

The 6 Critical Foundational Lessons & More

These lessons are meant to be read and practiced in the order presented. It would be ideal for you to spend at least one full practice session working on the concepts in Lesson #2, through Lesson #5.

I have given you three ways to access these lessons. One is a direct link to the lessons and another is a pdf file that you can download. I will also e-mail you one of these lessons every week. This way you will be reminded to read and put into your practice the concepts that each lessons presents.

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David's Tennis Lesson #1

Congratulations for taking the 1st step in improving your tennis! You are about to learn some concepts and techniques that will absolutely improve your play.

However, there is one thing that you need to know. I am not going to give you any instruction on the mechanics of how to stroke the ball. I will, however, give you some resources (go to my web site and look on the right side) so that if you want to learn some "killer" approaches on how to play, you can explore them on your own. Here I will be giving you mental concepts and techniques only.

Before I get into the actual techniques, I need you to understand exactly what the mental game really is and how thinking (or not thinking) about winning fits into the picture.

So you will get two Lessons here in Lesson #1. One on the mental game and one about winning. Please be sure to read both.

You will also be getting the remaining lessons once a week for the next 7 weeks. I am spacing them out so that you will be able to focus on one at a time and I am hoping that you will have time during the week to work on them.

These next 3 lessons are the backbone of the mental game. Many people have had extraordinary results in their play when they have put them into practice. So, please take them to heart and use them to see what kind of results you can get from them.

What is the Mental Game Anyway?

The first order of business is to know what the mental game really is. Most people don't really know what it is or how to work on it so to get started I have three questions that you need to ask yourself. Don't worry if you can't answer all the questions correctly. By the time you finish reading this, you will know all.

- 1. What % of the game do you think is mental?**
- 2. What % of the time that you play and practice do you work on your mental game?**
- 3. If you were going to work on your mental game, what is it and how would you work on it?**

Most people say that the mental game is anywhere from 75 to 100% and most people answer that even though they feel that the game is this percentage, they don't practice it anywhere close to it if at all.

On the last question, most people don't have a clue or they give me some vague answer about what the mental game is.

This last question is the really important one because if you don't know what the mental game is, how can you even begin to practice it.

Here is my definition of the Mental Game:

The mental game is the relationship between your "conscious mind," your "other than conscious mind," and your body. It is your "conscious mind" which sets the goals then it gets out of the way and lets the "other than conscious mind" direct the body, which then hits the ball and achieves the ideal play. The strength, direction, and quality of your outer tennis strokes are determined by this inner relationship. When you pursue and find this ideal mental state, you will be playing in the zone.

An example is to be found if you think about how you drive a car. Your conscious mind has a huge purpose as it has to see where you are going so that you don't hit any other cars, people, bicycles, etc. It also has to see where the road goes and needs to read the road signs if you need to find a particular street. However, when you steer the car, hopefully you don't think about how you move the steering wheel and I know you don't think about how your foot presses the gas pedal or the brake pedal. You just do it.

Well, playing tennis is no different. It is just more complicated. Because we have been taught that we must control our bodies so that we can hit the ball correctly, you may not have even thought about just letting your body hit the ball without conscious control.

Your conscious mind has a role to play but you need to learn how to get it out of the way when it comes to hitting the ball. Please believe me when I tell you, your body is what hits the ball and it knows far better how to do it than the conscious mind telling it how.

As a natural by-product, your enjoyment will be enhanced. This is because you will be calmer and more relaxed, and of course, you will be playing better.

Before we get into the jobs of the conscious mind and how we figure out how to really let the body play, I want to talk a little about the ultimate goal and winning.

Why I Don't Want You To Try To Win & The Ultimate Goal

Do you think that winning is the ultimate goal? I hope not and if you do, I will try to change your mind.

In the mean time, would you like to learn how to win every time you play?

If this is your ultimate goal, then I have a deal for you. If I can tell you how you can win every time you play, and I can, will you pay me \$10,000? No?

OK, maybe winning is not that important so how about paying me only \$1,000?

Well, you can save your money because I will tell you how you can win every time anyway, and for free. In order to win every time, you just need to play a two year old. If you can't beat a two year old every time, then you are in really big trouble.

Maybe now you can begin to see that winning may not be a goal that will bring you the most satisfaction or pleasure even though winning can be a lot of fun and is the icing on the cake.

I have a trick question for you and let's see if you can get the answer. I can tell you who has won every match that has ever been played, and I can tell you who will win every match that will be played in the future.

How can I make this statement?

Here is the answer: The player who plays better on that given day will be the winner. So, if you play better than your opponent today, you will win. Did you get the answer right?

The point is that winning will take care of itself, and if you strive and learn to play at the top of your game and that "top" is better than your opponent, guess what, you will automatically win. And if you play twice as well as you ever had but still lose the game, most likely you will still be a happy camper. Oops, I meant to say a happy tennis player.

If you don't like how well you played (even though you played at the top of your game), then you need to figure out how you can play better in the future. This means that you will need to practice more of both the physical and the mental game.

So, how do you play at the top of your game? By spending more and more time figuring out how to get the part of your conscious mind that is interfering out of the way so your body can play its very best. You will also find that when you practice these concepts, your body will learn faster and more easily. I can't describe to you what this

state of being feels like, but I can guide you so that you can begin to discover for yourself what it feels like and how to get there.

