

FOREWORD BY **BILLY BEANE**

Executive Vice President of Baseball Operations,
Oakland Athletics



CRUNCH TIME

HOW TO BE YOUR **BEST** WHEN
IT MATTERS **MOST**

"When I was working on *Moneyball* and talking with Rick, it was clear that his coaching ability to maximize performance under pressure was extraordinary. I had the distinct thought: he should write a book."

MICHAEL LEWIS, *New York Times* bestselling author

RICK PETERSON & JUDD HOEKSTRA

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More Praise for *Crunch Time*

“In your high-pressure moments, don’t just try to survive. Apply Rick and Judd’s coaching and you will thrive!”

—**Marshall Goldsmith, Thinkers50 #1 Leadership Thinker in the World and bestselling author**

“In business as in baseball, your ability to perform under pressure can make or break your career. *Crunch Time* will teach you how to thrive in high-stakes situations.”

—**Travis Bradberry, bestselling coauthor of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0***

“Every day is Crunch Time in New York. When I was the New York Mets’ manager, Rick was the perfect fit to be my pitching coach. He has a unique ability to reframe pressure situations to maximize performance. *Crunch Time* is a must-read to optimize your performance in your own ‘Big Apple.’”

—**Willie Randolph, former Manager, New York Mets, six-time All-Star, and six-time World Series Champion**

“Rick Peterson is a national treasure. His storytelling is matched only by his hard-earned wisdom, and I’m thrilled he’s teamed with Judd Hoekstra to bring you the best of both. Their book is packed with insights on being at your best when the pressure is highest.”

—**Cade Massey, PhD, Professor, The Wharton School**

“At one time or another, at work or at home, all of us have felt like the whole game was riding on our shoulders. Rick and Judd apply what Rick has learned working with elite athletes to not only lift that burden but enable you to perform at your best.”

—**Susan Torroella, Executive Vice President, Wellness Corporate Solutions, and Fortune Small Business Best Boss Award recipient**

“Your heart is racing, your stomach is churning, and all eyes are upon you; your next move will decide whether you win or lose. Sales professionals, like professional athletes, know this scenario all too well. *Crunch Time* is a fun read that helps you take advantage of your adrenaline and make the most of high-pressure situations.”

—**Bill Mathews, Associate Vice President, Facilities Growth, Aramark**

“Rick Peterson has always applied a distinctive blend of insight and creativity in his out-of-the-box approach to solving problems. With *Crunch Time*, he and Judd Hoekstra lay out, in a compelling and entertaining way, an approach to dealing with pressure that can help all of us in our tough personal and professional moments.”

—**Bill Squadron, Professor, Columbia University, and former President, Bloomberg Sports**

“*Crunch Time* has already helped me reframe one issue, allowing us to save six figures. This is an amazingly inspirational book with examples everyone can relate to. I’ve shared this new knowledge with our team, resulting in a renewed alignment, confidence, and success!”

—**Yogesh Madhvani, CEO, SimplexDiam, Inc.**

“I’ve had the privilege of interviewing hundreds of professional athletes and coaches, and few are as insightful as Rick Peterson. He has a gift for distilling complex concepts into understandable terms. He is famous for developing the best pitchers in the world, of course, but he can teach us all about performing under pressure. The only thing better than a Rick Peterson interview is a Rick Peterson book.”

—**Lee Jenkins, Lead Writer, *Sports Illustrated***

“I wish I’d read this book sooner! I had an experience where I choked hard core. The more I tried to figure out why I was striking out, the greater the pressure became. I could no longer think clearly. Reading *Crunch Time*, with its practical techniques and relatable examples, I can now see what I will do differently next time.”

—**Laurie Cooke, CEO, Healthcare Businesswomen’s Association**

“Nobody knows more than Rick Peterson about dealing with pressure, whether it be the seventh game of the World Series or a real-world situation.”

—**Jerry Reinsdorf, Chairman and owner, Chicago White Sox and Chicago Bulls**

“Fascinating behind-the-scenes stories about how elite leaders, coaches, and performers have learned to thrive under pressure. The best part is that the lessons apply to all of us in our everyday pressure situations.”

—**Jon Gordon, bestselling author of *Training Camp* and *The Energy Bus***

“Rick has years of experience teaching professional and amateur pitchers how to maximize their true potential, how to embrace pressure and avoid crumbling under the weight of others’ expectations. He and Judd now team up to share those experiences in *Crunch Time*, a must-read for anyone looking to conquer pressure in the business world or in daily life!”

