You’re still three days away. When the finals come on Thursday, you’re going to be awesome!”

Thank goodness he didn’t know I was trying to solidify my own faith as much as his. True to the spirit he had shown all year long, he bounced right back as he listened to my brief pep talk, nodding and smiling at me with twinkle back in those laughing eyes of his. He felt even better when

he found out he had qualified first in the individual medley and second in the backstroke. But when we left the prelims that evening, I couldn't help but wonder if he was going to fall far short of his goals. He deserved success, and I prayed he would find something magical inside of him by Thursday.

That week at our short practices, Ron was right back to his cheerful, upbeat self. We both knew Thursday would be his one big shot at his dreams. If he approached the goals we had set he might even catch the eye of a college recruiter or two, with the outside chance of a scholarship. He would be a hero at his school—potentially a CIF champion—and single-handedly responsible for having his school earn an unprecedented top-five finish in overall team points.

Wednesday afternoon, after a very light practice with a few sprints tossed in to rev the kids' engines, I asked Ron to come into my office. He had been in my thoughts incessantly, and I wanted him to know how honored I felt to be his coach. I wanted to thank him for the shining example he had set for our team. Even more, I wanted to thank him for all he had meant to me. Everyday that season I looked forward to practice with extra enthusiasm knowing Ron was going to be there ready to meet every challenge I threw at him with pure joy. I told him that no matter what he did the next day, he was already a champion in the truest sense.

"When you step up on those starting blocks tomorrow, remember how completely I believe in you. You deserve an amazing day and you are going to fly!" I gave him a big bear hug and joked with him about remembering to put a blade in the razor when he shaved down. The last thing I said to him was, "Sleep well tonight. You can rest easy knowing that you could not have prepared any better. You're ready!" As I watched Ron walk out to his car, I looked to God for help in making my "three days away" prediction after his prelim swims clairvoyant rather than unrealistically optimistic.

The energy was electric at the East L.A. City College pool the next day. At that time southern California was the hotbed of swimming in the U.S., and the CIF Championships were the premier high school swimming event in the world. School spirit was running rampant as cheers erupted from every corner of the aquatic center. Only the fastest eight swimmers in each event had survived the preliminaries to make it to these finals, and each and every competitor was primed to put it all on the line.

Because I was Ron's United States Swimming coach and not his high school coach, I was not allowed on the pool deck for this championship meet. Knowing of this restriction, we had carefully gone over his warm-up plan in advance. I positioned myself at the most visible spot in the bleachers where Ron and all of my other swimmers could easily spot me. If it's possible to transmit energy and faith through space, from my perch up in the stands I sent my kids all I had as I watched them loosen up. I'd know quickly if it was to be a day of triumph or disappointment because Ron's first race, the two hundred-yard individual medley, would be one of the earliest events. I just hoped Ron wasn't as nervous as I was!

As he walked over to sit behind the starting blocks with the other seven competitors, Ron looked out at the end of the pool, deep in concentration. He was visualizing his race just as he'd done a hundred times. Each finalist stepped forward when introduced by the announcer and was greeted with a wild explosion of cheers. When Ron heard his name, he stepped up on the block and acknowledged the crowd with a wave, and then, spotting me, gave a quick nod as if to say, "I'm ready coach. I know I can do it!" I smiled back and gave him the thumbs up.

All cheering and last minute conversation came to an abrupt halt as the starter blew his whistle, the signal for total silence except for his instructions to the swimmers.

"Judges and timers ready—swimmers, take your marks—BOOM! The gun went off, and eight peak-performance athletes exploded from the blocks, their legs driving like pistons as they stretched for the water. Ron had a terrific start, and within twenty-five yards he was already in the lead.

The first half of the race, consisting of the butterfly and backstroke legs, was his strongest. So I expected Ron to open up about a body-length lead. But when he hit the half-way mark I was stunned. He was flying! He was over two seconds ahead of the pace we had hoped for and had moved at least three full body lengths ahead of the second-place swimmer. I was excited, but could he keep it up?

