



The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance

By Josh Waitzkin

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In his riveting new book, *The Art of Learning*, Waitzkin tells his remarkable story of personal achievement and shares the principles of learning and performance that have propelled him to the top—twice.

Josh Waitzkin knows what it means to be at the top of his game. A public figure since winning his first National Chess Championship at the age of nine, Waitzkin was catapulted into a media whirlwind as a teenager when his father's book *Searching for Bobby Fischer* was made into a major motion picture. After dominating the scholastic chess world for ten years, Waitzkin expanded his horizons, taking on the martial art Tai Chi Chuan and ultimately earning the title of World Champion. How was he able to reach the pinnacle of two disciplines that on the surface seem so different? "I've come to realize that what I am best at is not Tai Chi, and it is not chess," he says. "What I am best at is the art of learning."

With a narrative that combines heart-stopping martial arts wars and tense chess face-offs with life lessons that speak to all of us, *The Art of Learning* takes readers through Waitzkin's unique journey to excellence. He explains in clear detail how a well-thought-out, principled approach to learning is what separates success from failure. Waitzkin believes that achievement, even at the championship level, is a function of a lifestyle that fuels a creative, resilient growth process. Rather than focusing on climactic wins, Waitzkin reveals the inner workings of his everyday method, from systematically triggering intuitive breakthroughs, to honing techniques into states of remarkable potency, to mastering the art of performance psychology.

Through his own example, Waitzkin explains how to embrace defeat and make mistakes work for you. Does your opponent make you angry? Waitzkin describes how to channel emotions into creative fuel. As he explains it, obstacles are not obstacles but challenges to overcome, to spur the growth process by turning weaknesses into strengths. He illustrates the exact routines that he has used in all of his competitions, whether mental or physical, so that you too can achieve your peak performance zone in any competitive or professional circumstance.

In stories ranging from his early years taking on chess hustlers as a seven year old in New York City's Washington Square Park, to dealing with the pressures of having a film made about his life, to International Chess Championships in India, Hungary, and Brazil, to gripping battles against powerhouse fighters in Taiwan in the Push Hands World Championships, *The Art of Learning* encapsulates an extraordinary competitor's life lessons in a page-turning narrative.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Waitzkin's name may sound familiar—back in 1993, his father wrote about Josh's early years as a chess prodigy in *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. Now 31, Waitzkin revisits that story from his own perspective and reveals how the fame that followed the movie based on his father's book became one of several obstacles to his further development as a chess master. He turned to tai chi to learn how to relax and feel comfortable in his body, but then his instructor suggested a more competitive form of the discipline called "push hands." Once again, he proved a quick study, and has earned more than a dozen championships in tournament play. Using examples from both his chess and martial arts backgrounds, Waitzkin draws out a series of principles for improving performance in any field. Chapter headings like "Making Smaller Circles" have a kung fu flair, but the themes are elaborated in a practical manner that enhances their universality. Waitzkin's engaging voice and his openness about the limitations he recognized within himself make him a welcome teacher. The concept of incremental progress through diligent practice of the fundamentals isn't new, but Waitzkin certainly gives it a fresh spin. (May 8)

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From [Booklist](#)

Waitzkin, a champion in chess and martial arts, brings enthusiasm and obvious love of learning to this amazing look at what he aptly describes as the art of learning. He begins by recounting his own quirky journey. At the age of six, Waitzkin learned chess from a motley crew of street hustlers, gamblers, junkies, and artists. Since then, he has been among the highest-ranked chess players. He recounts the distractions of adolescence as well as fame after the publication of his father's book and, later, the film based on it, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. He later discovered that chess principles could be applied to learning tai chi. In fact, he found a respect for artistry, meditation, and philosophical devotion within both chess and martial arts and realized the possibility for broader application to learning in general. Waitzkin integrates his personal experiences in mastering chess and tai chi with research on psychology and learning techniques to offer a vibrant and engaging look at the love of learning and the pursuit of excellence. *Vanessa Bush*

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Review

"This is a really superb book, one I wish someone had given to me long ago. The title is accurate -- at a profound level, it's about real learning from hard conflict rather than from disinterested textbooks. It will take a ferocious interruption to make you put this book down." -- Robert Pirsig, author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

"We all remember the portrayal of Josh Waitzkin in *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. He was a very impressive child who continues to impress with *The Art of Learning*. Through a unique set of experiences, Waitzkin has formed an original and outstanding perspective. From chess to Tai Chi, he provides tools that allow all of us to improve ourselves every day." -- Cal Ripken, Jr., 2007 Baseball Hall of Fame Inductee

"Waitzkin's in-depth look into the mental side of his success in both chess and martial arts is an inspiring and absorbing read. I strongly recommend it for anyone who lives in a world of competition, whether it's sports or business or anywhere else. It's also a great training tool for kids aspiring to reach the pinnacle of their chosen fields." -- Mark Messier, 6-time Stanley Cup Champion

"Josh Waitzkin's *The Art of Learning* is a testimonial to the timeless principle of 'do less and accomplish more.' Highly recommended for those who want to understand the power of consciousness." -- Deepak Chopra

"Absolutely brilliant immersion into the phenomenon of human mastery. Waitzkin brings laser clarity and penetrating insights into the delicate mind, body, spirit interactions fundamental to extraordinary achievement in most any area of life. This is a journey worth taking." -- Jim Loehr, Chairman and CEO, The Human Performance Institute, and coauthor, *The Power of Full Engagement*

"*The Art of Learning* succeeds on every level, combining a truly compelling auto-biography with profound philosophical and psychological insights all wrapped in a practical how-to framework. This is a must-read for anyone wishing to achieve that rare combination of success and fulfillment." -- Paul Blease, SVP, Director, Team Development & Consulting, Citigroup Smith Barney

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Matthew Ibarra:

This The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you get by reading this book is definitely information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This kind of The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance without we know teach the one who studying it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't be worry The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance can bring when you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even telephone. This The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance having very good arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Nathan Pope:

The reason why? Because this The Art of Learning: An Inner Journey to Optimal Performance is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the idea but latter it will shock you with the secret it inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have got such as help improving your talent and your critical thinking means. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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Walter Burchett:

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