—**Jim Duquette, former General Manager, New York Mets and Baltimore Orioles, and Major League Baseball analyst**

“I love Rick’s progressive and out-of-the-box thinking. He helped me improve as a major league pitcher at the back end of my career in the pressure cooker of New York with the Mets. In *Crunch Time*, Rick and Judd provide a GPS for you to perform your best under pressure.”

—**Al Leiter, nineteen-year major league pitcher, two-time World Series Champion, two-time All-Star, and Emmy award-winning Major League Baseball analyst**

“Rick has the deepest knowledge of pitching that I have come across in my career. He helped me immensely. This includes sharing wisdom in areas beyond baseball, such as dealing with pressure. I encourage you to dig deep into *Crunch Time*. The lessons last a lifetime.”

—**Barry Zito, fifteen-year major league pitcher, World Series Champion, three-time All-Star, and Cy Young Award winner**

“*Crunch Time* succinctly defined and taught me concepts and techniques that are relevant across business, personal, and athletic challenges. So easy to grasp and apply, and with enough variety for just about any situation. Thanks for helping me find ways to ‘change the station,’ remember that it’s okay to relax under pressure, and simply perform better.”

—**Tracey Roberts, Chief Human Resource Officer, Weber-Stephen Products LLC, busy mom, and “weekend warrior” triathlete**

“On the surface, *Crunch Time* seems to skillfully address a specific life situation—the physiological and psychological response to pressure. Upon reflection, its application is much more than that. From public speaking to parenting to corporate leadership, the richness of the life lessons that are incorporated in this engaging and relatable text is, in fact, enormously broad. So, sit back, relax, and reframe your perspective.”

—**James G. Conroy, President and CEO, Boot Barn**

“Contrary to what many of us assume, it is not our body or possessions that determine happiness and success; it is the state of our mind. This book will help you go from stress and fear to optimal performance when it matters most, by teaching you how to train your mind.”

—**Dr. Rogier Hoenders, psychiatrist and Director, Center for Integrative Psychiatry, Lentis, the Netherlands**

“*Crunch Time* brings the magic of the Professor (as Rick was known throughout the big leagues) to the reader in an engaging, inspiring way. Judd translates Rick’s success as a pitching coach into the everyday pressures we face at work, at school, at home, and in the community. The proven power of reframing—under the most trying of circumstances—can help shift our heads, hearts, and hands from victim to victor. You need *Crunch Time* to be your best!”

—**S. Chris Edmonds, author of the Amazon bestseller *The Culture Engine***

“It is our mindset that distinguishes those who truly perform under pressure and not just our skill level. *Crunch Time* taught me how to coach my team to come up with new ways to rethink a situation and see it as a new opportunity and that they have what it takes to succeed! There is a lot to learn from Rick’s coaching with elite athletes, and it definitely translates to the business world.”

—**Charlene Prounis, CEO, Flashpoint Medica**

“Time and again we hear anecdotes about how sports results can relate to business decisions. Rick Peterson, who has always thought beyond the diamond, has coauthored an essential read to help you succeed in business, sports, and life.”

—**Joe Favorito, veteran sports entertainment marketing executive and Professor, Columbia University**

“As someone who challenges convention and explores new ideas, Rick Peterson is an important voice not only in baseball but also in finding your personal best.”

—**Tom Verducci, bestselling coauthor of *The Yankee Years* and Emmy Award-winning Major League Baseball analyst**

“Using engaging stories from high-pressure situations in business, sports, and life, Rick Peterson and Judd Hoekstra give you the mental tools you need to deliver when tension is high and everyone is depending on you. A key part of leadership is learning; using that learning to develop an engaged and passionate culture is vital.”

—**Garry Ridge, President and CEO, WD-40 Company**

“This is one of those books I’ll keep close to me, to pull out when I need encouragement and coaching. I wouldn’t be surprised to find myself reviewing it again and again.”

—**Martha Lawrence, coauthor of *Trust Works!***

“*Crunch Time* is an instant classic. Rick’s unique wisdom on the baseball diamond and Judd’s ability to translate that wisdom across numerous work, sports, and life situations has produced the definitive prescription for clutch performance. This book has already improved my professional mindset and my golf game!”

