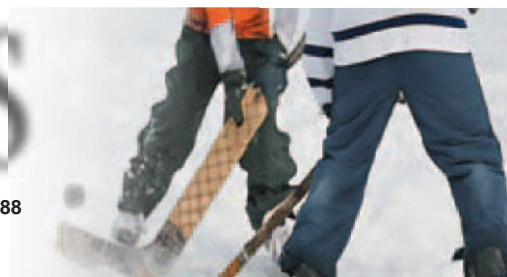


# SPORTS

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## Positive thinking helps pave the way to success



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What do you think when you hear the word nerves? Do you get butterflies that make you excited to compete, or terrified of any upcoming performance? Whether or not you view things as threatening or challenging comes down to how you perceive the situation and all the components.

Your level of confidence, your attitude, your outlook (and as a result your perception) all shape how you put situations together in your mind. If you're confident and excited, you're more likely to view a difficult situation as challenging. The word challenging, as defined by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, refers to "arousing competitive interest, thought, or action." So you can understand that when you are positive and confident about a specific situation, you're aroused and excited to showcase yourself and your abilities. On the contrary, when your confidence is low, your mood and outlook are negative, and you're feeling scared, you are most likely viewing it as a threatening situation. The word threat refers to "the possibility that something bad or harmful could happen."

Now, hearing both definitions, you can see how both perspectives can alter your feelings of nervousness. When you feel threatened, you're most likely going to experience butterflies in your stomach as nerves and anxieties. The feeling of discomfort is what may throw you off, as your attention may start to shift towards these anxious jitters. These are not ideal feelings, obviously, as you don't want to feel as though you're preparing for a life-or-death situation. It definitely is not! But that is how your body may perceive it. When you're feeling challenged, you may experience butterflies as a sign that you're preparing for competition and you feel ready to go. This is a more desirable feeling, as we want it to kick us into gear, and not shut us down.

So, is it as easy as just changing your view to a more positive, challenge-focused one? Well, sort of. In a perfect world, you could just think "I need to be more positive and excited." However, you know it isn't that easy. Changing your perspective comes with work and attention to the little details.

The first step to thinking more positive is to eliminate the occurrences of negative thoughts. Easy enough, isn't it? Again, in a perfect world, it would be that easy. Awareness is key at this point. Becoming aware of what makes you nervous, what makes you think/talk negative, and stopping it, is the first step towards changing your perspective.

Now, think of all of those negative thoughts you're stopping. Ask yourself how many are rational. Think about why you might be thinking them, and what might be some of the reasons or triggers for those thoughts. Now give yourself all the reasons why these nerves cannot be proven or justified. Find the reasons that show that you can, not that you can't (a bad word). You're worried about not scoring, for example. Well, you can't stop the goalie from being the best they can be. All you can do is focus on your efforts to set you up for the best chance to score. So, your perspective has now changed from feeling defeated, to feeling challenged. You'll become more excited, engaged, and ready to attack when you're thinking more positively about it.

Now take these proven facts that support why you can be successful. Build yourself 10 positive affirmations that you will repeat to yourself twice a day; once when you wake up, and once before you go to sleep. They may include things like "I am a strong player, and I am untouchable." You're going to feel ridiculous! I'll warn you about that now. However, the change in perspective must be contagious, and it must infect every part of your training and efforts. This confidence and self-assurance must seep into every thought you have, at all parts of the day. So the best way to coat all your thoughts with this new perspective is to fill your head with so much of it that the negativity and doubt has no room to occur.

As you approach new endeavours, repeat your affirmations to yourself. Repeatedly remind yourself of your strengths, your achievements, and your capabilities. When you're faced with a new and possibly scary challenge, give yourself all the reasons that support how you can be successful. See all the opportunities, not the threatening aspects that might set you back. By keeping this work towards positivity a constant part of your training, you're going to continually improve on your abilities to alter your perspective. And you owe it to yourself to set yourself up to reach your highest potential.