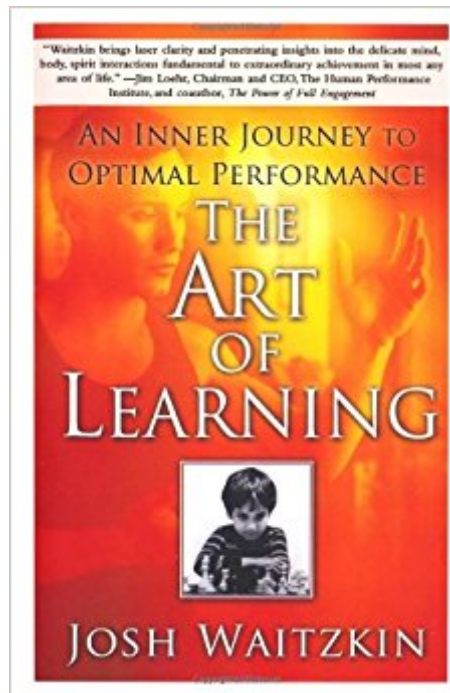




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# **The Art Of Learning: An Inner Journey To Optimal Performance**



## Synopsis

In his riveting new book, *The Art of Learning*, Josh Waitzkin tells his remarkable story of personal achievement and shares the principles of learning and performance that have propelled him to the top twice. Josh Waitzkin knows what it means to be at the top of his game. A public figure since winning his first National Chess Championship at the age of nine, Waitzkin was catapulted into a media whirlwind as a teenager when his father's book *Searching for Bobby Fischer* was made into a major motion picture. After dominating the scholastic chess world for ten years, Waitzkin expanded his horizons, taking on the martial art Tai Chi Chuan and ultimately earning the title of World Champion. How was he able to reach the pinnacle of two disciplines that on the surface seem so different? "I've come to realize that what I am best at is not Tai Chi, and it is not chess," he says. "What I am best at is the art of learning." With a narrative that combines heart-stopping martial arts wars and tense chess face-offs with life lessons that speak to all of us, *The Art of Learning* takes readers through Waitzkin's unique journey to excellence. He explains in clear detail how a well-thought-out, principled approach to learning is what separates success from failure. Waitzkin believes that achievement, even at the championship level, is a function of a lifestyle that fuels a creative, resilient growth process. Rather than focusing on climactic wins, Waitzkin reveals the inner workings of his everyday method, from systematically triggering intuitive breakthroughs, to honing techniques into states of remarkable potency, to mastering the art of performance psychology. Through his own example, Waitzkin explains how to embrace defeat and make mistakes work for you. Does your opponent make you angry? Waitzkin describes how to channel emotions into creative fuel. As he explains it, obstacles are not obstacles but challenges to overcome, to spur the growth process by turning weaknesses into strengths. He illustrates the exact routines that he has used in all of his competitions, whether mental or physical, so that you too can achieve your peak performance zone in any competitive or professional circumstance. In stories ranging from his early years taking on chess hustlers as a seven year old in New York City's Washington Square Park, to dealing with the pressures of having a film made about his life, to International Chess Championships in India, Hungary, and Brazil, to gripping battles against powerhouse fighters in Taiwan in the Push Hands World Championships, *The Art of Learning* encapsulates an extraordinary competitor's life lessons in a page-turning narrative.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Free Press; Reprint edition (May 27, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743277465

ISBN-13: 978-0743277464

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 482 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #8,410 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Exercise & Fitness > Tai Chi & Qi Gong](#) #3 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Chess](#) #209 in [Books > Self-Help > Motivational](#)

## Customer Reviews

Waitzkin's name may sound familiar—back in 1993, his father wrote about Josh's early years as a chess prodigy in *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. Now 31, Waitzkin revisits that story from his own perspective and reveals how the fame that followed the movie based on his father's book became one of several obstacles to his further development as a chess master. He turned to tai chi to learn how to relax and feel comfortable in his body, but then his instructor suggested a more competitive form of the discipline called "push hands." Once again, he proved a quick study, and has earned more than a dozen championships in tournament play. Using examples from both his chess and martial arts backgrounds, Waitzkin draws out a series of principles for improving performance in any field. Chapter headings like "Making Smaller Circles" have a kung fu flair, but the themes are elaborated in a practical manner that enhances their universality. Waitzkin's engaging voice and his openness about the limitations he recognized within himself make him a welcome teacher. The concept of incremental progress through diligent practice of the fundamentals isn't new, but Waitzkin certainly gives it a fresh spin. (May 8) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Waitzkin, a champion in chess and martial arts, brings enthusiasm and obvious love of learning to this amazing look at what he aptly describes as the art of learning. He begins by recounting his own quirky journey. At the age of six, Waitzkin learned chess from a motley crew of street hustlers, gamblers, junkies, and artists. Since then, he has been among the highest-ranked chess players. He recounts the distractions of adolescence as well as fame after the publication of his father's book

