

# SHIFT HAPPENS

CHANGE ISN'T POLITE.  
IT'S DISRUPTIVE.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Everyone has a Racket Going On

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02 Breaking Your Own Barrier:  
The Mindset That Makes the  
Impossible Possible

---

03 Permission to be Human

---

04 When the Sea Goes Out

---

05 Christmas has a strange way of  
exposing us.

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# What This eBook Is About

*If you don't own your mindset, someone else hijacks it.  
Shift isn't a slogan — it's a rebellion.*

*This eBook is your monthly spark: raw truths, sharp lessons, and a boot up the backside when you need it.*

Written by Dr Maurice Duffy — coach to leaders, athletes, and change-makers — it's packed with real stories, sharp insights, and practical tools you can use straight away.

In future it will include contributions from other Thought Leaders Inside, you'll find hard truths, hard-won lessons, and bold prompts to shake your thinking, shift your habits, and sharpen your edge.

## Why It Matters

You're tired of sugar-coated nonsense.  
You want real change, not motivational wallpaper.  
Good — this is where the real work begins.

**“MOST PEOPLE  
DROWN IN THEIR  
OWN NOISE.  
IF YOU DO NOT  
CONTROL YOUR  
CHAOS, YOU  
BECOME THE  
STORM INSTEAD  
OF THE  
CAPTAIN.”**

# Everyone has a Racket Going On

Last night I had dinner with a friend. To protect the innocent, let us call one of them John. Now John is a character in the best possible sense. He is sharp, quick witted, warm hearted, a good friend and utterly convinced that the entire universe is one giant racket. Not a complicated one. Not a nuanced one. A simple racket where any group of humans instantly bands together to promote their own interests and quietly fleece the rest of us.

According to John, the only thing more reliable than gravity is people forming small secret alliances to get an advantage, whether they are politicians, business leaders, football club directors, or the four people ahead of him in the supermarket queue.

And I have to be honest, there is a charm to the way he presents it. Watching him explain this over a bowl of olives is like watching a man narrate a documentary that only he can see. He delivers it all with such calm authority that you almost find yourself nodding along. I gently suggested that not everything is a scheme or a plot. He smiled, shook his head, and said that my comment was exactly what someone who is part of the racket would say.

Here is the truth: conspiracy thinking is not madness. It is psychology. Human beings hate randomness. We crave explanation. When the world feels messy, the mind knits loose facts together until they make a story. Psychologists call it pattern completion or agency detection. John calls it life.



And while John's theories arrive with the seriousness of scripture, they are fuelled by something deeply human. We all want to believe someone is in charge. Even a bad someone. A villain at the controls still feels more comforting than the idea that chaos is driving the bus and has missed several turnings.

In his mind, every promotion, every lucky career jump, every strange policy, every dubious contract, and every petty nuisance can be traced back to a discreet cluster of insiders nudging the world in their favour. It is an oddly generous view of human coordination. If ministers and executives were as organised as John imagines, the world would run like a Swiss watch. Sadly, most cannot even organise a coffee order.

At the end of the meal he leaned in and whispered that even the restaurant was a racket. And I had to laugh. Because there is something strangely reassuring in his worldview. When life feels unpredictable, John's version at least gives it structure. And that, more than anything, is why he remains such wonderful company. He makes the chaos make sense, even if only for the length of a dinner.

“MINDSET  
MEANS DOING  
THE HARD  
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THE EASY THING  
SCREAMS YOUR  
NAME.”

# Breaking Your Own Barrier: The Mindset That Makes the Impossible Possible

In 1954, Roger Bannister did what the world believed could not be done: he ran a mile in under four minutes. Not because he was the strongest, or the fastest, or the most gifted. He broke the barrier because he refused to accept the limits others tried to hand him. Every day in my work with elite athletes, I see the same truth: the biggest opponent you will ever face is the one inside your own head.

Bannister's story is not about running. It's about belief. It's about stepping into a space where the impossible stops being a wall and becomes a dare. In sport, in business, in leadership—barriers break the moment your mind stops bowing to them.

What separates the elite from the almost-there is mindset, not muscle. Talent will get you in the race, but mindset is what wins it. At the highest level, ability is the starting line—not the finishing one. Top performers share a different psychological architecture—one built through daily discipline, deliberate mental training, and the refusal to quit on themselves when everything hurts.

