

“Visualize Your Way to Success”

My wife and I have five children. They’ve all gone through the many ups and downs of growing up, but frankly they’ve turned out great (if I don’t say so myself). I’d like to think I played a hand in that, but I’ve also learned the choice feedback we crave from our kids usually appears unsaid and unwritten. So please pardon the following prideful story from a happy papa.

In my presentations, I often speak on the importance of visualization - the ability to picture something in your mind and prepare for it, long before you face the actual moment of truth. I tried this with my youngest son, Stephen, who is an accomplished high school wrestler.

On the wall of his high school gymnasium hung a banner listing the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) champions for our division in the state. Last year, I pointed out the banner to Stephen and told him, “Wouldn’t that be great if your name was the next one on the wall?” To which my son replied, “uh huh.” (For those of you who don’t speak “teenager,” this means “yes.”) What followed was a very significant focus on a concrete objective, many extra hours in the gym and a dedication I’m very familiar with.

At the end of the season, my son found himself in the CIF Southern Division finals. I drove Stephen to the high school at 6:30 am on a rainy morning to meet his coach for our drive to the competition. He wanted to jog a bit to make sure he was at weight so the coach opened the gym and Stephen jogged around an empty dark room, lit only by an exit sign. While running, he said, “Dad, look,” and he pointed to the banner on the wall. Stephen just kept on jogging. That afternoon, he went on to take the title after his final win and I sat down next to him. With sweat pouring down his face, he looked ahead and said, “Dad, I can’t believe I actually made it to the wall.” He was so happy. But I think I might have been even happier than he was!

The next year, Stephen wanted to take his skills to the next level. So after a summer of wrestling almost every day, competing at the Junior National Championships, and working under three separate coaches he felt ready to qualify for the CIF State High School Championships. Only the top 36 wrestlers from 2000 schools in California make it. And only the top eight in Stephen’s Section (550 high schools) qualify at what is appropriately called the “Masters Meet.”

In the competition that determined who would go to State and who would go home, my son found himself in a brutal and exhausting match against an opponent who also knew what was at stake. Stephen got off to a 5-0 lead, but his opponent battled back in the final period, and they were tied 6-6. I think I was more nervous for my son than I was for myself in the Olympics! With 10 seconds left, the score was still tied. A 2 point takedown in wrestling must take place within the circular boundary of the mat. So with 8 seconds left, my son was able to lunge towards his opponent and take him down, maintaining the presence of mind to keep his toes inside the circle. As the other boy went down, the referee looked at my son’s toes, and then he raised his hand for the “two!” Exhausted relief for Stephen. Pure elation for Dad.

Visualization is not a substitute for hard work and dedication. But if you add it to your training regimen - whether in sports, business, or your personal relationships - you will prepare your mind for success, which is the first step in achieving all your goals and dreams.

(For more information on Peter Vidmar, please visit: www.petervidmar.com)