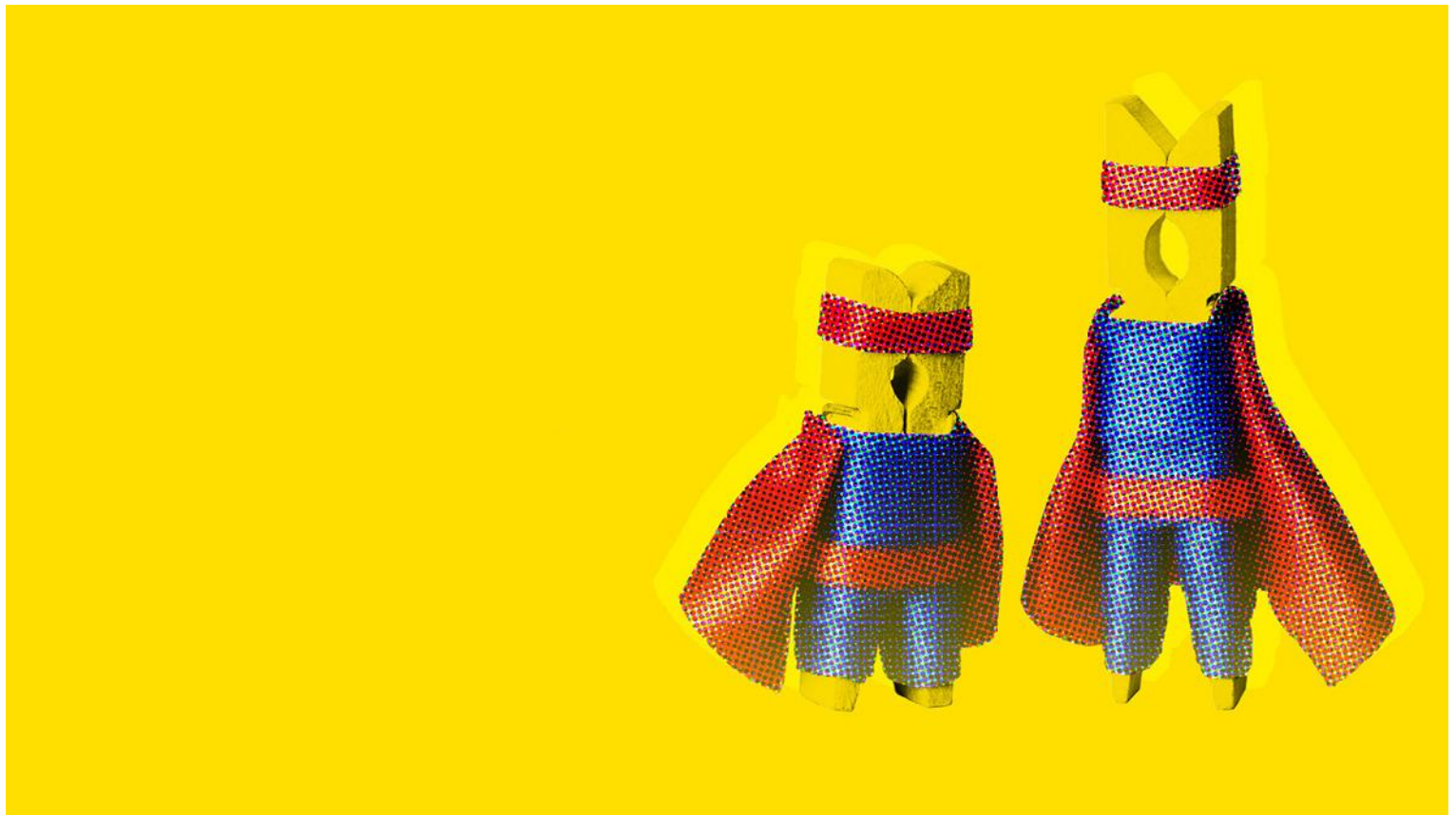


LEADERSHIP

Leadership Lessons from 10 Wildly Successful People

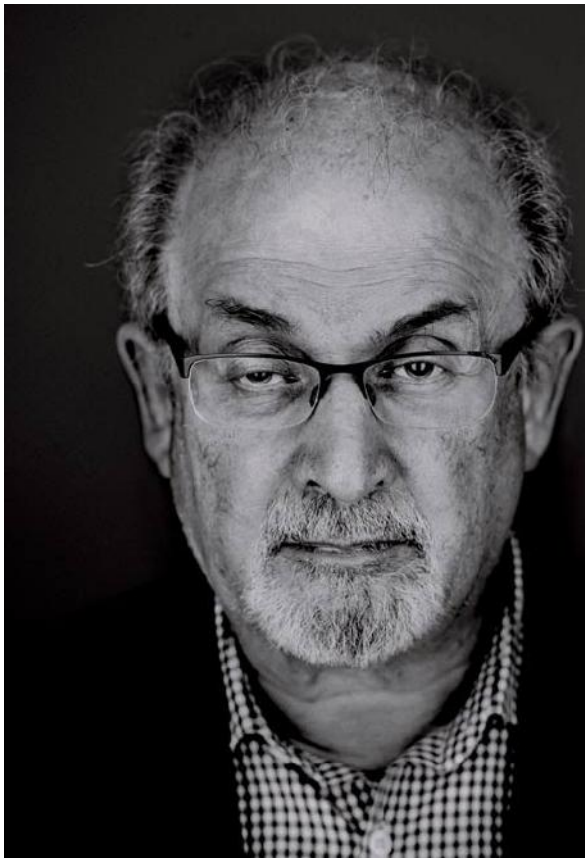
by Alison Beard

DECEMBER 29, 2015



HBR STAFF

Each year, HBR asks 10 stars in fields outside business — whether it's politics, sports, the arts, or competitive chess — to offer wisdom on topics of interest to our readers. Here are the highlights from the class of 2015:



“There's a point at which you're not making it better; you're just making it different. You have to be good at recognizing that point.”

