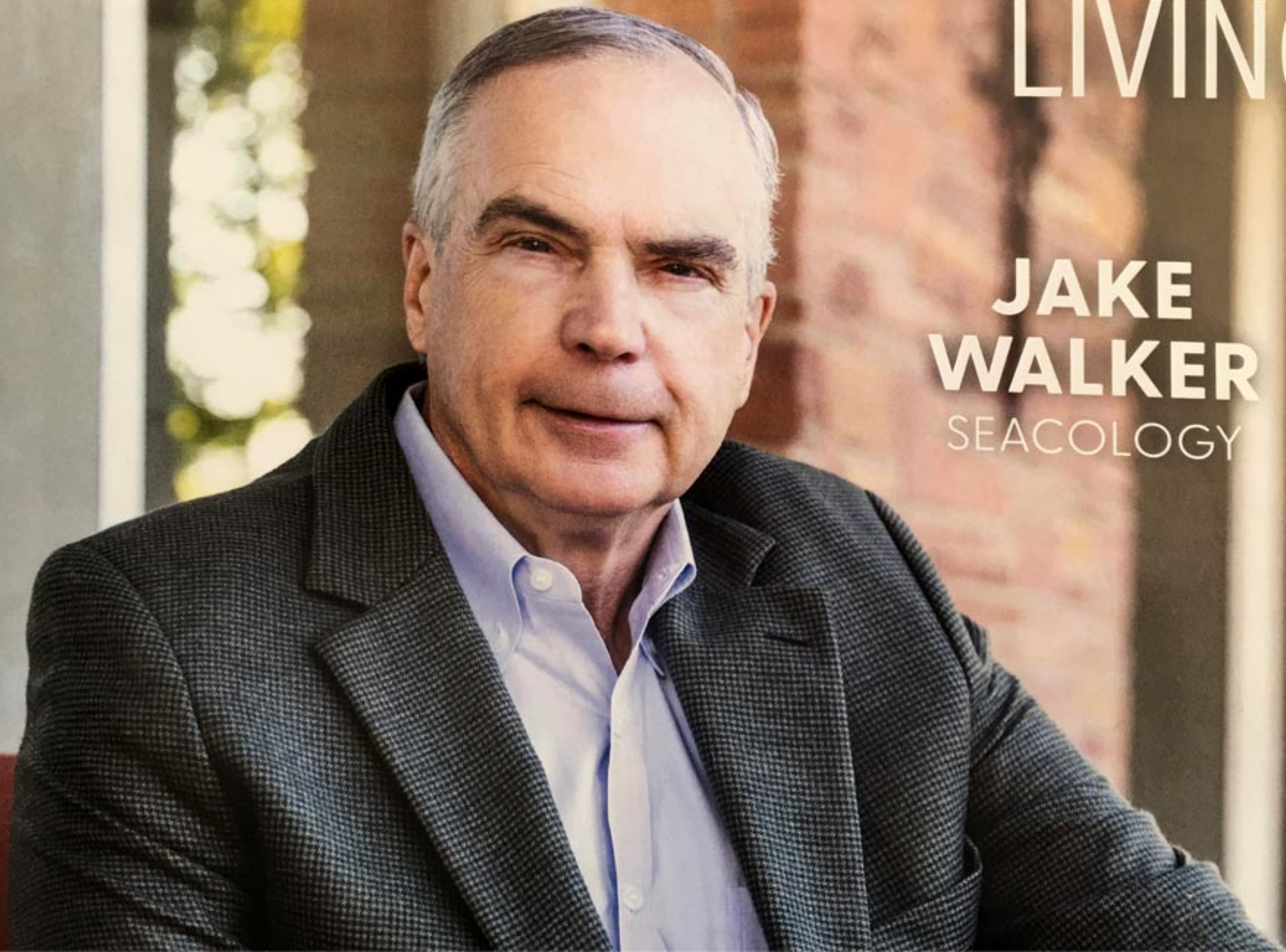


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Evolving to Higher Levels of Consciousness

By Brent Zeller



Marin is known as a place where people aspire to evolve to higher levels of consciousness. This is a vital goal for our planet. The interesting aspect about evolving toward a higher consciousness is that the key to achieving this goal involves removing competition from the process. Competition, us versus them, actually perpetuates being stuck in a lower level of consciousness. And competition pretty much dominates everything in our society. People talk about working together, but our educational system, from an early age, teaches us to see

others as adversaries and obstacles to our goals. How can we work together and solve the myriad problems all around us when we've been programmed and indoctrinated to instinctively compete against each other? This is the crux of the problem we face today.

In 1992 I began creating a non-competitive learning model for my Effortless Tennis program, the goal—competence before competition. The positive physical and psychological changes seen in students are profound. Many people in Marin have been very successful in competition, but when they arrive at the tennis court to either learn or enhance their skills, what is noticeable immediately is that everyone is way too tense for optimal learning. The root cause of this tension is the premature introduction of competition into the learning process. We start people competing before they have really learned the physical and psychological fundamentals. Does that make any sense? It's the old school-of-hard-knocks, trial-by-fire theory of learning. Competition is an advanced aspect of any sport or endeavor, not appropriate for beginners or those who cannot demonstrate competence in the fundamental skills. Being thrown into competition without basic skills instantly creates anxiety and uncertainty. High-level performance is the goal of a non-competitive learning model, minus the stress of competing before being prepared.

When I talk to people who feel they are competitive, because they've been told that's good, it's like I'm attacking something sacred to them, threatening their child or dog. All I am saying, is it wise to throw children or adults into competition before they have the essential skills necessary for success? Once students can demonstrate competence in the basic physical and psychological skills, then they can compete, if they so desire. An eye-opening realization I've had from my fifty years teaching is that it is not possible to achieve our potential in competition. This may be anathema to many. We've been convinced the only way to be our best is to prove we're better than everyone else through competition. How can we do our best when our opponent is doing everything in their power to prevent us from doing our best? And that is the objective of every good competitor. So, actually, it's impossible to perform our absolute best in competition. Only by working together and helping each other can we hope to achieve our potential. If we are to raise our consciousness to higher levels, we must examine and revise the role competition has played in inhibiting our development, our potential, and our enjoyment.

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