

SELF-MASTERY · THE ONE ACADEMY™

S.P.E.A.R.

A Short Guide to Self-Mastery

Liviu Ursan

Liviu Ursan

S.P.E.A.R.™ — A Short Guide to Self-Mastery

S.P.E.A.R.™ is a concept and educational framework developed by Liviu Ursan. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced without the author's written permission.

liviursan.ro · thelone1.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

S — Situation

P — Perception

E — Emotion

A — Action

R — Result

SPEAR Applied to Health

SPEAR Applied to Relationships

SPEAR Applied to Money

The Next Step

INTRODUCTION

I Want Power

Everyone wants power. Few name it correctly.

I don't mean power over others — over a partner, an employee, an economic situation. I mean something much simpler and, in my experience, much rarer: the power to see clearly what's happening inside you, in the moment it actually matters.

I spent years looking for that answer in different places — in psychology books, in Stoicism, in coaching, in my own decisions, some good, some not. I kept noticing the same sequence: something happens. You assign it a meaning. The meaning produces an emotion. The emotion produces an action. The action produces a result. And the result becomes, almost every time, the proof for the meaning you assigned in the first place.

That's how the circle closes — and that's how we stay, often for years, in the same place, believing we've changed something because we changed the surface-level behavior. We lose weight, we gain it back. We reconcile, we fight again over the same thing, in different words. We save, then give in to one impulsive decision that brings us right back to where we started.

Not because we're weak. Because we kept attacking the wrong end of the chain.

S.P.E.A.R. is the map of that sequence. Situation. Perception. Emotion. Action. Result. It isn't a theory. It's a tool — and, like any tool, it's worth exactly as much as you use it. I'm not offering it to you as a philosophy to contemplate. I'm offering it as something to use tonight, at the first situation that knocks you off balance.

This book is short on purpose. I didn't want to write another thick volume you buy, shelve, and never finish. I wanted something you could read in an hour and apply the same day — to your health, to a relationship, to a financial decision. The rest — the depth, the sustained practice, the guidance — comes elsewhere, if and when you're ready for it.

For now, this is all you need: the Situation is always neutral. Everything else is built by you. And that's exactly why it can be rebuilt.

A word about who's telling you this. I'm not a theorist. I didn't build S.P.E.A.R. at a desk, reading studies — I built it by living, by getting things wrong, by observing, correcting, and doing it again. Everything in these pages passed through my own life, my own decisions, the hard conversations with the people I love, before it ever became something I'd teach someone else. If at points it feels like I'm speaking too directly about my own difficult moments, that's intentional — a model about inner honesty wouldn't make much sense taught from behind a mask of perfection.

S — Situation

Everything starts with a fact.

The Situation is what actually happened — what a video camera could have recorded, with no interpretation added. It's the kind of thing any witness would confirm, regardless of their opinion of you or the context. It contains no adjectives. No intent. No conclusions about character.

'They arrived at 10:20' is a Situation. 'They don't respect me' is not. 'Sales dropped 12% this month' is a Situation. 'We're about to fail' is not.

It sounds like a trivial distinction. It isn't. Most of the people I've coached over the years come to me convinced their problem is a Situation, when the real problem sits much further down the chain — at Perception, at Emotion, or at an Action repeated out of habit for so long it's become invisible. That confusion between fact and interpretation is the source of a great deal of unnecessary suffering, because we try to solve something that can't be solved — an interpretation dressed in the clothes of a fact.

The test I always use, with myself and with clients, is simple: what could a camera and a microphone have actually recorded? If the answer contains intent, character, or an assumption about the

future, you're no longer in the Situation. You've already moved on, without noticing.

That doesn't mean your interpretation is wrong. It just means it's yours — and, being yours, it can be checked, discussed, tested against the facts. An interpretation you mistake for a fact can never be checked. Only defended.

I learned this lesson the hard way during a period when medical scans showed a problem with my spine. The fact, the Situation, was simple: an MRI image with a certain result, a few words written by a doctor on a page. Everything else — the fear of surgery, the scenarios where I could no longer function normally, the nights I spent imagining myself dependent on others, unable to live my life the way I knew it — wasn't the Situation. It was a construction of my own mind, starting from a real fact but far bigger and darker than the fact itself.