-SALMAN RUSHDIE

NADAV KANDER ©HBR.ORG

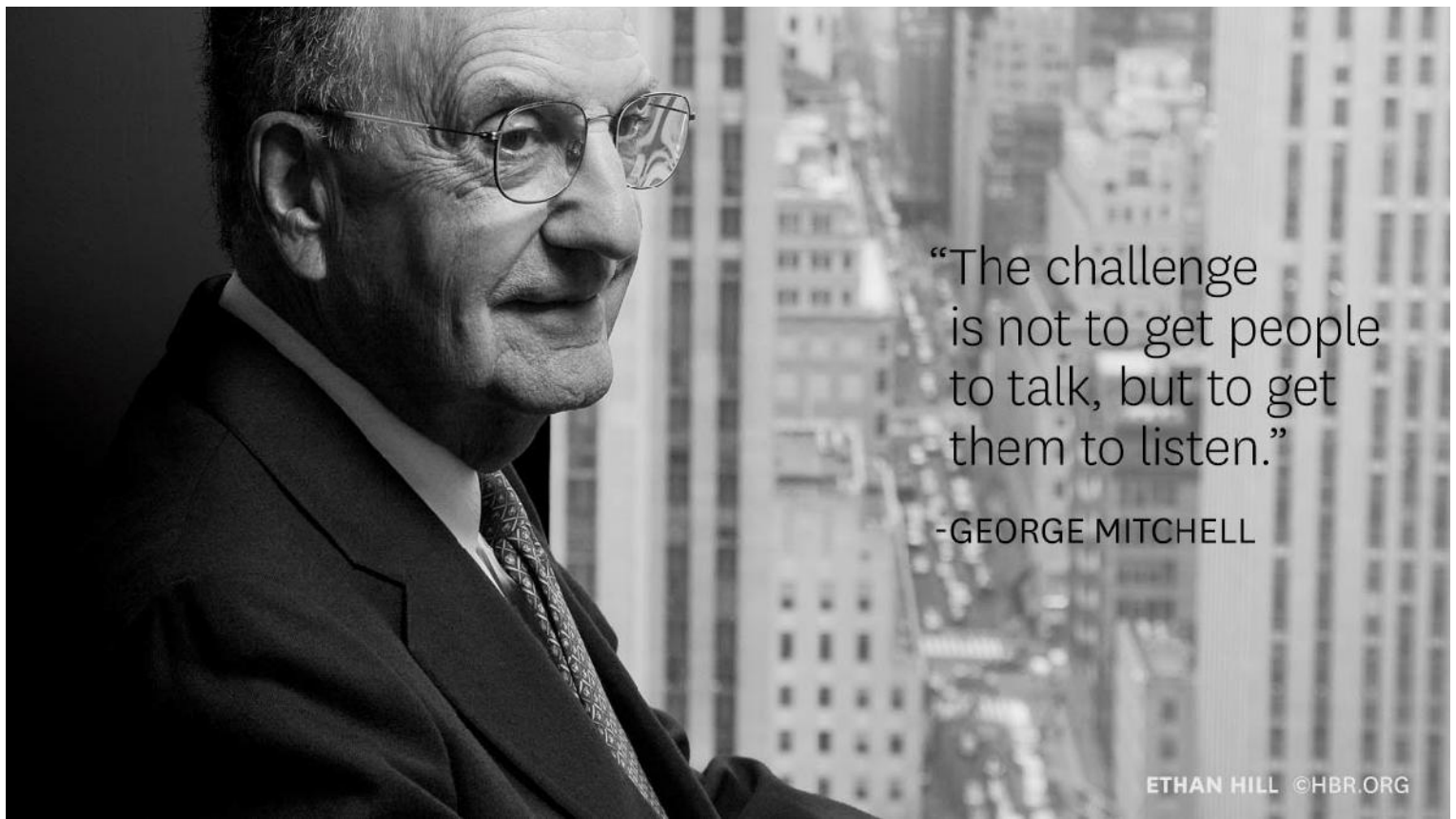
The novelist Salman Rushdie on productivity: “I’ve always told myself to treat it like a 9-to-5 job...It doesn’t matter whether you’re feeling good that day. I don’t think writers or artists can afford to have a ‘creative temperament’ or to wait for inspiration to descend. You have to simply sit there and make yourself do it. Once your mind understands it has no excuses, it’s remarkable how it begins to play along.”

