

Positive Attitude

What is a Positive Attitude?

A positive attitude is a belief that good things come through having a growth mindset, working hard and learning from mistakes and failures. A positive attitude comes from the understanding that learning is naturally a struggle and that you have to work through the initial steps of learning to achieve success. Perhaps most importantly, having a positive attitude is a decision. In order to have a positive attitude, you have to choose to be positive and not negative. You have to be the boss of your own mind and root out ALL negative thoughts.

Understanding Positive Attitude:

Attitude is a little thing that can make all the difference in the world. Having a positive attitude is key to increasing motivation and developing skills. People with a positive attitude get over set-backs quicker because they understand that they are not personal or permanent; they are simply opportunities to learn and improve.

Connection to Soccer:

Having a positive attitude is critical to maintaining a high level of motivation to work hard to improve skills. To practice in the most efficient way, you have to force yourself into the first (Cognitive) and second (Associative) phases of learning which require complete focus and total effort. Learning in these two phases means you're going to fail more than you're going to perform the skill correctly. This requires mental toughness and a positive attitude or it's going to get the best of you and you'll retreat into what you already do well and arrested development. Don't let that happen!

How to Develop a Positive Attitude:

- A person with a positive attitude expects to learn and improve through hard work and effort.
- A person with a positive attitude views set-backs as temporary and as learning opportunities.
- A person with a positive attitude is more likely to get back up after experiencing failure and try even harder or perhaps try a different strategy.
- A person with a positive attitude believes that he/she has a certain amount of control over how events (like a workout or match) will turnout.
- A person with a positive attitude focuses on past achievements and victories which can release serotonin a feel-good neurotransmitter in the brain.

Did You Know?

In his book, *Learned Optimism, How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, Martin E. P. Seligman, Ph. D. writes that he believes that optimism is a learnable skill, not an inborn trait. Optimism is very similar to having a positive attitude. Seligman teaches that to improve your life you need

to create for yourself a better story of *why* good and bad things happen to you. Dr. Seligman and his colleagues have developed a method to become more optimistic when you experience adversity. It involves learning a couple of skills that will help you speak to yourself in a more encouraging way. They call the method **The ABCs**.

A is for adversity which can be almost anything that doesn't go your way. Think in terms of a description of what happened.

B is for Belief. Your beliefs are how you interpret the adversity. You want to separate your thoughts from your feelings. Feelings will go below under consequences.

C is for consequence and these are your feelings about what happened and what you did.

Let's look at an example:

- A. You blew a play and gave up a goal. (Adversity)
- B. You think – the team can't count on me. (Belief is permanent and personal)
- C. You feel frustrated and dejected. (Pessimistic feeling)

Now let's look at how you can turn this from something negative to something more positive.

- D. **D stands for Disputing** the disturbing belief that you can't be counted on by changing the way you talk to yourself. Instead of beating yourself up:
 - a. You realize that you are blowing things way out of proportion,
 - b. You normally make that play and this time you just lost focus for a split second (not permanent), and
 - c. That can happen to anybody (not personal).

Martin E. P. Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1991)

The outcome of this **positive self-talk** is that you should feel much better about yourself and your contributions to the team. You're committed to making a better effort, to stay focused throughout the game. You have changed your feelings from frustration and dejection to being more optimistic and confident in your ability to perform under pressure. In doing so, you change your course of action from playing tentative or scared, to playing with much sharper focus. By arguing with yourself - the way you would argue with a friend that said something negative about you – you have changed a negative attitude into a much more positive attitude.