I spent a few days effectively living in that imagined future, not in the actual present. My body was reacting to scenarios that hadn't happened yet — and that, as it turned out, never happened the way I'd built them. That separation, between what had actually happened and what I'd added on top, was the first real step toward calm. Not because the medical issue disappeared. Because I stopped doubling it with entirely imaginary suffering.

The exercise I start every coaching session with is exactly this: 'Tell me the Situation, without a single word that wouldn't hold up in a courtroom.' It usually takes a few tries to get there — because we're trained to blend fact and story from the very first sentence.

Try it right now, with something on your mind this week. Write one sentence — just the Situation. Then read it back and ask

yourself: would anyone confirm it, regardless of their opinion of me? If the answer is no, you still have work to do separating fact from story. That's not a failure — it's exactly where the model starts being useful.

CHAPTER 2

P — Perception

This is where almost everything happens.

Perception is the meaning your mind assigns to the Situation. It isn't a fact. It's an interpretation — and, like any interpretation, it can differ from person to person, even when the Situation is identical for both.

The short formula I teach constantly: $S \neq P$. The Situation is not equal to the Perception. We treat them as the same thing, and it costs us enormously — because once you believe your Perception IS reality, you have no reason left to question it. Why would you check something you're already certain is true?

I lived this directly through a major decision in my own life — choosing my professional path and, later, my relationship with my wife, Andreea, in a direction different from what my family, especially my mother, had imagined for me. The Situation was simple: I was choosing a path, a partner, a way of living my life. Her Perception, at the time, was one of loss — as if my choice meant a rejection of everything she held important, an irreversible distancing.

I'm not saying her Perception was illegitimate or unfounded. I'm saying it was hers, built from her own history, her own fears, her

own values formed over a lifetime. And I, in turn, had my own Perception of her reaction — I read it as rejection, as judgment, sometimes as proof I would never have the approval I needed. From my Perception came my own emotions, at times just as intense as hers, and my own actions — some defensive, some prideful, few of them wise.

What I learned, over time, is that you can't negotiate directly with the Situation. You can't negotiate directly with someone else's Perception either — that one is theirs, just as real to them as yours is to you. You can only negotiate with your own Perception. Once I can see clearly which interpretation I'm carrying in a given moment, I can choose whether to keep it — not by denying it, but by honestly checking it.

This isn't forced positive thinking, the 'let's look on the bright side' kind. It's a much simpler and much harder question: 'What do I actually believe this means? And is it true, or just familiar?' Often our strongest Perceptions aren't true — they're just old. We inherited them, practiced them, confirmed them so many times they came to feel like reality instead of opinion.

Separating S from P doesn't resolve a conflict with your mother instantly. But it changes the entire playing field: I'm no longer fighting an undisputed fact, I'm working with an interpretation — mine and hers — that can, with time and honesty, be adjusted.

Over the years, our relationship changed — not because I convinced her to think differently, but because we both stopped treating our initial Perceptions as the only possible ones. She needed time to check her fears against the real results in my life. I needed time to understand that her reaction came from

frightened love, not rejection. Neither shift would have been possible while we confused Perception with a final verdict — hers about me, or mine about her.

CHAPTER 3

E — Emotion

Emotion isn't the enemy.

Emotion is the vibration in the body, always produced by Perception — never directly by the Situation itself. This matters, because many people believe they're 'too sensitive' or 'too reactive,' when the real issue isn't their capacity to feel, but the Perception behind what they're feeling. Emotion is the messenger. We have a habit of punishing the messenger for the message it brings.

You can feel anger without attacking. You can feel fear and still take the difficult step. Emotion prepares an impulse — but the impulse is not the Action. Between them there's a space, however small, sometimes no longer than a few seconds, and in that space real freedom begins. Nearly all of Self-Mastery happens, practically speaking, in that tiny space between feeling and acting.

For a long time I believed I had to eliminate 'negative' emotions to function well. Anger, fear, shame — I treated them as flaws to fix, as proof of a weakness I needed to hide, especially from myself. I only understood later that they don't need to be eliminated. They need to be recognized for what they are: information about the Perception I just chose, consciously or not.

