

PREVIEW



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R A I S I N G   S U P A M A N

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# Dedication

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This book is dedicated to none-other than Naeem Khari Turner-Bandle, a.k.a *Supaman*, to whom I owe an extreme debt of gratitude. Thank you for being a cooperative and forgiving M.I.T. (Man in Training), while I attempted to figure out through trial and error how to best serve as your father, mentor and friend.

I love you now and I have loved every moment of your existence - from the day I learned of your conception to this very moment as we travel to Brazil where you will begin another exceptionally exciting chapter of your life. Your journey to Brazil, at this particular time, has left me as confident as I have ever been about your extraordinarily bright future, your progress as a true citizen of the world, and as the man I have always envisioned you becoming.

I am so proud of you that there are no words that I know of that can adequately express my feelings. I am equally grateful that God has allowed me to be your father. All I can say is that it has been and remains my distinct honor and privilege to raise you, Supaman.

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# Chapter 1: As a Man Thinketh

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Naeem:

First, I want you to know that your apprehension when it came to running today, your fear of competition and your lack of poise in simply seizing the moment has no appreciable effect on my feelings about you. Rest assured, I will never allow anything to make me question the value and purpose of my relationship with you. Without question, my love for you is on par with the great loves any father could ever and has ever had for his son. So relax, I'm in this fight with you for the long term.

Instead, I will admit that I am perplexed by my inability to convey and instill in you the hope and belief that you possess the capacity to do far greater things than your fears and reservations currently allow you to imagine. At the moment, I realize that I must develop better parental tools if you are ever to maximize your ability. Your words and actions today are proof of my parental inadequacies and I must – I will – rectify them immediately.

I should have been more observant, as the signs of a tentative competitor were noticeable. I should have recognized the manifestations of lingering doubt and the presence of the fear and loathing growing inside you. I should have listened better as the way in

which you spoke was a hint that you had unwarranted reservations. Although I heard you loud and clear, my expectation was that you would deliver your own self-motivated message.

I hoped and prayed that your training had equipped you to speak words of empowerment to yourself—words to remove all doubt and reservation—words that would encourage you to discontinue the conception and belief in negative thoughts. My hope was that at the very moment doubts began to creep in, you would have replaced those thoughts with positive affirming beliefs – ideas that breathe life not death, thoughts of having both feet in and beliefs of only success. Instead, it appears that my hopes were unrealized thus my inadequacy as your father and mentor are now obvious, and were on full display during the track meet. I am sorry for failing to recognize your fears and doubt. I am sorry for failing you. I will be better!

### *Internal Drive*

Secondly, I want you to know that I heard you completely when you expressed your feelings about what you considered your internal drive. For the record—internal drive is not doing what you are instructed to do. Internal drive, when called into question, is not proved by defensive posturing: simply offering words without evidence of consistent and unrelenting deeds. Internal drive is not waiting for someone who will receive little or no benefit from your progress and success to do all the work to prepare you to succeed. Internal drive does not require fear from an outsider or worries of being punished.



Internal drive is doing what others won't do without having to be poked and prodded; emailed and texted; yelled at and punished. Internal drive is expressed and is evident by a non-stop, passionate, purposeful, focused, refusal to be outworked; an uncompromising unwillingness to give less than one's best; an un-matched pride in seeking all available options to be successful; and a goal driven desire to simply maximize one's potential and ability. Internal drive is at the very least sharing and taking a 50/50 or better role in your own success.

Internal drive is "*I will because I need to...*" Internal drive is "*I will because there is no choice for me other than to give all I can give*". Internal drive is "*I will because quitting and more importantly the thoughts of quitting cannot and will never be tolerated*". Internal drive is never thinking or saying the words, "*I will try*". Rather internal drive maintains the thought "*I must, I will no matter what may come my way...by any means necessary*". The aforementioned is what it means to have internal drive. So please don't tell me for one minute that you believe the words you spoke about internal drive were valid.

### *Obedience*

Let me be absolutely clear, what you did today when you went to the track meet with your mother was simply obey authority; it was nothing more. There was nothing that you did that should be equated with internal drive.

Obedience will not and cannot ever be equated with internal drive. Rarely are we praised or awarded for obedience alone. Only in a society where expectations are unreasonably and unacceptably low do we find rewards for being obedient; doing what is expected—a minimal performance standard if you will.

As an example, at your school's most recent Honor's Convocation, I did not see any student rewarded for doing the minimum. An institution that prides itself on espousing that their minimum is more than the maximum at other schools provided no reward or overt acknowledgement for simply achieving a standard higher than most other schools: going to class, showing up for school on time, being courteous, etc. Rather, I witnessed men and women being praised for achieving academically and socially beyond the minimum standards.

