

Dream Setting

Dream Setting

Greg D. Wells Ph.D.

CHAPTER 1

Notes

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If you would like more information about Dr. Greg Wells, please visit his website www.drgregwells.com and if you're interested in presentations, coaching, or programs please visit The Wells Group website at www.thewellsgroup.co.

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Introduction



In 2010 and 2012, I attended the Olympic Games as a sport science analyst. I had some incredible experiences and saw some amazing performances. One in particular is etched in my memory.

Early one morning during the 2010 Winter Olympics, Slovenian cross-country skier Petra Majdic was warming up. Petra was one of the gold medal favourites in her event. But on that morning everything went wrong. When she was coming around a corner,

she slipped and fell off an embankment. This seemingly minor accident was anything but. She had fallen in such a way that she broke her ribs. Her Olympic dream was in jeopardy.

Despite this injury, she went ahead and competed. Each time that she took a breath, her broken ribs scraped over each other. Every time she poled to drive herself forward, the vibration forces transferred through her arms and torso causing the latissimus dorsi muscles in her back to pull on her rib cage. The pain must have been torturous. But she persevered. She competed in her first heat, and then her second heat, qualifying for the semi-finals. Then, in the semi-final, she was fast enough to qualify for the final.

Somewhere along the way, one of the broken ribs punctured her lung and she suffered a pneumothorax, which is a technical term for a collapsing lung. Still she kept going. In the final, she skied her way to a bronze medal.

There's an iconic picture of her receiving her medal. Two medical personnel flank her on the podium. She refused to go to the hospital until she had been awarded that bronze medal.

After she had been stabilized in the hospital, the media were finally allowed to interview her. One of her answers to their questions had a life-changing impact on me. The interviewer asked Petra, "How could you keep skiing through the heats, semi-final and final despite all that pain?" Petra said, simply, "The pain I went through today to win that bronze medal was nothing compared to the pain that I have gone through training for 20 years to achieve my dream."

She didn't say "achieve my goals," "reach my objective" or "to win a medal." She referred to her dream. While goal-setting is one of the traditional methods used to build motivation in human beings, that moment helped solidify my thinking that dreams are far more powerful than goals. I have learned that athletes, especially the great ones, find the motivation and passion that fuels their drive, action and growth in their dreams.

The difference between goals and dreams is subtle but significant. To deliver that medal-winning performance that inspired the world, Petra Majdic used a skill she

had developed as an athlete to overcome incredible obstacles. When faced with a decision about whether or not to continue, one that no doubt nagged her with every stride, she reached out to her dream. She focused on the big picture – the vision she had created as a child about what she wanted to achieve. Her dream was to win a medal at the Olympics. That dream allowed her to compartmentalize the pain and focus on the performance that ultimately enabled her to complete the competition – successfully.

The principles that led Petra to success can be applied to almost anything in our daily lives. By making slight adjustments in the way we act, think and feel, we can move from average to iconic. We can take the experiences of people who have pushed themselves to the limits of human performance and apply those lessons to our own lives.

Dreams are powerful. They inspire us to new heights. Dreams are our deepest and most dearly held hopes and aspirations. They capture our imagination. Dreams produce extraordinary motivation and transformative change. They enable us to live life differently.

Dreams Make the Impossible Possible

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke to that massive crowd stretched out in front of the Lincoln Memorial during the pinnacle of the Civil Rights movement, his intention was to inspire listeners everywhere into action. To do so, he repeated a single phrase over and over again: “I have a dream.” He didn’t say “I have a goal,” or “I have an objective.” He had a dream and his dream inspired an enormous shift in race relations that occurred in the United States and around the world.

By dreaming BIG, then making small, consistent improvements, you can revolutionize your health and your life. If you really want to achieve something, you need to dream yourself into doing it. Dream Setting is powerful. And it is the most effective way to change your life for the better.

The difficulty for most of us is that thinking of our personal and professional goals as dreams seems somehow hokey or silly. It’s not. Dreams are a powerful and effective way to find the motivation you need to achieve more. And while some dreams are huge – like inventing a new technology or starting an organization from scratch – dreams can

be as small as you want: running a 10 km race, sleeping more deeply, being more effective in your job, improving your body, overcoming an illness or learning how to play an amazing piece of music.