When I feel an intense emotion now, the first question isn't 'how do I get rid of this as fast as possible,' but 'what do I actually believe right now, to be feeling exactly this?' Most of the time, the emotion shifts not because I repressed it or forced it away, but because I saw clearly the thought feeding it — and once seen, that thought loses part of its grip.

This doesn't mean every negative emotion needs to be 'fixed' immediately. Sometimes sadness, frustration, even anger are appropriate responses to a real Situation, and the rush to eliminate them is itself a form of avoidance. The distinction I make is between feeling an emotion as honest information and being blindly driven by it toward an Action you'll regret later.

Self-Mastery doesn't mean you stop feeling anger, fear, or desire. It means you're no longer required to act on them automatically, without a single second of pause between impulse and behavior.

CHAPTER 4

A — Action

This is where everything you've built so far becomes visible.

Action is what you do, or don't do, in direct response to what you feel. Inaction is itself a form of Action — silence, delay, avoidance are choices, even when they don't feel like choices in the moment. 'I did nothing' is, quite often, the most effective way to keep the exact same Situation going for another month, another year, another decade.

Most people try to change the Result by changing the Action directly, without ever touching the Perception or Emotion behind it. It can be done — but it's the hard way, and it rarely holds. It's far simpler and far more stable to change the interpretation and then act naturally from it, than to force a new behavior on top of an unchanged Perception. Discipline built on denial — 'I'm not allowed to do X' — collapses quickly, usually at the exact moment of fatigue or stress when you need it most. Discipline built on clarity — 'I no longer believe X serves me' — holds, because it isn't fighting anything anymore. It simply stops making sense.

I saw this clearly when I quit smoking. For a long time, my 'action' was a daily battle of willpower — I'd hold out for hours, sometimes days, but the Perception underneath stayed the

same: 'I need this to calm down, to function, to cope.' With that Perception intact, every day of abstinence was a form of deprivation, and deprivation, sooner or later, gives way. The real quitting didn't come from more willpower or more discipline. It came when I actually changed the interpretation: it wasn't a calming tool I needed anymore, just an old habit inherited from a period of my life that no longer existed. From the new Perception, the Action became almost simple — not easy, but simple, in the sense that it stopped being a daily fight.

The same logic applies to any habit you try to change through force alone. Diets that 'don't work,' savings plans abandoned by month two, New Year's resolutions forgotten by February — more often than not, it isn't a case of insufficient willpower. It's an unchanged Perception, forced into a new Action that doesn't fit it, one the body and mind eventually reject.

The question I keep asking, in any situation where I want a different result: if I believed something different about this, what would I do differently right now? The answer usually shows me exactly where I need to work — not on the surface behavior, but on the belief underneath it.

CHAPTER 5

R — Result

The Result isn't the end.

The Result is the effect of your Action — and, most of the time, it becomes the proof for the original Perception. If you believed you weren't capable of something, acted from fear or avoidance, and the result was poor, your mind will take that as 'see, I was right all along.' The cycle closes itself, almost perfectly, unless you intervene consciously — and with each repetition, the original belief grows stronger, harder to challenge, more 'true.'

But the Result doesn't have to remain a verdict. It can become information.

The difference between the two is enormous, even though at first it sounds like a matter of vocabulary. A verdict tells you who you are — 'I'm not good with money,' 'I'm not the kind of person who succeeds in relationships,' 'I'm the kind of person who gives up.' A piece of information tells you only what you tried and what you might adjust — 'this method didn't work this time,' 'I handled that moment poorly,' 'I gave up because I lacked a clear plan, not because I'm weak.'

An entrepreneur who loses money in a venture can conclude 'I'm no good with money' — a verdict, which will contaminate every

future financial decision, becoming itself the Perception that produces the next poor result. Or they can conclude 'here's what didn't work this time, here's what I'll adjust next time' — information, which feeds directly into a better decision next round.

The Result, whatever it is, becomes part of the next Situation. The S-P-E-A-R cycle never stops — there's no finish line where you're 'done' applying the model. But you decide, every time, whether you enter the next cycle from the same place, with the same Perception reinforced by the previous failure, or from a slightly clearer place, with an interpretation you had the courage to check instead of accepting automatically.

