



Positive Coaching Alliance Members
Connector

Special Connector: Joe Torre on Motivation

At his press conference to explain why he rejected a one-year, \$5 million contract to continue as manager of the Yankees, Joe Torre provided a graduate-level seminar on motivation for coaches at every level. This special issue of Connector "unpacks" the powerful lessons implicit in Torre's comments. Quotes are from the New York Times.

Lesson #1: More motivation does not equal good motivation
What Torre Said

Torre described the incentives built into the offered contract as an "insult." He didn't feel that "...we basically get to the postseason and then all of a sudden we're satisfied..."

Unpacking it

Torre was insulted by the \$3 million incentive clause for leading the Yankees to the World Series because it implied that he was the kind of person who needed to be motivated by money to win in the post-season.

Internal motivation (e.g., wanting to excel because of a love of the game) is of the highest value. External motivation (e.g., working hard to get money or a trophy) is much less valuable. When a coach adds external motivation to try to get his or her players to try harder, it rarely works out well. What usually happens is that the less valuable external motivation replaces the highly valuable internal motivation with little or no net increase in total motivation.

Coaching Tips

* Talk with your players about the power of being motivated from within. Share your own love of the game. Many coaches love their sport but don't show or talk about it with their players. Tell them how you can't wait to get to practice to work hard because effort and enjoyment are not opposites but are entwined.

* Ask them to work hard not because they want to win a trophy or want recognition from others. Ask them to work hard because they are the kind of people who love to excel and who enjoy the hard work that allows excellence to emerge. If they do that, the wins will come as a byproduct.

Lesson #2: The Coach as Pressure Relief Valve What Torre Said

"...I didn't think it (big incentives to win in the post-season) was the right thing for me or the right thing for my players, because it would have put too much pressure on everyone."

Unpacking it

Contrary to conventional wisdom, people do not perform better under pressure. The best athletes find ways to reduce the pressure they feel, and the best coaches serve as pressure relief valves for their teams. Being cool under pressure doesn't come naturally. Great coaches teach players how to regulate their response to pressure. Torre realized that huge financial incentives to win a succession of short playoff series might add just enough pressure to backfire.

Coaching Tips

* To reduce pressure before a big game, talk about it! Tell them that, in Billie Jean King's words, pressure is a privilege. Share "Big Game James" Worthy's insight that a little fear is a good thing--it conjures up some good energy. If they aren't a little bit nervous, they'll play flat.

* Teach and emphasize PCA's ELM Tree of Mastery--E for Effort, L for Learning and M for bouncing back from Mistakes. If your players focus on what they can control (the ELM Tree), they will try to make the play rather than worrying about not making it.

* Teach them to use a mistake ritual when they make a mistake (such as "No sweat," "Shake it off," or "Flush it") so they can get back to the moment for the next play. Teach your entire team to support the mistake-maker by signaling the ritual gesture and/or phrase whenever a mistake is made.

Lesson #3: The Power of "Influence-ability"

What Torre Said

"While he said he could not guess what was in the mind of the owners who decided on his salary package, their not wanting to negotiate, he said, told him a lot."

Unpacking it

The feeling of not being in control is poison to motivation. When people feel they have no influence on their situation, they have a hard time working hard to change it. Torre recognized that if he took the contract when his bosses were not open to talking about it, he was signing on to a job where he would have no influence with them. That may work with individuals who feel they have no other option, but it was a huge flashing red light for Torre.

Coaching Tips

* Build motivation in your players by being "influence-able" with them. Ask for their ideas and then LISTEN to them. Use some of their ideas and mention that to your team, "Angie and Tanya suggested something at our team meeting the other day, and I realized they had a good idea so we're going to try something a little different today."

* Encourage your players to ask each other for ideas on how they could improve. Being asked for help is a big Emotional Tank booster, and something that should be passed around.

Lesson #4: "We" v. "You & Me"

What Torre Said

"Yes, it was a very generous offer, no question about it. It still wasn't the type of commitment that we're trying to do something together as opposed to what can you do for me."

Unpacking it

There's a very different feeling between a team where players feel judged by coaches and one where they believe the coaches are in it WITH them. When it comes to WE v. "What can YOU do for ME?"-WE wins every time.

Coaching Tip

* Create a team feeling by stressing that you are in it together with your players. Without becoming "one of the guys," you can share

what you are doing to prepare for a winning effort, that you are working as hard as you are asking them to work: "The coaching staff spent the weekend coming up with some new plays that we think will give us a better chance in our upcoming game. I know you work hard and I just want you to know that we are working just as hard as you are to make this a great team."

Lesson #5: Self-Control & Respect for Others

What Torre Said

"Mr. Torre, in his typical manner, spoke with no rancor or bitterness about the end of his career with the Yankees. Ever the gentleman, he took time to thank everyone, especially the fans, and Mr. Steinbrenner, who he said, 'was never satisfied.'"

Unpacking it

No unpacking needed here. Torre shows that you can deliver a tough message (This contract is an insult.) in a way that respects the other person and sets an example for all of us that we can be true to ourselves without having to diminish our opponents or teammates even when we feel slighted by them.

Coaching Tips

* Use and teach the universal PCA gesture of "Keep It Under Your Hat." Tell players, fellow coaches and parents (perhaps especially parents!) how important it is for them to learn to control themselves under pressure. Demonstrate the Keep-it-under-your-hat gesture by patting your head twice. Ask them to practice it. Whenever you see a player, coach or parent starting to lose it, get their attention and without saying a word, pat your head twice. Then, later, recognize them for keeping their cool under pressure!

* Develop a pride in your ability to deliver hard, motivating messages with respect. Instead of yelling or demeaning a player who doesn't seem to be trying, try something like this: "Jason, I'm just not happy with your level of effort out there. Can you dig down and give more of an explosion when you come off the line?"

Or: "I know you parents want to help our team win, but it's just not okay to yell insults at the officials. This team is one that Honors the Game and I need you folks to help me with that. Can I count on you to do that?"