

Think **BIG?** Think **Again...**



"Think big! Aim for the stars! Even if you don't reach the stars, at least you get to land on the moon!" The concept of thinking big and taking massive action to reach or even surpass your goals has been preached by lots of motivational experts and it is especially popular at this time of the year where we make resolutions.

Do you agree with the idea of thinking big? Have you tried it? And, has it worked for you? From my experience as a mental skill coach for sport, I noticed that thinking big works only for a small number of very driven athletes, athletes with strong enough belief systems to support big thoughts and stretch goals. For most of us, thinking big often leads to big disappointments and here's why...

Limiting Beliefs->Thoughts ->Actions-> Limited Results

We may have thousands of big and positive thoughts going through our minds but none of them have any power unless they stem from our beliefs. A belief is a thought that we make real, or accept as true. Most of us have crafted our beliefs during childhood which served to protect us at that moment. Unfortunately, during our adult life, these limiting beliefs are almost always geared towards protecting us from perceived danger or disappointment. Thinking big will only work if you can believe big! Otherwise, your belief system will find all ways and means to "protect you" by overriding your big thoughts with thoughts that involve the least action and risks instead.

Breaking It Down...

I was recently involved with coaching a school hockey team that has not won a single match in two years. They were even thrashed 17-0 by another team just before I met them. Preaching to these guys about thinking big after losing by such a big margin would almost certainly sound like gibberish. Why would they want to believe in thinking big and risk even greater disappointment?

Instead of getting them to think big, we broke down the task of improving their performance into baby steps that they could believe in. The team had only a 40% successful passing rate. Out of every ten passes made, only four found their mark. It is simple math; the more successful passes the team makes, the less likely they will concede goals because the opponent simply cannot score without the ball. We gave the boys a target that they believed they could achieve-improve their passing rate by 10% but focusing on increasing just one more successful pass (from four to five) for every ten made.

There was an immediate shift in their attitude during training, they were more focused and motivated. Although they still lost narrowly in the next game, they managed to increase their passing percentage to 52%. Instead of feeling like losers, the boys felt good for having exceeded the target of 50% and were motivated to train even harder. Success builds on success, and I am certain that they will eventually find their first victory as long as they progress along these baby steps!

Positive Beliefs->Thoughts ->Actions-> Positive Results

Why did I bring up the example of this sporting incident? Did you manage to get any insights from this? If you think about it, success really depends on how effective we are in accomplishing a series of baby steps that eventually add up to the big goal. These baby steps require consistent energy and focus. Instead of focusing on the task at hand, our limiting beliefs may cause our minds to be occupied by fears that we may not attain our goals and the disappointment that follows. Thinking big becomes a cause of stress and distraction when it should be a source of inspiration!

I see many friends and athletes getting caught up in the cycle of being hyped up by big goals and being disappointed again and again because their belief system simply cannot support these big thoughts. They eventually lose their enthusiasm for life and give up altogether. They end up being "A very passionate person who has been disappointed too many times".

Our minds already know what we have chosen to accomplish. Instead of worrying about the big goal, focus on the baby steps instead. In fact, we should start with a baby step that is so easy and that we are guaranteed to accomplish it. Success builds on success, celebrate these small accomplishments and you will experience more of them. More importantly, this practice will help transform our limiting beliefs into beliefs that work for us instead.

All the best to your success in 2010!

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