

GAME PLAN

Level up your mindset.
Own your future.

JAKE HUMPHREY + DAMIAN HUGHES

CONTENTS

FOREWORD **006**

INTRODUCTION **010**

KNOWING YOURSELF **018**

MAKING CHOICES **048**

HANDLING PRESSURE **066**

CLEARING HURDLES **092**

ACHIEVING GOALS **110**

LOOKING WITHIN **128**

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS **138**

ACTIVITIES **142**

YOUR HIGH PERFORMANCE TOOLKIT **150**

GLOSSARY **151**

FOREWORD

80 PER CENT.

That statistic is really important. Since we started interviewing the world's most incredible, successful, and well-known people, we have heard that number often.

It's the answer we were regularly given when we asked our guests how much of their success is down to the way they think. For them, just 20 per cent of their success was due to natural talent, luck, hard work, and consistency. All those things are important when discovering your own version of high performance, yet are probably only worth 20 per cent.

High performers believe the way they think – their mentality – is worth around 80 per cent. The message is clear, and the research backs this up: high-performing people are made, not born.

My name's Jake. I'm the co-host and founder of High Performance. I also co-founded one of the world's fastest-growing production companies, called Whisper Group. As well as that, I have presented kids' TV, covered Formula One, Premier League, Champions League... and much more. I would agree that in my case, more than 80 per cent of my success is down to how I think. In fact, I would say it's 100 per cent. It's that important.

When I was growing up and going to school like you, my mindset was that success was for other people, and I was destined for a life of normal, not very exciting things. Then... I read a book. I know it sounds crazy, but reading one book changed my entire life, and I hope that reading this book changes yours, too.

The book I read was called *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers. It was the first time I realized that people who do great things still have doubt, still feel fear, but they still go for it. That book opened my eyes to the fact that optimism is the greatest superpower we possess. Optimism means that whatever is happening to you, you still feel hopeful for the future and that everything will be OK.

Optimism is important because it builds your resilience. You'll see the word resilience a lot in this book. It means the ability to keep going and, so often, keeping going is what eventually leads you to high performance.

There are a lot of barriers that a person can face in life. Your ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, or neurodivergence might mean that your path to success looks different to other people's, because our societies aren't always as inclusive as they could be. While this book can't address these larger societal issues, it will help you develop an optimistic mindset that can help you overcome them.

And the greatest news of all? Optimism is available to everyone. It's something you can learn, a mindset you can build... and this book will help you build it. I wish this book had been available to me when I was your age!

And my name's Damian. I grew up in a boxing gym in Manchester, where my dad was a successful coach. I was rubbing shoulders with Olympians and boxing world champions as far back as I remember.

While their physical gifts were impressive, what I came to realize was that it was the quieter qualities that really made the difference. It was the stuff going on between their ears that helped them have the discipline to consistently show up every day, no matter how they felt; the confidence they had in themselves, even when everyone doubted them; their ability to perform well when it mattered most. These were the qualities that I found impressive, not least because I wasn't very good at boxing, but mainly because I could use them in my own life.

Since leaving school, I have been lucky enough to work with sports teams and businesses who want to create environments where the same qualities I learned in the boxing gym can be available to everyone. I've been to three different World Cup tournaments in three different sports, written 10 books on the subject, and also taught this stuff at university in Manchester.

I love co-hosting 'The High Performance Podcast' alongside Jake, because we're able to chat to some of the highly impressive people you'll read about in this book and find out more about the quiet skills they have used to get to the top of their game, and then stay there.

You may wonder what you have in common with world-record-breaking Olympians, top footballers, business owners, and artists. What I hope you realize as you read this book is how little difference there is between you and them. When they began, they had the same doubts and fears as you may have. They also had the same dreams and ambitions as you. It is how they have chosen to deal with each obstacle and then go after their dreams that we want to share with you, so you can go after yours.

So now you know a bit about us and why we wanted to create this book for you, it's time to dive in. We hope it prompts you to ask questions, to challenge yourself, but most of all we hope it helps you realize you deserve an exciting, ambitious, adventure-filled life and helps you to work out how to find one.

Big love,

JAKE AND DAMIAN
Co-hosts, 'The High Performance Podcast'

1 INTRODUCTION

RUNNER USAIN BOLT explodes out of the starting block as if he's been fired by the very starting gun that signalled the start of his race. His head down in concentration, he pumps his arms and speeds up his stride. Within 6 seconds he is in the lead, and at 9.69 seconds he has crossed the finish line. He has become an Olympic champion and broken the 100-metres world record – and he made it look effortless.