“If you have a sense of yourself, your mission, your belief system, those things will lead you to success.”

-GOLDIE HAWN



Actress and producer Goldie Hawn on dealing with difficult colleagues: “Is it wonderful working with someone who’s gifted and talented and amazing and receptive? Yes. But some actors aren’t that generous. Some are temperamental. [So] you hold your tongue. You be patient and try to understand. If you get agitated, you’ll screw yourself up... You want to be able to think clearly, and the only way to do that is by getting quiet and knowing that you can’t change someone else but you can certainly change you.”



Former U.S. Senator and peace negotiator George Mitchell on resolving disputes: “First there has to be a certain level of knowledge about the history and nature of the conflict...The second thing you need is a recognition that the people involved must own the resolution because they’re the ones who will live with the consequences...Third, you must really have deep reservoirs of patience and perseverance...Fourth, you have to gain the best possible understanding of the bottom line, or basic objectives for each party...Finally, you have to be willing to take a risk when it’s warranted.”



“A great rival is like a mirror.”

-ANDRE AGASSI

MAKI GALIMBERTI/REDUX ©HBR.ORG

Tennis pro Andre Agassi on managing emotions: “I’ve seen people use emotion, positive or negative, as a tool and it works for them. But typically, the more you can remove emotion, the more efficient you’ll be. You can be an inch from winning but still miles away if you allow emotion to interfere with the last step. So you have to accept: the weather, heat, rain, stops and starts, the line calls, whatever your opponent is giving you, however tired or injured you are. There are so many things that can distract you from taking care of business.”



