

## How Can I Win If I Don't Come In First?

Abstract: For most competitive athletes, striving to win is a significant factor in their participation in sport, and winning, therefore, is a highly valued goal. This possibility is often a driving force in training, practice, and competition. Most often, it involves beating another athlete or team, or coming in first in individual events. This experiential workshop is intended to provide participants with an opportunity to explore their beliefs, attitudes, and emotions about winning, not winning, and failure. The question of whether athletes can win when they don't come in first will be approached using guided imagery, memory about winning and not winning, and related observations, feelings, and attitudes toward self and others. Discussion and questions about failure, perfectionism and winning as a process will also be included.

Imagine that this workshop is an individual session with a consultant in sport psychology. What are some possible answers to the question in the title? (Write them on blackboard.)

"I can't" or "There is no such thing."

"I don't know" or "I don't understand" or "What do you mean" or "Tell me."

"I have an idea" or "I think I know" or "Let me think about it" or "I know."

Think of a time when you won. (Preferably a sport experience.)

What was the situation? What did you do? What did you feel?

What did you think? What did you want?

Now, think of a time when you didn't win. (Preferably a sport experience.)

What was the situation? What did you do? What did you feel?

What did you think? What did you want?

What do you get when you win? What do you get when you don't win?

What are the differences? What is the essence of the difference?

Can this essence be obtained in other ways?

What gives you good feelings about yourself? (Write them on blackboard.)

-accomplish a task

-apply something I've learned

-give my all

-see others benefit

-create something new

-bring clarity to confusion

-solve a problem

-get praise from others

Return to title question. Redefine "winning" as a process, not just an outcome (beating others).

-an inner experience- a "win-win" situation

-being in the present- Here, Now, "Present"

-fully focused- whole self- (Zen- "sit," "eat," "practice")

"Golden-Haired Lion" (modified Sufi story).

Disciple- "Master, when lions seize upon an opponent, be it elephant or rabbit, they make exhaustive use of their power. Where does this power come from?"

Master- "It comes from the spirit of being- putting forth one's whole self, in which nothing is kept in reserve, nothing goes to waste. When you can perform in this way, you too can be a golden-haired lion."

Return to example of "didn't win" situation.

Are any of the sources of "good feelings about yourself" available?

What's in the way? What's interfering with feeling good about yourself?

Can it be changed? Can this barrier be removed?

"Failure"- In our culture, failure is not a description. It's a judgment.

Description- "I didn't accomplish my goals." Failure- "I'm not good enough."

"Perfectionism"- High standards are not the problem. They give us something to strive for, something we can feel good about ourselves for having. The problem occurs when there is self-criticism for not reaching them.