Obedience is evident in those who know and illustrate the true meaning of internal drive but internal drive is not found in obedience. Being obedient is most often described by a pet owner recounting the behavior of a "good" pet; a slave master describing his docile slave. Obedience is often developed from a fear of punishment or reprisal: obedience school for the dog; beatings with the whip for the slave. You are neither a pet nor a slave; are you?

### *The Future*

Finally, to answer your question about what you should do in the future, I would expect you to realize that your future depends on you

being all in – 100% of your total existence – and not even a pinky toe out. Either you share and support the "process" of your development unconditionally or you don't. There simply can be no in between. If you are to succeed, you must know that failure and quitting and the thoughts thereof are not an option. *As a man thinketh, so is he* (Prov. 23:7 King James Version). As you think, so are you.

In the future, you must understand what it really means to have internal drive. You must know that today while you vacillated about the road you should take, the spoken and unspoken words you uttered were those same words many unaccomplished, unfulfilled men have spoken.

I am referring to men who had the same potential as you who like you vacillated when they were challenged with fulfilling their destiny. At first those unaccomplished, unfulfilled men (and those responsible for their maturation) considered their utterances the mere words of a teen. However, the teens and the community soon discovered the power of words as those teens grew to be men who went on to waddle in disappointment, dismay and a depth of discontent I will not allow you to ever know.

### *Closing*

Yes, I realize that you are “only” fourteen, soon to be fifteen. Yet, let me be perfectly clear though. While others may consider you a teen, to me you have always been my M.I.T, man in training. Hence, I don’t

subscribe to the same low expectations others have for you and those like you.

For me, the expectation is that from the moment you were born you have been matriculating to full manhood. In fact, my expectation is not unusual as in most places outside of the US, at your age, you would be expected to fend for yourself, your family and community. In many cases, fending for yourself and others would come with threats of extreme physical violence and the probability of death.

For me, treating you like a “teen”, rather than expecting anything less than the exhibition of absolute manhood, is a parental contradiction that I believe is fraught with peril. Those who have a differing viewpoint – that you are just a teen – support a philosophy that I will never subscribe to.

For those who would hold you to anything less than a man, ask them how they would judge you if you were to do anything unlawful in this city, state or country. I am certain that they will not only accuse you as a man, they will judge you as a man, they will prosecute you as a man and they will sentence you for your crime as a man. And then you and I will have to visit and speak with one another as men from opposites sides of a glass window. You in an orange jumpsuit, shackled and residing on the side of the glass accompanied by all the other men who were allowed as “teens” to be confused about the roles and expectations of men. While I sat on the other side of the glass heartbroken by my failings as a father, mentor and friend.

As long as I am alive and kicking, you will never be confused about who you are or what is expected of you as a man. Moreover, I make you the promise that I will not make the same error that I made in having you prepared for today's meet or for life in general.

The choice is yours, you can get on board the ship to your success of your own free will and volition, or you can do so kicking and screaming. Either way, the journey to real manhood is not going to leave without you.

Dad

## Questions

1. What's the difference between obedience and internal drive?
2. Why does the father apologize for being inadequate and failing his son?
3. Why does the father use the expression "As a man thinketh so is he"?
4. What expectations does the father have for his son?
5. What expectations do the adults in your life have for you? What expectations do you have for yourself?
6. What, according to the father, is the meaning of manhood?

## Chapter 2: The Best Father's Day Ever!

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Good evening National Qualifier:

It's funny when I look back on today. For starters, it is really good that I am writing you and not having an in person conversation. Man, I have no voice. I think that I may have to send you a doctor's bill for the treatment of laryngitis. Wait – that would be a waste of time; you don't have a job – you are still freeloading. I think my vocal chords are severely damaged from all the yelling and screaming – oops, I meant cheering and encouraging, I did today. Crazy parents yell and scream, civilized folks like me – well we cheer and encourage.

Second, my main man, I am as proud of you today as I have ever been. I'm so excited and encouraged about your future, and not just about you on the track. I am encouraged and excited about your future as a man. I saw something in you today that will carry you for the rest of your life.

The craziest thing about today is that we are both excited although our excitement is about different things. You're only nine, how could you have any idea about just how important today is towards the rest of your life?

I'm fairly sure that for you, today was a great day because you won a race that no one expected you to win, and you became the State/Regional Champion who will represent the State of Indiana at the USA Track and Field (USATF) Junior Olympics. Not to mention, today was a great day for you because you received a gold medal, which at this point in your life is a really big deal.

