

Battling the Invisible Demons in the Mind

“Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.” Napoleon Hill (American self-help author)

Self-confidence is the cornerstone of all great performances. The first factor in the Self-Confidence equation is Self-Belief. Therefore, athletes with a strong sense of Self-Belief possess a belief that they can do anything, achieve anything and perform well in any situation, anytime, anywhere.

Up until 1954, the common perception was that no human is physically capable of running a mile under 4 minutes. But then on 6th May, 1954 – British athlete Roger Bannister demolished the ‘brick wall’ and broke the 4-minute barrier. What had changed? How was he able to conquer this hurdle?

Roger Bannister said, “I, as a medical student, knew there wasn’t a brick wall. If you could run it in 4 minutes and 2.2 seconds, then you would find somebody else, somewhere who trained a little better, had better conditions on the day, was able to use the pace judgment better and they could do it... That was the frame of mind in which I approached it.” In a span of just a few weeks, Australian middle-distance runner John Landy lowered the world record to 3:58; yet Bannister’s 3:59.4 remains a part of the track and field lore.

Until the 1976 Summer Olympics, no gymnast had ever achieved a perfect 10 score. However, this was soon changed by a 14-year-old Romanian gymnast – Nadia Comaneci. It was her first Olympics and in her opening event in Montreal – the 30-second routine was nothing less than perfect. The judges awarded her a 10 – only to discover that the scoreboard flashed 1.00 instead – since the highest score that could be revealed was 9.95.

As humans, we are influenced by external factors to such an extent that we tend to form these invisible fences around us, which therefore hinder us to realize our true potential. Self-belief gives birth to a determination and motivation to succeed, which in turn gives hope to the stakeholders connected to tap into their abilities too. It is the power of this motivation that acts as a catalyst in achieving set goals.

Similarly, in the corporate world, self-belief is an important quality to have, as without the ability to believe in your own worth and actions you may struggle to reach your full potential. Often those who lack esteem are more susceptible to feeling low, socially awkward, shy, ashamed and doubtful. If you don’t believe in your ability, you won’t be able to achieve the standards you’re capable of. And if you don’t believe in your own judgement, you will become indecisive and less willing to take risks.

Learning from these athletes, it can be mentioned that only through faith in ourselves can we fight the invisible demons in the mind. The only thing that matters is what you as an individual think about yourself. At every stage in life – be it personal or professional – there would be factors that will always be in two categories – the controllables and the uncontrollables. Rather than worrying about the uncontrollables i.e. the opinions and views of society; one

should divert focus and channelize personal energies in paying attention to what can be controlled i.e. self-belief. In Billy Jean's (former American tennis player) words...

"Reputation is what others think about you. What's far more important is character, Because that is what you think about yourself."