—**Douglas Madenberg, Principal, Retail Feedback Group, and coauthor of *Feedback Rules!***

“*Crunch Time* entertains while providing concrete, actionable, personal behavior-changing advice. Great stories, great advice . . . a great read.”

—**Mark Censoprano, Chief Marketing Officer, Aspen Dental Management**

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Rick Peterson

*Director of Pitching Development for the Baltimore Orioles and
Pitching Coach for the Oakland Athletics during the Moneyball Era*

Judd Hoekstra

*Coauthor of the bestselling *Leading at a Higher Level and Who
Killed Change?* and Vice President, *The Ken Blanchard Companies**

Foreword by **Billy Beane**

Executive Vice President of Baseball Operations, Oakland Athletics



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Crunch Time

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*To my wife, Lelia O'Connor
You are my beacon of light and inspiration to
illuminate my life in 108 ways.*

—Rick Peterson

*To Sherry, Julia, and Cole
May you seek and find the opportunities
in every challenge.*

—Judd Hoekstra

Table of Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xvii</i>
Introduction: Rick and Izzy	1
1 Reframing—The Shortest Path from Threat to Opportunity	7
2 Why Reframing at Crunch Time Is Necessary	19
3 Reframing from Trying Harder to Trying Easier	37
4 Reframing from Tension to Laughter	55
5 Reframing from Anxiety to Taking Control	69
6 Reframing from Doubt to Confidence	85
7 Reframing from Failure to a Learning Moment	101
8 Reframing from Prepared to Overprepared	121
Final Thoughts	139
A Index of Stories	141
B Try This	145
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>About the Authors</i>	<i>155</i>
<i>Endnotes</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>167</i>

Preface

The privilege of a lifetime is to be the best of who you are and to exercise that privilege every day.

—RICK PETERSON

In the spring of 2013, I received a call from someone seeking to write a book with leadership guru Dr. Ken Blanchard. After working with Ken for almost 15 years, I've heard this request many times. However, this request was unlike any of the others. I stood up and took notice.

The caller was Rick Peterson, the most renowned pitching coach on the planet. He coached the Oakland Athletics pitching staff during the famed *Moneyball* era. He also coached a New York Mets pitching staff comprised of All-Stars, Cy Young Award winners, and Hall of Famers. Being a former college baseball player and life-long fan of the game, I was thrilled to be speaking with Rick. When it comes to pitching coaches, he is *the* pitching coach.

Rick shared that he felt a kinship with Ken, the coauthor of the runaway bestseller *The One Minute Manager*. He highlighted how a pitching coach is the ultimate One Minute Manager. He is responsible for setting clear goals, praising progress toward the goals, and redirecting performance when it's off track. But Rick also pointed out one big difference.

A pitching coach doesn't operate in your typical office environment. He is the only coach in professional sports who provides

in-game coaching on the field of play. He must calm his pitcher down in front of millions of fans, with the game on the line, in 30 seconds or less. Also, everyone watching will know within minutes whether or not the coaching worked.

Ken let Rick know he would love to work with him but was committed to other book projects for the next few years. Knowing my expertise and passion for leadership, coaching, and sports, Ken recommended I work with Rick. When I suggested this idea to Rick, he welcomed me with open arms. So began our odyssey.

In addition to my excitement to share Rick's unique perspective and expertise with you, I had a secret and selfish reason for working with him. Despite my success in amateur athletics and now in business, I have vivid nightmares from choking at crunch time. I'm not alone. Performing at less than your best in high-pressure situations is a universal problem. I see it wherever I turn—at work and in everyday life.

Help is on the way. Consider Rick your personal coach. In addition, *Crunch Time* shares the performance-under-pressure secrets gathered from my interviews with a number of other elite leaders, coaches, and performers. If you're a baseball fan, you'll recognize Oakland A's General Manager Billy Beane of *Moneyball* fame, Hall of Famer Tom Glavine, Cy Young Award winner Barry Zito, and the inspirational Olympic hero Jim Abbott. I also tap into the wisdom of elite performers outside of baseball, including CEOs, executive coaches, leadership guru Ken Blanchard, and award-winning Director Stephen Soderbergh. Rick and I are fortunate to call these individuals our friends.

While *Crunch Time* shares a number of entertaining, behind-the-scenes stories from Rick's career in baseball, you don't need to be a baseball fan to find this book enjoyable and valuable. The lessons shared transcend baseball, applying to the everyday pressure situations you face.