The key to living a world-class life and getting the most out of your time is to make sure you have dreams that power you to do more and drive you to be better. Dreams give you a flame in your heart that ignites passion. Just think about how athletes look like when they win: exhilarated, thrilled, excited, energized. That’s what the fulfillment feels like.

Having a clear dream will give you a chance to live life at a different level.

Dreams Help us Overcome Challenges and Obstacles

In 1987, at the age of 15, I attended a training camp in West Palm Beach, Florida with my swim team. During a break from training, we all went to the beach and did some bodysurfing. At one point, I got caught in a wave and landed headfirst on the sand, breaking several vertebrae in my neck. I spent two weeks in traction and three months in a halo vest. After that, I had surgery to repair the shards of bone in my neck – on my 16th birthday! The neurosurgeon told me that I would never swim competitively again.

When the medical treatments were over, I endured months of physiotherapy. When I was ready, I returned to training. Then, 14 months after my accident, I qualified for Olympic Trials. And you can bet I sent the surgeon a photo of myself at the Trials!

Dreams are Transformative

In 2003, I joined up with a group of people who dreamed of setting a Guinness World Record for the fastest human-powered crossing of Africa. This expedition became the Tour D’Afrique, a 11,000 km bicycle expedition from Cairo, Egypt to Capetown, South Africa, a now annual event that is the longest bike race in the world.

Participating in that expedition was a gruelling experience for me. Cycling through the Sahara Desert, getting very sick in Ethiopia, slowly building my fitness and physical resilience as we travelled through Kenya and Tanzania, and then becoming healthy

and psychologically tougher as we rode through Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa completely changed me. I was physically, mentally and emotionally transformed.

Dreams Become Reality One Step at a Time

On January 14th, 2005, rock-climbers Kevin Jorgeson and Tommy Caldwell finished a 19-day, 3,000-foot (915-metre) ascent of the Dawn Wall on El Capitan in California's Yosemite National Park. Their accomplishment generated significant media attention at the time and is generally considered one of the toughest climbs ever completed. Part of what made their feat extraordinary was that Jorgeson and Caldwell performed the ascent by free climbing with their hands and feet, using ropes only for protection from falls. When Jorgeson was writing about the climb, he posted that "this is not an effort to 'conquer.' It's about realizing a dream."

One of the most amazing things about Jorgeson and Caldwell's accomplishment is how they approached their preparation.

The route they were going to climb included seven distinct pitches (about the length of a climbing rope, or 60-70 metres) each of which was rated a 5.14 (read "five-fourteen"), the second most difficult rating on a scale from 5.5 to 5.15. Climbing a single 5.14 route is a significant accomplishment for any climbers. Completing seven such pitches in a continuous push up a route would be gruelling. As they prepared, they knew they would need to be able to complete the climbs repeatedly because it was unlikely they could do it on the first try. That meant that their preparation had to include not just strength and endurance training, but the planning, mindset and ability to complete challenging climbs repeatedly.

As soon as they had set the dream of climbing the Dawn Wall, their preparation began. They scouted the routes. They practised the different pitches repeatedly. They trained to build the required strength and endurance. They refined their nutrition. They slept deeply to ensure recovery and regeneration. They put in the time and commitment needed to build capacity, develop skills and become excellent in pursuit of their dream. In total, they spent seven years preparing for their historic ascent.

Your Dream

Over the years, I have learned about the power of dreams by working with Olympic athletes, reading about world leaders, following adventurers and facing obstacles myself. In both of the personal experiences I described above – coming back to swim at the Trials and riding across Africa, I was able to overcome challenges and achieve what seemed impossible. I was told I would never swim again. No one had cycled through Africa as quickly as we did. Surviving and eventually excelling in each of those circumstances made me who I am today. Those situations were hard and painful. But they made me better. They changed the way I act, think and feel.

Dream setting can do the same for you.

What's your dream? What do you want to achieve? What's your passion? What do you love? What do you want to spend your life doing? If it's your work, that's great. If it's supporting your family, that's great. If it's a health goal, that's fantastic.