For me today was a much bigger day than witnessing you qualifying for Nationals, winning a couple of gold medals, or even being congratulated by all your family and friends. Don't get me wrong, all those things are really cool and important.

However, what really makes today special is that today was the realization, the proverbial proof in the pudding, that the hopes, plans and lessons you have been receiving on your road to manhood have not fallen on deaf ears. And while we are celebrating the proverbial proof in the pudding, let's add some icing on the cake. The icing on the cake for me is that all these good things occurred today, Father's Day.

As you well know, I am normally not without the words to express what I am thinking or feeling. Although I have some words, I simply can't articulate it enough: today was the culmination of so many of the things that I have talked to you ad nauseam about since the first day that I held you.



There were times, especially when you were an infant, that I wondered if you were too young to fully comprehend what I was trying to get you to understand. To be honest, there were times when I spoke to you as if you were a grown man, and those watching and listening thought that I was crazy.

Moreover, when you were a toddler, there were times when I wondered if you could appreciate any part of the significance and the urgency of the lessons that I was sharing with you. Again, those watching and listening to our conversations thought that I had flat out lost my mind.

What made today so great was that your efforts on the track told the story of a young man who understands, appreciates and has even begun to embrace the things that will allow him to reach his fullest God-Given potential. Another thing that made today really great was that I was able to stick my tongue out at the people who thought me crazy while exclaiming “nah, nah, nah, nah, nah...look who is crazy like a fox.”

Years from now, I believe we will both look back on this day and realize that it was a seminal moment in your life. In other words, I believe today was one of your most important crossroads. You have two very different paths to choose: the path of least resistance or the path of the greatest personal sacrifice. These are two paths that you will encounter again and again throughout your entire life.

On this occasion, you chose the latter, which while imposing the greatest personal toll, it has also provided you with the greatest possible reward. Today you received the ultimate reward for that sacrifice.

One of the things that I most want you to remember about today is not the reward, or the results. I don't want you to focus on the bright shiny medal. I don't want you to focus on all the high fives, fist pumps, and pats on the back. I don't even want you to focus on the fact that you earned your way into your first Junior Olympics.

Instead, I want you to keep your attention on what truly matters, which is what was required to win the race. I want you to recognize that there is always a process for success.

Today's outcome was only possible because you had a process. As you will find with each new endeavor and experience you have, life will be more consistently enjoyable when you have and follow a process similar to the one that saw you leap into my arms for joy after winning your races today. In case you were not aware, the process that saw you succeed included passion, focus, seeking help and self-determination.

### *Passion*

You ran with passion today; an unbridled joy, if you will. You were not only physically and mentally ready but it was as if your spirit was different from any other time that I can remember. You didn't just go through the motions; instead you ran as if you were in pursuit of

something that you valued above any and all things. Today, my son, you ran your race as if your life depended on it.

Today's process will become increasingly more valuable as you get older. (I know, I know who wants to get older. Unfortunately, there is but one other choice and living and getting older is the much better option. Remember though, maturing doesn't mean you have to lose your childlike spirit.)

The difference between success and failure is far less about talent, and more about your passion. The more that you are willing to pursue your objective as if your life depended on it, the more often you will be successful. In the case of running, the more often you will be the victor. Always remember this: the greater the reward, the more passionate your effort must be.

### *Focus*

You ran today with a single minded purpose. I originally thought the one thing on your mind was qualifying for the Junior Olympics. I realize now how absolutely incorrect that thought was. It appears that your greatest focus today was proving to all the doubters that you had not only what it took to qualify for Nationals but to beat their "predicted paper champion".

By the way, I spoke with Muhammad Ali and he told me that you are now the G.O.A.T., greatest of all time, and that you should go door to door to each of the naysayers singing “The Champ is here”! Okay, I know that was over the top but give me a moment to bask in the glow of your success. I am a proud papa. Okay the moment is over; back to my letter.

When you ran today, each pump of your arms and lift of your knees, accompanied a facial expression which told the story of a young man on a mission. It was almost as if you were possessed. Many great athletes call this possessed look, this uninterrupted focus being “in the zone”. If you can find a way to bottle and reproduce the state of mind and demeanor from today, you will not only win a lot of races; you are going to be a winner at life.

### *Seek Help*

I hope you always remember what you said you heard in your mind as you were running the competition down over the final 50 meters. Your words were *“I heard Coach Malone tell me to lift my knees and pump my arms”*. Years from now those exact words will carry less weight but the real value of those words, the first half of the sentence, will live forever. It is in the first part of the sentence that you acknowledged that sometimes in life we all need help. Sometimes we are best served when we look to those who know more than we do like Coach Malone, and simply ask for help.