Furthermore, the lessons shared by the elite leaders, coaches, and performers are not just for the elite; they are relevant and valuable for everyone. Throughout the book, I share how I've applied what I've learned and the resulting fruit from the shifts in my thinking.

For example, in 2015, my first full year of consciously reframing pressure situations from threat to opportunity, the annual sales revenue I am responsible for increased 25 percent! The customers my teammates and I serve also achieved great outcomes. Based on these results and how they were achieved, I earned a promotion to Vice President. In this new role, I have more responsibility, more pressure, and more opportunity to expand my influence and impact.

Here's one quick piece of advice before you dive in: read the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 in order. These serve as the foundation for the rest of the book. Following Chapter 2, you may choose to read Chapters 3–8 in whatever sequence suits you best.

—*Judd Hoekstra*

Foreword

It's well documented in *Moneyball* that we (the Oakland A's of the late 1990s and early 2000s) were going to great lengths to rethink all aspects of baseball: how it is managed, how it is played, who is best suited to play it, and why.

The gap between the rich and the poor was growing wider than ever. To some, especially baseball traditionalists, having the second lowest payroll in baseball might be viewed as a threat. A threat to landing talent. A threat to winning. A threat to keeping our jobs. For us, it was the opposite; it was liberating. We could break the rules and take chances bigger payroll teams wouldn't dream of taking. It gave us the opportunity to explore new frontiers in every area of the game.

I knew bringing Rick Peterson onboard as our pitching coach represented tremendous growth for us and would give us an edge. Rick is anything but your typical baseball guy. He's an educated guy who studied psychology and art in college. He is very intellectually curious. We were the same. It was a great match in our minds.

Rick was always looking to learn and was going to explore every possible way to make our pitchers not only better, but also healthier. When we were together, Rick was looking into areas no other coaches were looking at—biomechanical analysis with Dr. James Andrews, statistical probabilities associated with various pitch counts, sports psychology, and even mindfulness—to figure out how to improve our pitchers' performance.

What strikes me about Rick is just how open he is to new ideas, to challenging traditional thinking. That's what reframing is all about—choosing to see the world through a different lens that enables you to bring out the best in yourself and others.

Rick reframed how to best achieve maximum pitching performance, especially in pressure situations. He showed that performing in the clutch is not a case of “you have it or you don't.” Rather, it can be learned.

He successfully brought out the best in the budding young stars of our pitching staff—the Big Three of Barry Zito, Tim Hudson, and Mark Mulder. Perhaps even more importantly, he helped the other less-physically-gifted pitchers like Chad Bradford and Cory Lidle maximize their potential and their contributions to our team. Baseball is a game with razor-thin margins of victory. Being able to get all your players—from the top of your roster to the bottom—to consistently perform to their potential in pressure situations is frequently the difference between winning and losing.

Throughout my career, both as a player and an executive, I've clearly seen differences in how some players cave under the pressure while others thrive. With entertaining stories from an insider's perspective, Rick and Judd share how those who appear to be immune to the pressure think differently and are able to be their best when it matters most.

Just as Rick was a difference-maker for our team, the wisdom captured in *Crunch Time* will be a difference-maker for you and your team. Enjoy!

—Billy Beane, Executive Vice President of Baseball Operations,
Oakland Athletics

CRUNCH TIME

HOW TO BE YOUR **BEST** WHEN
IT MATTERS **MOST**

INTRODUCTION

Rick and Izzy

Baseball is 90 percent mental. The other half is physical.

—*YOGI BERRA*

It's October 11, 2001, and the Oakland A's are playing the New York Yankees in Game 2 of the opening round of the American League Playoffs. Nearly 57,000 raucous fans are in attendance at Yankee Stadium, with a TV audience of 11 million.

Tim Hudson, the A's starting pitcher, has been nothing less than brilliant. He's staked the A's to a 2–0 lead. But it's the bottom of the 9th inning, and the situation for Oakland grows particularly nerve-racking. Hudson no longer pitches. On the mound, trying to finish the game, is the A's closer, Jason “Izzy” Isringhausen.

Last season, in his first full season as a closer, Izzy made the American League All-Star team. He showed he clearly had the physical talent to succeed. But that season wasn't without its rocky moments. Facing these same Yankees on August 8, 2000, Izzy blew the game by giving up back-to-back 9th inning home runs to Bernie Williams and David Justice.

