



## What Do You Really Know About The People You Know?

January.2011 “Unopened Gifts”  
Story

Co-Author Dr. Brett Hightower

### The Wrong Path & How It Can Define the Rest of Your Life

Back while he was fumbling his way through college, Brett Hightower was a chemistry and physics major. He was a gifted scientist with a razor-sharp mind, but like many people during this particular time of their lives he hadn't had that moment... that one beautiful epiphany artist's muse about, where an individual totally realizes what it is that they're actually supposed to be doing with their lives.

During this time he took a job at a hospital to increase his chances of gaining admission to a prestigious premed program. But after about 18 months of being trapped all day in such a disheartening place, Brett had a powerful gut feeling that becoming a medical doctor **wasn't at all what he wanted to do with the rest of his life.**

During that trying year and a half Brett Hightower was exposed to an unyielding onslaught of sickness. The patients of course came with the territory, but it was far more than that—all of the doctors roaming the desolate halls just didn't look healthy, and all of the nurses were pasty and obese; none of this seemed right to him.

He didn't fully appreciate it at the time, but traveling down the wrong path for those 18 months would end up defining the rest of his life. From that moment on Brett **knew that this dramatic experience summed up everything that he didn't want his life to be.** *But knowing what you don't want to do isn't knowing what you do want to do,* so over the course of the next five years he kind of just took life as it came.

### Breaking State

Giving credence to the “break state” idea of the Neuro-linguistic philosophy, Brett felt that his life needed a sudden change. He moved to Hawaii and picked up a construction job, and while there his whole world began to open up. Gaining exposure to many alternative medicine ideas, he met Shakti Gawain of creative visualization fame, learned about the Hawaiian shamanism of Serge King, and read Bernie Siegel’s seminal book “Love, Medicine and Miracles.”

The world of alternative medicine was beginning to bloom all throughout 1988 and into '89, but Brett was still unsure of how to proceed. *“I was meditating and praying every day.”* He recounts basically shouting *“God, I’m an idiot! I know you can burn bushes and part seas and stuff, so please give me a sign.”* He was hungry to make a difference in the world and thoroughly adamant that he did not want to spend eight hours a day at a job he didn’t enjoy.

### The Sign

Then one day while kayaking and camping on the Na’Pali coast of Kauai, Brett finally had that **one spell-binding moment** poets often talk about. During an excursion to a sacred burial ground with friends, he happened upon the skeletal remains of a small child... **Believing this to be the sign that he couldn’t ignore,** Brett decided to pursue the study of wellness so that he could make a difference in people’s lives.

He then began to study Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which looks at models of excellent communication and good mental hygiene. This was the perfect contrast to the field of psychology, which studies psychoses and neuroses but pays no attention to healthy people who’re striving to improve themselves. This was a good parallel to what he was seeking in health care and Brett loved it, but at 23 he just couldn’t figure out how to earn any money with it.

### Implementing the Dream

A few twists and turns aside, as well as the proverbial trials and tribulations along the way too, Brett set his sights on attending chiropractic school. It was 1990 and Kauai was already a distant memory, which wound up providing a good jumping off point for his Western mind; he was already intimately familiar with just how much we don’t know and how important a fully-functioning nervous system is to overall health.

By 1993 he graduated and over the next two years taught radiation physics and advanced diagnostic imaging. Then at the end of 1994 Dr. Brett Hightower decided to open his own practice...and all the while during the implementation of his dream, that thirst for knowledge never waned. In 1996 he studied at the Acupuncture Society of America in Kansas City, the **decision to do so being another in a series of powerful guts feelings.**

## Invaluable Lessons & Letting the Chips Fall where they May

Looking back on all of it now, the invaluable lessons that Brett picked up throughout his journey couldn't have been more fortuitous. He **suffered countless failures along the way**, but he never viewed them like that. During our talks he conveyed to me that **these instances were merely “delays” in achieving his goals**. The more we spoke the more I understood that he is the kind of man who surrounds himself with optimism, then simply lets the chips fall where they may.

*“As long as you're driven by a passionate need to create something beautiful, and you're comfortable with who you are, the rest will fall into place”* is how he likes to put it.

I couldn't have said it better myself.

## Listening to Your Instincts

Dr. Brett Hightower then finished up our wonderful discussion by sharing something remarkable. His favorite poet *David Whyte* talks about the mental errors we often make in our understanding of experience versus innocence. People tend to think that the more experience we attain, the less innocence we have, which is unfortunate and sometimes why we become jaded.

What we really need, he went on, was **to continually nurture the feelings of innocent exploration**. The more experience we have, the more we'll benefit from searching for new ways to understand our reality. Doing so helps prevent mental atherosclerosis, or a “hardening of the categories,” which is another NLP term.

And more importantly, we are all too hung up on winning. **It's not possible to win all the time, nor is it necessary**. What we all need to do is learn to trust our instincts and “to yield to the soft flesh of our animal desire,” which is David Whyte's way of saying to **trust your gut**.



## About James McPartland

(aka “Mac”) is the Principal and Chief Inspiration Officer of *The JMac Performance Group*, a specialized management consulting firm focused on realizing the importance of the *human potential in business*. He is an **entrepreneur, author, international speaker, TV/radio host, and noted authority on leadership, team building, corporate wellness, and transformational change**.

Mac focuses on helping successful leaders achieve a positive lasting change in behavior (and results) for themselves, their people, and their teams. As a consultant and speaker, he has worked with senior executives from **Fortune 500 corporations** including; *The Dow Chemical Company, IBM, Allergan, Technogym, Les Mills International, Spinning and Total Gym*, as well as non-profits such as *The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports*.

Mac actively participates in organizations such as; *The International Health and Racquet Sports Association, the American Heart Association, and The President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports*. He is currently active in *U.S. public policy legislation* that will positively impact companies that provide wellness benefits.

He sits on the Board of Directors for two health and wellness companies in California: *Best Fit Data* and *BH North America* and is an active member for *The World Presidents’ Organization*.

James has **been featured in numerous magazines and newspapers** including; *The Register and Times of Los Angeles, Club Business International and The Business Journal*. He has also been a **guest on network TV and numerous radio shows**.

McPartland was **recognized by the President’s Council of Physical Fitness and Sports for his outstanding contribution to wellness**, while also being honored by *The World Presidents’ Organization* for leadership.

James earned his Bachelor’s Degree from *North Carolina State University*. An **avid fitness enthusiast**, he has completed 37 marathons and 8 Ironman Triathlon events. He resides in Coto De Caza, CA with his wife and two sons.

## About The JMac Performance Group

A *‘Human Performance Company’* dedicated to improving the health and profitability of a company by unlocking the potential of its employees. Business and people development consulting is cultivated through seminars, workshops, and executive retreats.

