
JOURNEY

“Sometimes it’s the journey that teaches you a lot about your destination.”

~ **Drake**

“Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome.”

~ **Arthur Ashe**

“You don’t want to get too wrapped up in that final destination. You want to enjoy the journey, enjoy the process, and just take it one step at a time.”

~ **Carli Lloyd**

“A man watches his pear tree day after day, impatient for the ripening of the fruit. Let him attempt to force the process, and he may spoil both fruit and tree. But let him patiently wait, and the ripe pear at length falls into his lap.”

~ **Abraham Lincoln**

“The best competition I have is against myself to become better.”

~ **John Wooden**

It is said that the journey is more important than the destination. The way that we prepare and establish our daily habits says more about us than does the final outcome. Sure, we want positive results and wins. But it is the day-to-day wins that really make up who we are. Football coach Chip Kelley made the mantra “Win the Day” a common phrase when he was coaching the Oregon Ducks to the National

Championship game. He emphasized that they wouldn't win a championship without doing the things necessary each day to put themselves in that position. A football team doesn't win a championship in December or January but in the August, September, October, and November. It is the positive daily habits that end up leading to success.

Bobby Knight, the legendary Indiana basketball coach, was famous for saying "Everybody has the will to win, but not everybody has the will to prepare to win." Coach Knight was on to something. We all want the results. We all want to win. But we don't all want to go through what it actually takes to be a champion. Most of the time, our goals are lofty. Being a winner is a big thing and not easy. We don't just luck into being a champion. We must plan the work and then work the plan. Football coach Herm Edwards likes to say that a goal without a plan is just a wish. Hope is not a viable strategy.

Do you want to lose weight, save money, be a better person, get a promotion, quit smoking, get out of debt, or enjoy life more? All of these are great goals and many people include these in their New Year's resolutions each year. Commitments, planning, and goals are needed to realize these long-term wins.

Every major victory was made possible by the countless minor victories along the way. If the goal is to quit smoking, then stop smoking for this hour...this afternoon...this day. If the idea is to get out of debt, then don't stop at the mall today. If we want to lose 20 pounds, then bypass our normal

after-dinner piece of pie today. Then when tomorrow comes, we do it again. If we should take a step back, that's normal – just “win the day” the next time. Very few teams go undefeated. We can't expect to win every day but we can win on this day. We must tackle our goals in smaller increments. Win the little battles and we'll eventually win the war. Win enough days and we'll eventually be a champion.

The Chinese proverb says that “A journey of a thousand miles begins with just one step.” Each and every step that we take along the journey says something about us. It tells a story. It prepares us for the next step and for the next leg of the journey. However, it is easy for us to lose sight of all of this and want to take short cuts or lack patience.

Many times, when we fail, it is because we became too focused on a particular outcome. We are too focused on the rankings, winning, losing, or who our opponents beat or lost to. We are too focused on winning immediately and seeing results now. By focusing on the process, the proper techniques, and our effort, we put ourselves in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that come our way because we are prepared.

Nick Saban, the head football coach at the University of Alabama, seems to be the poster-child (so to speak) for the benefits of focusing on “the process”. He emphasizes the process – the journey – and how it leads to more lasting success, both in life and on the football field. In a nine-year stretch from 2009 to 2017, Saban's Alabama teams won five National Championships.

Sure, Saban wants to win ball games but he believes that ball games are not necessarily won on game days but in the days leading up to those Saturdays in the Fall. He believes that winning championships are a result of all of the things that go into the preparation, not necessarily because of what a team does or doesn't do during the National Championship game.

Saban first decided to focus on the process and the journey when he was coaching at Michigan State and had a below average squad compared to the #1 Ohio State Buckeyes, whom they'd be facing that particular week. In a paradoxical coaching move, the Spartans gave Ohio State their only loss on the season by not worrying about winning the game, but by focusing on doing things right regardless of the outcome.

"We decided to use the approach that we're not going to focus on the outcome", said Saban. "We were just going to focus on the process of what it took to play the best football you could play, which was to focus on that particular play as if it had a history and life of its own. Don't look at the scoreboard, don't look at any external factors, just all your focus and all your concentration, all your effort, all your toughness, all your discipline to execute went into that particular play.

"Regardless of what happened on that play, success or failure, you would move on to the next play and have the same focus to do that on the next play, and you'd then do that for 60 minutes in a game and then you'd be able to live with the results regardless of what those results were." ¹

A process-focused mentality leads to team development, individual growth, and skill mastery because each day is about achieving those things. Take each day as a day to improve as a person and as an athlete. We must challenge ourselves to not talk about winning games or winning a championship.

Saban encouraged his athletes to define success through a process focused mentality instead of it being results driven. He constantly talked to his athletes about giving 100% intensity or completing each set when they were in the weight room. He wanted them to give 100% effort in the classroom, as well as practice each day. He wanted their best regardless of the outcome.

When we are process-focused, each day is a day to improve. We don't have a goal set way out in front of us that we hope to get to at some point. Each day is taken as it comes and is an opportunity to be better than before.

If we focus on the process, we will be moving forward every day. Then we get to enjoy every moment of our performance as we just continue to grow. Process-focused people are happier people. And surprise! Success will come and because we aren't focused on it, it's the best success there is. Fall in love with the process of improvement and growth. Enjoy the journey!