This season, Izzy has struggled and his confidence has plummeted. By the start of August, he had nine blown saves. At one point in the season, he had been temporarily removed from his closer's role to give him a break and try to get him back on track. As you would expect, fear, worry, and doubt invaded Izzy's mind.

The bottom of the 9th inning starts with Izzy surrendering a leadoff double to Williams. Izzy then walks Tino Martinez on five pitches to put runners at first and second with nobody out. Izzy sees Jorge Posada confidently striding to the plate. He looks at the on-deck circle and sees Justice. Both players appear excited about the opportunity to get to Izzy and win the game for the Yankees in dramatic fashion.

This is a crisis.

Despite his 6-foot 3-inch, 210-pound frame, Izzy is currently anything but intimidating. He kicks at the pitching rubber distractedly as he turns the baseball over and over in his right hand, looking for the perfect spot to grip. He grimaces and rapidly chomps on his gum. He seems hesitant, unsure of himself.

From the A's dugout comes the cry of "Time!" Out steps the A's pitching coach, Rick Peterson. His appearance elicits jeers from the hostile Bronx crowd. Peterson, nicknamed "The Professor" for his scientific approach to pitching, jogs quickly to the mound as if he has something important to share with Izzy. Peterson smiles, puts his hand on Izzy's shoulder, and begins to talk as if they are the only two people in the ballpark. Izzy laughs, then nods. He straightens up and seems more confident, more relaxed. Peterson quickly returns to the dugout, his conversation with Izzy taking less than a minute.

Izzy turns his attention back to the batter's box. He bends at the waist, dangles his arm by his side, and locks in on the catcher's sign. Izzy nods his head with confidence and begins delivering his pitches like a new man. In rapid succession, he strikes out Posada, induces Justice to pop out to the third baseman, and jams former playoff-hero Scott Brosius, who pops harmlessly to the first baseman to end the game. Crisis averted. Izzy comes through in this nail-biter. The A's win.

While the outcome is known, questions remain about how Izzy quickly regained his composure and came through in the clutch.

What exactly did Rick say? Did he correct a technical flaw in Izzy's mechanics? No.

Stay tuned. We'll tell you what happened at the end of this introduction.

Pressure to Perform

In today's hypercompetitive world, we all face significant pressure to perform. In the business world, these pressures come in many forms, including, but not limited to, urgent project deadlines, stretch goals, sales presentations and negotiations with millions of dollars on the line, question and answer sessions with a challenging audience, tough feedback from your boss, job interviews, and the ever-increasing mantra to "do more with less." At school, pressures can come in the form of heavy workloads, exams, and the social desire to fit in. Whether it's a dance competition, a piano recital, or a baseball game, even our recreation is filled with pressure.

For example, the pressures I'm currently facing include these:

- Navigating the interviews, research, writing, and deadlines associated with this book
- Investing the 60 or more hours a week I work in my day job to make a positive difference in the lives of our customers and the people I lead
- Serving as a loving husband
- Acting as a positive role model to my two teenagers
- Proactively managing my Type 1 diabetes to stay healthy

We are all challenged by countless high-pressure situations in our daily lives. Like Izzy, we want to perform our best when it

matters most. But something happens when the pressure rises; in retrospect, we know we performed far below our capabilities.

I will soon dive into the reasons for this dreaded truth. For now, let's just say that, in too many cases, we get in our own way and sabotage our performance. Across every profession and walk of life, failing under pressure continues to plague performers. It doesn't need to be this way. Rick and I can help.

Think of Rick as your personal coach. He will coach you to *reframe*—a cognitive skill you can use to quickly and effectively equip your mind and body to perform well under pressure, anytime, anywhere.

I have two roles in this book: first, to share Rick's and others' wisdom in a fun, entertaining way that also gives you a behind-the-scenes look into the world of elite performers under pressure; second, to show you how I've applied what Rick and others have taught me to my professional and personal life. As I do so, you will see that reframing is not just for professional athletes, coaches, and CEOs. It's for all of us.

What Separates the Best from the Rest at Crunch Time?

Rick's and my experience and interviews with elite performers reveal that, even more than physical skills, it's performers' mindsets that separate the best from the rest under pressure. Clutch performers know how to think on command in ways that help, rather than harm, their performance. Thinking differently is the starting point. Change how you act, and change your results.