Let's get back to the ultimate goal.

I believe the ultimate goal is for you to find out how to play your very best every time you play. This automatically will help you win more matches. This goal not only helps you accomplish the old goal of winning but it will happen automatically and without you thinking about it.

Thinking about winning when you are playing in a tight game is death and will not lead you very often to playing your best and not playing your best may mean that that you will lose.

Trying hard to win will not always lead you to playing your best and may not lead to winning.

Trying to not lose doesn't work that well either.

How many times have you blown it in a tight situation? I don't think you blew it because you weren't trying hard to win. I believe it is because you were focusing on winning instead of focusing on the things that you needed to do to play well enough to win. I see this happen all the time even with professionals.

Do you know why thinking about winning is not productive? Do you know how it affects your body? Thinking leads to trying which leads to tension which may lead to not playing very well, especially in a tight match. Thinking about and doing what you need to do to play your very best is by far better and will lead to helping you to win more matches.

Now, I do see, from time to time, some athletes when they try really hard, it works for them and they play better. These players are far and few between. If you are one of these players, then you may not get much out of the techniques I am teaching you.

On the other hand, if you are like most of us, the harder you try, the worse it gets and this information I am presenting to you here will be your salvation, because you will learn how to "try" properly.

David's Tennis Lesson #2:

Do You See The Ball Properly?

I am hoping that you have read the 1st Lesson. If not, please take the time now. It is important because it sets up the philosophy behind all your tennis play.

In this lesson you will learn some things about seeing the ball that I will bet you have not heard before.

As you already know, seeing the ball is important. But, do you know how important? Do you know that seeing the ball the way I believe it should be seen just may blow you away. Do it and see if it affects your game big time.

This is a long lesson but it is the most important of all the lessons even the ones in my book and CDs, period! Please read it all the way through.

This is just one of a number of concepts and techniques that will really help you when you play. Get them all now here.

In the next Lesson, I will show you a greatly undervalued but also powerful technique. This will also come in 7 days from the last lesson so, in the meantime, you can practice this lesson.

See the Ball! Do You Really Know What That Means?

You know that you are supposed to watch the ball, right? Do you think you see the ball when you play? Of course you say you do. Otherwise you would not be able to hit the ball at all. But, do you really see it the way it needs to be seen? I will tell you that there is a 98% chance that you don't and that percentage is based on giving 'My test,' which absolutely demonstrates how to see the ball. I have given this test to hundreds of people and it is surprising to me how many people just don't see the ball very well.

Here is the good news. When you really see the ball the way I know it should be seen, your tennis game will improve immediately and sometimes dramatically.

In case you haven't guessed, seeing the ball is the single most important thing to do when playing and unfortunately, most people don't see the ball properly, even after being shown how to do it and being told how important it is.

"See the ball." "Watch the ball." "Look at the ball." Yes, I know you have heard this so many times. But do you really consciously see the ball all the way to and from your racket? It is not as easy as it sounds. And as you get into really seeing the ball, it becomes easy to think that you are seeing the ball well when you really aren't.

When I talk about how important it is to really see the ball clearly, some of my students try so hard to focus on the ball that they tense up too much. Remember that you don't need to try hard to read the words when you are reading, and likewise you don't need to try hard to see things if you were to look up and around the room. The same principle applies to seeing the ball on the court. Don't try, just see. What may be hard is to keep your focus on the ball for an entire point, game, or match, and this, like any other skill, will need practice.

How do you know if you are seeing the ball well? This requires awareness. When you are playing, are you able to answer the following questions with absolute certainty?

- **Am I really consciously seeing the ball all the way from my opponent's racket?**
- **Am I really focusing on the ball as my ball crosses the net and bounces up to my opponent's racket?**
- **If someone were to ask, could I tell them whether the ball was spinning fast, slow, or medium as it was coming to me and after I hit?**
- **Have I ever seen a ball that has no spin? Those balls should stick out like a sore thumb because they are so different from the rest.**
- **Am I able to see the ball spinning all the way to the blur of my racket when it makes contact with the ball?**

You need to be able to answer these questions beyond a shadow of a doubt. If you find yourself saying that "I think" the ball was spinning slowly, then you didn't see it. If you really saw it you would say without a doubt, "Yes, I saw that one."

When I am giving a student a lesson for the first time, I usually start out by having them just see the ball. I explain that I don't want them to think about their strokes or to think about hitting the ball into the court or aiming. Instead, I want them to just focus on seeing the ball all the way to their racket and all the way back over the net to their opponent's racket.

After rallying with them for a few minutes, I then ask them if they saw the ball very well. Most of them will say that they did, and many times they will say that they saw the ball better than they ever had in the past. The reason they say this is because I have taken away most of the things they normally think about and just had them watch the ball. And, many times they are aware that they are hitting the ball more consistently

solid and in the court. It is then that I give them "my little test." This test is the best way for me to tell if they are seeing the ball the way I want them to see it and it demonstrates to them beyond a shadow of a doubt how the ball needs to be seen.

Here is what I say before I do the test with them. I say that I am going to give them every hint in the book so that they can get the "correct" answer to this test. I will tell them that I will be hitting four balls to them, two to their forehand and two to their backhand. I will hit the balls as easy as I can and that I will stand at the net so that I can hit the ball really easy. I will tell them that all four balls will have the identical spin, and I want them to explain to me what direction the ball is spinning all the way from the time it hits my racket to the time it hits their racket. I tell them the three "key" words that practically give away the answer. Those words are "all the way" from my racket to your racket. I also tell them that there are three ways the ball can spin: Sidespin, topspin and underspin.

