

POSITIVITY

Your ability to be optimistic and overcome negative thinking.

WHAT WILL YOUR COACHING CHALLENGE BE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

LOW

Athletes at low levels will:

- Not easily recognize their negative thoughts.
- Have negative self-talk, such as “This is unfair!” which results in poor performance.
- Have difficulty getting along with teammates, especially if they feel they have been treated wrongly.
- Perform poorly in the face of obstacles.

HIGH

Athletes at high levels will:

- Do a good job identifying negative thought patterns.
- Effectively challenge their negative thoughts & replace them with positive or more neutral thoughts.
- Be effective at keeping good relationships.
- Have excellent performance in face of obstacles because of their belief that they can succeed.

HOW CAN YOU MOVE YOUR ATHLETES TO HIGH LEVELS?

Coaching Tips

- **Promote Optimistic Thinking:**
 - ✓ Have athletes actively reframe negative thoughts that lead to poor performance. Encourage them with a mantra like the one used by Coach Nick Saban, “What are you selling today? Positive or negative?”
 - ✓ Praise and reinforce when athletes can channel their negative emotions into positive performance actions such as competing even harder.
 - ✓ Encourage athletes to be fearless and take a chance, which gives them something to strive towards.
- **Stay Grounded:**
 - ✓ Be aware of black and white thinking or language that promotes “always or never” type of thoughts. Encourage athletes to see the grey area in issues.
 - ✓ If athletes have a bad game or practice, encourage them to shake it off and look to the next play.
 - ✓ Help athletes see the bigger picture. Explain how every athlete has setbacks. It’s not about the setback, but rather how they bounce back that matters.
- **Control Emotions:**
 - ✓ Encourage athletes to practice mindfulness to stay in the present moment rather than thinking about the past or focusing too much on the future. Have your athletes take a single deep breath to give their mind a quick break and help change their perspective.
 - ✓ Create a list of motivating statements or mottos as a team to help overcome obstacles.
 - ✓ Help your athletes find healthy outlets (e.g., friends, workout, movies) to control their emotions rather than bottling them up.

Talking Points

- Discuss how negative thinking can impact performance such as not playing as hard or playing to not lose.
- Find examples of professional athletes who were able (or not) to remain positive and how it affected their game.
- Teach your athletes see failure as an opportunity to learn and be better when the next opportunity comes along.
- Discuss ways your athletes can use to shift their attention from negative to positive aspects of the game.

Tools

- APP Lessons: Choose to Be Positive
- CORE Elements: Mental Toughness, Composure
- PRESSURE Elements: Short Fuse, Self-Doubting, Stubborn, Impatient, Perfectionistic

“Even when bad things happen you have to try to use those bad things in a positive manner.” – Natalie du Toit, South African world class swimmer who lost her leg after being hit by a car. She went on to be a Gold Medalist in the 2004 Paralympic Games –