

Motivation for Everyone.

I have always held the belief that sports is about **inviting many to be involved**, not just the elite. Participation in sports can be for everyone. **If we approach sports as if everyone can participate, can enjoy participating and can gain much from participating, then the everyone can benefit greatly. The elite, by which I mean the most naturally gifted of athletes, will also gain even more, as the bar will be raised to be their best.**

Based on that firm belief, ever since we began our coaching careers we have included as many players and helpers as possible so that the maximum number of people could share in the many great things that athletics brings our lives. And one of the greatest things to be gained from athletics or sports is the feeling of being motivated to do better, run faster, shoot harder, pass straighter, throw further, last longer, try harder, etc, and the inner sense of satisfaction and pride in self that one feels from doing better as a result of trying hard. Why should only the few gifted athletes experience this pride in self, when it's right there for everyone to feel?

But what is motivation, and how can we all profit from it.

It's not a pile of cash, praise or gold stars that moves kids to surge toward. There's a far more powerful motivation, says Daniel H. Pink*, and he's not talking about denial or punishment, either. Scientists are discovering a far more powerful third drive. To tap into it, you need to develop three things: a sense of mastery, autonomy, and purpose, and it is up to the coach to tap into these fundamental motivational needs to build competitive and competent **individuals and teams**. Motivation is an intrinsic response; it comes from inside and cannot be imposed on **anyone from** the outside. Motivation comes from wanting to do something of one's own free will. Motivation is leadership behaviour. It stems from wanting to do what is right for **ourselves, for the people close to us**, as well as for the organizations **we belong to**.

Motivation **can be driven in others** by a **good coach through a** series of actions grouped under three headings: energize, encourage, and exhort. Coaches must be aware there is an inner quiet confidence that all athletes need to **feel, to understand and to foster**. We need to nurture this inner drive and spirit of play that will allow the athlete to persevere in very difficult times and enjoy, **rather than dread**, that extra **effort it takes to succeed**. It **becomes** a privilege **for a motivated athlete** to work hard to **become** a part of something **much** bigger than **one's** self. **It becomes a pleasure knowing** that it is going to hurt some days; we call it "the right kind of pain", because it is the pain that says:

"I worked as hard as I could, I left it out there and win or lose no one can say I didn't do my best. If no one knew anything about me or my team or even about hockey and stopped to watch they would be excited by my excitement, enthused by my enthusiasm and want to meet me and say out loud 'I just like to watch you play'".

Those are the type of players we need to develop and the type of teams we need to build!

It takes hard work and never-ending patience and perseverance for a coach to insist players get the details of every drill right, grasp the purpose of the mini games and learn on an ongoing basis under conditions of pressure, speed and failure. It is not a soft approach, but neither is it an approach of fear. It is a Navy Seal approach, a Spartan approach, a “one for all and all for one” approach, and it builds character, binds people together, and separates those who are less passionate from the passionate. Under Coaches Edge, coaches teach players to learn, to understand and to treasure that it is about not letting yourself, your school, your parents, your coaches your teammates down. It is about finding your sentence.

Seeking purpose is part of how we're wired - by doing something that endures, we prove that we were here, that we mattered. Clare Boothe Luce once told John F. Kennedy, "A great man is one sentence. Abraham Lincoln's was 'He preserved the Union and freed the slaves.' What's yours?"

To be a great sports coach you must motivate yourself to ask and answer that question – “What is your sentence?” But more importantly, you need to energize, encourage, and exhort each of your players to ask and answer that question of and for themselves. “What is my sentence?”

Some people will question, “why does this matter, it’s only sports, only a game?”, but a great coach knows it’s much more than a game. Individuals who learn to motivate themselves to be better players and better teammates, who learn to take joy in working hard to be their best, will carry that over from sports, from “the game”, and apply it to all walks of life. They will be motivated to be better students, better workers, better friends, better sons, daughters, siblings and parents, better citizens and better human beings. What could be more important?

When you have understood the importance and purpose of properly motivating your athletes, and you have learned how to motivate them not through fear, but through unbending strength, perseverance and patience, couched in kindness and goodwill, then you will be well on your way to learning your sentence, and to becoming a truly great sports coach!

With Respect,

Coaches Edge

* Daniel H. Pink is the author of several provocative, bestselling books about the changing world of work. His work is intelligent, thought provoking and worthy of your attention. Reading his work helped me formulate some of my thoughts about motivation with regards to athletes. You can learn more about Daniel H. Pink here... <http://www.danpink.com/>