

The Social Capitalist: Mark Divine



Prepare to break the ceiling on your professional goals using the mental and physical strategies and tactics of the U.S. Navy SEALs.

Mark Divine, CEO of SEALFIT, NavySEALs.com, and US CrossFit, is the leader in providing civilians with mental toughness training and Navy SEAL-level fitness. His insights into elite fitness, elite teams, leadership, mental toughness, and warrior spirit development were developed during his 20 years as a SEAL and business leader, 25 years as a martial artist, and 15 years as yoga practitioner. Mark is also a former adjunct professor of leadership at the University of San Diego, and a co-founder of the Coronado

Brewing Co.

Mark discussed how to: Fine tune teamwork and accountability to drive excellence; forge the mental toughness that creates strong presence and leadership; maintain your "positive charge," not just emotionally, but physically; and to develop your inner "corporate warrior" to excel in all areas of your life.

This is an edited transcript from a Social Capitalist Live Event. The Social Capitalist is sponsored programming of myGreenlight, the only comprehensive online learning platform for critical relationship development skills. The interactive interview series is dedicated to delivering in-depth discussion on relationship science with the best and brightest thought leaders in business and academia.

TAHL: The ability to bounce back, to absorb shocks, to persevere, to retain functionality in crisis, to endure, to adapt, to survive, and to succeed. So many words are conjured up by what we call *mental toughness*. That it could benefit anyone in any profession seems clear. But can it be learned?

The answer comes to us from Mark Divine, who graduated with distinction from the Navy SEAL Training program and served on active duty for nine years, retiring as a commander from the Navy Reserves last year. Mark is founder and CEO of US Tactical Incorporated, which operates SEALFIT at navySEALs.com, US CrossFit, and the Unbeatable Mind Academy. The goal of nearly all of these ventures is to forge mental toughness in his clients. Welcome Mark.

MARK: It's great to be here. Thank you for having me on the show.

TAHL: So, give us a little background on how you decided, after graduating college at a small liberal arts school called Colgate, to go to the SEALs and then after that, how you came up with the idea for these businesses?

MARK: I followed the herd from Colgate University in upstate New York down to Manhattan. When I was in college, I didn't have any kind of inkling that I was going to be a SEAL. My family was a business family. We have a family business in upstate New York. So I ended up pursuing a job that sent me to NYU and landed me with Coopers & Lybrand, which is now PricewaterhouseCoopers, which was an interesting fit for me, because I had zero accounting experience in college.

This was a new program they were trial-running to forge better partners at the big accounting firms. They were going to bring people from a liberal arts school, send them to New York University to get a masters in accounting, and then we would get a couple years of audit experience, get our CPAs, and then be these miraculously well-rounded partners someday at these accounting firms.

So that's what I did. I went down to New York and within two years I absolutely hated my job, but I wasn't going to quit so I just plowed through and got my MBA and my CPA. Well, how this ties into the SEALs is about halfway through that process, I literally woke up one day and said, "This is not working out for me." I didn't like the people I was working with. I saw all sorts of greed and everyone was more concerned about the size of their paychecks than they were about other people and about really developing themselves and about leadership and things that I, at the time, thought were important. So I started to think well, maybe this is the wrong fit for me.

Fortunately, I had begun a martial arts practice at a karate studio down there in Manhattan on 23rd Street called Seido Karate, and the founder of Seido Karate would come out there every day. His name was Tadashi Nakamura, and I consider him my first true mentor. In this training, we did a lot of meditation. We meditated before and after every class and then we had a strict meditation session that was Zen style on Thursday evenings, for about an hour. After that, Mr. Nakamura would give us a little kind of Dharma talk, a little inspirational talk. I call this the period where I started to polish the mirror of my soul because during the height of this training, when I was really working hard toward my black belt, I started to really get signals from my intuition.

I started to be able to listen more deeply to my inner voice and these things that were closed off for me before, I guess for various reasons, and scientists will probably never figure out why, that little voice in our head keeps on at such a high volume and it's hard to quiet it down. But through the silence of the meditation I was starting to quiet that down and listen to my inner voice and it was telling me to head in a different direction.

Then, to make this long story a little shorter, the siren call that I heard was the Navy SEALs. So I started to really investigate that and think about it and visualize it and, sure enough, that led me to the SEAL team.

