

## **Courage**

### **What is Courage?**

Courage is often thought of as being brave, overcoming fear to do something you need to do or feel you should do. For example, it takes courage to stand up for a friend that is being teased or bullied. In a sports context, courage can also mean that you're willing to try new moves and skills, even when you know there's a good chance you may fail. Courage is overcoming your fear of what others may think of you in order to struggle and improve.

### **Understanding Courage:**

Courage is very important to learning because developing new skills involves a natural process of reaching and failing. That sounds strange I know; however, in order for you to master new skills you must first form the neural connections in the brain. This process develops through trying and failing over and over again while insulation called myelin grows and wraps around the axons that carry electrical impulses to muscles and other areas of the brain. So in every day terms, in order to improve you have to spend a large majority of your practice time doing things you can't do very well. You also have to be brave enough to try those developing skills in highly competitive training sessions with other players. In order to perform well later in competition, you must first be willing to practice under conditions that are harder than the matches you'll play in later, meaning you are going to experience a lot of set-backs and failure during your training sessions.

### **Connection to Soccer:**

There are many situations in soccer that require, even demand courage. Here are just a few examples:

- Goalies must demonstrate tremendous courage when they come off their line and leap to catch or knock away a ball, knowing full well that an opponent is bearing down on them and there will be contact.
- It takes a lot of courage to step up and calmly take a penalty kick knowing that the outcome of the match, perhaps the State Cup, is on the line.
- It takes courage to try something hard and struggle in front of your friends and family

## How to Develop Courage:

The best way to develop courage is to keep your focus on the process of what you're doing and not on the possibly negative outcome of a play or game. And it's very important to have the right mindset about how you learn and develop new skills and to put training and practicing in the proper perspective.

- Great athletes understand that they learn new skills through focus, effort and determination – they are not afraid to fail!
- For great athletes, failure is temporary and never personal. They are not afraid to take the big shot when the game is on the line...they have the courage to deal with the reality that they may miss.
- Great athletes are the boss of their own thoughts and the practice positive self-talk. They remind themselves of their achievements and victories and never dwell on failure.

## Did You Know?

Courage comes from the Latin word **cor** which means heart, so courage means having heart. To encourage means to 'put the heart into' while discourage means 'to take the heart out of'. When you have heart then you are able to face difficulty without being overcome by fear. Courage is facing fear and doing what you believe you can do.

Remember the Quote about Michael Jordan.

*"I've missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."* Michael Jordan. Source: Wiki.answers.com