You don't need the perfect answer to every Situation in your life. You just need to see the process a little earlier than last time — to catch the Perception before it turns into automatic Emotion, or the Emotion before it turns into an Action you'll regret. Every second gained in clarity is a second in which choice becomes possible again.

CHAPTER 6

SPEAR Applied to Health

Health doesn't change through willpower alone. It changes through the Perception you choose to believe in the face of the same facts.

A common Situation: bloodwork shows a marker outside the normal range. Or, more simply — you haven't exercised in three weeks, you've been eating carelessly, sleep has been poor lately. A fact, neutral, verifiable.

From here, two possible paths, equally real, equally available. One path: 'My body is failing, I'm past the point of no return, it's too late to change anything' — a Perception that produces shame or resignation, which in turn produces avoidance: you delay the check-up because you don't want the fear confirmed, you avoid the subject in conversation, sometimes you eat precisely to numb the emotional discomfort of the Perception, not actual hunger. This path's Result — a condition that worsens or stagnates — confirms the original fear, reinforcing the belief 'see, I was right, it's too late.'

The other path: 'I have information, I can adjust' — a Perception that produces a calm form of determination, without drama, without exaggerated promises to yourself. From that calm determination comes a concrete step — a doctor's appointment,

a small change in diet, resuming exercise tomorrow, not 'next Monday' or 'next year.' This path's Result — a gradual improvement, sometimes slow — becomes proof that the second interpretation was the useful one, reinforcing the belief 'I can adjust things.'

The Situation was identical in both cases — the same bloodwork, the same body, the same period of neglect. What changed, every time, was only the Perception — and, from it, the entire rest of the chain.

I lived this path directly, with my own spine, during a period when I realized how easily I slip toward the first scenario — the dramatic resignation — if I don't consciously notice what I believe in that moment. The difference between staying stuck in fear for months and taking the first concrete step wasn't a change in medical circumstances. It was a change in Perception, sustained day by day.

There's a third path too, subtler than the first two, one I see often in ambitious, performance-driven people: 'I don't have time for this now, I'll deal with it once I finish the big project.' The Perception sounds rational, even responsible — but it's still a form of avoidance, dressed in the clothes of priorities. From it, Action becomes permanent postponement, and the Result is health managed forever 'later,' never now. I've recognized this pattern in myself too, more than once — and I've learned that 'later' is, most of the time, just another word for 'never,' said in a calm voice.

I'm not suggesting you treat every symptom with panic, nor that you ignore discomfort with forced calm. I'm only suggesting you notice, honestly, which Perception is actually driving your

decisions about your body — and whether that Perception truly serves you, or is just familiar.

CHAPTER 7

SPEAR Applied to Relationships

Your relationship with someone is, for the most part, your relationship with your Perceptions about them.

A frequent Situation in any couple: your partner doesn't reply to a message for a few hours. Or says something in a tone you interpret a certain way. I've lived versions of this scene at home too, often starting from seemingly minor misunderstandings — about tone, about unspoken expectations around a meal, about how a remark should have been phrased, about who should have understood whom without being told.

Each of us arrives with our own Perception of what silence, tone, or haste from the other person means — Perceptions built from the family we come from, from past relationships, from personal fears we've carried far longer than the current relationship has existed.

From a Perception like 'they don't care about me' comes unease, then, often, anger — and from anger come repeated messages, an accusatory tone from the first second of the conversation, an argument that, at its root, has nothing to do with the few hours of silence and everything to do with the interpretation behind it, one

that built and hardened in the absence of any real information.

From a Perception like 'they're probably busy, I don't know why yet' comes a far more neutral state — you can go on with your day without being consumed by it, you can simply ask, without reproach, when you actually talk. Same Situation, the same few hours of silence, but a completely different day lived on the inside.

I've noticed, in my own marriage, how often the real conflicts didn't start from what was actually said or done, but from what each of us assumed it meant. A remark about food interpreted as reproach. A silence interpreted as disinterest. Every time, separating the fact from the interpretation was the step that stopped the escalation — not because we reached instant agreement, but because we finally got to talk about the real thing: the interpretation, not the presumed fact.

