



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #219

Dr. Patrick Cohn

As the president and founder of Peak Performance Sports, Dr. Patrick Cohn teaches mental skills and mental toughness techniques to athletes, teams, and corporate professionals to help improve performance. As a mental toughness specialist, many recognized sports figures and teams have sought out Dr. Cohn's expertise including the Miami Dolphins, NASCAR winners, NHL Players, National Motocross Champions and PGA Tour professional golfers. He's also consulted with corporate clients such as IBM and USA Today.

Quotes

"How I define expectations is that they're the unwritten standards or judgement that athletes have about the quality of their performance, outcomes, and results. Confidence is simply athletes' belief in their skills and execution of what they've learned."

"If you're dwelling on any mistake you've made, that's called a split-focus and that doesn't allow you to be fully present and perform your best in the moment."

"Sometimes you need to remind yourself why you're good, or what talents that you have."

About Tactics For Better Mental Performance 09:25 - 11:30

"Let's start with the big four. I often talk with my certification students about the big four that we teach.

1. Helping athletes manage expectations. They have such high and strict expectations that it ends up sabotaging confidence and their composure.

2. Teaching athletes how to focus on the process, how to be more as you say, present or more engaged in what they're doing, and be able to deal better with distractions.

3. Having proactive confidence, which means being able to take a healthy level of confidence with them into the game.

4. Trust in their skills, being able to trust what they've been learning and have practiced, and be able to take that out to competitions where they're not performing tight, scared, tentative or fearful.

I break it down in lessons, if you can think about that way. A lot of the lessons I teach, 97% of our students are perfectionists. With perfectionism, there are some real advantages but also disadvantages. The big four I just mentioned are for that type of athlete. Very motivated and committed, but with extremely high expectations and can be self-critical and analytical. Part of it is understanding how does the athlete trip themselves, how is the athlete getting in his or her way when they go from competition to practice. Being able to unblock that certainly is part of it, by teaching specific lessons that are going to help them get over the hump."

About Differentiating Confidence From Expectation 12:40 - 13:42

So the formula is no expectation, high confidence and manageable objectives/goals. That's the formula I teach within that managing expectations lesson. Athletes with very high, very strict expectations. Golfers, for example, tend to judge every shot based upon the best shot they've ever had. That's the epitome of perfection. Basically, they're setting themselves up to fail or feel like they're not performing their best. So they have such high expectations about their performance that they feel like they failed, when in reality they might not be failing. Managing expectations is all about understanding what are those strict or high expectations that you put on yourself."

About Focusing On The Process 14:48 - 17:09

"Well, it sounds really basic, but mostly, athletes don't have this one down. Focusing on the process means that you're focusing on the moment, one shot at a time, one move at a time, one point at a time. And I'll break it down further for them. If we talk about pitching, for example, I work with pitchers and talk about things like between pitches. 'Where is your mind between pitch? Let's talk about pre-pitch, the planning and programming stage, and then let's talk about execution.' So I break that down into three steps for them to get even more in the moment, or to be more

process-oriented. Once you have done that, the next step is what are all the ways you get off-task? Are you thinking too much about what's going on in the dug-out? Are you thinking about your coach, or your stats for the game? Athletes have different distractions, different ways to get off-task. Once you know the ways they get off-task, now what we're really doing is we're separating the process from all the garbage, and there's a lot of external garbage and internal demons going on all at the same time. Being able to separate that sounds basic but it's a huge lesson for athletes that they can really grasp on to. The lesson is really to refocus when you get ahead of yourself, refocusing if you're thinking about the last walk you gave etc., and trying to get back into the present moment."

About Proactive Confidence 21:18 - 22:35

The opposite of proactive confidence is what I call reactive confidence. Reactive confidence is you're reacting to how you feel that day when you get up. You're reacting to how you feel before the competition. In other words, you're allowing your confidence to be swayed around rather than taking control of your confidence. If you didn't have a good warm-up on the warm-up mat before you went out there for your first match, does that create some doubt and indecision? So, proactive confidence is about fueling up your confidence before the start of that competition, which means, what are you good at, what have you done, what's your success, what are your strengths and talents? It's about focusing on what you have versus what you don't have or what your opponent might have. It's a focus that's emphasizing on the self."

About Trusting Your Skills 27:18 - 28:45

Trust in skills is especially helpful for overthinkers, overanalyzers, people out there that tend to overthink and not trust what they've learned. So it's the main reason that you see athletes talk about choking. It's because they don't have trust in their skills. There are many things that block their trust. Fearing failure is a big one, or wanting to be perfect, wanting to be perceived as a great performer. Those things can get in the way of athletes trusting themselves. How can I describe trust? Let's just say you learn a new move in practice. You've got a match that you're going to take it out to. Trusting your skills basically is just seeing that move in your mind and letting it happen. So trust is really letting go of overthinking, the conscious control, the self-coaching that Gallwey talks about. You're in your own head. Instead of all that, it's relying on muscle memory and letting it happen instead of trying to force it to happen."

Dr. Patrick's Habits 31:20 - 32:45

“One of the things that I teach about development and personal development is continuing to strive to better yourself or better the knowledge that you have. When people come in the course and say, ‘Okay, you’ve got all the information. But here’s how you sharpen your skills.’ I’ve always done that throughout my life. When I was in Virginia, I read every single journal, every single mental training book that was out at the time. I was a consumer. I wanted to consume different viewpoints. I still do that today. I am still looking for that edge to help the participants in my program to be the best that they can be as a mental coach. I revise the program pretty much every year to make it more streamlined, more understandable and more applicable. The idea is being a life-long learner of your trade and never feeling like, ‘I got it all. I know it all.’”

Action Item 37:30 - 38:45

“Set up a small routine for whatever task you do, whether you're an athlete or a weekend golfer, a trader, or you like to play card games. Set up a small routine that helps you get into the right mindset where you are letting go of any preconceived expectations. You're checking in with yourself about being present, focusing on the process and having fun. You're trusting in your skills and believing in your talents. Those big four mentioned above fit nicely into the preparatory routine. There are a couple others we talked about like pre-game jitters and being able to manage those. Set up a small routine for yourself so you'll be able to get into the right mindset. Mindset doesn't just happen all by itself. Mindset is about seeing the conditions that are going to allow you to be present, focused, confident and trusting in your skills.”

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