**“Growth Mindset”**

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Sport Psychology**

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“*You can do anything that you set your mind to.*” No really… it’s true! There is a mentality called the growth mindset that can be adopted by all people which leads to greater success and overall performance. Having a growth mindset is associated with having the fundamental belief that your abilities and outcomes are influenced by hard work (as opposed to mere natural talent). It is a way of thinking that not only increases your motivation levels, giving you the drive to work towards your goals, but one that also allows for greater bounce-back from challenges faced along the way (otherwise known as resiliency). The athletes who adopt this way of thinking are the ones that tend to stand out from the rest. They are the ones that persistently look for ways in which they can improve their game and work hard to correct mistakes or bad habits. “*Athletes with the growth mindset find success in doing their best, in learning and improving*” (Dweck, 2006). They don’t need a prize to feel confident, and instead attain it through adopting a growth mindset and focusing on self-improvement. Not everyone has this same way of thinking, though, for there is another mindset called the “fixed mindset” that people often adopt.

The fixed mindset is associated with the fundamental belief that your ability level is limited by natural talent. Which, in essence, is what makes success and outcomes set at a fixed level determined by said ability. Athletes that have a fixed mindset have a fear of trying and failing. Instead of working hard to engage in their own improvement (as someone with the growth mindset would), they often get caught up in their failures/shortcomings, comparing their ability levels to other athletes around them. Someone with a fixed mindset may have all kinds of natural talent, but that talent means very little if they lack the motivation to develop it into something better.

They undermine their chances of success by assuming that their talent alone will take them where they want to go. Because talent has allowed things to come easier to them throughout their career, their confidence is quickly put to the test and often diminishes when they run into a set-back of any kind. The truth is, the athlete isn’t always to blame for having this kind of mindset. Coaches and parents have an influence on their athlete’s mindset based on the way that they communicate with them. When their athlete does something well, parents and coaches often fall into the habit of praising their talent and accomplishments, rather than praising the hard work that the athlete put forth to get there. Although praise is what many athletes like to hear, “*children need honest and constructive feedback that pushes them towards growth as well*” (Dweck, 2006).

That doesn’t necessarily mean that a coach, parent, or team leader should negate praise altogether, but they should be cautious as to what message they are sending the athlete through the way that they deliver that praise. At the end of the day, “*the athlete should recognize the value of challenging themselves and the importance of effort over anything else*” (Dweck, 2006).

One athlete who used the growth mindset to overcome failure throughout his athletic career was Michael Jordan. Believe it or not, he wasn’t always the star athlete that people view him as today. Not only was Jordan cut from his high school’s varsity team, he never got recruited to play for his top college team, and was passed up during the first two draft picks in the NBA. BUT instead of viewing these so-called “failures” as reasons to give up (as many people would), he used them as motivators. In fact, Michael Jordan was featured in a Nike ad where he says, “*I’ve missed more than nine thousand shots. I’ve lost almost three hundred games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot, and missed, and that is why I succeed*” (Dweck, 2006). He succeeds because he has trained his mind to see failure and defeat as a challenge and an opportunity for growth. This should be the mindset of every athlete, for “*success is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.*” (Quote by Colin Powell)

**Source: Dweck, Carol S. Mindset: The New Psychology of Success. 1st ed. New York: Ballantine Books, 2006. Print.**