An exercise I recommend often to couples I work with: before reacting to something your partner said or did, write down, in two or three words, the exact Situation — not how it felt, but what actually happened. Then write your Perception separately. Often, the simple act of separating them on paper shows how much of the reaction comes from interpretation, not fact. It's not an exercise that instantly fixes a difficult relationship — but it's the first honest step toward a real conversation, instead of one held with the ghosts of your own assumptions.

You can't control the other person's behavior — what they say, how quickly they reply, the tone they choose in a tired moment. You can control, every time, what you do with your interpretation of them. And, more often than not, that's where it's decided

whether an evening becomes a conflict or stays just an ordinary evening.

Long, healthy relationships aren't the ones without conflict. They're the ones where both partners learn, over time, to check their Perceptions before treating them as absolute truth about the other person.

CHAPTER 8

SPEAR Applied to Money

Financial freedom doesn't start with the number in your account. It starts with the Perception you hold about your own capacity to decide well.

A common Situation: an unexpected expense comes up, or an investment opportunity appears and needs a quick decision. A fact, neutral — a sum, a deadline, a few variables to calculate.

One possible Perception: 'I don't have enough, it's not the right time, I'll get it wrong no matter what I choose' — which produces fear, sometimes total paralysis in the face of the decision. From fear, you either avoid the decision entirely, delaying it until the good options disappear on their own, or you decide impulsively just to escape the discomfort of waiting, without any real calculation. Both paths usually produce a poor result — which confirms 'see, I'm no good with money,' reinforcing the very Perception that produced the bad decision in the first place.

A different Perception, facing the same Situation: 'I have the information, or I can get it, and I can decide with a clear head' — which produces focused attention, without panic. From that attention, you ask for more details, calculate options, decide with a clear point for reassessment, not a final, irreversible one. The Result, whatever it is — gain or loss — becomes information for

the next decision, not a verdict on your worth or intelligence.

Money most often amplifies the Perception you already hold about yourself. It rarely creates it from scratch. Someone who perceives themselves as capable will treat a financial loss as a costly but useful lesson. Someone who perceives themselves as incapable will treat the same loss as confirmation of a belief far older than that particular sum of money — often one formed in childhood, around the family table, long before any real financial decision was ever on the table.

The real work, in the area of money, isn't always about technical financial education — though that helps enormously. Just as often, it's about identifying the old Perception you carry into every decision, and checking it honestly, instead of letting it drive automatically, the way it has for years.

I've met people with considerable income who still lived from a Perception of lack — every financial decision made from fear, never from clarity, no matter how much the account balance grew. And I've met people with modest resources making calm, informed decisions, because they'd checked their Perception about money instead of leaving it untreated, inherited. The number in the account almost always follows the Perception — not the other way around, as we're usually told.

If you want one starting exercise, it's this: next time you feel a strong financial impulse — either to spend impulsively or to avoid a decision entirely — stop and name the Perception behind it. Don't act on it automatically. Just name it. Often, that alone is enough for the next Action to be chosen, not executed on autopilot.

CHAPTER 9

The Next Step

You've now read the entire map. Situation, Perception, Emotion, Action, Result — a single process, applied to three different areas of your life: health, relationships, money. The same five moves, every time, regardless of the context they show up in.

Knowing the model, on its own, changes nothing. I've seen this in hundreds of people over years of coaching — they understand the concept perfectly, intellectually, they could even explain it clearly to someone else, and yet they keep following the exact same automatic path in their daily lives, because no one helped them apply it repeatedly, with real guidance, to their actual situations, in the moments that matter.

That's the difference between reading about a map and actually walking the road, with someone who's been there before and can show you exactly where most people get lost.

The ONE Academy is where I built exactly this bridge — from understanding the model to applying it with sustained support, structure, community, direct guidance from me and my team. It isn't for everyone, and it isn't for every moment in life — but if you feel ready for the next step, not just to understand S.P.E.A.R., but to live it, with someone beside you who can help you see what's hard to see alone, I'll be waiting there.

The Situation is always neutral. Everything else is built by you. And that's exactly why it can be rebuilt — starting with today's first Situation, if you choose to pause one second before the automatic reaction.

livioursan.ro · thelonel.com