Your dream can be anything.

Start by realizing that a dream isn't just something that everyone around you will think is spectacular – it's something that matters to you. So it might be running a marathon or completing a triathlon, but it might also be running a 5 km race, taking up yoga or losing 10 pounds – permanently. It just has to be something deeply meaningful to you. What about that new business that you've been thinking about launching? Maybe you want to be a little happier every day.

It doesn't matter what your dream is or how big it is. Just find something you can go after that will become a powerful spark in your life.

In a day and age when we have almost immediate access to products, we are constantly being sold the latest quick fix. Achieving a dream isn't like that. Think of Petra Majdic's 20 years of training. Or the ongoing efforts to establish equality between the races in the United States. Of the seven years Kevin Jorgeson and Tommy Caldwell spent preparing to face the Dawn Wall. Or the effort that 16-year-old me put into building back up to being a competitive swimmer or enduring the heat and exhaustion of that African ride. It takes time, commitment and small but deliberate steps.

If we all work consistently over time at being a little bit better with our sleep, nutrition, exercise, mental skills and approach to daily life, we can accomplish incredible things. The key is that we make slow, steady and consistent improvement over time. So that's the approach I want you to adopt when applying the concepts I am offering you.

You will achieve incredible things when you focus on being 1% better.

CHAPTER 3

Set Your Dreams



Let's set some dreams!

What passion of yours can become a dream? What vision of the future makes you excited and happy? By developing and expressing that idea, you can turn it into something you can achieve.

Research shows that if you write down what you want to achieve, you increase your chances of reaching that objective. Research also finds that telling someone else about your dream improves your chances even more. So let's jot down some notes about what you want to be, do or achieve.

Your Ultimate Dream

This is what it is all about. In the space below, write out a simple statement of your dream. Your dream may seem unattainable now, but throughout this workbook we will break it down into simple steps that make it achievable.

DO NOT BE AFRAID TO GO BIG.

Goals to Achieve your Dream – The Yearly Plan

With your dream expressed, now let's focus on a specific goal you want to achieve. With a particular target, you can develop and follow a clear plan of action. That way, you break your long term dream into yearly chunks.

Good goals are specific, time limited and positive.

In this section, list some specific goals you will need to achieve in order to reach your long-term dream. Be as detailed as possible. Then, assess those goals and decide on a particular goal that will be achievable this year.

Objectives to Achieve your Goals and Dream – the Monthly Plan

Objectives are short-term targets that will lead you to your goals and break the year down into months and weeks.

In the space below, write out specific objectives you can focus on that will improve your physical, mental, behavioural, and strategic skills in order to help you achieve your dream.

Accomplishments – the One Week Plan

Learning to be focused on what you will accomplish each week will ensure that you are constantly moving toward your dream. Use this page to learn how to identify accomplishments that will ensure you are on track.

This week, I will accomplish:

1.

2.

3.

CHAPTER 4

Start with Why



When I worked as a coach and physiologist with Olympic-level athletes, I was known sometimes as Dr. Blood. I would often take blood samples to measure during hard training sessions to assess how their bodies were responding. As a result, I was frequently in close contact with athletes who were pushing themselves to the absolute limit.

In one memorable moment, in the middle of a set during a training camp, I yelled to an athlete, “C’mon pick it up. Let’s go!!!” He stopped, looked at me, and with uncharacteristic venom in his voice, replied, “I am a world champion. I know how to push myself!” He went on to do a great training set, and we didn’t say much after that. We just did our jobs – and the workout was awesome. He didn’t need external motivation; his internal drive was powerful enough to deliver exceptional results again and again.

That experience highlights an important aspect of motivation. Successful people are powerfully motivated intrinsically (within the body and mind). They want to reach their potential because that’s what they love to do. They are not motivated extrinsically. Forces outside them, such as money or me yelling, don’t drive them. According to both educational and sport psychology research, extrinsic motivation works well in the short term but not so well over time. Findings also show that intrinsic motivation is a more powerful driver for people over both the short and long term.

