

Positively reinforcing Brad upon an immediate success in practice actually increased effort and improved performance. But, a quick summary after practice, with encouraging words, proved to have an even greater impact. Of course, that pattern was not true for the entire team. Some players benefitted from positive remarks immediately following successful attempts to master a skill.

In addition, Brad noticed John needed less feedback as a skill improved. John did not continue to ask for advice or talk about his effort. As skill improved, Brad guessed confidence rose. In the end, Brad did not know why John required less feedback. The most important part is recognizing his player's individual pattern of how long positive reinforcement was needed to have an impact.

High school sports, musicals, band competitions and families can be amazingly difficult arenas to encourage Kids on a consistent basis. Successful programs must have an Adult who knows what makes Kids tick. Adults have to know what specifically motivates a Kid to turn out great effort and performances. Parenting a Kid through competitive arenas with Adult politics is a great opportunity to talk about life, but it is very difficult. Adults have to know how to connect and continue to encourage their child to be self-motivated. Knowing their individual patterns of self-motivation is critical to keep them on a path of growing, learning and happiness.

## CHAPTER 12 RELATIONSHIPS

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### **LAST...definitely not least! Tell them...it matters...**

Number one job for anybody is to be included, connected with others. It is especially important for young people so they can begin to form the life long habit of making friends. Relationships are fueled by love. Love for life, others and self. A respect for a quality of existence, with nurturing relationships. Awareness of how much better life is when filled with relationships fueled by love. Appreciation of the internal reward when putting others first. Living the power of forgiveness when initial words seem cutting and personal.

Relationships take time. We can teach Kids how to verbally and non-verbally present themselves to be socially acceptable. How to foster future connections, building a network of like minded people they would enjoy spending time with. Teach Kids to pay attention to how others react to their communication. Use that information to monitor the next communication to reach needs and wants of our own and encourage the well being of others.

Tell them, friendship skills can be taught, learned and constantly improved. It is a learned process that can be exchanged. It starts with learning from others who excel in the relationship arena. Pay attention to people who make meaningful connections, keep them, and cultivate each individual relationship as if it is a unique gift to be cared for.

We can step it up a notch and learn to love...again! Tell Kids, it's our natural state! Sometimes, it gets squashed without our

knowing it...shame on them! Often, the process continues and we let it happen...shame on us! We can also learn to love ourselves, others, and this precious opportunity called life. Developing healthy, loving connections brings out the best in ourselves, and others. Our children are looking for something that will make their life more meaningful. They want better relationships at home, in school and on the field...Teach them!

Kids yearn for relationships. Our Kids want to be connected with people. Ask any Kid, how can life be better? They want better relationships. They want more of them, but most important, they value closer relationships where they can be themselves, stretch and grow. They want to mingle, talk, share and discover the sameness we share and love the differences we have. Most of all they want and need to be connected to healthy minded Adults. All of this is supported by love. This is a very real and authentic process. It promotes engagement and achievement in all areas of life!

Tell Kids it is our natural capacity to love. Our job is to connect, love and teach it. If you want our Kids to accomplish more with enthusiasm...then encourage them to open up and, at some level, love people. The power of loving guidance, coaching and encouragement will give our Kids whatever they need to challenge themselves, to question the value of their existence and constantly grow in love and strength. Our best memories are of people and situations where we felt love and encouragement. They are the memories that count...start creating memories!

Teach Kids to develop a new identity that is fueled by love, not fear. Tell them, we will not go out of our way to threaten their identity. Kids need to be told they have nothing to fear from us. We will not hurt them, we will encourage them. In turn, they have to let go of their need to protect themselves with anger and withdrawal from people and success. Tell Kids it is their responsibility to let go of anger, fear and need to protect. Their inner chaos will live forever unless they decide to make changes. Their life will remain

contaminated. The changes they desperately want are fueled by their natural, suppressed, state of love.

Teach your Kids not to be passive about making and keeping friends. Our Kids exist with people their own age all the time. They create many acquaintances...few true friends. We can do better. How many of us still have friendships with our school friends. Very few, and those that do reserve a special place of envy. We teach our Kids how to disconnect from meaningful relationships when we meet our special friends at the store, commit to getting together soon, and NEVER follow through..."AAAHHH!!!" Friendships require effort, attention and above all...care! Do not let anything interfere with your friendships. Nothing is more rewarding. As a well respected high school Coach always yelled, "work hard...it's worth it!!!"

Teach our Kids the power of telling somebody else they are special. The variety of ways to reach out and make this connection are endless. A smile in the hall. A pat on the back when entering class. A wave from down the hall or across a classroom. A phone call, an instant message, email. A morning greeting as they wander out of their bedroom. Any opportunity to connect and say, "Hi... its good to see you!" A single compliment can change a negative outlook toward a test, practice, game, life outlook...everything! It reminds people that others are thinking of them and there is always hope and growth when you know people care.

They want better relationships and need to be taught. Show them how to reach out to others, share, compliment and listen. Teach our children to create friendships. Pay attention to them and do not take them for granted. Teach them to cultivate and keep friends. It takes work and commitment but, it is far more valuable than remaining receivers of information with little appreciation of the healthy value of meaningful friendships.