When I do the test, I always use new balls so it is easier to see the spin of the ball. Would you believe that 98 percent of my students can't correctly tell how the ball is spinning? Sometimes I even give them another chance after explaining to them again the three key words, and they still don't get it right. Once I tell them how the ball is spinning and I hit them more balls, they see it immediately.

I once had a student who got really mad when I told him he didn't get the test correct because he was so sure he saw the ball correctly. The point I am making with this test is that people think they are seeing the ball well when they are really not. Almost 100% of those who got it correct had no idea that the ball did what it did.

A few years ago, I gave this test to a friend of mine named Ken Stuart who came up from California to play doubles with me in the National Indoor 60s tournament in Seattle. Back in the old days, Ken was a world-class player. He is still a great player today, even though we have both aged a little. After I told Ken about watching the ball all the way to his racket and after we hit a few balls so he could get somewhat comfortable with focusing on the ball, I gave him the test. Well, he was one of the 2 percent who got it right the first time.

Because it was so easy for him, I was sure he thought I was lying about how many people got this test wrong just to make him feel good. About three weeks later he called me and said that he gave my test to 10 or so other players and all of them got it wrong. I told him, see, I wasn't just trying to make you feel good. He now knows how special it was that he was able on the first try to see how the ball was spinning the way it needs to be seen. Did I tell you that when he could see the ball well, he really noticed the difference in how well he played?

Ken also told me another story about seeing the ball this way. He was invited to play doubles with 3 other 6.0 players. Ken told them that he wasn't good enough anymore to play with them. They all said that they didn't care, they needed a 4th and they really wanted him to play with them. Because Ken felt the pressure of playing well, he really focused on the ball. After the match was over, Ken said that he was the best player on the court. When you see the ball this way, it really can have a dramatic effect on the way you play.

Ken is the owner of the Palisades Tennis Club in Newport Beach, California, so if you ever get down there, give him a call and tell him I sent you and that you would like to play at his club. His staff has a terrific way of matching you up with players of your own level. If you get a chance to play there, you will see one of the best-run tennis clubs in America. They also host one of the largest senior tournaments their called the Pacific Southwest Senior Tournament.

Are you wondering by now what the correct answer to my test is? Since I am not there to give you the test in person, I want you to try to give yourself the test. It won't be the same, but I am hoping that you will get the idea, not only about how you may not be seeing the ball as well as you could, but how really, really critical seeing the ball accurately is to your playing.

Here is what I want you to do. The next time you play, really work on seeing the ball as it comes to you, and notice which way it is spinning. After you get home, go to the super secret page on my web site and read about the test. Here is the web address:
<http://pureperformancesports.com/secret-answer/>

On this page you will get all the answers to how the ball is really spinning as well as all the answers to the universe. It is absolutely critical that you go to this secret page because you will find information there about seeing the ball that you won't find anywhere else.

If you can't wait until the next time you play, ask a friend or family member to throw a ball to you. Have them throw it so that it bounces so that you can then catch it after it bounces. Don't forget to see the ball spinning from the throw, to the bounce and then all the way to your hands as you catch it. Have your friend toss it with any spin they want 4 times. If you cheat and just continue to read without doing this exercise, you will miss much of these techniques. When you see the spin continue reading and I will tell you the secret. **Now stop reading and do the little throwing test or until you do the seeing the ball exercise.**

In the scheme of things, it doesn't matter if you cheated and just reading to get the answer. What does matter is that you learn the answer to the test and how the balls are spinning. Here is the answer to how the ball was spinning as you were catching it.

The secret is that no matter what the spin is before the ball bounces, the ball will always have top spin on it after the bounce. Did you know this? Did you know that even when your opponent hits an underspin, the ball will still have top spin on it after the bounce?

Whether you played first as I asked or did the little throwing test, you still absolutely must go to the secret page on my web site as it has critical information that you must have in order to fully understand about seeing the ball. Again that web address is: <http://pureperformancesports.com/secret-answer/>

Seeing the ball the way I have described on my secret page may be a challenge for you. It took me years to get good at it, but when you really know you are seeing the ball, you will absolutely see a difference in your game. Some of the benefits of seeing the ball really well will be fewer miss-hits, more consistency, and more relaxed strokes. You will also begin to experience what it means to get your "conscious mind" out of the way and let your "other than conscious mind" direct your body.

Here are some games you can play that will help you to focus on the ball.

In Tim Gallwey's book, The Inner Game of Tennis, he talks about a game called "bounce hit". Every time the ball hits your racket or your opponent's racket, say out loud or to yourself "hit." Every time the ball bounces on the ground, say out loud or to yourself "bounce." Check to see if you are saying "hit" with a relaxed voice or a tense one. And check to make sure that you are saying these words exactly when it is happening and not before or after. You may not be able to do this very well at first, but please challenge yourself until you can do it even in a game situation. The benefits will be worth it.

Another game to play is to say out loud or to yourself what direction the ball is spinning. When you hit the ball, say what direction it is spinning as it is going over the net and again when the ball is coming back toward you. Don't forget to consciously see the spin after the bounce. And we all should know what direction the ball is spinning then, right?