I want you to think about your intrinsic motivation. My dream is to help you improve your health and performance. Sometimes, things will get tough and you will regress or get off track. But if you’re aware of your “why” – the reason you are working so hard to improve – you will recover quickly.

Starting with why means checking in about your motivation. What is inside you that drives you? Alternatively, what is outside you that you are responding to. Other people? Expectations? External cues? The internal stuff is fuel for dreams while the external stuff won’t be much help in the long run.

Why do you want to eat better? Why is it important to prioritize sleep? Why do you want to get fitter? If you focus on what drives you from the inside, you will find it a lot easier to implement new skills, knowledge and techniques that will help you achieve your dreams.

In one of the most popular TED Talks out there, Simon Sinek talks about why inspirational leadership “Starts with Why.” He argues that understanding the why leads to action and passion. I’d like you to do the same.

Think about the “Why” of your dreams and goals. Writing this down and keeping it in mind will be very powerful for you as you move through this program toward a world-class life.

The 5 Whys

Consider your dreams and goals for a moment. Really bring them to life in your mind. Then ask yourself, “WHY do I want to achieve them?” Write the first answer down next to Why #1 below. Then ask yourself why you want to achieve that why. Write that answer down next to Why #2 below. Keep going until you have five answers. If you do, you will quickly get deep into your real motivations.

My Dream and/or Goal is:

1. Why?

2. Why?

3. Why?

4. Why?

5. Why?

CHAPTER 5

Create World-Class Habits and Routines



Consider your dreams and goals for a moment. Really bring them to life in your mind. Then ask yourself, “WHY do I want to achieve them?” Write the first answer down next to Why #1 below. Then ask yourself why you want to achieve

that why. Write that answer down next to Why #2 below. Keep going until you have five answers. If you do, you will quickly get deep into your real motivations.

In the space below, identify five keystone habits and routines you could develop that would help you move toward your goals and dreams:

Keystone Habit 1:

What is the habit I want to develop?

When do I need to focus on practicing this habit?

What is the reward I will receive once I practice this habit enough for it to become automatic?

Keystone Habit 2:

What is the habit I want to develop?

When do I need to focus on practicing this habit?

What is the reward I will receive once I practice this habit enough for it to become automatic?

Keystone Habit 3:

What is the habit I want to develop?

When do I need to focus on practicing this habit?

What is the reward I will receive once I practice this habit enough for it to become automatic?

Keystone Habit 4:

What is the habit I want to develop?

When do I need to focus on practicing this habit?

What is the reward I will receive once I practice this habit enough for it to become automatic?

Keystone Habit 5:

What is the habit I want to develop?

When do I need to focus on practicing this habit?

What is the reward I will receive once I practice this habit enough for it to become automatic?

CHAPTER 6

Create Your Dream Team



There is a constant battle in the sport science world about whether genetics or environmental factors (like training) are more important in determining if someone will become a great athlete. Obviously, genetics plays a huge role,

especially for factors like height. But environment is also critical. For example, how you work on your technique determines to a large extent how good your sport mechanics are.

I'm a believer that both are important. But you can only control your environment and your training. You can't control your genetics.

Your personal environment and training are not small factors in your success. You are a fluid being, still under construction, and you regularly respond to your surroundings and habits. Your environment can enable or dampen your potential. For example, you can improve your various intelligences (including your physical intelligence) by making particular lifestyle decisions, which is good news since you get to decide who you want to be and then create the conditions that will make it happen.

Recent research has indicated that we are all the sum of the five people we spend the most time with. This applies to every element of your life including areas such as the amount of money you make, your fitness level and your happiness.

Do the people around you make you better?

It's a question that professional sports teams take seriously when they bring in a franchise player like Josh Donaldson or Sidney Crosby. They believe that the presence of a great player will elevate the entire team. And it does. Think about how LeBron James or Wayne Gretzky elevated the players around them.

Whatever you are trying to accomplish, make sure you surround yourself with excellent people – people who make you better. They can be someone who elevates your training. Or someone who is great to talk with about healthy nutrition and cooking. Or a great friend you can relax with and just be yourself.

The key is to take some time to think about who you are spending your time with and make sure that they are positive influences on your life. A great team is part of your environment, and your environment drives your success.

