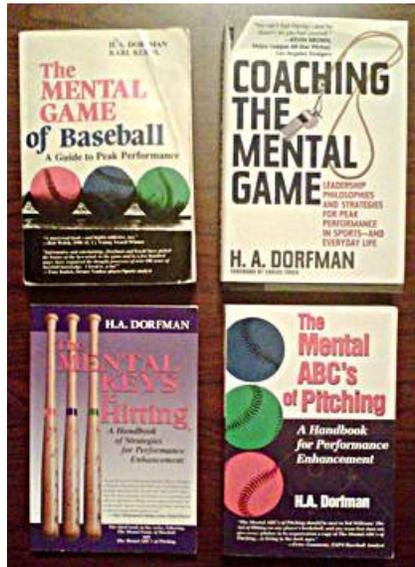


A Tribute to Harvey Dorfman

My Friend and Mentor

by Aaron Weintraub

Harvey died on February 28, 2011



Will you leave a legacy?

I do not like death. I do not like funerals. I do not like sadness and regrets. I am scared of death.

I will admit that death seems to be inevitable.

When I die, I hope to leave a legacy like the one left by Harvey Dorfman.

As a child, Harvey usually fought for his next breath, often from his sickbed. Making it to his next birthday was not assured. He didn't see it as a fight, though, because he knew of no other way. He was born with lousy lungs and they killed him, too. The fight in between (b. 1935, d. 2011) was impressive, to say the least.

Harvey's father taught him that "Sufferin's good for you, kid, as long as you survive." Harvey wrote that his "mother's worries about her sickly little boy" led her to "dote, fuss, and over-protect. ...This was as understandable to me then as it is now." Which is to say: not at all.

Harvey did not have time, space, nor desire for pity (not even a little). He did not accept normal as an excuse and he did not mince words. He was consistent in his brutal honesty and his relentlessness (his favorite word, I believe). His mantra: function over feeling. I can hear him still, bellowing "I don't care how you feel. I only care how you ACT!" Strangely, he was also always caring and empathetic. It was an unusual and incredibly effective combination for a teacher. He understood and he gave you what you needed, whether you --or he-- liked it or not.

Harvey wrote an autobiographical trilogy and preceded the opening of the first book with a quote from Christopher Fry's *The First Born*,

We must each find our separate meaning
In the persuasion of our days
Until we meet the meaning of the world.

Harvey's days persuaded him to toughness beyond measure and to a writing and teaching career that had a significant positive impact on thousands of people. Many of these people happened to be famous baseball players. How awesome is this: the list of people he has helped will grow exponentially over time, even now after his passing.

We all have chains from childhood, Harvey learned and taught, that are holding us back. Perhaps a Mom's loving words upon her child leaving the home each time was either, "Be careful" or "Be good." This has an effect. Some of that effect will hinder the child from getting what he or she wants. However, the question is not, "How many problems do you have?" It's, "What are you going to do about it?" Being an adult means breaking free from those chains and doing what needs to be done. With awareness, we can adjust and we must! Harvey grew and adjusted, blazing a path that people are smart to imitate.

When the teen-aged Harvey chose a college to attend, he picked Brockport State, a small school upstate from his Bronx home. He liked it because it was small enough (and mostly girls) to afford him a good chance to make a sporting team. Since the football team lost every game and he wanted to be a winner, he went out for soccer. Since he had a severe bronchial condition, he became a goalie. At tryouts, the coach said, "Jog until you think you can't take another step..." Harvey thought, "Oh, thank goodness. This guy's a human." Then the coach added, "...And then—SPRINT!" Harvey thought he was done for. Inside he was screaming, but all was not lost: he found a way to keep going, thus making the team. Upon reflection, he still did not know how he did it. What he did know is that he found a way with resources, whatever they were, that were inside of him. It was a defining moment. The sickly boy was eager "to impose my will on circumstance, for a change" and the boy was becoming a man who knew of the resourcefulness of humans.

Some People are Special

I very much enjoy productive conversations. I had the good fortune of spending many occasions with Harvey talking about interesting topics related mostly to baseball coaching, but also discussing family, friends, humor, or music. Without fail, I left each occasion smarter and also clearly knowing this to be so. How could this happen? I had heard his seminars before and read his books. I could ask him any question, anytime. Sometimes I did, but often I did not because I had no need; I already knew what his response would be. Still, time spent with him in person never failed to make an impression. He shared stories and modeled good behavior. He uncovered the truth of a situation. He told me what I needed to hear. He taught me what to do about... life.

What Are You Going to Do About It?

My friend and former roommate was over for dinner three days after Harvey's death. Harvey was on my mind. My friend was in a deep personal and professional slump, instigated by a painful divorce. "I'm sorry," I heard myself say. "So, what are you going to do about it?" I recognized that this was the question Harvey would have asked. There was no reply at the dinner table.

The next day, my friend called and asked if I coach business people like I do athletes. He's known what I do for years, but he's never before asked for my help. "Everyone is sorry for my misfortune," he tells me, "but you're the first to ask me what I was going to do about it." We had a productive meeting.

Harvey has left us, but his legacy will never go away. Many people, myself definitely included, will more often employ our internal resources and find a way to do what needs to be done because of

what we learned from him. That sickly boy fought his way to success and he teaches us still through the books he painstakingly left behind.

Thank you, Harvey.

Devoted family man

Championship soccer player (Brockport St.; Co-National Champions with Penn State, 1955)

Vermont State Championship Coach (girls basketball, 1979-80, Burr and Burton Seminary)

Major League Baseball World Series Champion (Twice: Coach for 1999 Athletics and 2007 Marlins)

Reader

Thinker

Connoisseur of the Arts

Teacher

Coach

Peter Gammons recommends him for the Baseball Hall-of-Fame.

Author:

Free-lance articles, many

The Mental Game of Baseball

The Mental ABC's of Pitching

The Mental Keys to Hitting

Coaching the Mental Game

Autobiographical Trilogy:

The Persuasion of my Days

Copying it Down

Each Branch, Each Needle

I miss you.

Aaron Weintraub

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