Thoughts & Emotions → Actions → Results

Once you get to the highest level, everyone has talent. They have the physical tools. The mental side of it is what really sets you apart and allows your talent to come through.

—Barry Zito, 2002 Cy Young Award winner with the Oakland A's

So How Did Rick Help Izzy Get Out of the Jam?

Let's get back to the story of Rick and Izzy in the bottom of the 9th inning. As Rick stood on the mound with his hand on Izzy's shoulder, Rick could feel Izzy's body shaking.

Izzy mumbled anxiously,
"I can't feel my legs."

The pitching coach smiled and responded,
"That's okay; we don't need you to kick a field goal."

The humor served as an open valve, releasing Izzy's pressure. The humor also opened up Izzy's mind so it was receptive to a new thought, which Rick then provided.

Rick continued, telling Izzy that in a situation like they were in, nerves were to be expected, but those nerves didn't need to get in the way of executing the task at hand. Rick directed Izzy to focus on the simple task he'd executed to perfection thousands of times before.

"Hit the (catcher's) glove! Remember, you're a professional glove hitter!"

The nerves and the task could coexist nicely, with no diminishment in performance. Free from fear, worry, doubt, and a multitude of mental distractions, Izzy repeated to himself, “Hit the glove!” Based on his rapid change in demeanor and his superb performance, clearly Izzy took his coach’s advice to heart.

Rick helped Izzy out of the jam by *reframing*.

1

Reframing—The Shortest Path from Threat to Opportunity

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.

—MILTON BERLE

At its core, reframing describes the *skill* of consciously and intentionally thinking about a situation in a new or different way. This, in turn, allows us to shift the meaning we attach to the situation, the actions we take, and the results we achieve. The operative word in our definition is *skill*. In other words, it's not something some are gifted with and others are not. With practice, reframing can be learned by anyone.

Blanchard Executive Coach Kate Larsen shared the following analogy with me to describe how reframing works.¹ You hop into your car and start the engine. The radio is already on and is playing a song on one of your preset stations. The song is like the voice in your head (a.k.a. your self-talk),

reframe [ri:'freɪm]

The skill of consciously thinking about a situation in a new or different way to change how you interpret the situation, the actions you take, and the results you achieve

often filled with emotion. The preset station is the equivalent of a long-held assumption or belief.

The volume is low and you may not be paying attention to what's playing. It's just on in the background as you drive and think about other things. Then you decide to turn up the volume. Now you are aware of the song that's playing. Let's assume, in this case, the song is one you do not like. Being aware of the song you don't like is the equivalent of consciously paying attention to your negative self-talk.

You now have a choice. You can keep listening to the song and let it affect your thoughts and your emotions. Or you can check out what else is playing by changing the station. Changing the station to identify better songs is the equivalent of identifying different and better thoughts that are likely to lead to better actions and better outcomes.

Taking this analogy one step further, we used to live in a world where, based on the number of radio stations we could access, we were limited in the songs we could choose. Sometimes, no matter how hard we tried, we just couldn't find a song we liked on the radio. We no longer live in that world. We live in a world where we can create custom playlists loaded with our favorite songs for every occasion. In a similar fashion, Chapters 3–8 provide a playlist of reframes you can use to be your best at crunch time.

It's important to highlight that reframing is not about pretending everything is perfect and positive. It is about finding different ways of interpreting a less-than-ideal situation. The resulting new frame leads to a different meaning, which leads to better actions and better results. Just as important, you feel better about how you handle the situation.

The skill of reframing is useful for many situations—in particular those in which you feel an uncomfortable degree of pressure, anxiety, or stress. Here are a few examples.

1. In the late 1980s, a parasitic insect named phylloxera threatened to destroy vineyards and bring Napa Valley wineries to their knees. The projected cost of replanting the grapes was \$25,000 to \$75,000 an acre. This didn't even take into account the opportunity cost of a five-year wait for new vines to bear fruit.

In spite of the financial and time investment costs, a few growers did replant. One of those growers, Jack Cakebread at Cakebread Cellars, recalls, "Phylloxera was the greatest opportunity the valley has ever had. It was an *unbelievable opportunity!*"²

"How often in your life do you get a chance to go back and say, 'Hey, if I had this to do over again, I'd do it this way'? We had all the new technology. We had root stocks. We had clones of varieties you are looking at now. We had spacing. We had soil analysis we never had before. It was just a dream!"