My Dream Team

Identify five people who make you better and will help you reach your goals and dreams – even if, and maybe particularly if, they are not people you spend a great deal of time with right now. They should also be people who you can help to be better. Together, you can achieve great things.

Person #1:

Why I need them on my team:

How can we help each other:

Person #2:

Why I need them on my team:

How can we help each other:

Person #3:

Why I need them on my team:

How can we help each other:

Person #4:

Why I need them on my team:

How can we help each other:

Person #5:

Why I need them on my team:

How can we help each other:

CHAPTER 7

Use Media to Your Advantage



When I was training for Ironman after a heart infection put me in the hospital, I needed to exercise early in the morning before my family woke up. Some mornings were tough: getting out of a warm bed to go outside in February

for a winter run is not exactly fun. But one thing that helped me was a YouTube clip of the NBC Ironman show. It was motivating and got me out of the house on many mornings when I did not want to get up and train.

Scientists and psychologists refer to this as “The Media Psychology Effect.” Simply put, this area of research explores how pictures, graphics, sounds, the Internet and what you read affects your psychology. These effects can be very good and very bad.

If we focus on the good side of the media effect, we can take advantage of the fact that our brains change based on what we are exposed to. New neural connections are made that help us to think better, solve problems better, concentrate better and learn better, depending on what we watch, consume and do.

As part of your effort to actively create your environment, consider the media you consume and its effect on you. What magazines do you subscribe to? What TV shows do you watch? What blogs do you read? What podcasts do you listen to? Every one of these choices will influence your health and performance. Consider dropping a media habit that isn’t positive and doesn’t move you forward. Do you really want to put stuff in your head that’s negative or deflating? Then add a media habit that is positive.

If you find great media, you can use it to help you achieve your dreams. I subscribe to Runner’s World, Triathlete, Entrepreneur and Fast Company. I’m into training and building a great business, and what I read reflects those interests as much as possible. Do an audit of what’s in your media environment and see if you can make some positive changes!

Identify one form of media that you don’t think is helping you achieve your dreams and swap it for one that will inspire and inform you – a new book, a new blog or a new podcast are all good ideas.

List of My Positive Media:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

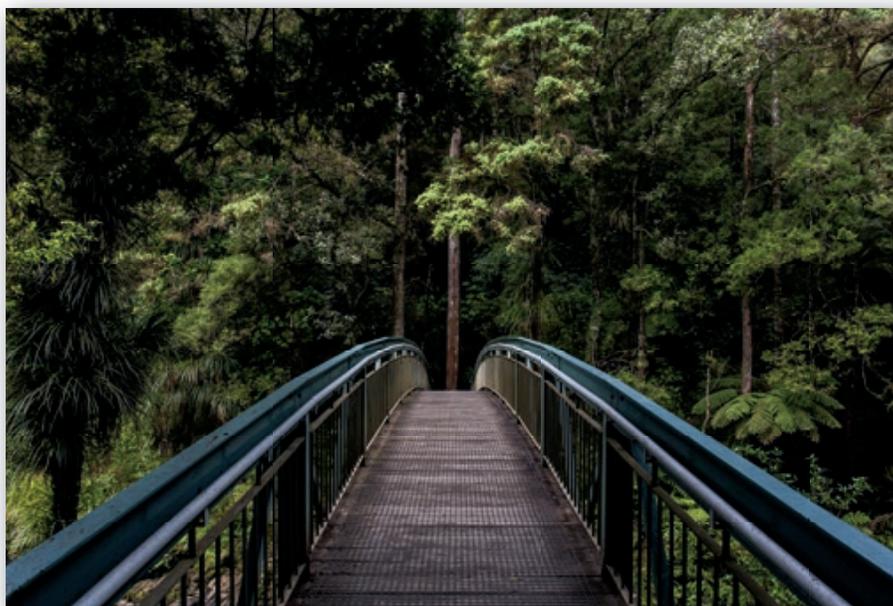
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

List of Media I want to delete/eliminate/stop following:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

CHAPTER 8

The Power of 1%



One of the best approaches I have seen for achieving a dream is to focus on being 1% better.