Here is one more game to play. Watch the trajectory of the ball as it comes to you and as it goes back to the other side. Ask yourself whether the ball is still rising, has reached its peak, or is dropping when you hit it. Do the same when your opponent is hitting the ball.

As you learn to let go and just see the ball the way I describe above and on my secret web page, you will see amazing things begin to happen. If nothing much happens, then maybe you are just not seeing the ball properly. Please contact me so we can figure out what is going on with you.

If you want to get a visual picture of what it looks like when someone sees the ball all the way to contact, watch Roger Federer's head as he makes contact with the ball. He sees the ball better than any professional I know of. I use this visual picture when I am playing and am having difficulty seeing the ball. I just remember how Roger's head moves when he hits the ball and immediately I begin to see the ball better.

The final thing to understand about seeing the ball is that even though it is your "conscious mind" that is seeing the ball, you want to have your "other than conscious mind" make it happen. This means that, for example, when you read, you are not trying hard to read, you just do it. Do the same for seeing the ball. Just see it.

One more final thing. Anytime you read or hear me say see the ball, I am talking about seeing the ball the way I described it in the answer to the test. If you have not gone there yet, you must stop reading and do it.

If there is one thing in my book and in this CD series that is a must, this is it. Here I am giving it to you for free. Again, that web page is <http://pureperformancesports.com/secret-answer/>

David's Tennis Lesson #3:

What Do You Know About Breathing When Hitting?

Did you read the 2nd Lesson on seeing the ball? If not, please take the time now. Even if you did read it, it may be a good idea to read it again because the concept of seeing the ball is so critically important.

Some of the things you should have noticed is that you were more consistent, you hit the ball more solidly, and your strokes felt better. Did you notice any of these things?

In this lesson you will learn something that I know you won't hear anywhere else. This is another long lesson but it is a very powerful technique and you absolutely have to work on it.

Just about all my students say it is the most difficult thing to do when you are playing, but it can be the most incredible one you will do. You may be wondering what this powerful techniques is. It involves a breathing pattern when you hit the ball.

After seeing the ball as described in Lesson #2, the second most important thing to focus on is your breathing. This is because focusing on your breathing keeps the upper body more relaxed, thereby allowing your body to hit the ball better.

Have you ever taken a yoga class? What is one of the important things the instructor tells you while you are doing the postures? You quickly learn that breathing is a big part of getting the full benefit from it. Tennis is no different except that you will be using the breathing to stay in the here and now, as well as using it to help you learn how to keep your "conscious mind" out of the way. And, like yoga, working with your breathing, helps you relax properly.

Since breathing is the most important part of the relaxation package, you will need to work on it as much as you do on seeing the ball. I will discuss the full relaxation package in a later session. In the Mental Game Core Principles, I talked a little about how to breathe but not about some of the practical ways to work on it. Here I will go into more detail.

Up until I wrote my book, I have always told my students that the jury was still out as far as the "best" way to breathe, because I have always had difficulty allowing my breathing to be the way I felt it should be. Well, the jury has arrived at a verdict. I had

experimented with just about every possible way to breathe and I believe the way I will describe to you now is the easiest and most beneficial way to do it while hitting.

Do you think you hold your breath when you hit? Have you ever been out of breath and realized that you didn't really run anywhere? If you have, then you are holding my breath.

Early in my days of working on my mental game and trying to find out how to play my very best, there was a time when I was playing doubles, and after most points, I found myself out of breath. I thought that this was very strange because, as you know, there is not a lot of running in doubles and I was only a few feet away from where I started. I said to myself, "How can I be out of breath when I didn't run anywhere?"

This was when I realized that I was holding my breath and when I began to discover what the best way to breathe was when hitting the ball. And, as I said earlier, I experimented with many ways of breathing. The thing I found was that no matter how I breathed, I felt so much more relaxed.

The next time you play, begin by just being aware of your inhales and exhales as you are hitting the ball back and forth. Check to see if you are holding your breath when you make contact with the ball. Without this ability to consciously pay attention to yourself breathing, it will be difficult to work on changing your breathing patterns in the way I describe next.

Once you have the ability to pay attention to your breathing, you can start working on the quality and rhythm of it. Here is what I consider to be the most effective and natural breathing pattern while hitting the ball.

When you are hitting from the backcourt, start your exhale before, as, or just after the ball bounces on your side as the ball is coming to you. This exhale should be a sigh that is long, slow, and relaxed and should continue well through contact with the ball. In fact, the exhale should last until your ball bounces on the other side.

At the same time, of course, you are consciously seeing the ball all the way to the blur of your racket. You don't have to concern yourself with your inhales as I guarantee that you will do it. Your sigh should sound like this. (Do a sighing exhale).

Exhaling as you hit is a very natural way to breathe, so all you have to do is start your exhale before you hit the ball, make it smooth and relaxed, and make it longer than usual. It doesn't get any easier than that.

When you watch the pros play, you will hear some of them actually grunt out loud as they hit the ball. Especially Sharapova. If you notice closely you will hear that they start

this grunt or forced exhale as or after their racket makes contact with the ball. I don't think this way of breathing is very helpful since it does little to relax their upper body.

If you listen to Nadal's breathing, it will be closer to what I am describing as the optimum way to breathe. He does sometimes start his breathing before he hits the ball, but he still exhales after hitting the ball. From my way of thinking, he is exhaling too tensely, but I believe it has great value anyway.

