

Failure and learning in sports essay example

[Experience](#), [Failure](#)



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ABSTRACT

For many years psychologist have studied athletes and what separates the successful from those who fall short. Carol Dweck's work has helped Psychologist' and athletes treat a major limiting factor, mindset. In a fixed mindset talents are considered innate. A growth mindset focuses on developing ability and talent through experience. Dweck's research shows that people who have a fixed mindset reject learning for fear of displaying their shortcomings. Those with a growth mindset embrace acquiring new skills through learning and experience. This work is especially important because it has been supported that a growth mindset can be learned. In four studies student improved their grades significantly after attending a growth mindset workshop. Improvements were made relative to a control group teaching effective learning habits. This work will improve the way athletes view their shortcomings and encourage personal growth.

Entity V. Incremental Theory

When you think of sports you usually think strength, endurance, commitment, among other things. Often you don't think about psychology or how that tie into sports but it is a very important aspect especially when it comes to determining how failure and learning applies to sports. Dr. Dweck's research focuses on how an athlete's mindset rather than their talent is what makes them stand out and become a champion above the other athletes. Dweck specifically focuses on two theories that she has discovered in her work first is the entity theory and second is the contrasting theory called the incremental theory of ability.

The entity theory briefly described is that certain people believe they have a set amount of ability in this case a certain amount of talent when it comes to a sport. You can continue to learn about the sport but your amount of talent in this arena is fixed at a certain point which would represent your highest ability. These people feel like when they fail at anything that it is the direct result of their inability to perform any better. Like they are predestined to receive the exact score that they got.

The incremental theory of ability focuses more on people who believe that abilities or in this case talent in sports is something that is accrued and developed to perfection over a lifetime. These people do not have a fixed mindset they have more of what Dr. Dweck refers to as a growth mindset. The people in this category will strive and push harder when they fail at something. They feel that if they study the subject harder or practice more they will continue to improve no matter how hard it is.

These self-theories seemingly have a great impact on an individual's ability

to succeed. If you are a person who is in a fixed mindset you will believe that you are predetermined to only be good at what comes easily to you. This could end up leaving you never really pushing to reach for something that would be difficult and obtain new goals. This could seriously affect many aspects in your life from the person you marry to the job that you hold. It would ultimately determine your success in everything you do. People in this mindset would likely be accepting that this is what they are destined for or all that they deserve because they are predetermined to have nothing better as their ability or lack thereof will not allow for any growth. People who fall in this category also are at risk of using coping skills that are less than acceptable like not studying because they accept their failure or even cheating as Dweck points out (Self-Theories: The Mindset of a Champion p. 3)

People in the second category or the growth mindset most likely will fail as many times as necessary until they develop a strategy to attain goals that is seemingly out of their reach. These people are most likely to eventually be more successful than people in the fixed mindset as they do not accept failure, instead they continue to strive and study until they reach perfection in the area that is ailing them. The coping the students with the entity mindset would use when faced with failure is much more of a success driven coping mechanism. These students reported during Dr. Dwecks study that they would study harder if they failed a test or even research and find different ways to study that might lead to success.

What about people who are naturally good?

When discussing self-theories other issues arise that cast doubt like natural talent. Some of the talent you may consider natural talent however would not be considered so by the athlete, who spends countless hours perfecting his swing, pitch, touchdown, or end-run. These athletes may seem to be more naturally inclined toward sports in basketball it seems the tallest people can run faster and jump higher, but if you look at someone like Keith Jennings who was considered the underdog and people said he was not dominant in his field as he stood at only 6, 7 (www. complex. com). This man overcame the odds for a game he loved even when he dwarfed in comparison to other NBA players. This goes hand in hand with what Dr. Dwecks states and that is that you need both motivation and confidence. You also need to push to be the best.

Both of these theories are very contradictory of each other so the conclusion you draw must be your own. Is there a limit to one's potential? A fixed mindset predetermined that no amount of studying will be able to overcome? Should people just give up when they know that there is no possible outcome other than the one they have already reached? Or is there an ability to push past this block and strive or develop new study techniques to perfect your ability to accomplish being the best at anything you focus on. That is the real riddle that both of these theories pose. However you feel about each theory one thing is definitely clear and that is that one of these theories the entity theory pushes people toward their goals and success instead of allowing them to accept their failure and lemming type place in life. One theory requires motivation and hard work and the other just

requires you to only focus on what you know you are already good at even if it is not what you wanted to do.