The strength to seek help is a quality that you must continue to cultivate. Often men, young and old, struggle with asking for help. The fear is that asking for help says something unfavorable about them. This is a baseless notion and one that you should never adopt.

It is so important for you to understand that great men learn from other great people. Life is a minefield; like a real minefield there are places you should walk and there are places you should avoid. Only a fool would walk through life's minefields and not seek the guidance of those who had already walked through the minefield, and who knew where all the potential pitfalls, explosives and booby traps lay.

Do not ever be the man who is too proud or fearful to ask for help, because you will end up being the man who never sees his life fulfilled. You may also very well end up being the man who is missing limbs or sees his life cut short because he did not know where the pitfalls, explosives or booby traps lay. Whenever necessary, my son, seek help.

### *Self Determination*

Say this out loud ten times: There is ABSOLUTELY NOTHING I CAN'T DO! In you, as it lies in all human beings, is the spirit to achieve and the capacity to be great. The unfortunate thing for the masses is that we doubt ourselves and our abilities continuously. We find every possible excuse so that we can skip giving our all and

preparing for our lucky moment – where preparation and opportunity meet.

I'm too short, I'm the wrong color, I'm poor, etc. Even before we accept the challenge, even before we begin to prepare, most of us have already outlined, visualized, and defined all the reasons that we cannot succeed and thus have convinced ourselves that we should not even bother to make any effort.

Although you had every opportunity to do this, you didn't. Your reward was finishing in 1<sup>st</sup> place, winning your highly sought after Regional Championship medal, qualifying for Nationals, beating the competition and showing all the naysayers what happens when they doubt the heart of a champion.

Today your picture is listed in the dictionary under the words *self-determination*. Today, you determined for yourself what you could and would accomplish. You did not leave the outcome to the opinions or expectations of others. You were the master of your own fate; you were the captain of your own soul.

So now my main man, it is off to the SHIP, the USA Track & Field Junior Olympics National Championship. Now say that ten times. YES!

I can't predict the outcome but I do know that in you is everything you need to be everything you desire. More importantly, I know that you now know there is a process to having success at Nationals as well as in

life. I'm not only ready for Nationals, but I am ready to see the man that you will soon become. Team Naeem all the way, baby.

Congratulations again!

Dad

P.S. In case I forgot to tell you, this was the best Father's Day ever.

## Questions

1. What is meant by the path of least resistance and the path of the greatest personal sacrifice?
2. What are the four elements of “the process”?
3. How can “the process” help you and/or your child?
4. In this letter, the son is 9 years old. Do you think it’s ever too early to start learning how to be a man?
5. What is meant by the use of the phrases “proof in the pudding” and “icing on the cake”?
6. Why is the father so excited and optimistic?



## Chapter 3: Decide Right Now!

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Nacem:

Your mom and I loathe coming to the games anymore...watching you sit, watching you make bad plays, watching less talented children play ahead of you, listening to folks whisper about you, etc. It's all so very depressing. And you know the worst part: it doesn't have to, nor should it be this way.

Our experience and feelings happen to be this way because you simply refuse to be CONSISTENT about your own success. You simply are not good enough to not do 30 minutes or more of foot skill drills each day. You simply aren't good enough not to strength train 3 times a week. You simply are not good enough not to work on your speed and agility at least 3 times a week. You simply are not good enough not to watch the video of the games I record for your benefit. You simply are not good enough not to study tactical formations. You simply are not good enough not to watch professionals. You simply are not good enough not to stretch properly after each game. You simply are not good enough not to do yoga twice a week or so. You are simply not good enough not to do mental psychological conditioning each day. What is most important for you to recognize is that you will never be good enough to not be CONSISTENT about your own success. In truth, no one is!

The best players, the great players, the players everyone idolizes...are those who do everything everyone else does at practice and significantly more than everyone else before and after games and practices. The players you say you want to be included with make NO EXCUSES about their success. These players let nothing or no one keep them from being successful. The groups that you are capable of belonging to don't sabotage their own success as you CONTINUE to do.

Your time is running out. You don't have all the time in the world to get what you want and believe you deserve. You are just going to have to decide how important your success is to you and at what price you are willing to pay.

Thus far your own SUCCESS doesn't seem too important and the price you are willing to pay is the "Dollar Store" equivalent.

Your raving but exhausted fan,

Dad

## Questions

1. What are you willing to do to be successful?
2. Why is the father exhausted?
3. What does the son need to decide?
4. What does the father hope his son will learn about success and excuses?

PREVIEW

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