



SPORTS

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Redefining failure



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When we strive to reach a goal and we miss, we usually feel pretty defeated. It is common to feel as though we have failed, let ourselves and possibly our team, coaches and supporters down. We've defined failure to ourselves as the inability to reach the level we'd like. This often leads to loss of motivation, distraction and fear of trying again.

What if we changed our definition of failure to be more congruent with our progress? What if failure was the action of not trying, instead of the act of not reaching your goals? By switching perspective, we're now able to live in the moment and can approach our attempts and achievements with a more active mind, confidence and positive attitude.

When we feel as though we have failed, it is often because we're not where we want to be, and we're not there in the time we thought we could be. On the flip side, think about the times you have held back your potential effort in fear of failing. If I don't try, then I can't fail. That self-talk isn't pushing you to try or succeed at all.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all about goal setting and putting a step-by-step plan into motion. But what about when we don't achieve something; where do we go from there?

By redefining failure to acknowledge our efforts instead of our outcomes, we're applauding and rewarding our actions and the work we put into making something happen. You could work your butt off and still not win an event, simply because the opponent was bigger, stronger or faster, or even just had better luck. The effort, hard work and time that we put into our personal growth is really the triumph here.

In preparing today's article, I reflected on past Training Matters articles I have written and this topic seems to be a reoccurring one. Why is that? I know that this is often the most common internal struggle athletes have throughout their athletic careers. The articles are often written with a similar end-point in mind. However, I continue to come back to it every few years to really reflect on the approach that we can take and the shift in our mental game to really make the positive changes necessary to get out of this slump.

Recently I had the chance to work with personal business coach Brandon Barber. He said that imperfect practice is better perfect procrastination. Have you ever put something off because you're worried the outcome won't be exactly what you'd like it to be? It usually keeps you stuck in a rut, afraid to move forward.

Now think that same thought, but flip the perspective. If I don't at least try, I'll never know how well I could do it. Or, I may not be good now, but with consistent practice I will get there.

Failing to try means you are setting yourself up to fail. The more we acknowledge our effort and the blood, sweat and tears as our real success, the more proud of ourselves we will become. By shifting the focus to our efforts and the work we're putting into our goal achievements, we're acknowledging the process more than the outcome. Funny thing is, the more we focus on our effort, the more favourable the outcomes are.