What's the science behind both theories?

These theories are not just cooked up out of the blue. They are gathered through long analysis of students and feedback that they derive from the people who are in charge of evaluating their success in any given area. How these people evaluate or treat these students failures may even directly result in their decision to evaluate their self as a person who cannot achieve anything farther in life or a person who can be anything without limitations depending on their ability to focus, stay motivated and practice the sport until perfection regardless of how hard it is. They evaluated and came up with these theories by taking two groups of students. The first group was given feedback and the second group was praised for their performances (Self-Theories: The Mindset of a Champion p. 6). The first group tended to lie about the outcome of their performance so they would not be looked down on. They also had less inspiration when it came to trying this task again. The second group was unsurprisingly more open to keep interest in tasks that were increasingly harder or exceeded their current abilities. The children in the second study also had surprising results when it came to their increasing ability to accomplish difficult tasks with great results in future tests. This is because when you learn something new or different your brain develops new connections and you in fact become smarter. This is because your brain is in fact full of billions of neurons that actually expand and grow when you learn something new. These fibers that grow out of the neurons when you learn something new can also grow stronger when you practice something that

you have already learned. (www. cvcc. edu). This in fact supports the theory that states that you can continue to learn through practice or even different study habits also that you will improve throughout this process.

What it all means

So what does this all suggest when it comes to the success or failure in learning in sports? All of this research suggests that your success or failure may in fact be determined by your own outlook or mindset about learning. If you are a person who falls into the entity theory category then most likely your success rate will be what you are already aware you are capable of. If you know you can jump high, even dunk, but are also aware you are a slow runner and fall into the entity theory, you will not try to improve on your running and will accept it as something you are not able to do.

If you fall into the incremental theory you will push harder when you fail you will practice running if that is what is holding you back until you find a way to run faster and improve your performance. When you fall into this theory you truly believe you only fail if you are not trying hard enough.

Both of these theories can have advantages and disadvantages believe it or not. The entity theory protects you from facing failure as you most likely will not attempt to do anything you are sure you are not capable of. If you fail you will try something new rather than try again. However this theory could potentially hold you back from achieving your highest level of success or beyond. The incremental theory may leave a person faced with a lot of failure, and endless challenges that can really be difficult to face. However this theory can also show you your true place in life and highest potential as well as success level. This theory is also supported by amazing facts that

have been studied and can be proven about how the brain works and grows every time we learn something new. This process of proving that brain stems grow when learning something new even goes further to state that this is a long process and dendrites or the stems that grow when you learn take a long time to grow and this only happens through practice.

Dwecks research on these two theories points out and contrasts the flaws in the entity theory clearly. It also supports this analysis with a lot of data and experiments that clearly show the incremental theory being superior if your goal is to reach for experiences that you did not think were possible for yourself. This predetermined goal setting or ability to look past a fixed point of view is shown to come from people who are in charge of you at a young age but you also have the ability to overcome this and be more incremental, a go getter if you will. So the outcome is up to the individual and which category they are more like because the ability to learn more is all about the individual's motivation and willingness to try harder. Dwecks theory has even been revisited in a study with older adults and the incremental theory seemed to show the same success and received a higher endorsement (Psychol Aging. 2013 Dec; 28(4): 948-57. doi: 10. 1037/a0034348. Epub 2013 Oct 14.)

Conclusion

In conclusion I can see we have to be aware of our abilities and use the ability to understand the psychology of these two theories and how they apply to us and we will be able to overcome any obstacles we want to.

Science supports the fact that the brain never stops learning, and Dwecks research supports the fact that one of the theories listed the incremental

theory has a proven success rate in contrast with the entity theory. In any sport this can be a serious setback as many people will not see there self as athletically inclined when it comes to a sport and they may miss out on an opportunity to achieve greatness because of their inability to overcome their mindset rather than their inability to succeed at the given task.

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