Cakebread Cellars, producer of 75,000 cases of wine per year, is now one of the most highly esteemed and successful wineries in Napa Valley. Where others saw despair, Jack Cakebread saw hope. He saw the chance to start anew.

2. During the Korean War, the Chinese communists had overrun the Yalu River. The Marines battling the Chinese were in a running fight to reach the coast. Ten Chinese divisions surrounded Colonel Lewis Burwell Puller's 1st Marines. The unyielding Colonel saw the dire situation from a unique perspective: "Those poor bastards," Puller said. "They've got us right where we want them. We can fire in any direction now!"
3. When President Ronald Reagan was running for reelection in 1984, he was the oldest president to have ever served. At

age 73, there were many questions about Reagan's capacity to endure the grueling demands of the presidency. On October 7, Reagan performed poorly in the first debate against his opponent, Democratic candidate Walter Mondale. Among other mistakes, Reagan admitted to being "confused."

Two weeks later, in the next debate, Mondale made a comment that implied Reagan's advanced age was an issue voters should be concerned about. Reagan's comeback was priceless. He joked, "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience." Mondale himself laughed at Reagan's joke. With that humorous reframe, Reagan effectively neutralized the age issue, ended Mondale's campaign, and steamrolled to reelection.

In each of these examples, where it might be natural to feel overwhelmed and threatened, these individuals saw opportunity.

While reframing can be used in a variety of contexts, this book focuses on helping you perform your best under pressure. On that note, I want to make an important point; you need to calibrate your expectations with reality. It is unrealistic to expect to perform better under pressure than you perform under calm conditions. As a result, *your goal under pressure is to perform at a level equal to how you typically perform when there is no pressure.*

Seven Reasons Reframing Is Priceless

Let's have a look at seven reasons why reframing is an incredibly valuable skill.

1. As I stated earlier, reframing is a skill that, with practice, **can be learned.**

2. In today's world, it can be argued that time is our most valuable resource. While the 10,000-hour rule to master a new skill is true for many skills, who has 10,000 hours to spare? We're constantly on the lookout for life hacks—tricks that not only produce great results, but do so in record time. Reframing is **as quick as coming up with a new thought**, which can be measured in seconds.
3. In addition to being fast, reframing is **efficient**. It redirects your attention toward the opportunity before you rather than toward what could go wrong. This enables you to use your energy wisely.
4. Unlike dunking a basketball or becoming a supermodel, reframing is not limited to those who have won the genetic lottery. Reframing also knows no economic boundaries. It can and has been used by the extremely rich, the extremely poor, and everyone in between. Reframing is **available to everyone**.
5. Also, to reframe, we don't need to be in the office, or in front of our laptops or smart phones, or on a practice field. We can reframe while we're driving, talking a walk, mowing the lawn, and so on. Because the skill resides in our mind, reframing **can help you anytime, anywhere**.
6. Reframing **applies in all different types of pressure situations**. It applies at work as you seek to solve problems, make presentations, or beat your quota. It applies in academics as you take exams. It applies in your personal life as you sing a solo in the church choir or play in a big game.
7. In addition to being a skill you can use to help yourself, reframing is a key skill you can use to **teach and positively influence others**. When Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at

the March on Washington in 1963 and gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, he reframed the civil rights movement from a struggle of mighty proportions to an inspiring dream embraced by many.

Now that we have shared examples and you know more about reframing, let’s shift to understanding how pressure affects your mind and body.

How Does Pressure Affect Your Mind and Body?

When we’re under pressure, we can think about the situation in one of two ways—either as a *threat* or as an *opportunity*.

Whether you view the situation as a threat or opportunity depends on how you answer this question for yourself: “*Do I have what it takes to handle this situation?*”

When you answer “*no*,” you view the situation as a threat. The perception of pressure situations as a threat hurts our performance. *Why?* With threat thinking, your mind is typically filled with thoughts and feelings that

- You have little to no control over the situation.
- You’re filled with anxiety, fear, worry, and doubt.
- You’re focused on trying to avoid failure and its devastating consequences.

These thoughts and emotions, in turn, trigger responses we’re all familiar with: butterflies in your stomach, sweaty palms, dry mouth and throat, and tense muscles, to name a few. In addition, threat thinking leads to an increased heart rate and the production of performance-crippling chemicals such as cortisol—a.k.a. the stress hormone. In heavy doses triggered by threat, cortisol causes your

blood vessels to constrict, limiting the amount of oxygen and glucose that reach your muscles and brain. This, in turn, compromises your ability to make good decisions and perform at the level you're capable of under less stressful conditions.

