

# THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

## Worksheet for Kobe Bryant | Dissecting the Mamba Mentality (Episode 249)

It was the end of an era when Kobe Bryant officially retired from basketball after 20 years of playing for the L.A. Lakers. In a career that enjoyed the highs of winning five championships and the lows of multiple injuries that would have ended the careers of lesser athletes much earlier, Kobe left the game as one of its legends.

[In this episode](#) Kobe joins us to explain how his famous drive to push the limits of human performance translates to his current role as CEO, writer, and producer of Granity Studios, a multimedia original content company dedicated to creating new ways to tell stories around sports. His latest project is *Legacy and the Queen* with Annie Matthew, a book about a 12-year-old girl who enters a tennis tournament to save her orphanage against massive odds and malicious magic.

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## High Expectations

Kobe is famous for pushing himself beyond what even most high-achievers would consider reasonable. He credits an ambition to excel in a sport he loved for propelling him into its elite ranks, but any external factors encouraging him forward were surpassed by his own need for accomplishment.

“I had goals,” says Kobe. “I had expectations and things I wanted to accomplish. So the outside world could not meet that. I knew I wanted to win five, six, seven championships — that was my goal. For me to come out and say that, people would think I was a lunatic. So no matter what they threw at me, my expectations were certainly higher. Sometimes you have a fire; you need to keep those flames burning. There’s nothing you can do about it.”

**Are there any internal fires of your own that keep burning no matter what the outside world has to say in favor of or against them? How might they be expressed if you had the ability, time, and patience to pursue them with Kobe’s laser-focused purpose? In what ways might they be applied or adapted to your life today?**

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## Great Care

At Granity Studios, Kobe brings his drive for excellence from basketball to media production. He hires similarly driven and talented writers, artists, and designers to ensure that every detail is considered. Looking to *Legacy and the Queen* with Annie Matthew, he even made sure the bar code didn't mar the book's overall design.

"We try to handle things with great care," says Kobe. "When you handle things with great care, you have no choice but to look at every single detail. The books we create, the films we create, we look over every scene, comb through every line. When a kid picks up a book, we want them to have the experience of somebody put a lot of thought and care into it. The message we wanted to get across is: kids matter, and investing heavily in kids is extremely important — in fact, more important than it is than investing in adults, because children are our future. So instead of spending all of our resources and doubling down on grown ups, let's double down on kids."

**What areas of your own life do you ensure are covered with great care? In contrast, what areas of your life do you perhaps neglect? Are you satisfied with how you prioritize these areas? If not, what neglected areas would most improve your life if you could devote greater care to their details?**

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## Detached Self-Criticism

Under the scrutiny of millions at the peak of his career, Kobe had to be emotionally detached when it was game time in order to keep his focus intact, and he likens it to acting — the Kobe the rest of us saw on the court was an alter ego of the Kobe you might meet anywhere else. Luckily for him, being a celebrity in Los Angeles has its perks, like access to the world's finest actors — Hilary Swank, Kate Winslet, Larry Moss, and Sean Penn to name a few — to ask how they achieve the right mindset to get the job done.

“As an actor, you are trained to get into that zone and find that pocket,” says Kobe. “As athletes, the psychology is the same. The discipline is different, but the behavior’s the same. Before you start a game, how can you lock in and get into that mental space where nothing else matters — you’re completely locked in and focused on what you’re trying to accomplish as an athlete? The noise and the crowd don’t matter, whether they’re cheering or booing doesn’t matter, you’re just completely locked in. How do you do that?”

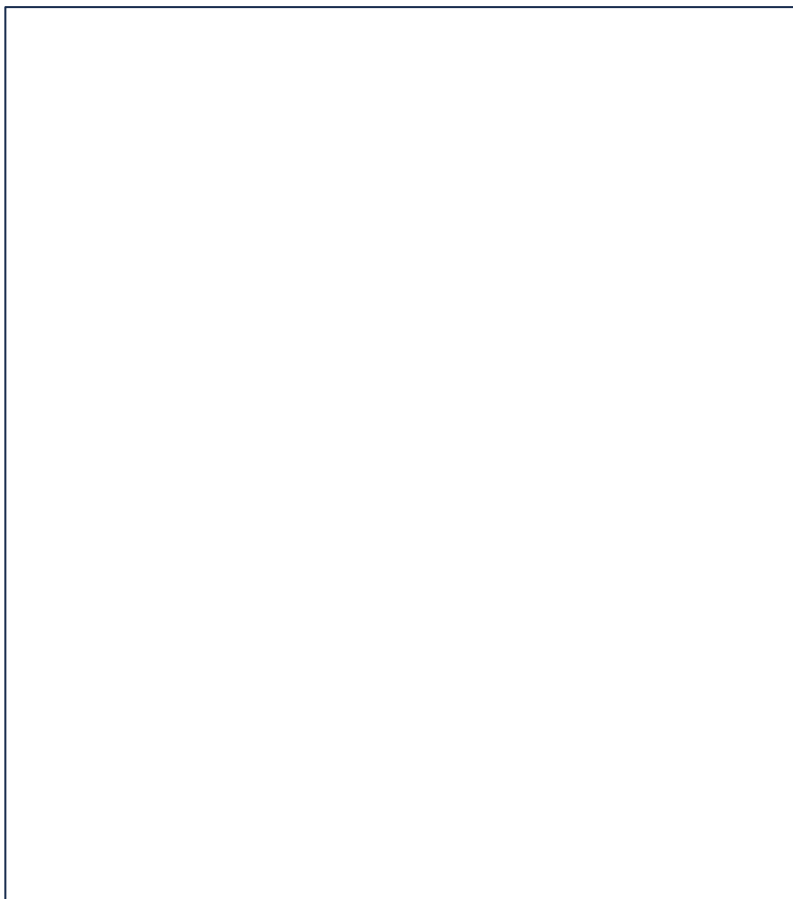
And when it comes time to look back on personal performance critically, the late Coach Tex Winter taught Kobe how to approach this with a similar mindset of emotional detachment.

