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How to Find The Olympian Within

Why did it take me so many years to discover that it's not about the approval of others?

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You're standing on the highest pedestal, the one in the center. You hear the roar of approval from the crowd. As the first note of the national anthem is played in the Olympic stadium, you feel all the pride and honor that accompanies this moment. Ten thousand hours of preparation for this one triumphant moment in history. You've won the gold!

That dream of an Olympic championship is in the heart of every amateur athlete, just as the Grand Final, World Cup, Super Bowl and Wimbledon are the goals of professional football players and tennis players. What are your dreams? You're most likely not a world-class athlete, but surely you have aspirations of your own. Perhaps you imagine a metaphorical gold medal being placed around your neck by the CEO of your company, or by your friends and family for being the best in your own unique way. Maybe you wonder whether you're up to the risk of starting your own business.

On Sundays my grandparents would take us children to ride the huge merry-go-round next to the San Diego Zoo. We could hardly wait to mount those bobbing zebras, lions, tigers and stallions, and whirl round and round to the music of the antique pipe organ.

Surrounded by mirrors and lights, our hearts would pound in anticipation as we stretched out desperately, trying to be the one

among all the riders who would grab the gold ring and win another ride. So began my competitive spirit.

Since you're probably younger than I am, you may never even have heard of grabbing the gold ring on the carousel. But in the 40s, and 50s, if you reached out and caught it, you not only got a free ride – your name was also announced over the loudspeaker and all the other kids and their parents would applaud. And, of course, the kids all wished it could have been them instead of you.

Reflecting back now on my youth, I've come to some realizations. I guess I did start out thinking of success and winning as something that you got by reaching outside yourself and proving to others that you were worthy. Come to think of it, most of my friends also believed that you had to prove, or earn, or win, or perform in some special way, and then you would deserve the gold ring or the Olympic gold medal.

The approval of others seemed to precede feelings of self-confidence and self-worth. You were entitled to feel good about yourself only after you performed well. Why did it take me so many years to discover that just the reverse ought to be true?

After devoting most of my lifetime to investigating the well-springs of personal and professional success, I'm able to make the following statements with great confidence:

- You need to feel love inside yourself before you can offer it to anyone else.
- Your own sense of value determines the quality of your performance.
- Performance is only a reflection of internal worth, not a measure of it.
- The less you try to impress, the more impressive you are.

- What you show the world on the outside is a mirror image of how you feel on the inside.

- You should chase your passion, not your pension

The key trait shared by athletic champions and winners in every walk of life is the fundamental belief in one's own internal value.

If your success depends on external possessions, you'll be subject to constant anxiety. When your peer group cheers one of your accomplishments, you'll feel good for a while, but then you'll wonder if they'll cheer as loudly the next time. If they're critical, you will feel hurt and threatened.

> **The truth is, you can never win over a long period of time if your concept of success depends upon the perfect performance or the placing of a gold medal around your neck.**

It's obvious that talent, looks and other attributes aren't equally distributed, but we're all given an abundance of value – more than we could use in several lifetimes. The game of life certainly isn't played on a level playing field for each of us in terms of education, a supportive home life, and other circumstances beyond our control, but I can assure you that you were born with the qualities of a champion. That's what I mean by value.

You see, champions are born, but they can be unmade by their perceptions, exposure and responses. Losers are not born to lose. They're programmed that way by their own responses to their environment and their decisions.

There's a phrase I like to use – *The Inner Winner* -- that describes the kind of person who recognizes his or her internal value, and who is able to use that recognition as the foundation for achieving any goal.

The secret of wearing the gold medal around your neck in the external world is that first you must be an Inner Winner. You must recognize that you're already an Olympian Within.

Denis Waitley is one of America's most respected and beloved authors, keynote lecturers and productivity consultants on high performance human achievement. He has inspired, informed, challenged and entertained audiences for over 25 years from the boardrooms of multi-national corporations to the control rooms of NASA's space program. Denis has been voted business speaker of the year by the Sales and Marketing Executives' Association and by Toastmasters' International and inducted into the International Speakers' Hall of Fame.

With over 10 million audio programs sold in 14 languages, Denis Waitley's CD album, *The Psychology of Winning*, is still the all-time best selling program on self-mastery. To order this Best-Seller or his newest release, *The Platinum Collection* and to subscribe to the free Denis Waitley Weekly E-zine visit his website here: DenisWaitley.com