Discuss the joys, adversities, risk of making and keeping friends. We will learn so much about our children and selves. Make it a common practice at home, family meetings, classroom, sport teams

and other arenas where people gather. It enhances the growth, and accomplishment of any individual or group brought together for a common goal. It is a special bond. People need each other. They need time to discuss and explore the development, dynamics and growth enhancing qualities of friendships!

## **FORGIVENESS**

Young people have taught me the power of forgiveness. My religious experiences paved the way, but it was students who discovered and taught the power of forgiveness. Occasionally, relationships hurt and disappoint. Forgiveness teaches us to look past the hurt and move to a new place where we see the powerful value of the relationship. Kids have to understand the need to forgive. Forgiving people, who have caused pain, opens the door to a life we can call our own.

Forgiveness is an enemy to isolation. Tell Kids, they must know, life is better with a friendship. Relationships are more rewarding than allowing hurt to push people away. My students have taught me to understand the hurt imposed by others and the damaging effect it can have on life. Every single day, they confront hurt, in order to understand it and its potential to cause more harm. My students continue to reach for forgiveness. They forgive the very people who caused them pain. Forgiveness, that supports their desire to be free of internal confusion, anger and fear. A heroic forgiveness, to any Adult Authority that violated their identity development. They taught me that if they do not forgive, they would not move on. They will stay imprisoned in their own state of confusion, helplessness, anger and isolation. They will never reach a life powered by their natural state of love. As you probably know, these Kids are amazing!

Trish is the epitome of a loving, caring, nurturing soul. Totally engrossed with the care of others. Dedication and devotion cannot come close to describe her passion. For Trish, her time was not a career; it was a mission, a purpose. She was there for kids who struggle. Kids with few options. The disenfranchised, disenfranchised, damaged from a loveless family. Trish was there for them.

It happens, time moves on. Trish looked at something she rarely thought about...her self. For the first time in a long time, Trish had a self-need she took time to look at. This was a new experience. What was the need? What was this need saying? How does she address this need? How long will it take to find out what it is?

In time, Trish discovered she wanted a friend. That revelation left her exhausted. How do you go about finding a friend who will listen, share the same ideas, care as much as she, about the things she cared about. Trish knew the answer before she journeyed. Nobody can fit that list. Trish threw herself into this search the only way she knew, intense focus, devotion and passion. She came up short. Nothing there. Trish was alone.

Alex shared the same spot as Trish but, did not know it. Occasionally, their paths crossed since graduating from the same high school. He shared little of her world. He was consumed with the same intense desire to have an impact on others, but in the arena of technology. He was immersed in plastics during the day. On his own time, he devoted his efforts to alternative fuels for energy. Often, Alex spoke of the opportunity we have to separate from our dependence on foreign oil. His intensity did not allow for a normal conversation. It was listen and nod. As much as Alex had to offer, it was wasted on his inability to get people to listen and engage with him. Alex was alone.

So far, pretty sad. But, there is a happy ending. It started at a high school reunion. Yes, they met. Yes, they both spoke with passion. Yes, neither listened. Yes, they left separate with no plans to meet again...until Trish, walking to her car, felt sorry for Alex. He was alone. She never thought of her own aloneness, but that was her pattern...true to form, she reached out to a person in need.

Without hesitation she walked over to Alex and asked if he wanted to meet for coffee. They met, she listened, and so he talked more and more and more. Trish was not naturally interested in anything he was saying but she pretended...until he touched on the

part about reducing military intervention if we were less dependent on oil.

This was new and attractive. This played into her sense of living and purpose. Less kids spilling blood on foreign land played into her sense of purpose and passion. Without knowing it, Alex had connected with Trish. They discovered, by accident, a common ground filled with emotion.

Now it was time for Alex to listen. Trish was filled with questions and Alex had answers. He could hardly complete a thought without Trish tossing another question. Two people speaking passionately about a shared interest...attractive!

They discovered something amazing! When a common ground had been found, their process for passion, dedication and devotion became attractive. When that process centered on a very common interest, they became a team. Together, they formed a non-profit group dedicated to informing the public of a perceived political stonewall surrounding our countries selfish desire to keep oil as the status quo while putting our military, young boys, in harms way... needlessly. Whether accurate or not, a shared belief propelled them forward.

Trish and Alex are still together. This time, it is not an accident. They are in love and their same process of devotion and passion are poured into their daughter. They love her! They have served so many others well. Many, they have met and others they will never know. It all started with paying attention to self. Trish had the courage to explore what she was feeling and put her wants, needs, and goals to action. Though, she met failure, she never stopped. After all, she attended a high school re-union. Trish allowed her normal desire to help others push toward asking Alex for coffee. She forced herself to listen to a person who made little attempt to offer the same gift, listen. As their connection developed, he was motivated to mirror her gift. Alex gave, what she so desperately sought, to be heard, listened to, appreciated, and loved.

When throwing ourselves into different arenas we often discover happiness. Trish discovered Alex's desire for energy independence could serve her needs of protecting youth from needless harm. She believed our military was often misused and youth paid a needless price. True or not, that is what she believed. From her belief she found a connection to Alex. Only time invested into paying attention to others could create an opportunity for such a discovery.

Trish's courage to pay attention to herself, fortitude to realize her goal, find a common connection, develop a relationship and encourage others is a story that still inspires others. Staying true to herself, she asked I not use her name. If you met her, it would take no time at all to appreciate her love for all. Inspired by love, anything is possible!