

Losing to win

The concept of losing to win is making a sacrifice for the “greater good”. As described in the book and as we discussed in class, this can be something like sacrificing a piece in chess that will lead you to eventually win the game. Losing to win can also mean sacrificing your body as described in the author’s tai chi experiences. These types of sacrifices are tangible and external. Another thing that can be sacrificed is pride or ego. Ego is arguably a more challenging sacrifice for most adults because we are very concerned about how others perceive us.

We want to appear competent, in control and confident. However, the need to be perceived in such a way can actually be limiting because it forces us to stay within a very small area (physically, spiritually and mentally) where we feel at ease. In the text when a tai chi practice is described where the author must be physically thrown against the wall a number of times before he “sees” his opponents weakness and thus learns how to beat him. I think this is a good metaphor for life. Sometimes it takes getting thrown against a wall to figure out how to get ahead.

Losing to win may not always be intentional. Many people excel after overcoming extremely adverse situations, but many do not. The key with losing to win in my opinion is how you look at the situation. If a person takes the time to reflect on the experience, see what happened and determine what can be improved upon the next time a similar situation occurs, then the person is losing to win.

I think a lot of my clients are scared of the principle of losing to win. This fear can be paralyzing. For example, say I have a client that is severely overweight and needs to make big lifestyle changes. This person has likely tried some sort of dieting in the past without long-term success. Often the patient already feels like a failure because of being overweight, then unsuccessful attempts at dieting compound that feeling of failure. The fear and feeling of failure are often enough to stop people from seeking help when they need it most. When my clients have setbacks while working with me, I view it as an opportunity to reflect on and analyze the situation that occurred.

I had a weight loss client who was trying very hard to lose weight and change her lifestyle in preparation for weight loss surgery. This was a model client, very self-motivated and determined to be successful. At one of our appointments she told me that they had a box of donuts sitting in the break room at work. She avoided them in the morning, even though her favorite kind of donut was in the box. When she went to eat her lunch (that she had brought from home), her favorite kind of donut was still in the box in the break room. Again she resisted the temptation. Mid-afternoon rolled around and she found herself in the break room again and her favorite kind of donut was still there. After an internal struggle, she decided that she could eat half of it. Before she knew it, she had eaten the entirety of her favorite donut and another donut from the box. This client was devastated that she had allowed herself to eat the

donuts.

I convinced her not to look at this as a failure, but to see it as a learning experience. This was not a behavior that will end well if she does it after surgery, so it was best that she learn how to deal with it sooner than later. We worked on formulating a strategy that will keep her out of the donut box next time it is in the office. The day of the donut incident was a loss, but in the long run it allowed us to have a very productive conversation and develop a game plan for the future. Ultimately, she needed to experience that type of setback in order to figure out how to be successful. Losing to win.

I plan to continue using this strategy with my nutrition clients in order to help them approach eating with a different mindset. This strategy will likely be transferable to my future exercise clients as well. Oftentimes people feel intimidated by weights or unfamiliar machines in the gym. Hopefully, making them aware of the losing to win principle will help ease that intimidation. If they can just sacrifice their pride/ego for a bit (losing), while they learn new things, it will help them reach their fitness goals (win).

Making Sandals

When I read the part in the book about making sandals, the concept really resonated with me. The concept of making sandals basically says that you can't control everything in the world around you, but instead you should focus on yourself and the things that you can change. I have said similar things to my kids for years. You can't change what other people think or how they behave, but you can change yourself. For instance, you can choose to get angry at other drivers when they do stupid things, or you can choose to let it go. Getting mad at another driver on the road does not impact the other driver at all, but it can ruin your day if you let it!

To me, making sandals is about making the best out of your situation no matter what you have to work with. In the book, he relates making sandals to overcoming distractions. Overcoming distractions is something that I have a lot of experience in. I have been going to school for the last five years. Prior to February of 2015, I lived in a 1100 sq ft house with four other people. The quietest place in the house that was available for me to study in was my bedroom. The bedroom had one window facing the front yard and shared one wall with the garage, one wall with the living room and one wall with a bathroom. If anyone came to or left the house I could hear it either through the front window or the garage. If anyone used the bathroom, I could hear it. If anyone talked in the living room or watched TV, I could hear it. I began listening to a lot of classical music on Pandora to drown out the distracting noises and help me focus when studying. In my situation, the music was my sandals.

In the text, Josh didn't have it as easy as I did. He was forced to drown out distractions with just his mind. Not an easy feat! I have had a lot of experiences in my life that were far less than ideal. I have had my home broken into, car stolen, purse/wallet stolen several times, but I choose to see the world as a good place. I choose to look at the world and see that the person who stole my wallet needed the money more than I did. It would be just as easy to assume the

role of victim, but I choose to make sandals.

While I am quite adept at making sandals in some aspects of my life, I have a long way to go in others. For instance, I can be hot tempered when I feel as though I am being attacked or disrespected. (That's why I don't bartend anymore!) In the book, Josh talks about turning the anger that he felt toward a particular competitor (Boris) into "a profound state of concentration". He goes on to give examples of sparing with unethical competitors in order to hone his skill of staying calm and centered under pressure. As Josh states, "there will always be creeps in the world." I think this is a good point; it's silly to let angry or mean people rile me or ruin my day.

After reflecting, I realize that I get angry when people are rude or disrespectful to me because it shakes my confidence (ego). Then, I overcompensate for feeling incompetent by lashing out. This act makes me as big of a "creep" as the person who was rude and it usually only escalates the situation. Unlike Josh, I don't have sparing matches that I get angry during. It is usually during some sort of conversation, so there is not an immediate target where I can redirect and release that anger.

There is a chess player mentioned in the book who has had his confidence rattled. He acts confident in order to appear confident and by appearing confident, the chess player hopes to regain his confidence. I think a similar strategy would work for me. Instead of firing back a response when I feel wronged, I can act unbothered or even aloof. If I appear un-shaken by the comment, perhaps the situation will deescalate on its own. If the other person continues to be rude and I continue to act calm at some point the other person's behavior will seem ridiculous – even comical. I plan to implement this strategy immediately!