Here's what I see in the champions I coach:

- **Unbreakable persistence:** They chase excellence with a kind of stubbornness that borders on defiance.
- **Rule-edge intensity:** They compete right at the edge of possibility, stretching norms without snapping them.
- **Invisible labour:** They do the dark, lonely, unseen work—the kind that never earns applause but always earns victory.
- **Steeled emotions:** Under pressure, where others crack, they stay composed, clinical, dangerous.



- **Grounded communication:** They speak simply, listen deeply, and keep ego on a leash.
- **Independent conviction:** They will stand alone if that's what winning demands.
- **Reinvention as a lifestyle:** Comfort is their enemy. Reinvention is their ritual. And here's the truth most never see: elite performance is a mental craft. Mind tools, visualisation, meditation, and my SVIMGM© system are not extras—they're the engine room. They build clarity under chaos, resilience under fatigue, and belief when doubt tries to take the wheel. Because winning at an elite level requires a mind strong enough to carry the body when it's done. Bannister didn't just break a record. He broke a story. And every athlete, leader and human being must eventually decide which story they are willing to live inside.

## Three Things You Can Do Today:

1. Train your mind like you train your body — visualise the outcome, rehearse the process, meditate on the pressure.
2. Break your challenge into small, brutal, manageable steps — and execute the next one with full commitment.
3. Rewrite your story — remove the words "I can't," "I'm not ready," "maybe someday." Replace them with action.

Your barrier is waiting. So is the version of you that breaks it.

“MINDSET  
MEANS  
ARGUING  
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EXCUSES UNTIL  
YOU WIN.”

# Permission to be Human

Here is the psychological reality few dare to say out loud: forced happiness creates emotional whiplash. Pretending to be fine for a short, socially approved season doesn't lift the lows — it deepens them. The contrast hurts. If you struggle in July, the weight of December can feel like emotional debt with interest. And if you are lonely this Christmas, let me say this with clinical clarity and human compassion: There is nothing wrong with you. The culture is the problem — not your heart, not your worth, not your life.

We have built a world where sorrow is tolerated only in private while joy is demanded in public. That is psychological madness. People feel broken not because they are failing, but because they have absorbed a lie: that everyone else is glowing with holiday perfection while they are quietly falling apart.

But the data tells a different truth:

- Loneliness spikes at Christmas.
- Mental health symptoms peak between December and early January.
- Most people perform happiness they do not genuinely feel.

Christmas has become a stage, and too many people sit backstage wondering why the costume doesn't fit. Here's the dark, liberating truth:

- You do not need to be joyful on command.
- You do not need to match anyone's cheer.
- You do not owe the world a performance of merry.

Your humanity is not a seasonal inconvenience. Your feelings are not a malfunction. Your quiet ache is not a sign of weakness — it is a sign that you are still alive, still capable of depth, still capable of meaning.

And here's the part that lifts this out of the darkness:

Your worth is not seasonal. It does not rise in December and fall in January. It does not depend on who texts you, who invites you, or who remembers you.

## If this Christmas feels heavy, here are truths worth holding onto:

1. Feeling low during a high-pressure season is normal — not a defect. Your nervous system is reacting to overload, not failing at joy.
2. You are allowed to create a Christmas that fits you — not the performance the world expects. Quiet is allowed. Stillness is allowed. Saying "this is enough" is allowed.
3. Your story is not finished. Loneliness is a moment, not a life sentence. Pain is a chapter, not your whole book.

Some years, survival is the victory. Some holidays, simply staying kind to yourself is the achievement. And sometimes, the most courageous thing you can do is refuse to fake a smile and choose honesty instead. Because authenticity — even when it's raw — is far more powerful than the brightest artificial cheer. This Christmas, may you give yourself the one gift the world rarely offers:

Permission to be human.

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# When the Sea Goes Out

There are days when life does not break you loudly. It simply drains you. Quietly. Slowly. Like the tide pulling back from the shore, leaving you standing on cold sand wondering where all your colour and energy went. I have known those days.