TAHL: How did the ideas for these businesses and, specifically, building businesses around forging mental toughness – teaching it, training it – come to be?

MARK: When I was in the SEALs, one of the main reasons that I joined was I was really looking for a career where I could develop my own leadership capacity, where I could lead people in authentic or high risk situations as opposed to where there was really no shared risk. So, while I was in the SEAL teams, I already had an MBA and a CPA and I think I'm the only Navy SEAL with that distinction. I know there are quite a few who have MBAs, but I doubt there are any other CPAs. They're completely different character traits.

I was paying a lot of attention to what was going on around me and thinking deeply about leadership and mental toughness, and the skills that I had learned in my martial arts training carried me so well through Navy SEAL training. I think you mentioned that I was number one in my class in Navy SEAL training and that distinction is quite an honor, but there was a reason for it. It's because I had learned certain skills during my martial arts training that allowed me to not only to dominate the training, but to really enjoy it day by day. Where people were dropping like flies and in constant misery – the Navy SEAL Training Program has an 80 percent dropout rate – I was really enjoying it. I had a big ol' smile on my face every day.

I got off active duty after about seven years because I got married and I had to make a choice. If the Navy had wanted me to have a wife, they would have issued me one, so that wasn't going to work out. I plugged in as a reserve after that. But I went back to the business world as an entrepreneur, which was very closely aligned with being a SEAL, which is like being a military entrepreneur. Everything you do is on your own. You're very creative at figuring things out.

So it made sense that I would come back into the business world as an entrepreneur. It was in my first few business ventures, some of which were uglier than others, that I really started to cultivate the strategies and tactics and actually put them to paper. I started teaching leadership at the University of San Diego as I was getting my doctorate there, and I started to really cultivate these ideas and think, "Hey, you know what? These need to be taught to everybody!" What I learned as a SEAL and through my martial arts training and then, later on, through a deep practice of yoga, needed to be crafted and communicated in a manner that was more

accessible to everyday people. So that's when I conceived of the idea for teaching these principles through my business. That has led to SEALFIT and Unbeatable Mind.

TAHL: Let's get into one in particular, which is nothing resembling any kind of corporate team building exercise or program that anyone on this call will be familiar with. Up to 40-plus hours straight with no sleep, nonstop, brutal exercise, 20-mile hikes with a 50-pound rucksack. You have a tremendous portfolio of videos showing what you put these people through. People actually pay your company, SEALFIT, to put them through this, which, to most people, would sound like torture. Describe a little bit about how the program works and what people have to do.

MARK: We call that program Kokoro Camp. *Kokoro* is a Japanese term for warrior spirit, or heart spirit. I originally designed that program in 2007 for special operations candidates, for Navy SEAL wannabes who are going to go and challenge themselves against the hardest training in the world.

I quickly – I think even before my first event – had 45-year-old investment bankers calling me, and folks from all walks of life, entrepreneurs and other guys, and girls actually as well, though I haven't had as many women as I would have liked. Folks were calling me and saying, "Hey, can civilians do this?" I thought about it and I said, "Well, sure. Why not? Should we create a separate program for you?" They said, "We don't want a separate program. We want to do this side by side with the young guns. When I was 21 or 28, I thought about doing this, but I didn't. I chose a different path." Or, "I was a competitive athlete. I've been running triathlons and I do this and that but I really need a challenge. This sounds terrific."

So I said, "Okay, let's give it a shot." That's when we opened it up to civilians. Now, there's no question that these folks are trained athletes. The people who are coming to the Kokoro Camp.... I guess you'd call that the pointy edge of my spear. That's the hardest program I run, so it's not for everybody. However, I believe everybody could do it if they set their mind on it and decided they wanted to do it. I had a 54-year-old spine doctor train for two years for that program. He came and he did an exceptional job.

The program is designed after the Navy SEAL hell week, but we deliberately teach principles of mental toughness, warrior spirit, and leadership and team building throughout the event. We have a saying that people meet themselves for their first time during this event. It is, no question, like a spiritually enlightening experience for everybody who goes through it. It accelerates learning and the depth of emotional breakthrough that you require when learning how to press on when your

physical body is pretty much at its limits – these are the principles and things that we teach.

I'll say one thing here – I do realize that most folks on this call are going to look at that program and say, “Well, that’s interesting but there’s no way in hell I would ever do it,” because we hear that all the time.

