

# Peak performance is possible for all people

Home News Tribune Online 09/29/06

HAYM BENAROYA

We all want to do our best and be very positive about ourselves and what we do. Of course, sometimes that is not possible and we feel down and lack energy to accomplish anything. Over the past year, I have become interested in how one can be motivated and whether it is really possible to change moods, from bad to good, fast. This has led me to a number of excellent books that I recommend to everyone.

The first such book I read is "Awaken the Giant Within" by Anthony Robbins. This book and his other, "Unlimited Power," were national best-sellers, and for good reason. Robbins has created a business empire based on the "science of peak performance." Essentially, he presents strategies and methods to enhance and change your emotions, your finances, your relationships and other such critical aspects of your life.

At first, I started reading the book not expecting anything very profound, but quite quickly saw that a completely new philosophy was being presented in a very readable way, one that can truly change the lives of those who took the message and the method to heart. In fact, I was so taken by "Awaken the Giant Within" that I bought two additional copies and sent them to my kids in college. I had so wished to have read this book when I was in my 20s that I felt that at least making my kids aware of some of these ideas at an early age could be transformational.

Some of the basic tenets in Robbin's books are: (1) do not limit what you can achieve by limiting what you think you can do; (2) be flexible about achieving your goals and never give up; (3) have a deep understanding of your passions; (4) set goals and be relentless about achieving them; (5) be prepared to make decisions based on your goals and your passions. Each of these books is more than 500 pages long, but using a conversational style, with many real life examples and interesting quotes, Robbins makes the books easy and enjoyable to read. My favorite quote from the book is, "If you knew you would succeed what would you do?"

Based on the motivation embodied in this quote, I was led to a completely new area of work in my engineering activity. That will be the subject of a future essay. But the point of the quote is to assume you will succeed. Do not limit the challenges you adopt with negative thinking. (Norman Vincent Peale also was an eloquent proponent of positive thinking.) Equally important is the recognition that failure is a positive experience because it allows us to learn and become better. Robbins points to Edison's many experiments and inventions: "I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward."

As I learned more about these basic ideas on how to motivate people to work at their peak performance, I found out that they are part of a larger discipline called

neurolinguistic programming, which "enables you to understand what makes you tick; how you think, how you feel, how you make sense of everyday life in the world around you," as defined in "Neurolinguistic Programming for Dummies" by Romilla Ready and Kate Burton.

Today, NLP has spawned an industry devoted to self-motivation, communication, organization, and hundreds of books and seminars devoted to enable any person, group or organization to improve their performance to a peak level. If I could, I would give Robbins' book to every freshman in college, perhaps in high school.

Haym Benaroya is a professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering at Rutgers University and directs the Center for Structures in Extreme Environments. He is a resident of East Brunswick. "Be Counted" columnists are members of the public. Their opinions are not those of the Home News Tribune.