I held my breath as he made the turn into the breaststroke leg. This was where he had faltered on Monday when his timing had fallen off and fatigue had crept into his arms and legs. But today, he looked fantastic!

He was on top of the water, driving forward on each stroke with terrific thrust from his whip kick. I had never seen him swim with such power in breaststroke before. My heart nearly pounded out of my chest as I watched this tremendous young man find the brilliance that had always been hidden by his fear. Fifty yards of freestyle to go! I shouted in my mind, *Please let him finish strong!*

He turned for home, every muscle in his powerful body blasting toward the finish. With ten yards left, he put his head down and accelerated into the wall without breathing. His closest competitor was more than a half a pool length behind him!

As soon as he hit the finish he whirled around to look up at the giant scoreboard clock that instantly flashed his time: 1:53.86! He had shattered both the CIF record and exceeded our wildest dreams by more than two seconds. In the process, he had qualified for the most prestigious swimming meet in the United States, the Senior National Championships. We had never even considered that possibility!

As soon as he saw his time, he turned and looked for me in the stands. When our eyes connected he leaped out of the water to his waist and pumped his right arm toward the heavens in absolute joy and triumph. His huge smile was the greatest gift a coach could ever receive. The entire stadium was applauding wildly for him, and he flew out of the pool, forgetting all about my pre-race instructions to go straight into the warm down pool and loosen up for his backstroke event. Instead, he rushed up the stairs, pumping his fists and howling in utter delight until he reached me. He wrapped his arms around me and lifted me right off the ground in pure exultation. The next second, his parents joined our unrestrained celebration. Goosebumps, tears, and gratitude flowed non-stop. A phenomenal young man had transformed his belief in himself and received the moment he truly deserved.

Ron went on to win the hundred-yard backstroke as well, once again eclipsing the CIF record and demolishing his personal best time by over two-and-a-half seconds. To top it all off, he lifted his team on his powerful shoulders and carried them to a third-place finish in the team standings, by far the greatest showing in their history. Ron was named the outstanding swimmer of the meet and received a full-scholarship from the University of Utah.

It's been said that God's delays are not God's denials.

Whenever we take actions in ways that positively and compassionately impact others; whenever we choose unselfishness over ego; whenever we give our most focused, dedicated, and determined efforts; our intent, energy, and actions will lead irrepressibly to **deserved results** just as Ron experienced. We may not find *instant* gratification, however. Indeed, we may even begin to wonder, as time goes on, if a lifetime of planting will ever result in a richly deserved harvest. But when things seem the darkest, and your life's circumstances the most unjust and unfulfilling, remember, faith has no time limit. The rewards for living your word and holding confidently to hope and possibility cannot be denied. In simply making the decisions and taking action you have already succeeded.

The instant you know you deserve the best, it is yours.

You will experience joy that cannot be taken away because, through your choices, you will discover the healing, freeing peace of mind that is faith in action. Your job as a coach is to fill those you serve—your downline, business associates, students, children, and yourself—with this belief system centered on unconditional faith. Through the eyes of a coach, you'll see others' greatness the instant you believe it.



Brian D. Biro is ***America's Breakthrough Coach!*** He is one of the nation's foremost speakers and teachers of **Leadership, Possibility Thinking, Thriving on Change, and Team-Building**. A major client who has had Brian back to speak several times offered the best introduction about Brian's impact when he said, "Brian Biro has the energy of a ten-year-old, the enthusiasm of a twenty-year-old, and the wisdom of a seventy-five-year-old." A former vice-president of a major transportation corporation and the author of 6 books including internationally acclaimed bestseller, *Beyond Success!* which climbed to #71 on the Amazon.com top 100 — from over 2 million titles, Brian was **rated #1 from over 40 Speakers** at 4 consecutive INC. Magazine International Conferences. With degrees from Stanford University and UCLA, Brian has appeared on Good Morning America, CNN's Business Unusual, and the Fox News Network and as a featured speaker for several of the top Network Marketing companies worldwide.

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