When you are at the net, you will notice that your breathing will have to be a little quicker. You will need to start your exhale just before, as, or just after the ball hits your opponent's racket and allow it to continue well through your hit. Do this, and you may see some amazing things happen with your volleys.

When you are at net or when your opponent is at net, it is also a little trickier because the ball is also coming back sooner than normal, and you will have to start your exhale before you make contact with the ball. You might need to start your exhale just as your opponent hits the ball or you can still start the exhale when the ball bounces. Again, the important thing is to start the exhale before you make contact with the ball.

Again, while you are working with your breathing, it is ideal to also be focusing on the ball all the way to the blur of the racket. However, you may want to forget about focusing on the ball for a while and just work on the breathing part. After you have spent some time with the breathing, you must then see if you can do both at the same time. Achieving both the correct breathing and seeing the ball at the same time, and without judgment, is the ultimate focus and leads to playing in the zone.

One of the ways I help myself pay attention to my breathing is to make a little sound as I exhale. It is not a grunt, and no one else can hear me, but I can hear it inside my head. This way I can stay more aware of what is going on with my breathing. The breathing will be a little different on your return of serve. I will be discussing the return of serve in more detail later. Until you get to that part, here is what you need to do. You should be starting to exhale just as or before your opponent hits the ball. But the exhale is still a long, relaxed sigh and continues well through your hit. This way your upper body has a better chance to stay relaxed even when your body has to move quickly. This is especially important when playing someone with a big serve.

When you are serving, you will also start the long, relaxed exhale as you release your toss and before you make contact with the ball. And again, continue to exhale well through contact. You may also find that you will be able to see the ball to the blur of the racket that much easier.

The important point to remember is that no matter what shot you are hitting, the exhale should always be like a very relaxed sigh and that you start it before making contact with the ball and continue it long past contact.

This may be a good time to let you know that there will be no shot that you will ever hit where you won't want to see the ball and breathe. This includes drop shots, lobs, overheads, behind the back shot, every shot. Every ball you hit. Again, this is easy to talk about, but may be hard to do. When you can do this, have you seen how much better you play?

Breathing was the last part of the inner game that I worked on. I didn't work on it very much in the early years because I just couldn't let go enough to focus on both breathing and seeing the ball. However, once I did get serious about doing both, my game started to really improve.

Doing both is not easy. It takes a lot of work and a lot of letting go. Please don't let that keep you from working on your breathing.

The obvious way to work on it is to just hit balls and see if you can pay attention to your breathing and for the moment forget about focusing on seeing the ball. If you are just playing a practice match, you can do it then also. However, if you are playing a match that is important to you and can't yet focus on both the ball and your breathing, I would rather have you just focus on the ball. I guess what I am trying to say is that when playing an important match, it is not the time to practice the way you breathe, but it is the time to have your breathing be as relaxed as possible, even if you can't consciously focus on it.

Another way to work on breathing and you can even do this in a game, is to play two points or rallies just paying attention to yourself exhaling. This means from the time the first point starts to when the second point ends and includes the time in between points. And, of course, any thought of trying to see the ball, trying to hit the ball into the court, or trying to stroke it a certain way needs to be eliminated. If you happen to see the ball well at the same time, that would be wonderful and an added bonus.

Then play two points just seeing the ball. Again, make sure that you are focusing on the ball from the time the first point starts to the time the second point ends. Likewise, if you happen to feel yourself breathing at the same time, that is better.

Then see if you can pay attention to both your exhaling and seeing the ball for two points.

The ultimate goal here is to program the "other than conscious mind" to have the breathing be very relaxed. Just as when you are seeing the ball and the time comes to

play the game, you need to get the "conscious mind" out of the way and again let your "other than conscious mind" keep your breathing relaxed.

David's Tennis Lesson #4:

What Is So Important About Relaxation?

In the last lesson, I talked about breathing. This is just part of the relaxation package but it is the most important part.

This lesson will cover the rest of the relaxation techniques. Even though the breathing is extremely important, understanding about the other parts of relaxing when you play can be very important to your ability to play well.

Again, this is a long lesson so I am hoping that the length of it won't keep you from reading the whole thing.

Do you ever hit a shot that feels "wrong" or awkward? How about a shot that felt really hard to do? I believe that the "wrong", hard, or awkward shots are the result of being tense somewhere in your body.

Also, have you ever hit a shot that felt absolutely effortless and you wondered how come your ball when so hard and well? If you have, then you know what perfect relaxation means. And, you can learn to hit these kinds of shots more often.

So, what do I mean by relaxation? When playing tennis, being relaxed properly means using only those muscles that are needed to execute the shot and using the right amount of tension. The problem is that there is no person on this earth who knows exactly which muscles those are and how to use the perfect tension every time when hitting. The good news is that your "other than conscious mind" does, know. And if you can relax and let it hit the shot, you will be able to produce shots that really are effortless.

One day when talking to one of my students about relaxation, she realized perfect relaxation did not mean being relaxed the way you feel during a massage. You can observe the proper amount of relaxation and tension demonstrated when you watch the professionals in any sport and you say, "They make it look so easy."

When we try hard to do something and especially the first time and when learning any new physical skills, we use so many more muscles than we need to and often with much more tension. And we wonder why it takes so long for that new skill to become easy and second nature.