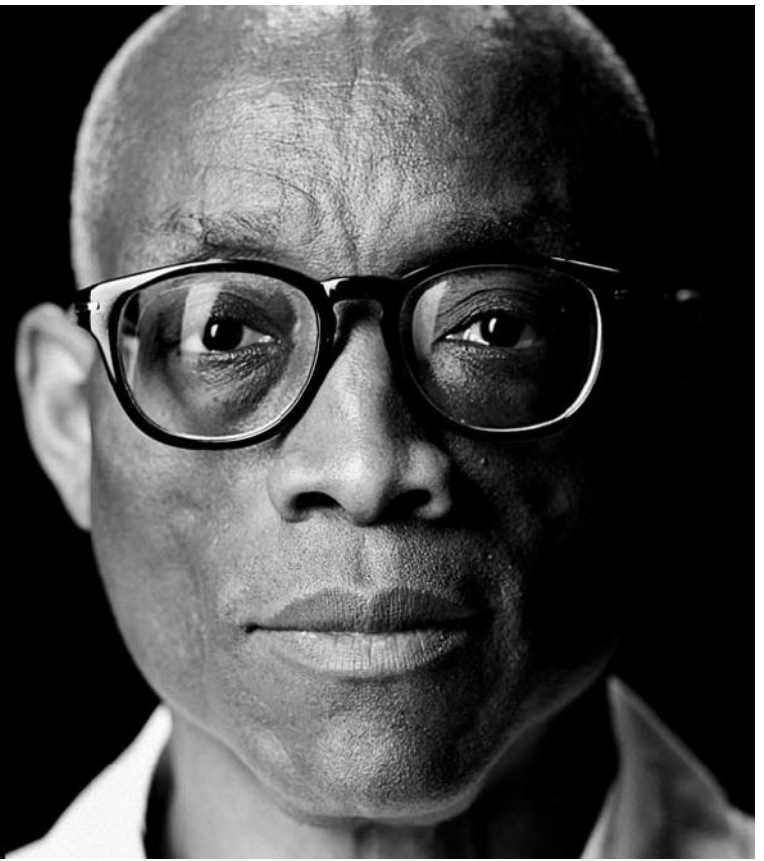
Oscar-winning producer Brian Grazer on delegation: “Because I started at the bottom, I know all the little things that have to happen and I can sense when I’m being bullshitted. You have to know the weeds, to have lived in them, to delegate. I wouldn’t want to be a leader who had never lived in the weeds.”



Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns on heroic leadership: “We choose leaders abysmally today. We expect perfection, and when we don’t find it we lament the absence of heroes. But heroism, by the very definition that came down from the Greeks, is a negotiation between strengths and weaknesses. Maybe I’m being glib when I say that people like the Roosevelts and Lincoln couldn’t make it past the Iowa caucuses, but it would be very difficult for them to succeed in this environment.”