I said, “Okay, well let me create a program where I can teach this stuff and people can do it in their living room and start to figure this out and start to train and then maybe we’ll spark a fire in their belly and eventually they will want to come to either a program like that or at least start doing some more serious physical training.” So that’s where the Unbeatable Mind Program came from, and that is really about teaching this stuff without kicking someone for fifty hours straight.

TAHL: But extreme physical exercise is clearly a really efficient vehicle for you to teach the principles of mental toughness. Why is that?

MARK: You know, I take it back to the warrior traditions like the Spartans and the Samurai. The mind-body connection is so intimate that we just don’t know where the two merge and blend, but I believe that it’s all over the place. The heart has been recently proven to have about 60 percent of the same material as the neurological connections in our brains, so we have this heart-mind, which is really one of the things we try to open up and train at Kokoro Camp.

The heart-mind has an intense energy around it. It can extend for many, many feet, whereas the power of your brain is very limited to press out and to influence other people. So the physical body needs to be moved and challenged and energized in order to access the fullest capacity of your mind – the totality of your mind. I’m not just talking about your left-brain, cognitive mind. We certainly need to use that and in the West we’ve dominated that and trained that very well in our schools.

But what we don’t train very well is the right brain – intuitiveness, the ability to use our creative subconscious and that heart-centered approach to decision making, which really includes the team first and not just “what about me.” These are the things that, through the physical training of Kokoro Camp, we expose very quickly.

You cannot get through Kokoro Camp as a Rambo, you can’t get there as the toughest guy on the street – those guys are the first ones to quit. You’ve got to extend yourself to your teammates, you’ve got to be there for them. And guess what? When you do that, all of a sudden you’ve got 15 or 20 people watching your back at the same time. That bond and the shared risk and shared accountability just go through the roof. So, the

physical aspect of it, like you said, is very effective. It creates an accelerated learning environment. The good news is you don't have to make it so hard. It works even if you scale it down dramatically.

I've worked with people in my CrossFit gym who are 65 and coming to us after a 20-year hiatus from exercise, and we see the same types of breakthroughs. It just might take a little bit longer and we've got to be a little bit more systematic with the way we train them. We don't throw the kitchen sink at them right away, obviously.

TAHL: Digging deeper into this idea of the breakthrough, on one of your clips you mentioned that people are capable of many, many times more than what they think they're capable of doing. So obviously, pushing them physically is a way of showing them that and about showing how mental toughness is about a belief. We underachieve because we accept a belief about ourselves due to something that you made an acronym for, *BOO*. Can you explain that?

MARK: I call this the *20X factor*. This is one of the things I learned in Hell Week. Hell Week in Navy SEAL training is five days of nonstop training. It's Kokoro on steroids and without sleep. So you're dealing with that sleep deprivation and that nonstop training and by the end of it you're just like, "Wow, how did I do that?" It creates a new sense of what's possible, and I call that the 20X. You're literally, all of a sudden, faced with this new person who knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you're capable of about 20 times or more than you previously thought you were capable of.

So, peeling the onion on that: Why was I previously unaware that I was capable of that much physical, mental, and emotional accomplishment? It's partly because you've never been exposed to it, for sure, but also partly because of what I call this *background of obviousness* – or *BOO*. This background of obviousness is made up of those belief systems and undercurrents in our subconscious that are so obvious that we don't notice them.

One of them is that going to the gym and working out for an hour, three times a week, is physical training. Most people on this call would say, "Yea, I kinda do that. That's good." I'll tell you right now, that's *not* physical training. That's a bare minimum, and it's better than nothing for sure, but it's just kind of working out. Working out is barely stemming the tide of inertia or entropy and it's not training your body and mind to meet your fullest potential.

The god-given potential for this human machine of ours is unbelievable. There is an athlete and a warrior in everybody. It's essentially part of our DNA. It's hard-coded. But we've been kind of brought up in a society that

has led us to believe that hard work is really not for everybody, it's only for a few select people, like first responders, and it's okay to kind of just get by and go to the gym, or to eat all that junk food and not take responsibility and blame it on society. That background, or that belief system, is really dangerous and needs to be rooted out and eliminated.

