

I have discovered in life that there are ways of getting almost anywhere you want to go,

If you really want to go.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)



What do you really want to do?

Discipline

Coach Lou Holtz maintains that the major determining factors between where you are now and where you want to be in the future are (1) The books that you read; (2) The people you associate with; and (3) The dreams that you dream.

Recently, I finished reading "What it Takes to be #1" by Vince Lombardi, Jr., a book about his father's leadership model. It's a great book about Vince Lombardi, the Packers, and the role of a coach. I also just finished "Failing Forward" by John Maxwell, a book about turning mistakes into stepping stones for success. Hear, in part, what they have to say: Every major difficulty you face in life is a fork in the road. You choose which track you will head down, toward breakdown or breakthrough.

In the face of pressure and tension, unless you have developed the habit of discipline, you will quit, surrender, fail to rise to the occasion. Stress and tension, when not moderated by discipline and a strong sense of duty, cause us to compromise and take shortcuts. Instead of doing things the right way, you choose to do it your way.

"Of all the lessons I learned from Lombardi," All-Pro guard Jerry Kramer once commented, "from all his sermons on commitment and integrity and the work ethic, that one hits home the hardest. I've found in business that only 15 or 20 percent of the people do things right all the time. The other 80 or 85 percent are taking short cuts, looking for the easy way, either stealing from others or cheating themselves. I've got an edge, because whenever I'm tempted to screw off, to cut corners. I hear that raspy voice saying, 'This is the right way to do it. Which way are you going to do it, mister?'"

While reading these books, it suddenly dawned on me that while Vince Lombardi Jr. was describing the essential ingredients that created the Packer Dynasty of the 60s, he was delineating the reasons why the Samurai could be successful. A great deal of it has to do with discipline. Discipline is a much maligned word these days. **The definition of discipline states:**

1. Training that is expected to produce a specified character or pattern of behavior, especially that which is expected to produce physical, moral or mental improvement. 2. Controlled behavior resulting from such behavior. 3. A set of rules or

methods as those regulating the practice of (athletic) training. 4. A branch of knowledge or of teaching. verb: 1. To train by instruction and control. 2. To punish or penalize for the sake of discipline control.

Today's society thinks discipline is all about punishment and not about instruction, all about control and not about freedom. A man once took his son to the beach on a windy day and launched a kite into the breeze. The boy asked his father what keeps the kite in the air. His father told him that it was the string that kept the kite in the sky. His son said that could not be; the string was holding the kite down. His father replied, "If you believe that, let go of the string."

You see the very things that we believe are holding us down are the very things that empower us to go where we want to go. Teenagers spend far too much energy fighting the rules when they should be embracing them. The rules actually enable us to get where we want to go.

When that teen jumps into the car and is headed to Suzi's house for the big date, he gets there because he follows (most) the rules of the road. By following the rules of the road, he gets to where he wants to go.

So it is with other areas of life. Life is rule governed behavior. Once we learn the rules, we have the power to go where we want to go, do what we want to do, be what we want to be, have what we want to have.

It's much like your score on the SAT test. Your score does not indicate how intelligent you are. Your score, especially your math score, indicates how many of the necessary rules and skills needed for successful behavior in college have you mastered. It is a skills test.

An example of such rules and skills is finding the square footage of a room. In order to find the square footage of a room you must know the formula (rules for determining the area) $A = L \times W$: The area is equal to the length times the width. It is a simple rule that most people know. It works in all cases. But in order to successfully determine the area of the room, we must bring in lots of other skills and rules that relate to add, subtract, multiply and divide. So if we know the right rules and can demonstrate the right skills we will be rewarded with a high SAT score and have more college doors open for us. To learn these necessary college skills, we must discipline ourselves to learn them. It is this discipline of training, investing those countless hours of practice that leads to mastery. It's a processing activity. It's hard work.

Hard work is a discipline: the focused training that develops self-control. Discipline helps you make the hard decisions. It helps you embrace and endure the pain associated with change. It helps you stay on track despite stress, pressure, and fear. It is what leads to breakthroughs instead of breakdowns. It is the relationships you forge with others, your teammates that are going to get you through the tough times, the challenges. It's where you find the energy and strength to do what has to be done; the energy that moves your teammates beyond ordinary to extraordinary performances. It's where the superhuman, unbelievable efforts emanate from.

Confronting your goals everyday, working hard, encouraging your teammates to do their best, that's discipline. Challenging yourself to reach new levels of play and execution each week makes you rise to the occasion on a regular basis. Everyday the great athlete has to reach down and find the inner strength to reach new heights, raise the bar, to do more than she has ever done before. Her teammates encourage her. They do it together. Weeks and months later when on the athletic field or court the team is challenged to come from behind, they respond in a positive way because they have trained themselves for this occasion.

Winning on the fields of play is a natural extension of winning everyday in the practice setting. Their efforts are labeled superhuman, unbelievable, and extraordinary because ordinary people are not willing to work that hard, dedicate that much, commit to that extent. So the mere mortals marvel at what winners accomplish.

Not doing more than the average is what keeps the average down. Ordinary people do ordinary things. Championships are won by those who are willing to do the extra things to become extraordinary. Champion athletes have the edge because they have practiced doing things the right way day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. "Winning isn't everything; it's just part of what we do!"

While other athletes are looking for the shortcut, the easy way out, while they are off doing who knows what screwing around, cutting corners, champion athletes are disciplining themselves to lift and run and jump their way to prepare themselves for the challenges ahead. So that when faced with the pressure and tension associated with game night, a big game, or having to come from behind to win, they can rise to the occasion and deliver their best performance. That's what they are trained to do.

That's what great athletes and teams do everyday. Practice Perfect! Reaching down and finding the energy to beyond the ordinary, to the extraordinary. They train to win everyday they discipline themselves to complete their workout. Set a higher standard. They know that every repetition they execute perfectly is another step toward winning the Championship. They know that they are on a collision course with success, the only variable is time.