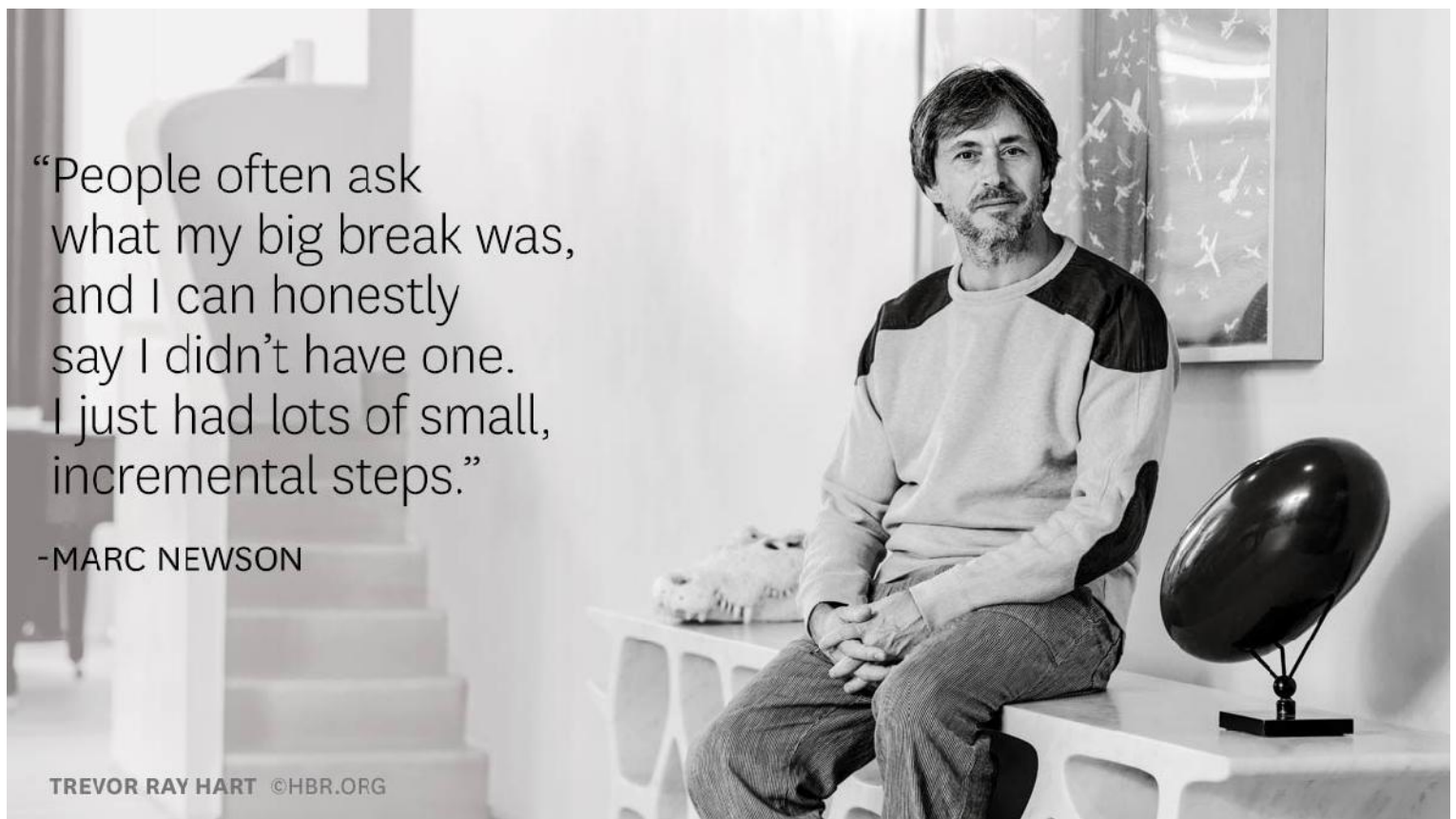
“Considering how volatile and confrontational I can be, it’s a wonder there’s this talented corps of people around me.”

-BILL T. JONES



FLORA HANITJO ©HBR.ORG

Dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones on self-doubt: “I’m depressive. Six years ago I didn’t know if I had the stuff to stay alive. So what do you do? One way through is to keep working. Going to therapy is another. So is looking into the eyes of the people who love you. For me, that’s the man I married, Bjorn [Amelan], as well as my associate artistic director Janet Wong, who whenever I’m despairing looks at me in a way that says, ‘Why are you indulging in this? It’s not who you are. We have work to do.’ Doubt is fought by love and commitment to something bigger.”



Designer Mark Newson on inspiration: “‘Anger’ is probably too strong a word but if we were happy with the way everything was, we wouldn’t have anything to do. You don’t have to look very far to realize that things could be a lot better, and the reason they aren’t is because no one has thought about it enough.”