When I teach a student a different way to stroke the ball, they will often have a death grip on the racket. I tell them this is not a weight-lifting class and the racket does not weigh 1,000 pounds. The student also often feels that this new way of stroking is not natural or feels funny because they are so used to trying very hard.

I try to help my students discover only the muscles that are needed when hitting a particular stroke. I accomplish this by having them experience relaxation in some part of their body starting with their grip and wrist.

Here is one of the little secrets of why relaxation works so well. When you are relaxing and not trying to control your body with your conscious mind, your body falls under the supervision of your "other than conscious mind" and it can then take control of your stroke using only the necessary muscles and tension. Your "other than conscious mind" will also figure out exactly how to time the ball perfectly and what angle the racket must be at to hit the ball the way you want. If the body doesn't know, by keeping your "conscious mind" out of the way and keeping it from trying to control your body, your body will learn that much faster.

Let's say for example, that you are hitting the ball too high and it goes long. Do you know what angle of the racket that is needed to make the ball go lower? I don't think so. But some part of your body knows. So, by relaxing your grip and wrist, your "other than conscious mind" can take over and adjust the angle of the racket. This principle applies to every part of your game.

So, how do you work on using only the muscles you need, and how do you know if you are doing this? There are some signs that you can watch for.

When you hit a ball and you feel awkward or the stroke feels hard to do, it means you are too tense somewhere in your body. As I told you earlier, if you are hitting a lot of balls long especially when running for a ball, then your grip and wrist are too tense. If you have ever paid attention to what your face is doing when you hit the ball, you may notice that it is not relaxed and you are "making a face". That means you are too tense and maybe even holding your breath from trying too hard.

Speaking of the face let me tell you about Roger Federer. He does two things better than any other top pro that I am aware of. The first is that he must be seeing the ball all the way to his racket as I discuss in the watching the ball section. You can see his head follow the ball to his racket, and his head stays at that point for a period of time longer than any other player I have seen. You will see most other pros move their head to their racket, but not even close to how well Federer does it. If you will take a look how often other players miss the ball, and I am talking about the pros also, you will see that often their head and eyes don't follow the ball all the way to their racket.

The second thing that Roger does that no other top pro even comes close to doing is what he does with his face. Or maybe I should say what he doesn't do with his face. In every picture I have seen of Roger hitting the ball, his face looks very relaxed, and sometimes it looks like he may be exhaling gently. Even in pictures where he is obviously straining to get to the ball, his face is relaxed.

In every picture I have seen of other pros (male or female), you can see tension in their faces. This means that Roger is truly allowing his body to hit the ball and is not using any other muscles or trying to control his body consciously when he hits the ball. This is why Roger will be, and maybe already is, the greatest player the world has ever seen and will be on top for a long time to come.

By the way, do you know what stroke Roger hits without a relaxed face? The next time you watch Roger play, look at his face when he serves. Is it relaxed like the rest of his shots?

OK, back to how to work on the relaxation issue. When you feel you are too tense somewhere, you first have to isolate where the tension is located.

Other than the breathing, the most common place is in the grip and the wrist.

Tim Gallwey says that when you hold the racket you should hold it like you are holding a bird. You want to hold it tight enough so that the bird can't get away, but not so tight that you squash the poor bird. Do you think you are squashing the poor bird when you hit the ball?

Many of my students think that if they hold the racket this loose the racket will turn in their hand. The racket will only turn in your hand if you hit the ball off center. Here is the irony of this. If you hold the racket too tight, you will find yourself hitting more balls off center thereby having the racket turn in your hand more. By holding your racket looser and combined with seeing the ball, your body will be able to find the center of your racket easier and more often.

Here is a pretty complete list of the areas of tension, in order of importance, that seem to be common to most players.

- **Your breathing -- holding the breath as you hit the ball or a tense exhalation**
- **Your grip and/or your wrist**
- **Your face**
- **Your arm at the shoulder**
- **Your elbow when you are serving**
- **Your legs**

- **Your left hand if you hit right handed**
- **Your left ear. OK, maybe I am getting a carried away and being a little ridiculous but you get the idea**
- **And lastly, any other place in your body**

Once you have determined what area you think may be tense, all you need to do is pay attention to that area when you are hitting the ball.

For example, if you think that your grip or your wrist is too tight, pay attention to your five fingers as you hit the ball. If you use a two-handed backhand, pay attention to all 10 fingers as you hit. With this awareness you will discover how not to squash the poor bird.

At the same time you are working on relaxing by paying attention to some part of your body, it is critical that you refrain from trying to do anything about the tension. The trying leads to more tension. Let your "other than conscious mind" figure out how to hit the ball into the court using only the muscles that are truly needed, and get your conscious mind out of the way.

As you begin to let go of all the other muscles you don't need when you are hitting the ball, your strokes will become natural and so much easier. Your game will improve, and you will find that you have more endurance because you are using so much less physical effort.

When I was a junior and I played the number 1 ranked player in S. Calif. Jerry Cromwell, I always felt that I was in terrible condition. This was because after the match, I was absolutely exhausted. Only after my lesson with Tim Gallwey did I realize what was going on so many years ago. I was tensing up every muscle in my body for the entire time I was hitting the ball. No wonder I was so tired afterwards and no wonder I never ever beat Jerry.