How do you do that? That's a whole discussion, we could spend weeks on that topic but there's all sorts of other BOO items. One is around abundance and money and ties into the whole idea of, *are you really a positive person or are you negative?* So it's a very, very fine line between being positive and negative, and it has nothing to do with the words that come out of your mouth. It has everything to do with the energy charge of your body. You may listen to a tape from Napoleon Hill and say, "I need positive self-talk," and that positive self-talk is certainly very important, but you also have to have a positive *self-feeling* and you need to cultivate that feeling and that vibration at a very deep level so that your entire being, literally, is vibrating with positive energy.

You can feel that when people walk into a room who are truly positive, versus people who walk into the room who are kind of neutral or slightly negative, but have some kind of happy statement like, "Good to see you," or whatever. They may *sound* positive, but they're not projecting that energy. That is tied into underlying belief systems as well, such as growing up with a feeling or a dialogue in the house around not being good enough or not being the type of family or people that will ever have money. "Those people are different from us."

There's a lot of these underlying things that are put out through our families, through our media cultures and our local communities or where we live in the country or whether it's just us as Americans or whatever culture you're from, as well as pop TV. That's why, in my training, one of my practices and one of my exercises is to do what we call a *news blackout*. Just shut off the TV and shut out any type of news, because it's all so negative and it dramatically affects our subconscious programming. Once you cut that out and you start to use your brain to analyze headlines and look for patterns, there's a radical shift. It takes about 30 days and people start to report that they just feel so much happier and so much more positive.

TAHL: Let me check that I'm understanding correctly: Many of us have accepted a limiting concept of who we are and what we're capable of. It's a negative story we tell ourselves about who we are?

MARK: Right.

TAHL: The purpose of your Kokoro Camp is to put people through something so extreme that they come out with a new concept of themselves. In essence, you're creating a controlled, traumatic experience to break people down, open them up, specifically rewrite this story they tell about who they are, and rebuild them and their story into something different. Is that the idea?

MARK: I don't think I could have said that better. That was fantastic. I may have to type that up and put it into my marketing material. That's exactly what we do. It's a crucible experience and that fire burns off some of the impurities that are resting in their subconscious. This background of obviousness is replaced with a much more powerful strategy.

So one really simple strategy is we have this thing, and this is nothing new, but it's this: What dog are you feeding?

We have the *dog of courage* and the *dog of fear*. We tell this really simple story and then anytime we see someone with that look in their eye like, "Oh shit, I can't do this," we just look at them and say, "Ask yourself right now, what dog are you feeding? Is this the courage dog or fear dog? If it's the fear dog, you've got to stop it."

So we teach them to stop that negative self-talk and that negative feeling and to stand up straight and breathe deeply so they have a powerful posture and that energy is starting to course through their body, to look at their teammates and to say something encouraging, which creates kind of a ripple effect and it comes back to them 10 times.

All of a sudden, they're feeling more positive. Then we have them replace the negative talk with a positive mantra. We give them mantras or they come up with their own. One of my favorites, when I went through SEAL training, was, "Feeling good, looking good, oughta be in Hollywood." I would say this over and over and over to keep myself positively charged and keep my mind from wandering into that negative cesspool that was gonna drag me down.

So you hit the nail on the head. That's kinda what we do. It's an accelerated environment, the Kokoro Camp, where we can crack people wide open, let those demons fly out, and then we fill them up with good stuff.

TAHL: What I think is really interesting is that, for the past 30 years, we've all been told that stress is the number one health threat in the U.S., that it causes all these health disorders, that we should eliminate it from our lives, even if we have to take pills to do to so, and here I see you and people like you developing toughness at an elite level of performance,

specifically *because* you constantly sought to challenge yourself beyond reason and integrate a constant dose of stress.

What does that mean for those people who aren't going to do Kokoro Camp? Basically the message seems to be you need to push yourself constantly to reveal your potential. How are people supposed to apply that to what they're doing and how they're doing it day-to-day?

MARK:

Yeah, you're right. You can't develop mental toughness without challenging yourself. I call it *stressing yourself for success*. There's no question the human body is designed with that fight, flight, or freeze response. You can interpret that that we're not supposed to essentially stress ourselves out because we're supposed to avoid stress or eliminate stress even, which is impossible by the way, because it's not good for our bodies. Well, that's not true.

Even in caveman days, it was the hunter who was able to control the stress response and turn it into a performance behavior – who got the most meat or was able to face down the charging tiger and organize a team to defeat him. That was called leadership. So just because we have stress everyday in our life, doesn't mean it has to be debilitating or lead to disease in our bodies. What we need to do is develop some strategies to turn that stress into success.

