

Rafi Kohan

Author, *Trash Talk*; Expert on Human Behavior, Stress Management, and Peak Performance

What is it that pushes us to perform at our best? Which people on our teams inherently thrive in high-stress/high-stakes environments and which need to feel cool and calm, even as the pressure rises? Why does this distinction matter and how can you use it to drive peak performance? After three years of interviewing more than 200 people, including professional athletes and coaches, military officers, political strategists, poker players, neurobiologists, and elite performance psychologists, Rafi Kohan offers insights into the science of gamesmanship and how the stress we experience can be used to optimize performance and drive resilient behaviors. This work, which culminated in the lively and hilarious read, *Trash Talk: The Only Book About Destroying Your Rivals That Isn't Total Garbage*, features anecdotes from some of the world's top competitors about the mind games that push them to outperform their opponents.

Exclusively represented by [Leading Authorities speakers bureau](#), Rafi shares his unique take on human behavior; the powerful opportunity we all have to harness mental and physiological stress; and the practical ways to apply to our own lives the principles of peak performance that the most successful competitors seem to understand instinctively. Audiences will laugh and nod along as Rafi recounts the smack talking and petty rivalries that are notorious in professional sports and outlines the proven psychology behind them. His speech delivers insights into how each of us can navigate the stress of our lives in order to optimize our anxiety levels, see moments of adversity as challenges instead of threats, achieve improved performance and results, and develop mental resilience.

An Acclaimed Storyteller. A keen observer of the sports world, Kohan's first book, *The Arena: Inside the Tailgating, Ticket-Scalping, Mascot-Racing, Dubiously Funded, and Possibly Haunted Monuments of American Sport*, established him as a finalist for the 2018 PEN/ESPN Award for Literary Sports Writing. In this interdisciplinary examination of the modern American sports stadium, Kohan weaves on-the-ground reporting, original interviews, and deep-dive research into a compelling narrative hailed by *The New York Times Book Review* as "smart, readable, deeply reported and researched, engagingly personal, funny and often surprisingly poignant."

Previously, Kohan served as deputy editor at *The New York Observer*, where he wrote a variety of long-form features and cover stories, including a bombshell profile of Carmelo Anthony in October 2013, which broke the news that the star forward was going to test the free agent market. As a journalist, his writing has also appeared in numerous outlets and publications, including *GQ* (where he worked for five years), *Men's Journal*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Town & Country*, *Slate*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Ringer*, *ESPN*, *Vice*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*, covering everything from identity theft to the World Series of Birding to the New Orleans Police Department on Mardi Gras. Most recently, Kohan worked at *The Atlantic*, as the executive editorial director for Re:think, the magazine's award-winning creative studio. He and his team executed ambitious content programs on behalf of dozens of brands, including HBO, Allstate, Lyft, Nest, Netflix, HPE, The North Face, Google, REI, and Walmart.