

**"Happiness is not something ready made.  
It comes from your own actions."  
» Dalai Lama XIV**



## Life's a Dance

I've become hooked on the ESPN mini-series, "The Last Dance". It does an amazing job of documenting the Chicago Bulls' championship runs in the 90's.

Few teams have ever become the center of the sports universe quite like the Jordan-era Bulls.

If you don't know the story, it would be easy to assume that Jordan's teams won because they had the most talented player on the planet.

Well, that didn't hurt.

But Jordan had established himself as the biggest talent in the game by his third season. Yet, it took 7 years to win their first championship.

Some (okay, a lot) of the language in the series isn't appropriate for young people.

Yet, I haven't been able to stop thinking about how I'd recommend it be shown to young athletes, musicians, actors, singers, mathematicians, videographers, entrepreneurs... anyone who might benefit



## Still Loopy After All These Years

A conversation this week with a longtime banker friend got us laughing.

While discussing the stress all banking teams are under, he emphasized the heightened importance of the attitudes his managers display these days.

The comment that got me was, "I think about that old, stupid slide you showed us about the brain or something."

I told him that I was happy the old, stupid slide made such an indelible impression.

I realized he was talking about a slide I often used featuring a cartoon drawing of the human brain. I used it when talking about one of my favorite subjects, the open-loop nature of our limbic systems.

In a nutshell, our brain's limbic system controls our emotions.

That's not a small thing.

Our emotions impact everything from our productivity to our mental health to our immune systems.

from understanding the difference between talent and skills.

Talent is given. Skills take work.

Even in Jordan's prime, there were more talented shooters in the game. There were people who jumped higher.

There were better ball handlers. There were bigger and stronger natural athletes.

No one, however, became as driven or willing and able to improve each year. Jordan's talent was always there.

Championship-level skills, abilities, and wisdom were what he developed over time.

From heartbreaking losses early in his career, to being physically beaten up in games (the Jordan Rules), to being criticized for a selfish playing style, the series shows him going through the process of transforming into arguably the most determined and driven team athlete ever.

You see him overcoming setbacks, accepting the need for change, and developing his work ethic to epic levels.

He became more accepting of coaching.

Critically, he then fully embraced the leadership roles of developing his teammates and putting them in positions to succeed. And that's when the championships began stacking up.

There is a tendency to see successful people as they are today and extrapolate that success must have always been in the cards.

They look the part.

But we are looking at the polished results. We didn't see their polishing processes.

Each of us will have obstacles along our journeys that can either grind us down - or polish us up - depending on the mindsets we choose each day.

Choose yours wisely.

Having an open-loop limbic system means that we humans rely considerably on connections with other humans to determine our moods.

I'd suggest that's an especially relevant fact these days.

I believe the phrase "misery loves company" isn't exactly accurate.

Negative people do not simply attract the company of other negative people so much as create negative people around themselves.

The same is true, thankfully, for positive folks.

Beyond that, in most business environments, our leaders' demeanors have an even greater effect on their teams' mental and emotional states. I would suggest that is all the more evident today.

Later in our conversation, my friend asked me to send him a slide I used to advise managers that they should never underestimate the importance of thespian skills.

I (only half-jokingly) suggest that the ability to act in a way that may not be representative of how you feel at any given moment is one of the more useful management skills you can have.

Managers often have quite legitimate reasons to be tense, irritable, and even discouraged.

Hey, they're human. It happens.

But when we display those feelings, we need to realize we recreate those feelings in others.

Hey, they're human. It happens.

That said, a great thing about the way we're wired is that we can lift our own spirits by lifting someone else's.

Being openly upbeat around others creates more upbeat people. And when the folks around us are more upbeat, our own spirits tend to lift as well.

How many positive loops can you create this week?

**"Sometimes you need to get hit in the head to realize you're in a fight."**

» **Michael Jordan**

*Dave Martin, author of [The In-Store Advantage](#), has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*

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