The first and the main strategy we have is breathing, breath control. The breath has become an unconscious body function for most people. Ever since we were born, nobody says, "Hey Mark, let's teach you how to breathe properly." I would look at that person and say, "Well, I already am breathing. There's breath coming in. If I wasn't breathing I would be dead."

Well yeah, but are you conscious of *how* you're breathing? There's seven or eight breathing techniques that I teach here at SEALFIT to develop power, to develop heat, to develop psychic energy, and to concentrate our mind and keep it focused. One of the most powerful stress-control, arousal-control tools is to basically get control of your breath, concentrate on it, slow it down, deepen it, use your full capacity of your lungs, use your diaphragm, and anytime you feel that stress coming on you kick into this breath. I recommend a four-count in, and then if you're in a calm environment, not a lot of activity, your heart rate is calm, maybe a four-count hold and then a four-count exhale. If you're in an environment where your heart is racing and you need more oxygen, just slow it down and do a four-count inhale and a four-count exhale.

The SEALs actually teach this now, they didn't when I went through, but now they do and they call it *arousal control* and it helps dampen the

physiological effect of the fight, flight, or freeze response, so all those hormones that are coursing through your veins and triggering your parasympathetic nervous system when you are exposed to stress are brought under control through the breath.

Another thing we teach is collapsing your goals to very achievable, very short-term goals when you're in a stressful situation. It has an amazing effect on eliminating that gap between the known and unknown, which is essentially what fear is. It's the gap between what I know to be true and real and possible, and this complete unknown. So, collapsing your goals to what I call *near-term goals* can provide directionality and momentum and give you small victories toward your larger goal. That has a very powerful effect on mental toughness and on your stress response.

Third is really learning to use your mind effectively, your creative mind to visualize yourself succeeding, to visualize yourself as powerful, to visualize yourself as a leader, to visualize yourself as healthy, as whatever it is you want – and also to use that power of visualization to practice skills. The process of thinking is creating energy and form even though it's very, very subtle. But your body, physiologically, doesn't really make any distinction between practicing a skill – let's say in the martial arts context a sword stroke, or for someone in the business setting the skill might be a communication dialogue, or anything really. You practice those skills in your mind and you master them in your mind, and it has the same effect as if you were practicing it in the real world.

So these are all really important tools that can be learned by anybody to help mitigate the deleterious effects of long-term stress, as well as to be able to turn stress into more performance-oriented actions.

TAHL: So much of what you talk about and so many of these principles seem to come down to self-awareness and this idea of knowing where you're at, at the moment, what your thoughts are and how they're affecting you. Do you delve into this idea of self-awareness quite a bit in your programs?

MARK: Big time. In fact, it's the whole first and second lesson of Unbeatable Mind. I call it the *first premise*. The first premise is that you've got to win in your mind before you can even attempt to win on the battlefield. That's a famous Sunsu quote. And so how do we do this? How do we develop awareness?

Really, it starts with cultivating a love for silence. We don't spend much time alone or in silence in our society. We're always with our Blackberries and iPhones and TV in the background, running from one meeting to another, then jumping in the car and dealing with traffic and listening to

the radio. We never shut off the constant and incessant stream coming into our minds.

As a result, our minds are like that choppy, turbulent water, the rapids. They're just bouncing all around, failing to concentrate deeply on any one task. Everyone thinks, "Well, I've got to multitask." Well, you can't multitask, and research is finally showing that you can't. Your mind can only focus on one thing at a time. So, a multi-tasker, really what they're doing is giving short shift to everything and not doing anything really well.

So what we have people do is just start to sit in silence and watch their breath – very classic breath awareness meditation that you'll find in every kind of spiritual tradition and all warrior traditions – and then try to cultivate a connection with what I call your *witness*, which is that part of you which is watching everything, in spite of what your mind is doing. Cultivation of that witness then leads to greater awareness of both what's going on in your mind – your thoughts and emotions – as well as what's going on in your body. You develop what I would call a *spaciousness*. So, that space between the stimulus and the response, that's cultivated through silence, and you want to develop that spaciousness.