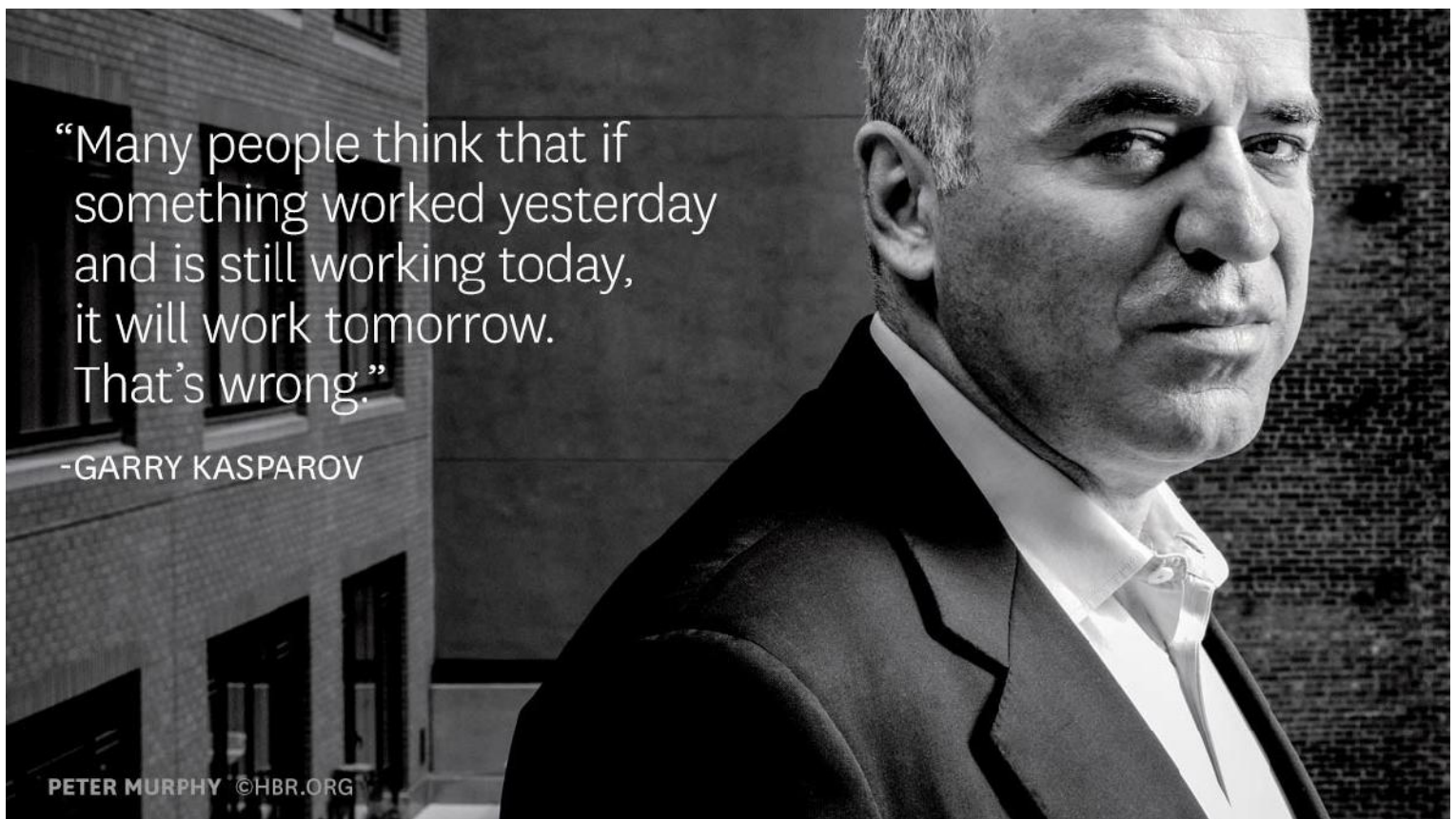


“Both my girls will probably face the same issues with work/life balance that I did—our country is still in the Dark Ages when it comes to accommodating working families.”

-KATIE COURIC

CHARLES OMMANNEY/GETTY IMAGES ©HBR.ORG

News anchor Katie Couric on authenticity: “A morning show...allows for casual conversation and interaction that makes your essence particularly obvious. I think that was one reason I was successful in the morning. People felt they were getting the genuine article. I was the same off-camera as I was on. When I went to do the CBS Evening News, the format did not allow me to be as relaxed and show my personality. For the most part you’re reading lead-ins to other people’s stories — 22 minutes in all — and I couldn’t relate to the audience in the way I’d been able to in the morning.”



“Many people think that if something worked yesterday and is still working today, it will work tomorrow. That’s wrong.”

-GARRY KASPAROV

PETER MURPHY ©HBR.ORG

Chess champion Garry Kasparov on coaching and competition: “There’s this conventional wisdom that it’s possible to give universal advice — a tip. But we’re all different. Your decision-making process is as unique as your fingerprints or your DNA. Something that works for you may be counterproductive for me. Some of us are more aggressive; some more defensive. You have to understand who you are, know what you’re capable of and what you’re not, and then try to construct a game — or a deal or a campaign — in which your superior qualities will be factors and your disadvantages will not be displayed.”

Alison Beard is a senior editor at *Harvard Business Review*.

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