Days when the world feels grey, when your confidence is a flicker, when your purpose feels like a rumour you once trusted. During one of those seasons, I walked the same stretch of coastline every morning. The tide was always out. The beach felt abandoned and emptied. And I began to think that maybe this was who I had become: the after of something.

## Three things when the tide feels out:

- Do one thing that matters to you, even if tiny. The tide begins with a single wave.
- Speak one honest sentence. Truth is how strength finds its way back in.
- Help one person in one simple way. When you change someone else's tide, yours shifts too.

Then I remembered a story.

A man was walking along a beach at low tide. Starfish were scattered across the sand, stranded and drying in the sun. He bent down, picked one up, and placed it back in the water. Then another. Then another.

Someone said,

"There must be thousands. You cannot save them all. What difference does it make?"

The man picked up another starfish, held it for a moment, and returned it to the sea. "It makes a difference to that one," he said.

One act.

One moment.

One breath.

Later that morning, the tide rolled back in. And I realised something I had forgotten: Strength behaves like the sea. It retreats, yes. But it always returns. Not in one dramatic surge, but in waves. Small. Steady. Relentless.

When life seems grey and obstacles seem huge, remember: the sea always returns. So does your strength. So does your appetite for life.



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# Christmas has a strange way of exposing us.

It arrives every year with tinsel and expectations, and the reminder that the parsnips burn, the tears come, and in my house, both begin with me, because the kitchen is where love holds you and life finally catches up. And yet, buried inside the chaos, is the quiet truth: Christmas is the greatest mindset lesson we get all year. Wrapped in fairy lights. Delivered with deadlines. Because behind the sparkle, Christmas can be lonely for some. Sad for others. Desperate even for many. When the world tells you to be merry, it has a habit of shining a light on everything we would rather keep in the dark. *Take A Christmas Carol.* Scrooge did not change because three ghosts turned up with mood lighting and a fog machine. He changed because they dragged him face first into clarity. Past regrets.

Present blindness. Future consequences. The ultimate coaching feedback session, Victorian edition. Christmas teaches us that reflection hurts... but avoiding reflection hurts more.

Or *The Grinch*, who stole a whole village's decorations and still could not escape himself. He was not cured by roast beast. He was cured when he realised that the noise in his own head was louder than the singing in Whoville. A mindset masterclass: You cannot steal your way out of your own misery. You have to face it. Even *Love Actually*, the crown jewel of Christmas emotional manipulation, teaches us something. Every storyline, whether absurd, heartbreaking, or implausibly charming, carries the same message: life is messier than we want it to be, but connection is the one thing that puts us back together.

And maybe that is why Christmas feels heavier for some of us. The lights go up, and suddenly the shadows do too. This is our second Christmas knowing my wife is terminally ill. Knowing, but not knowing. Living in that unbearable middle place where love grows stronger and time grows uncertain.



The truth is, none of us know how many Christmases we have left. Some of us are simply asked to confront that truth earlier than we ever wanted.

Christmas does not hide life's cracks. It illuminates them. The empty chairs. The changed traditions. The moments of joy that arrive hand in hand with fear. But this is the real miracle hiding inside the chaos: **Christmas resets us.**

Not with perfection. Not with forced cheer. But with clarity. It reminds us that mindset is not about staying strong. It is about staying present. Even when the present hurts.

Especially when the present hurts. So, this Christmas, show up for the ones you love. Hug them tight. Let go of the past. Be the warm rock of forgiveness and love. Hold them with both hands.