One simple practice that I teach, and this is also relevant for all your listeners, is what I call the *three breath practice*. I didn't invent this. This is for anytime you have something that comes at you that is typically going to stimulate a reactive response, typically driven by this background of obviousness, a subconscious belief system or some variation thereof. You just pause and take three deep, controlled breaths before you respond. That has the double whammy of controlling the arousal response, so everything is settled down in you. Your mind and your body settle in that three breath space, and it also allows the mind to be aware of the stimulus that was arising and about to fly out of your mouth and to maybe reorganize it for a much more powerful response.

TAHL: That's incredibly helpful. This is the time when we start integrating questions from our listeners. One listener commented that the idea of collapsing your goals seems like an incredibly important strategy. They wanted to know if you could give an example of how you specifically use that in the course of your day?

MARK: I'll start out with how I figured this out, which was during Navy SEAL Hell Week. People were quitting all around me. We started Sunday afternoon at about 6 o'clock and we weren't going to finish training until the following Friday, and we knew that. We knew that we weren't getting any sleep. We were going to be training around the clock. So that means Sunday night, Monday night, Tuesday night, Wednesday night.... Holy

cow, that's a hell of a long time. People would fixate on that like, "Holy cow, I've got to make it till Friday!" Guess what? At 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock on Monday morning when it's dark and they're miserable because they've been in the ocean now for 12 hours and they're freezing their butts off and they can't see their way till Friday - they quit. Most people will quit Sunday night or Monday night of Hell Week. So the class could go from 100 people down to 40 people in a 24-hour period.

What I learned very quickly is that I needed to collapse my goal to "just get to sunrise." Just get to sunrise and that sun comes up and it warms you and it's like a new day. It has an amazing effect on your spirit and you're like, "I made it one night! All right, I'm at sunrise now, let's just get to breakfast." Because at breakfast, I was going to be warm and I was going to fill my belly, so let's just get to breakfast. After breakfast, let me just get to lunch. That's how I made it through hell week, one evolution and one meal at a time and it was fantastic.

I do this in my everyday life by focusing on one project at a time and then making sure I can finish it. Now, if it's a project like a writing project, which I'm doing quite a bit now, I've got to chunk that down into bite sized chunks. What I'll do is say, "Okay, my short term goal is not to finish this 40 page document, but to finish this section that I'm working on." I won't move from my computer until I finish that section and then I'm done. I'm checking off the box. I give myself a pat on the back. I feel like I've attained a small victory and then I'll go off and do something else. I'll go catch a workout, which is going to make me feel even better.

I'll organize my day around very, very succinct, clear, achievable victories that I know that I'm going to nail, and guess what? By the end of the day, I look back and I've really made some significant progress towards my major goals, and it wasn't stressful. I eliminated that gap between the known and the unknown by making the unknown much more achievable. Does that help, I hope?

TAHL: That makes perfect sense. Onto another question from one of our listeners. They mention that they have experienced several losses and the death of several loved ones, and how this is obviously nothing foreign to a SEAL. The question is how do you push through grief using some of these mental toughness techniques?

MARK: Now, this is a difficult one, but SEALs are trained to develop what I call *non-attachment*. When we're talking about loved ones, this is a difficult thing, right? Because we get very, very attached to our loved ones. But ultimately, we don't take anything with us. Every day has the potential to be your last and has the potential to be the last one for your loved ones

as well. So we really focus heavily on doing today what's important. Doing today and living today as if it's your last.

And if it happens to be the last day of a loved one, you certainly go through the grief process, but you don't want to dwell in the past, just like you don't want to dwell in the future. The only thing that can come from dwelling in the past and future is more suffering, more pain, because it's just not real. It's happened and it doesn't exist anymore. It's just a figment of our imagination. We don't even remember well in the past. It's estimated that about 10 percent of the things that happened in our past we remember with accuracy. The other 90 percent is filled in with what our hopes and desires are, or how it could have or should have been. Same thing with the future, the future is just a fantasy. You've got to live in the present. You really must collapse your focus and develop that awareness to go moment-to-moment and live in the present.

That's really the only way through grief, to be in the moment and to appreciate what you have right here, right now. Every morning you tell your loved ones how much you love them because it might be the last day, right? Same thing with yourself, tell yourself how much you love yourself. You're gonna go hit it hard and you're going to accomplish great things today, and frankly, nothing else matters.

