

Teaching For Success Faculty Success Center

Success Insights

Dump the Slump

Listening to a recent talk by John Eliot, PhD, "The Maverick Mindset," I discovered something very important that I hadn't realized about outcomes. Outcomes or goals are necessary for establishing clarity of direction and defining the boundaries of the intended results. But they can also be the cause of slumps and poor performance when the focus remains on future outcomes instead of improving the current process.

Dr. Eliot works with many high-performance sports figures and reports case after case in which keeping the focus of training and playing solely on the winning of a medal, a title, or a championship degrades performance and causes slumps.

When competitors identified the reason they were playing a particular sport and focused on the enjoyable aspects of playing, their performance levels almost always increased, and they would reach the goals they had set.

The effects of enjoyable on outcomes seem to apply equally well to teaching and learning. What are the reasons you are teaching or working in higher education? If your reasons are limited to: it's a job, or a job with benefits, it can be difficult to prevent a performance slump.

Dig deeper; think more about what you can learn and what you can contribute. If you would rather being doing something else, that's an understandable feeling, but focusing on that feeling will limit your performance. Instead, dwell on the opportunities this job provides for self-development. You may be teaching, managing, administering, or performing student services, but what can you learn from this job experience that is life and career enhancing? That is an crucial success question. We know we are living in a period of intense change and uncertainty as to what the future might bring. Therefore, it seems prudent to use every job experience as a chance to grow and improve your future.

The high personal energy levels created by adopting an "enjoy-and-grow-the-process" attitude attracts other positive individuals of like mind. Discussing innovation and improvement with others will further fuel your job enjoyment. If you teach with this attitude, it will energize your class. Further, if you are wrapped up in and enjoying improving your teaching, students will respond with increased engagement and enjoyment of learning.

The more your job focus remains on effecting innovations and improvements to the current process, and less on the outcome, the more likely it is that you will dump the slump. Then your performance and those around you will improve markedly and outcomes will be realized.

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