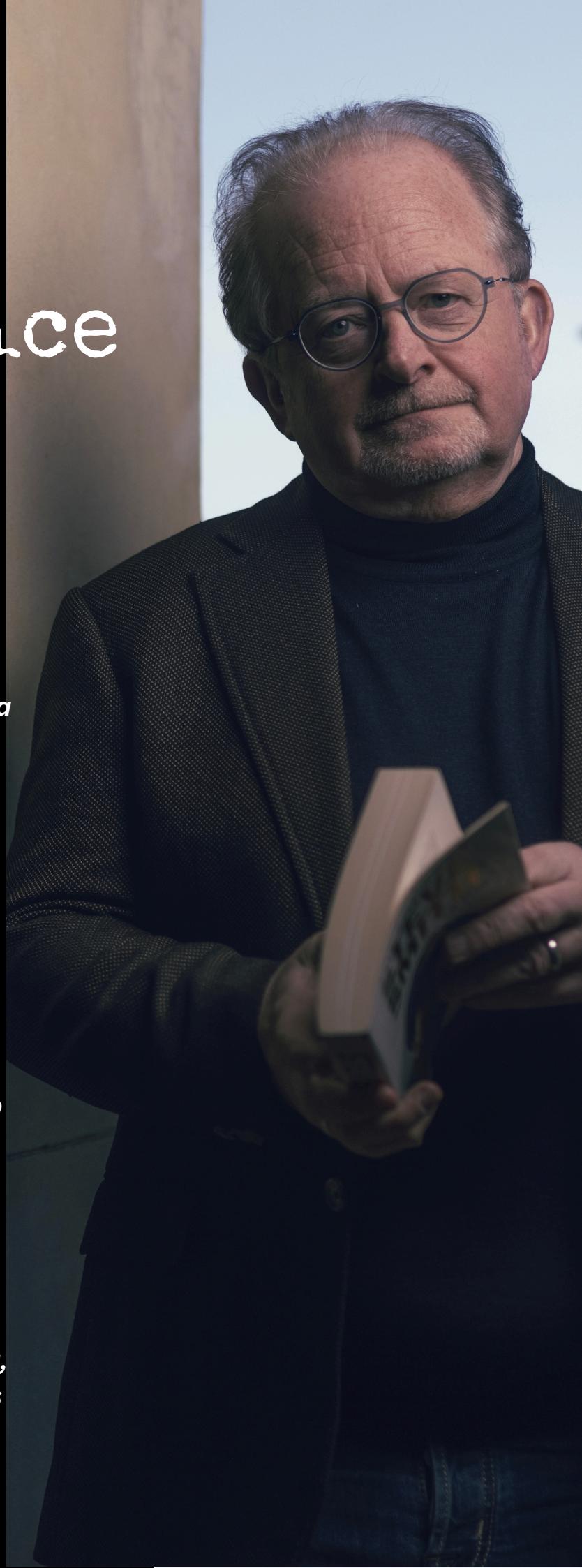
Laugh when you can. Cry when you must. Remember the ones who shaped you, even if they can no longer sit at the table with you. And let the season remind you of the simplest, hardest truth:

**One day, someone will remember this Christmas as the last one you shared — so love like you already know how precious it is.**

One day too, you will tell the story of how you overcame. And someone else will survive because of you. Be the person who gives energy to others. Because... We do not get endless time. But we do get this time — and one day we will realise it was enough. Enough to love with everything we have. And if you have a little left to give this Christmas, please think of Mind — the charity my wife champions every single day, even through her own storms.

# Keep Connected with Maurice

*Dr. Maurice Duffy is a globally recognised mindset coach, leadership expert, and motivational speaker with over 30 years of experience in transformative change. He serves as a Visiting Professor of Innovation and Transformation and Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Sunderland, as well as this Dr. Duffy is a Visiting Professor at the University of the Commonwealth Caribbean. He has worked with a diverse range of clients, including global corporations such as Google, Sony, Coca-Cola, Siemens, HSBC UK, P&G, Barclays, JP Morgan, BP, and AXA. His expertise extends to elite sports, having coached international teams and athletes like the Australian Cricket Captain Steve Smith, Durham Cricket Club, Ryder Cup players, and Premiership football players. Additionally, he has advised political figures in Westminster, Washington, and Durban, and has served as Advisor to the Mongolian Government. Beyond coaching, Dr. Duffy is a bestselling author, columnist, and BBC presenter. He regularly shares insights on mindset and personal development through his blog and social media platforms.*





In Dr Maurice Duffy Coaching, discover the raw truth behind elite performance.

No fluff. No excuses. Just real stories, sharp provocations, and practical tools from one of the world's top mindset coaches.

Whether you lead a boardroom, a battlefield, or your own chaotic life, Shift Coaching challenges your thinking, confronts your habits, and rewires your mental game. It's for the doers, the dreamers, and the disrupters. Success isn't luck — it's mindset. And mindset is a choice.

Choose yours. Start now.

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