“When we used to watch game film, he was pretty brutal on us as players,” says Kobe. “But he always said, ‘I’m not criticizing the person; I’m criticizing the act. So remove yourself from that. Remove the ego from this process and just focus on the act. The goal is to help us all become better.’ When you do that, you can...look at actions, and then you can truly improve.”

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**You may not currently have the massive resources of Kobe's celebrity network to understand every nuance it takes to emotionally detach from your own performance and evaluation of how that performance went, but your every move probably doesn't have the eyes of the world on you, either. Whatever the task at hand, practice emotional detachment in the moment and in reflection in order to understand how you can focus without distractions and improve your actions without beating up yourself personally for not being perfect from the start.**



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## Slow Respect for Swift Kills

In the locker room before a big game, Kobe was known to pump himself up with John Carpenter's *Halloween* theme song on repeat, or bring his mindset back to the lower-pressure days of high school basketball with a song that was popular then: Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. But Kobe draws more than just visceral inspiration from music; he draws inspiration from the people who create that music — whether they're Jay-Z or Taylor Swift.

"I think it's important to listen to people who do great things," says Kobe. "So it's not just genre specific, but it's like Taylor's been at the top of the game for a very long time. How and why? How does she write? How does she get into that mental space to be able to create things over and over and over? It's a lot of pressure for her to follow up a number one album with a better album. I don't care if you like her music or you don't like her music; look at what she's doing. It's unbelievable to be able to pull that off over and over and over. I'll look at things like that and try to learn from them as much as I can."

With Taylor Swift's success comes another lesson: if you want to keep swimming with sharks, you need to become a shark yourself. So when industry heavies like Spotify try to push her around, **she doesn't hesitate to push back**. "From afar, I know she has to be that way," says Kobe. "She's a sweet kid. She was a sweetheart to my girls before she even blew up and became Taylor Swift, so that's why I like her. But you can't have that level of consistent success and not be a killer! It's impossible."

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Just because I'm not a sports fan doesn't mean I'd rob myself of the opportunity to find out what makes a high-performer like Kobe tick; there's value in weighing the perspectives of people who come from worlds seemingly alien to our own — even if it's just to remind us that we all have far more in common than the things that separate us. This week, pick a person who creates work you can't seem to wrap your head around no matter how much they resonate with popular culture. This could be an architect, musician, television personality, author, politician — anyone in the public eye. Read articles about them. Watch interviews with them online. Listen to their podcasts. Check out documentaries in which they're featured. Then write down three things you appreciate or respect about them (no matter how grudgingly), and feel free to share these insights with me:

[jordan@jordanharbinger.com](mailto:jordan@jordanharbinger.com)!

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## Self-Negotiation

Even athletes at the top of their game have differing levels of physical ability, so what distinguishes them from their similarly high-performing peers? If we take away what makes them different from the rest of the population, what do they have in common that makes them great?

“I think it’s how you negotiate with yourself,” says Kobe. “That’s the biggest thing. We talk about the mental side of it, but then what does that really mean? The thoughts that happen in your mind when you’re going through a competitive situation? Or you’re facing a tight deadline and you still don’t have your idea yet — what happens inside of here? Do you talk yourself out of it? Do you say, ‘It won’t be a big deal if I don’t do it,’ or ‘I don’t have to get up on a Tuesday morning to hit the track. What does this day really mean in the long scheme of things anyway? It’s just one day.’ When you have those conversations with yourself, are you able to negotiate your way out of that little voice telling you it’s not that important, or does that little voice get the best of you? That’s what separates people from going to do great things versus people who don’t. Or people who do great things, but in an inconsistent way.”

**When it comes to negotiating with yourself, do you tend to talk yourself into the things today that will make tomorrow better, or out of the things that result in tomorrow’s disappointments? How might you prepare yourself today to make tomorrow’s negotiations bring you better outcomes?**



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## Teaching Kids Self-Negotiation

When Kobe's own kids talk themselves out of doing things, does he call them out? "No, I let them sleep in," he says. "That's the biggest thing as a parent is when they're late, you let them be late. And you let them learn from that. You let them figure that out versus me telling them."

And when he was coaching girls, Kobe once took a parent aside who was verbally encouraging his daughter and gave him these words of advice: "When she's doing those line drills, don't say anything. Because there's a conversation that's happening inside of her head. She's talking to herself trying to pump herself up to do it. She's already having those conversations. So for an outside voice to come in to give her guidance and to give her the push to keep going actually interrupts her process. Just let her be. Let her figure it out herself. Because as they go through life, as parents, we're not going to be there all the time. Kids have to be able to navigate those things themselves."

**When you think back to your own childhood and the way you negotiate with yourself today, did your parents or guardians tend to encourage you with their voices, or encourage you to develop your own? If you have kids, what tactic makes better sense to you? If you disagree with Kobe's methods, what would you do differently?**

*Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here.](#)*

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## About



Join us as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers – from legendary creators to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth – and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these valuable insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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