I work with a lot of incredible athletes, but it isn't always talent that drives achievement. What sets the best performing athletes apart is their dedication to training at a

consistently high level. And among that group, there is a factor that sets even the elite athletes apart: lifestyle.

Athletes with daily habits and behaviours that are consistent with their goals tend to be the most successful. I call them "24-hour athletes."

This is a key idea for this program. To live a life consistent with your dreams and goals, you have to be committed to improving how you eat, sleep, exercise and think. A 1% change might not seem like much, but small improvements each and every day will amplify your life.

Here is an interesting example from the business world: General Electric CEO Jeff Immelt has made 1% Better a mandate. GE collects and analyzes data from its various automated areas of operation to discover how to make micro-improvements in efficiency. Then, using the industrial internet, updates to operating software can be sent to the equipment to create 1% gains in performance.

GE estimates that it can boost productivity in the US by 1.5% which, over 20 years, could raise the average national income of the company by 30%. If we use an airplane example, a 1% reduction in fuel costs could save the airline industry \$30 billion over 15 years.

Similarly, Dave Brailsford who coached the Sky cycling team that won the Tour de France in 2012 and 2013, also applied the principle of aggregating 1% gains. They started by optimizing tire pressure, then working on nutrition, then fitting the bikes to the riders better. This process continued and repeated itself over and over. Ultimately, this approach helped his riders to many championships and medals.

What GE is doing with business processes and Team Sky is doing in sports, you can do with yourself. Being just 1% better every day is like compound interest for your body and mind, where every day's gain gets added to yesterday's "principal" so that you earn results on your results. Doing something small each day will leave you with more of everything: more strength, more confidence and more possibilities.

As we work through all of the advice, information and suggestions of the program, stay focused on micro-improvements. They will build the foundation that supports your dream.

CHAPTER 9

Connect

Have fun exploring how to build a great life. Learn some new ideas and apply them to make your life better and to bring the wonderful people around you along for an incredible journey!

As always, share your journey with me – I would love to hear from you.

You can connect with me:

Via my website: www.drgregwells.com

On twitter: www.twitter.com/drgregwells

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/gregwellsphd

Or on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/gregwellsphd

Here are links to my:

Podcast: <http://drgregwells.com/podcasts/>

and

Newsletter: <http://drgregwells.com/newsletter/>

CHAPTER 10

About the Author

As a scientist, broadcaster, author, coach and athlete, Dr. Greg Wells has dedicated his career to understanding human performance and how the human body responds to extreme conditions.

Dr. Wells is an assistant professor of kinesiology at the University of Toronto where he studies elite sport performance. He also serves as an associate scientist of physiology and experimental medicine at The Hospital for Sick Children where he leads the Exercise Medicine Research Program. There, he and his team explore how to use exercise to prevent, diagnose and treat chronic illnesses in children.

Throughout his career, Dr. Wells has coached, trained and inspired dozens of elite athletes to win medals at World Championships, the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics. He has studied athletic performance in some of the most severe conditions on the planet, like the Andes Mountains and the Sahara Desert.

Dr. Wells has had his own personal experience with the challenges and opportunities of adversity and human extremes. Late in his high school career, he broke his neck in a freak accident while swimming in the ocean and was in a halo brace before undergoing neurosurgery. Told by his doctor that he would never perform as an athlete again, he went on to compete at the international level in swimming. He has competed in events such as the Nanisivik Marathon - 600 miles north of the Arctic Circle - Ironman Canada, and the Tour D'Afrique, a gruelling 11,000-kilometre event that is the longest bike race in the world.

Dr. Wells is the author of *Superbodies: Peak Performance Secrets from the World's Best Athletes* (HarperCollins, June 26, 2012), which explores how genetics and DNA, the brain, muscles, lungs, heart and blood work together in extreme conditions.

Dr. Wells is a frequent contributor to *The Globe and Mail* and has been an expert source to other top media outlets like ABC News, "20/20," The Discovery Channel, TSN, CBC and CTV. He also served as the sports medicine analyst for the Canadian Olympic Broadcast Consortium for the 2010 and 2012 Olympic Games.