TAHL: Our own Sara Grace, who is the program director of myGreenlight, has a question. She mentioned she's been doing yoga for years and has had periods of furious running and she definitely hears and feels you when it comes to the body/mind connection. It seems when she is doing this kind of exercise, her performance and mental clarity is top notch. She wants to know, when it's clear to both your mind and your body that when you do a certain thing, you feel better, why does it still take so much to keep herself on the straight and narrow rather than falling into these slothful lazy periods when she does nothing at all? You would think that your mind and your body - being so smart and seeing what one type of behavior would do - would make it easy for you to just keep doing it, but it never seems to be easy.

MARK: Yeah, that's kind of the Holy Grail discussion here. We have a saying that, "Where the mind leads, the body follows." Interestingly enough, where the body leads, the mind will follow as well.

So if you're feeling physically bad about yourself because you haven't worked out for two or three weeks, that's going to start becoming an obsession. You're going to start to get a little bit bummed and depressed about your state of affairs and eventually it might lead you back into the gym and then, all of a sudden, you start to feel a little better. You're feeling good, looking good, you outta be in Hollywood, and then, all of a

sudden, you tell yourself, “Okay, I got it. I don’t need this anymore. I’m gonna go back and party a little bit and take a break. I’m not gonna work out on vacation.” We all seem to yo-yo through that cycle.

I think that’s what Sara’s talking about and what I would say to that and what I teach is that developing discipline is a daily habit. People make it too big. They think, “Oh God, I’ve got to get back in shape! I need that eight-week challenge to get back in shape!” And then they make this big energy around the eight weeks and then, when it’s done, *boom!* They don’t work out again for eight weeks. We see it all the time in our CrossFit gym. So I don’t really like these challenges, even though we’re about ready to launch one in two weeks.

The whole root of the word *discipline* is to “be a disciple.” You need to be a disciple to something every day, something important. There’s nothing more important than you. If we disassociate, if we have this duality between our mind and our body, and we think, *okay, my mind is the most important part of me so I’m going to use my mind for work and I’m going to cultivate it through training and education and all this, but then I leave my body alone.* Well, what is that doing to your mind? It’s weakening it, and your mind is not going to be operating at its peak.

Again, your mind is more than that left-brain cognitive IQ. In fact, it’s estimated that that is about 12 percent of your thinking mind. The other 88 percent of your mind happens at the creative and subconscious levels and that’s all that right brain and connection with your *heart-mind* and what I would even call your *belly-mind*. That’s intuition and cultivating sensory perception.

So, back to the question of how you get off the yo-yo and back to a daily discipline. Well, you’ve got to make it a habit to work out every day. How do you make it a habit to work out every day? Well, you don’t do Kokoro Camp every day and you don’t do a two-hour workout every day. All you need is 15 minutes or half an hour. So you turn it into a morning practice.

This is what I teach in my Unbeatable Mind Program, a morning practice. You wake up half-an-hour earlier and you start out with a warrior yoga session. You’re practicing all the skills as well as getting yourself a nice, legitimate, functional movement training session, and guess what? You go about your day. If you happen to play a sport or do something else in the day, great, that’s gravy. But, every day, seven days a week, you move your body and you don’t make it an optional, “Can I get to the gym today?” type of thing. You do everything you need to do with your body on the space of a yoga mat right there in your living room. So that’s my answer to Sara. Maybe she should call me and I’ll talk to her about it.

TAHL: I love the notion of a belly-mind, except the problem with both Sara and I is that our belly-mind often is more belly than mind. So we go to lunch rather than to the gym.

I guess this is the question we'll end on. You talk about – and I think this is not something people would suspect in this conversation, in this context with you – breath and presence and non-attachment. And there are links to a lot of esoteric, spiritual disciplines in your thinking. And I heard, in prepping for this interview, that one of the observations you made while you were a SEAL was that those soldiers who had a more spiritual take on the world were generally the best of the best.

MARK: Right.

TAHL: When did you make that observation? What kind of spirituality are you talking about and why do you think there's a connection between that and people who generally outperform others?

MARK: This is such a great topic. When we're talking spirituality, it has zero to do with religion, in my context. And any religion, if you look at its root, has these very similar spiritual practices that I'm talking about. Christian contemplation or Buddhist meditation. Zen is a form of Buddhist meditation, which is very effective and applicable to developing concentration. The art of yoga is a spiritual science or spiritual practice. Yoga is not just moving your body in these poses. That's actually one of eight limbs or levels of yoga. So again, the whole idea of spirituality, and how I first uncovered this, was through my martial arts training.