As you work on relaxing, you will experience more shots that feel absolutely effortless. When this happens, you will know that you are in the state of perfect relaxation. You need to remember those times so that you can begin to duplicate them on every shot. This is what you are striving for. And, all this "letting go" leads to "playing in the zone."

David's Tennis Lesson #5:

The Mother Of All Tips

After you learn this technique for improving your consistency, you will see that you now have some new incredible tools to help you with your play.

If you are finding them valuable, you will want to buy my CD or e-book. In it you will find many more tools and concepts that will help you with your play. Be sure to check out my Outrageous Guarantee.

You will also get strategies and drills that you won't get anywhere else.

I also offer a course that follows the same format that you got here with the last 5 Lessons.

Here is how it works.

With the course, you will then get a lesson every week.

The course content will be directly out of my book and CD. Each of the lessons will remind you to work on whatever lesson is being presented. The value of doing it this way is that if you lose track of working on your game, these lessons will be a reminder every week to work on some part of your game.

If you are a do it your selfer, just by reading and/or listening to my book or CD will benefit you immensely. You can buy my CD and book here.

This way of playing is a process and by keeping your focus on the different aspects of the way you think about playing, it will help speed up your improvement.

There will also be some additional lessons not found on the CD's, which you won't want to miss, so you must also read the book.

And, of course, you will have access to me by phone or e-mail with any problems or questions you may have.

Ok, let get to the Mother Of All Tips (Well maybe only one of the children)

Holding the Follow Through

Caution: This is not to be done in a match. Only in practice and warm-up.

This is one of the "miracle" tips for improving your strokes as well as your consistency in hitting the ball into the court, but it will take some focus and concentration.

Here is what you are to do. Hold your follow through until you see your ball bounce on the other side of the net even if you miss the ball. In fact, it is even more critical to hold when you miss. You are not trying to follow through correctly or to make anything happen.

Holding your follow through means that your arm will come to an absolute stop. This is the key to this entire exercise.

When you are holding, pay attention to the location of your follow through and how relaxed you are.

While you are holding, this is the time you will relax your grip and arm maybe to the extreme.

You will also hold and relax your footwork.

As a bonus while doing this exercise, work on seeing the ball to your racket some of the time and some of the time work on your breathing.

This exercise has a lot of benefits.

- **The foremost is that it will absolutely groove your stroke.**
- **It will make you more consistent in hitting the balls in the court.**
- **It will force you to learn how to be balanced with your footwork.**
- **And, best of all it will help you break the pattern of reacting physically to your shot.**

However, there are the things to watch out for when doing this exercise. One has a tendency to not hold the stroke when you miss so you must be very aware and allow yourself to hold even longer at these times. In addition, one has tendency to not allow the stroke to come to an absolute stop every time so you need to be aware of this. You will also need to be aware of whether you fall off balance when you are holding your footwork. If you find that you are off balance, it means that your legs are too tense so you will have to relax them until you can keep your balance.

The short version of this exercise is to just allow your arm and your footwork to come to a complete stop.

However, if you have difficulty with this then you will need to go back to holding until your ball bounces on the other side.

Let me tell you a story about how well this tip can work.

When I was at a tournament where my book was being sold, one of the players who bought my book asked me if I would give him "my famous test" on what seeing the ball really means in person. Since I love giving the test, I said sure. Well, he was one of the 2% who got the test correct, but his strokes were not very grooved. I told him that I wanted to show him the Mother of all Tips which I did. It took me about 10 minutes to get him to do this technique to my satisfaction.

He was still in the consolation mixed doubles with a partner who he had not met previously as the tournament had fixed him up with this partner. After his match, his partner said to him, "What happened to your game? You improved 1000%!"

Now, I think she must have exaggerated a little, but it gives you an idea as to how powerful this technique can be. And in only 10 minutes.

This technique is not to be used in match play. It is to be used when you warm up and practice.

However, if you want to use it in a game situation, then you can do it but only if you truly make it ok to miss more balls and you make it OK to sometimes not be ready for the return ball.

Remember, this is to help you groove your strokes and not necessarily to maximize your play. However, you just might find yourself playing hugely better.

I have made my first video and guess what it is about. Yep. It is about the Mother of all tips. Here is the link to see it. The Mother of All Tips Video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjvMXAWO1RA>

David's Tennis Lesson #6:

Watch Out For Your Ego Mind

In the previous lessons, you now know and hopefully you have experienced how powerful seeing the ball correctly is, how breathing helps, and how relaxing the muscles that you don't need and using the proper tension of the muscles that you do use helps you hit the ball into the court.

Have you noticed that maybe you are not making doing them as important anymore? Or have you forgotten to work on these concepts altogether?

This seems to be a natural progression for most of us because the ego mind does not want to be so far out of the picture. It will constantly sneak in and tell you that it knows better than you do about how to play well.

If you have used these three concepts in your play and saw the immediate improvement, then you know this thought is not true.

My point is that if you found that you played better when you used these concepts then using them more and more and getting better and better at letting your body learn and figuring out how to hit the ball the way you want to is the issue you need to address.

So, how do you deal with this Ego mind? First of all, you need to just not believe the ego mind when it says that it needs to control your body in order to hit the ball into the court.

Then you need some strategies that will help you keep letting go and letting your body play and learn.