Before Rick's visit to the mound in the bottom of the 9th inning, Izzy felt—in a word—threatened.

In contrast, when you answer “yes” to the question “*Do I have what it takes to handle this?*” you view the situation as an opportunity. With opportunity thinking, your mind is typically filled with thoughts and feelings that

- You're in control.
- You're confident.
- You're focused on the success you view as being within your grasp.

These thoughts and emotions, in turn, trigger a performance-enhancing response from your body's internal pharmacy. Like threat thinking, opportunity thinking also causes your body to respond with an increased heart rate. However, unlike threat thinking that releases cortisol in large amounts that hinder us, opportunity thinking releases dopamine, the feel-good neurotransmitter.

Dopamine causes your blood vessels to dilate, increasing the amount of oxygen and glucose getting to your muscles and brain. This, in turn, helps you make good decisions and perform at the level you're capable of under normal conditions.

Learning the skill to get yourself into opportunity thinking for pressure situations is critical for performing your best. *After* Rick's visit to the mound in the bottom of the 9th inning, Izzy saw the opportunity.

In essence, your mind is filled with beliefs that can either hurt you or help you. These beliefs, in turn, spark an internal pharmacy

within your body that releases chemicals that can also hurt you or help you.

The Mind-Body Connection

Consider the following well-known example to illustrate the point that your mind and body are inextricably linked.

Task 1 Imagine you are asked to walk 50 yards on a bridge. The bridge is the width of a sidewalk, has no guard rails, and is 1 foot off the ground. What thoughts are going through your head? How does your body feel? How likely are you to succeed? What are the consequences if you fail? How important is this task to you?

Task 2 Now imagine you are asked to walk 50 yards on a bridge that is the width of a sidewalk and has no guard rails. This time, however, the bridge is 1,000 feet in the air, over a stadium full of people. What thoughts are going through your head? How does your body feel? How likely are you to succeed? What are the consequences if you fail? How important is this task to you?

In both tasks, the physical requirements of you are the same—walk 50 yards on a bridge that is the width of a sidewalk and has no guard rails. However, you likely had very different inner reactions to the tasks in terms of the thoughts that went through your head and how your body felt. The reason you had different reactions to the task is due to the significant difference in the consequences of failure between the two tasks. There is little to no pressure in Task 1, and you likely have a high degree of confidence you will succeed. With Task 2, however, the dire consequences of failure lead to threat thinking. Confidence likely wanes and your focus

shifts from the act of walking on the sidewalk to falling down from 1,000 feet in the air.

As you can see from this simple example, it's not the physical requirements of a task that cause us to feel threatened. Rather, *it's our perception of the requirements that cause us to feel threatened.*

Most often, pressure comes from within, not from others. Consequently, the best response also comes from within—by learning how to modify our thinking. The answer is learning how to reframe.

Highlights

- Our experience and interviews with elite performers reveal that, even more than physical skills, it's performers' mind-sets that separate the best from the rest. The most clutch performers know how to think on command when under pressure, and in ways that optimize their performance.
- Reframing describes the *skill* of deliberately thinking about a situation in a new or different way. This, in turn, allows us to shift the meaning we attach to the situation, the actions we take, and the results we achieve.
- When we're under pressure, we can think about the situation in one of two ways—either as a *threat* or as an *opportunity*. Seeing the pressure situation as a threat triggers the bad pharmacy in our body and hurts our performance. Seeing the pressure situation as an opportunity triggers the good pharmacy in our body and helps our performance.
- Like Izzy, we all want to come through at crunch time.

Try This

- Identify a high-pressure situation you're facing now or will be facing in the near future (e.g., completing a big project with an impending deadline, making an important presentation to a challenging audience, performing in a game or a recital, taking a final exam). Use this situation as the context for practicing the skill of reframing as you read this book.
- Write down what you're currently thinking and feeling about your high-pressure situation.
- Are you seeing it as a threat or an opportunity? If a threat, come up with two ways to think about it as an opportunity.
- If you can already see the opportunity, write that down.

While you may be ready to acknowledge the value of reframing, you may be wondering why it's so critical to use this skill in pressure-packed situations. Let's find out.

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