Now, what do Usain and his powerful strides have in common with Susie Ma, founder of Tropic Skincare, as she receives an EY Entrepreneur Award for 'Building a Better Working World'? It isn't their skill sets. Those are incredibly different. It isn't their training or their achievements. But it is something that ties their skills, training, and goals together. It is their pursuit of **HIGH PERFORMANCE**.

Usain and Susie had very different career paths, and equally different talents, but they share more than we might first think. For a start, they were once young people – just like you. At one point, they decided what they wanted to do, and they decided that they wanted to do it as well as they could. Then they both found a way to achieve that goal.

That process of deciding what we want to do, and then doing it to the very best of our ability, is the essence of high performance – and do you know what? It could work for you.

You too could be as amazing as Usain and Susie, and our plan is to show you how.

OK, some of you might be rolling your eyes. What if you're not interested in being the fastest runner or creating skincare products? That's understandable, but it is also a misunderstanding.

The question is not whether you can become an Olympic medallist or an award-winning entrepreneur, but whether you can think like one.

We believe that you can, and that this new way of thinking – this **CONCEPT** of high performance – can make you the very best version of yourself, whoever you decide you want to be.

If you take pride in being fast, then – for you – understanding high performance could help you become your fastest. If you enjoy creating things, then you might just end up making a business out of it. This handbook is not about making you into someone you're not but about becoming everything you could be. We want to share how you can incorporate high performance into your own life.

We learned about high performance by looking at the approaches of people who have achieved greatness. We listened to how they formed their goals and then pursued them, and what they did when things did not go to plan.

Believe it or not, you might already have things in common with some of the greatest performers of your lifetime.

This is quite a cool thing to realize: that you share hopes and dreams with award-winning actors, or have similar doubts as double Olympians, and you might make the same mistakes as millionaires. The lessons that these high performers learned on their individual, unique journeys can be applied in your life, too, no matter what your chosen goal or challenge may be.

Our society often thinks of world champions and award-winning musicians as being talented from birth, perhaps believing that these high performers would have achieved greatness regardless of their circumstances – but it's a mistake to think this. These people might be naturally talented, but they are also products of nurture. No one was born great – they learned greatness. And, more likely than not, they learned and maintained high-performance habits.

We recently spoke to former Olympic runner Usain Bolt, a man who has arguably achieved more in track and field than almost any other athlete, and he summed up the relationship between hard work and talent better than we ever could: 'You can't get to the top with just talent alone. You need work. You need sacrifice. You have to be dedicated.'

Following on from the idea of natural talent, people often remark that high performers were 'born to do' the thing they have succeeded at. So a person might be 'born to play football', 'born to sing', or 'born to light up a stage'. But it's important to remember that they also decided to do that thing. Not only that, but they chose to do that thing really well. Indeed, they worked so hard that their high performance eventually seemed effortless. A popular saying among countless high performers goes,

THE HARDER I WORK, THE LUCKIER I SEEM TO GET. This means that the many things that appear to be luck or natural-born talent are actually the result of hard work.

