

Teaching For Success Faculty Success Center

Success Insights

Coach K's Four Keys

As hoop season commences, it's appropriate to learn about success from Coach Krzyzewski. He is a highly respected and winning basketball coach for Duke University, and he knows something about how to consistently achieve tough goals. I pass on his four major keys to success that stood out for me while listening to one of his talks.

Don't Fight Change

People don't stay the same; change makes each term and class a new experience. Accept the likelihood that what worked last year with a group (your class for example) may not work this year. Students act differently because they are different, diverse. Change is with us and in us; life is dynamic and adaptive. Plan for it; expect it.

Challenges Promote Learning and Growth

We learn by meeting tough challenges, especially those that create in us some anxiety and even fear. Coach Krzyzewski's point supports an Eleanor Roosevelt quote, "You must do the things you think you cannot do."

Failure is Positive

Work (and learning) gives you dignity and a sense of fulfillment. Coach Krzyzewski stresses that a leader must create ownership so everyone on the team adopts the same goal. As a leader, he learned that you have to fail to learn more, and that failure is only temporary. Failure is part of the learning process; accept it, learn from it, and move forward.

I concur with his assessment and suggest that students should be challenged by instructors to boldly attempt things beyond their present capabilities, push their skill envelope, and learn from difficulties and successes. I put into practice Tom Watson's famous philosophy from the early days of IBM: If you want to become more successful, double your failure rate. If this maxim carries the truth, I should be experiencing a lot of success in the new year.

Stay Positive

Coach Krzyzewski defines success as a daily journey: doing the very best you can each day. He reminds us to change our focus from, "Oh man, I have to do this!" to, "Oh man, I get to do this!" He enjoins success seekers to be unafraid of failure, enjoy the journey, and experience fulfillment through the pursuit of betterment and applying our individual uniqueness to solving problems.

While not specifically addressing teaching and learning, Coach K's four keys are applicable and fundamental to teaching for success.

*~John H. (Jack) Shrawder, Exec. Director,
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