
YES

“If someone offers you an amazing opportunity and you’re not sure you can do it, say yes – then learn how to do it later.”

~ **Sir Richard Branson**

“Success is when I add value to myself. Significance is when I add value to others.”

~ **John C. Maxwell**

“Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.”

~ **Sheryl Sandberg**

“A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success.”

~ **Unknown**

“Positivity is like a boomerang. The more we put it out there, the more it comes back to us.”

~ **Jon Gordon**

The “Yes” trait is not that you say yes to everything and try to please everyone. Rather, this trait is about being solution-oriented. It is having a can-do attitude. It is the ability to be positive and find ways to get things done. This is accomplished through enthusiasm and positive leadership. Positive leadership is not about ignoring negatives or living in denial, but rather it is the ability to overcome the negative.

Years ago, National Soccer Team coach Tony DiCicco and Sports Psychologist Colleen Hacker

wrote a book entitled *Catch Them Being Good*. Even though I was a basketball coach, I read it and it changed the way I coached. I started finding reasons to empower, encourage and lift up my players. I wanted them to believe that they could reach their untapped potential. Certainly, I was not always perfect at doing this, but it was what I strived for. It was something I was intentional about.

People want to be encouraged, empowered and uplifted. People want to know that others believe in them. I am not talking about fake encouragement. This is not saying “you can win this game” when we are down 30 points with one-minute left to play. This is the type of encouragement that says “together we will continue to fight, scrape and claw to finish strong and then learn so that we are better the next game.” Empowering people means that we will find ways to utilize their talents and strengths.

Going into the 2017 College Football Playoffs, very few people gave the Clemson Tigers much of a chance to win the National Championship. In fact, even though they had the same 11-1 record as Ohio State, their semifinal opponent, they were big Vegas underdogs. Yet, they upset the Buckeyes 31-0. They would now face the seemingly unbeatable Alabama Crimson Tide led by Nick Saban. Alabama had won 26 straight games. However, Clemson pulled off the upset in the National Championship game. Later, Clemson’s coach Dabo Swinney would be described as an overachiever, but he would refute that label. He said, “I am not an overachiever, I am an overbeliever”.

If you have ever watched a press conference or

interview with Dabo Swinney or seen him on the sidelines of a game, then you know that he is passionate about his players. He truly cares about them and believes in them. That belief had a huge impact on his team winning the 2017 National Championship. His ability to find ways to motivate, inspire, and encourage his guys has been the main reason Clemson has become a consistent championship contender.

Apple's founder Steve Jobs was famous for inspiring his team to do more, create more and become more than they ever thought possible. His employees called this his reality distortion field. He was able to distort their reality from pessimistic (some would say realism) to optimism. He did not want to accept the norm. Just like Dabo Swinney, he believed in the ability of his people to go higher and accomplish more.

A study by a professor at Harvard University supports the ideas that the emotions that we feel are contagious and can affect the people around us. Student-athletes are just as likely to catch the coach's bad mood as they are to catch a cold. Likewise, an athlete can also catch a coach's good mood. Whether we are a coach or a player, when we walk into practice, the locker room or the cafeteria, are we a germ or a big dose of Vitamin C? We can have a huge impact and influence (both positive and negative) by the words we use and the actions that we take.

We do not have to invent the iPhone or have an Ivy League education or be a championship coach to add value to others. All we need to do is

intentionally seek out ways to help the people around you do more, create more and become more than they ever thought possible. This is not just about coaches empowering and encouraging their players. Anyone can do it. Students can do this for teachers. Players can do this for their coaches. Players can do this for other players. The best players make those around them better.

If a teammate misses all eight of their three-point attempts, including the last shot of the game then we are presented with an opportunity to uplift that teammate. We also have the opportunity to send a positive message to the entire team. Oftentimes, players will say something to the effect of “We have to make more shots next time” or “We just didn’t shoot very well tonight”.

However, what if we said, “I love that we were able to get J.R. eight shots tonight. He is a great shooter, which is exactly why I keep passing him the ball. I am glad that he is on our team and I don’t have to go against him. I am going to keep feeding him the ball when he is open.” Those kinds of statements can go a long way toward keeping our teammates motivated and encouraged.

Another common situation is when things do not go our way. Maybe we are sitting on the bench and not getting as much playing time as we would like. We can choose to fixate on our situation or choose to focus on what we can do to turn it into a positive. If we are sitting on the bench but still cheering on our teammates, what kind of effect could this have? Maybe our teammates will respect us more. Maybe our coach will notice us. Maybe a

future employer will be in the stands and take note of your positive mindset and attitude. Our attitude and enthusiasm might end up being contagious. In the same way, having a pity-party can also be contagious. Our teammates (and coaches) need as much encouragement as possible. Sometimes the best way to cheer ourselves up is to cheer someone else up.

Some of you reading this might be coaches. Some of you are players. Some of you are seniors. Some of you are freshmen. Some of you are stars. Some of you are bench-warmers. Some of you may have a position of leadership while others of you may not.

However, when it comes to encouragement, anyone can do it. Anyone can make a situation better. Making situations better can allow us to have a stronger influence. Influence is leadership. The leadership expert, John C. Maxwell says that “Leaders become great, not because of their power, but because of their ability to empower others.” It is a valuable skill we all can possess.

Remember that we have the choice in every word and action whether we will be a big dose of Vitamin-C or a germ. Will we make a situation better or worse? Will we add value to those around us or look out only for ourselves? What will we do today to believe the best in people.

Try to add something of value to every situation that we encounter. Spread positivity. Catch people being good. Be a big dose of Vitamin-C to those around us. Find a way to get things done. Be solution-focused rather than problem-fixated.