and, later, the film based on it, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. He later discovered that chess principles could be applied to learning tai chi. In fact, he found a respect for artistry, meditation, and philosophical devotion within both chess and martial arts and realized the possibility for broader application to learning in general. Waitzkin integrates his personal experiences in mastering chess and tai chi with research on psychology and learning techniques to offer a vibrant and engaging look at the love of learning and the pursuit of excellence. Vanessa BushCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The point that there is more work to do inside than outside is made very well in this book. Josh's medium, first chess then in the martial arts mirrors endeavours in reaching for excellence in any other field. Great food for thought and worth more than its weight in gold.

Really helpful book. Highly recommended. The audio book, in particular, is very well done - with the author himself narrating. Author structured the book in a very thoughtful and engaging way. He develops his ideas about approaches to learning while telling the story of his own chess and martial arts career, making the learning advice more entertaining to follow because it relates to the story.

I enjoyed reading the first part of the book the most since I had a love of chess growing up. Second phase of Josh's life was not as interesting to me, but I did find his passion to compete and win to be amazing. The analysis of one's self can help move you in the right direction if you believe you can do it.

As other reviewers have observed, Josh provides some valuable insights into the "art of learning" but this book reads more like an autobiography. I happen to like both chess and martial arts, so I enjoyed reading about Josh's extensive experiences. Other readers who do not share these passions may find his accounts of past competitions a bit tedious at times. I liked this book, but I expected something that was a little more about learning and a little less about his personal experiences. Either way, it's worth a read.

If you want to become a champion, learn from one. Josh Waitzkin has been a U.S. national champion in chess and later in a martial arts form of tai chi chuan. The effort, the intelligent attention to detail, the dedication---all are depicted in this memoir, some of which we recognize from the

movie "Searching for Bobby Fisher," based on Waitzkin's early years. Perhaps it did take 10,000 hours of practice to become as adept at chess as Waitzkin became, but it also clearly took a rare degree of inherited talent. Push Hands Tai Chi likely required less talent, though no less determination. You learn what it takes to make a champion, and you learn that Waitzkin came to agree with his mother's view: Family comes first. He notes that fame is fleeting and of little value, except to generate clients for a successful consulting practice.

Fantastic!! This book was so good, I had to take a pen and underline things to take notes for later. There is one paragraph that I felt pretty much sums up life on page 172.

This is an amazing book. To take the principles of higher consciousness to the highest levels of world class chess and the martial arts version of Tai Chi is a stunning achievement. If you want insight into how to train your mind to operate on a razor's edge, you have to read this book. As a former professional golfer, I was blown away by the authenticity, depth and clarity in Waitzkin's years-long adventures.

I got this book with great anticipation, a lot of people I respect absolutely adored this book. That was not my experience. I had two main issues here, one is more about me than the book, the other about the book itself. To the latter, it seemed like 80% of the book wasn't about learning, but listening to Josh tell stories that went on and on and on and on about "Push Hands" and Tai Chi competition. I get telling stories to illustrate learning concepts, but this went well beyond that to simply relaying those stories. Many may find those exciting and interesting. I found them boring. They also smacked of the author reveling in his awesomeness. The former issue was this...you know how sometimes you read an author teaching on a subject and it just clicks with you and your learning style? That's not me and this book. I'm not sure I can describe it, but something about the way Josh teaches and transmits information is not the way I receive and process it. Did I learn some things from this book? Sure. But I'm not sure it was really anything I hadn't already learned, it was just the same concepts phrased differently. Josh likes to create cutesy phrases to describe old concepts. Numbers to leave numbers, making smaller circles, etc... None of it for me was new and I kept waiting for the revelations, and instead I kept getting more of an education on Push Hands. I learned more about how the Taiwanese Federation cheats at structuring competitions than I did about 'the art of learning'. Just my experience, hope yours is different.

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