One of these strategies is that you just keep on focusing on the three concepts given to you **NO MATTER WHAT.**

However, I find that most people need some help and this is why I developed my course. When you get a reminder every week to think about and work on some aspect of your mental game, you will be over riding the ego mind.

Maybe just buying my book or CDs is enough for you to keep working on these ideas. Either way should help you stay focused on the things that allow you to play well every time.

Another technique I use with my student is this. Say, for example, that you are not able to see the ball the way I have talked about. I tell my students that, "If I would pay you \$1,000,000 for every time you saw the ball properly and to your racket, do you think that you would be able to do it a little better?" Now unless you are Bill Gates and didn't need a few extra million, I am willing to bet that you would make seeing the ball a little more important. Well, you have to make it that important. And that means letting go of all the other thoughts that interfere. So, make seeing the ball, breathing, and relaxation this important and don't let the ego mind tell you that it knows best.

And please always keep in mind that this way of playing is a process and you will not one day "just do it perfectly." You will be constantly learning more and more about yourself and how you can play better and better no matter your age. At the time of writing this, I am 65 years old and I am still learning things and although I can't move as well I am still getting better in a lot of areas.

So please keep working on these concepts and just don't let your Ego mind tell you they don't work.

David's Tennis Lesson #7:

Some Additional Information

Whether or not you have purchased my CD, I would like to point out some other ideas for you to either improve your tennis or some other parts of your life.

So, over the next few weeks (maybe even months) I may send you some more "stuff."

Please remember that you can stop these e-mails anytime by unsubscribing. Just go to the bottom of the page to see the unsubscribe link.

However, I hope you won't as you might miss out on some really "cool" stuff.

The products and programs that I will be pointing out to you are, in my opinion, the best of the best. The thing that they all will have in common is that they have the potential to really improve your life in some way. Maybe even your tennis if you are lucky.

Just like my course will improve your tennis. Sorry, I just had to put that plug in again.

In this e-mail, I wanted to point out to you the books on tennis that I have recommended to you. You will find them here:

<http://pureperformancesports.com/links-to-special-tennis-resources/>

If you will read and study them (even if you don't read my book or listen to my CDs), your tennis has to improve.

Tim Gallwey's Book, The Inner Game of Tennis, is absolutely essential to understanding the mental game.

Ron Waite's booklet Perfect Tennis will also help.

For an overall information on how the game of tennis should be played, Tennis Mastery is a very impressive book. In it you get every aspect of tennis.

Think to Win: The Strategic Dimension of Tennis by Allen Fox is another worthwhile book. If you have not heard of Allen, he is a brilliant thinker on the mental game even if I don't agree with everything he says. Take a look.

Now that you have your library filled with ideas on how to use your mind to improve your tennis, all you have to do is to act; buy, read, study, and use these ideas.

I also have some other ideas for you should you be interested. Please check out the Extraordinary Health Products.

<http://pureperformancesports.com/extraordinary-health-products/>

and the Extraordinary Wealth ideas and books.

<http://pureperformancesports.com/having-extraordinary-wealth/>

Are you into things spiritual or inspirational things? If so, please take a look at some of these. <http://pureperformancesports.com/spritual/>

Know anyone who plays baseball or basketball? Have them check out my books.

[Playing Zen-Sational Baseball](#)

[Becoming a Zen-Sational Basketball Shooter](#)

David's Information Lesson:

Programs For Your Computer

(That You Won't Want To Live Without)

This information I will be telling about will be a big deviation from anything pertaining to using your mind to improve your tennis, but I wanted to share it with you anyway.

Just for the record, I will make money on some of these programs. However, that is not why I am asking you to take a look at them. I have been using these programs for years and they save me a lot of time and effort.

I have put an "*" by the programs that I make money on if you buy it. That way you can either "make me rich" by buying them or "send me to the poorhouse" by avoiding them. :)

I won't be going into a lot of detail about them. That will be your job if you are interested. So, check them out. They certainly have made my computer use a lot easier and funner. :)

Active Words: <http://www.activewords.com/> - ActiveWords relates words and actions, giving you instant access, making you more productive, and improving the quality of your work. Try it free before you upgrade to the paid version.

I use this program many times a day and it makes my life so much easier not to mention how much time I save.

***Aweber:** <http://www.aweber.com> - Do you have an online business where you send newsletters or other information to your customers and want to make more sales?

This e-mail marketing company is recognized a one of the best if not the best. And, if you noticed, I use this company for my communications with you.

Fine Print - <http://www.fineprint.com> Reduce paper, ink and printer costs by at least 30% with this award-winning printer utility. Create booklets, save and compile print jobs from multiple sources and so much more!

I love this program because it lets me edit out the pages that I don't want to print and much more neat stuff.

***RoboForm:** www.roboform.com If you are like me, I have trouble remembering my passwords and usernames. That is why I use RoboForm. It does it all for you. I can't tell you how many times this program has save me grief when I needed to find out a password.

And how many times have you had to fill in your name, address, credit card info etc by hand each time you buy something online? Again this program does it for you.

Get the free trial version to try it out.

Your Uninstaller: <http://www.ursoftware.com/> This program was recommended by my computer tech guys. I use it because it absolutely gets rid of all of the files when I uninstall a program. They use it in their business of "fixing" computers so I figured it was good enough for me.

So, now you have all the foundational lessons. Just keep using them and you will see your game improve. Guaranteed. And, if you want more, you know where to find it. <http://pureperformancesports.com/>