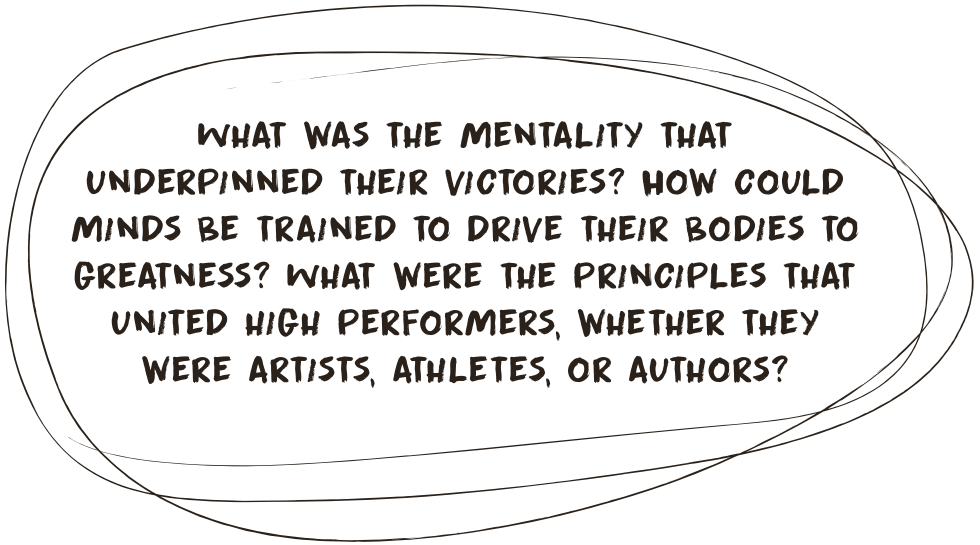
It's easy to talk about 'natural talent', but it's not always obvious what a person was 'born to do'. Sometimes, our disappointments are what lead us to discover the thing that we were 'born to do'. Your teenage years and young adulthood are a time when everything seems possible, but sometimes life may not go your way and you might find yourself in a situation you never expected to be in. What sets high performers apart is how they deal with that situation. For example, take Jake Humphrey, one of the hosts of 'The High Performance Podcast'. He never planned to be a television presenter, own a production company, or start a foundation that teaches young people how to become high performers. However, he achieved all that because he failed his A levels (although we're not recommending that you fail your A levels!).

Jake might have thought he had failed on the day he collected his A-level results – but, in fact, he had just begun succeeding. He was about to make a series of decisions that would take him around the world and into a room with some of the most interesting people in the world, and it started because he failed to get into the university of his choice.

When you put it that way, it seems that a failure is only truly a failure if it doesn't start you on a new journey. Failing should really be better understood as not succeeding yet.

Jake's journey, and his choice, was to achieve high performance in a new field. He discovered that although he was not destined to be a high performer on a university English literature course, that didn't mean he couldn't be a high performer somewhere else. He had to look at where he was, think about what he could do, and then decide where he wanted to be.

Damian Hughes, Jake's co-host on 'The High Performance Podcast', followed an equally unconventional route into broadcasting. He grew up around boxers in his father's gym in Manchester, but when it became clear he would not become a great fighter himself, he realized that he could instead try to understand the people who did.



As a result, Damian became a performance coach in a boxing gym, and worked with competitors around the world to improve their mindsets and raise their standards. Then he decided to share what he had **LEARNED**.

No one knew what podcasting was when Damian began, and few could have predicted that the lessons learned on a boxing-gym floor could change the minds of corporate CEOs, politicians, and World Cup winners. Damian simply did the best he could, where he was, with what he had (to paraphrase football coach Phil Neville), and that took him further than he could ever have imagined. Damian's life didn't go to plan, because sometimes the best-laid plans don't work out, and this can come as a surprise.

Both Jake and Damian experienced **MISFORTUNES** and made **MISTAKES**, but they soon understood the importance of controlling how they reacted to them and what they did next. Becoming a high performer is about knowing yourself and believing in yourself to the extent that you can find a way forward, even when the path you planned to take is blocked, or as yet undiscovered. High performance is about knowing that you can succeed at whatever you put your mind to.

Sounds straightforward, right? You accept that you have one life, your own unique set of skills, and a responsibility to make them count. Yes, but there will still be hardships and hurdles along the way. There will be pressure and there will be doubt, so you have to know yourself, and learn how to work through those difficult moments when emotions rise, and fear seems to pull the rug out from under your feet. You might have to learn to accept multiple disappointments and start all over again – you might even begin to enjoy these fresh starts. Whatever happens, you keep moving forward, win or lose.

Life can be deeper, richer, and more satisfying when you challenge yourself.

And you have to realize that this is the only way you would ever want it to be. You don't want to live life on easy mode, and you might grow more uncomfortable with being too comfortable, because life becomes much more interesting when you face your fears. It is worth living precisely because things don't always go to plan, and it's crucial to learn how to respond when that happens.

These are the reasons why so many of us are drawn to high performance. These are the ideas, but what about the practices? Are you ready to learn the secrets of high performance – about who you are, what your best is, and how you can make it a reality?

If you are, we'll begin. We'll come out of the starting blocks fast and we'll reach for the stars. After all, it's what Usain and Susie would do.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. How to identify your goals.
2. How to make the right decisions.
3. How you handle pressure.
4. What you do when you face challenges.
5. What it means to achieve your goals.
6. How to reflect on your successes and learn from your failures.