I was brought up as an Episcopalian and we did church on Sundays and whatnot. It was very interesting and it was very much in my head, but I didn't really feel any connection. There was no heartfelt connection to anything with that structured religion. But when I started to practice martial arts, that was really the first sense I had that there actually was a spirit inside of me. That spark of the divine was inside of me and I was stoking that flame by connecting with that witness, by connecting with it through silence, by connecting with it through deep contemplation and it was stronger. Or at least my connection to it was growing stronger.

Then, when I got into the SEALs and I found myself just literally sailing down the beach on long runs, saying my stupid little mantra, my "feeling good, looking good" mantra, and practicing, what I call, *wide angle vision gaze*, where I wasn't using my mind to concentrate, I was letting it relax, kind of the same idea of letting your eyes be windows to the soul. What was happening was I was settling into a deep, deep meditative state while I ran. I did the same thing while I was swimming and I've learned to do this even during a hard work out. It's all cultivating that spirit.

Now, I use the term warrior spirit so I don't scare anyone off, but that warrior spirit is in all of us and that's what I'm talking about. It's a very important part of us. I talk about the mind-body connection, but what it really is, is a *mind-body-spirit* connection, and it's all one big ball. It's not like there are three. There are three aspects, but they're all fused, and so we want to basically bring them all together in an integrative fashion through our training so that we can lead with, and make decisions with, the full capacity of our being. With our cognitive IQ intelligence, with our emotional and heart intelligence, as well as with our spiritual intelligence. We're not lopsided anymore and I believe that a lot of our society in the Western world is lopsided, heavily skewed toward that cognitive IQ and they're disassociated from their bodies and their spirits.

- TAHL: We've talked about mind, body, spirit, and the different disciplines that you used. To leave people on a very concrete, practical note – what's the most important starting place for all this? Is it meditation? Strength? Physical breathing? To open the door on all of this, what's the one thing you can suggest to people listening, that they can do today or tomorrow, and just start their journey to increase mental toughness?
- MARK: Okay, I've already referenced this, but the most important thing that someone could do is to take some time alone, during the day, 20 minutes would be ideal, 15 minutes if you can't do 20. Five minutes if that's all you can afford. But just take some time alone to sit quietly or stand quietly. You could even walk quietly, just be quiet. I'm not talking about going out and thinking about being quiet. I'm talking about literally shutting the mind down and just observing the breath or observing nature, something. That's the first step. The second step would be to move your body – and you can combine those two, which is what yoga does very well and a very good yoga program is designed to get you to stop thinking while you're moving. So then you've got the combination of mental concentration and awareness practice combined with a physical movement practice. It's very, very effective.
- TAHL: Is it a particular kind of yoga?
- MARK: Any yoga is good. It's really the intent you bring to yoga. Don't look at it as a fitness class or flexibility class. Those are tangential benefits. The primary focus is to breathe and concentrate on the breath or on the depth of the pose, not let your monkey-thinking mind dominate the training. Same thing if you're a martial artist. Tai-Chi is another fantastic example of meditation and movement. If you want to get a twofer and really start moving the body, getting the blood flowing, starting to develop that warrior spirit and calm the mind and get in connection with

the witness, then something like Tai-Chi or dance or something that is a concentration practice through movement – very, very effective.

TAHL: Our time is up, but Mark, thank you for sharing with us today. The information has been really, really wonderful and thank you especially for all of your service. For people wanting to find out more about you and your programs, can you tell people where they can go to get more information?

MARK: Sure, our primary website for the training programs is SEALFIT.com and at SEALFIT they could also find information about the Unbeatable Mind Program. We have a separate website for that, it's at UnbeatableMind.com, spelled just like it sounds. That's the program that would be probably the place for most people to start. Everything I talked about, we dive into in that program. It's a 12-month program and the reason I did it for 12 months is because you know what? Most people don't like to commit to something for that long. Their mind slips and they want to try the next thing. I slow people down and say, "Let's just take our time and 12 months later you'll be a different person, but take it one month at a time and practice this stuff every day." I've got a yoga program in there called warrior yoga, and all these practices are part of that program and I introduce them through writings, videos and audio in the Unbeatable Mind Program.

TAHL: Thank you Mark and thank you everyone for listening.

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For more information about and resources from Mark, visit SEALFIT.com and UnbeatableMind.com.