

# Team Dynamics

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## Taking Personal Responsibility For Your Own Success

by Darryl Horne

*Darryl Horne of Edmonton, Alberta is one of the hardest working and most successful coaches in the country. Darryl coached Colin Davison's junior men's foursome to a Canadian championship in 1994 and captured Gold at the World Juniors the following year. Darryl's contribution to the Cathy Borst Team over the past 3 years was rewarded with a victory at the 1998 Scott Tournament of Hearts and a comeback Bronze medal at the Worlds.*

*Darryl is a very analytical coach who takes his supporting role very seriously. It's this professional approach that leads Darryl to research key competitive aspects of the game and in turn the production of coach/athlete development resources which he willingly shares with one and all. Darryl recently provided the CCA with a draft document he calls "Taking Personal Responsibility for our Success". In this document Darryl takes a tongue-in-cheek look at sixteen common competitive attitudes and concepts that do not necessarily enhance personal performance.*

Dreams precede reality.

*"Belief gives birth to reality." - Terry Orlick*

Dreams do not beget reality.

*"Dreams without effort are sleep." - Anonymous*

Coming to grips with reality.

*"Reality is something you rise above." - Liza Minnelli*

### **#1 Expect Someone to Motivate You**

*"The difference between your best and worst performance lies within your thoughts and focus." - Terry Orlick.*

No one knows better than you what your thoughts and focus are at a given point in time.  
No one knows better than you where your thoughts and focus need to be at a given point in time to ensure your best performance.

Motivation is "an incentive or inducement to action". In the case of preparation for sport performance, the desired action is simply to achieve an appropriate state of mental preparedness and you should have the discipline and ability to reach that state on your own.

Coaches or teammates should only be backup motivators for you. They may recognize symptoms of lack of mental preparedness for competition, and may offer incentive or inducement in order to prompt you to get it together. In reality, prior to competition, coaches and teammates don't provide incentive or inducement so much as they provide reminders or they attempt to put a particular competition into perspective.

Ultimately, you have responsibility for your own mental state. A requirement for external motivation implies a lack of discipline or skill on the part of the player.

### **#2 If it ain't broke don't fix it.**

If it ain't broke make it better. Look for ways to improve. Don't change for the sake of change, but make an effort to seek perfection and increase your potential to perform.

### **#3 Be comfortable.**

It's natural that most people are happy to find a comfort zone:

*This is the way I do it; I've always done it this way.*

*I'm successful competing at this level; why push it and risk failure?*

If you want to get better you have to be willing to make the effort to go beyond your comfort zone. If you wish to win something you've never won before, you may have to do something you've never done before.

### **#4 Try to control the uncontrollable.**

Trying to control matters that you personally can't control is a waste of time. It's a bad investment of your psychological energy. It becomes a distraction and weakens your ability to perform. "The difference between best and worst performances lies within your thoughts and focus." Do not become distracted by matters which you cannot control.

Examples:

- umpire decisions
- opposition antics
- teammates moods & antics
- ice conditions
- lucky shots

### **#5 Fail to control the controllable.**

You are in control of, and are responsible for your:

- focus/concentration
- mood/attitude
- personal actions
- interpersonal communication

Take responsibility now.

### **#6 Be afraid of the future.**

Anxiety about the future is one of the greatest distracters.

*What will happen if...?*

Things happen; some good, some bad. You are human and can only do your best to be prepared to handle what gets thrown your way.

*Do I belong at the level of competition I'm going to compete in? Will I disappoint myself?*

If you're good enough you'll be competitive. Worrying about it will only make you less so. If, however, you feel uncomfortable in a situation, learn from that and prepare yourself better for the next time.

### **#7 Set goals you're sure you can achieve.**

It's important to set realistic technical performance goals that you believe you can achieve with appropriate focus, effort and practice. Realistic achievement and success goals will also require appropriate dedication and effort and a little good fortune. Do not make your goals too comfortable. Keep challenging yourself.

### **#8 Forget that you can learn from everyone.**

Listen. Evaluate. Apply.

Everybody you meet will know something you don't. Whether they are a world champion or a beginner, they will have read something or experienced something that is of value to you.

Listen to what people have to say.

Evaluate what they've said. Is it verifiable? Does it fit with your experience? Does it make sense? Is it worth a try?

Apply what you think is reasonable. Don't worry about "copying" someone. If it's good for you or your team, then do it.

Admittedly, some people have more value than others.

### **#9 Focus on your opponent.**

Know your opponents and know your opponents' tendencies, but play your game. Take the initiative with consideration for your opponent, but don't bank on your analysis of the opposition. Be prepared for the unexpected. Opponents are like that. Sometimes they play better than you gave them credit for.

### **#10 Train because you have to.**

"Training and competition should be enjoyed. If you hate it, leave it." - Terry Orlick

Training on discipline alone is very difficult to maintain. You can't always expect to love your training regiment, but when it becomes too much of a grind, it's unlikely that you will get what you need out of it. Good training includes measurable objectives, a valid assessment and honest, frank feedback. Competitive practice is often more interesting and motivating.

### **#11 Your worth as a person is based on your visible achievements.**

"At one time you were not very good in your sport at all - in fact, at one time you hadn't even begun to participate in it. Yet you were an acceptable person and loved by those closest to you. Now that you are so much more skilled, why is it so disastrous to achieve a little less than perfection? You are still a skilled athlete, a worthy human being, and you will continue to be acceptable and worthy after you stop competing." - Terry Orlick

### **#12 Over analysis.**

KISS - "Keep It Simple & Smart"

Life can get pretty complicated when all the details are analyzed. Synthesis of too many details at one time or prolonged analysis can result in data overload (confusion) and analysis paralysis. Sometimes we need to get down to specific details to understand specific causes and effects. However, attempt to isolate details and establish the performance based priorities.

**#13 Be harder on yourself than anyone else would be.**

Some high performance athletes attain a level of elitism on a platform of perfectionism. These people are often very hard on themselves. The ability to forgive and forget after a sub-standard performance or a tough loss is critical to future success. Competitive resilience is a key factor.

Self assessment and criticism is good to a point, and we should strive for perfection if we want to be the best. However, don't forget that perfection is largely unachievable. Progress must be recognized. Small personal successes, especially at the elite level, must be celebrated. Curling is not a game of perfection but it is a perfectly good game.

**#14 Fail to plan.**

"The key is not to prioritize your schedule, but to schedule your priorities." - Stephen Covey  
Everyone wants to do as much as possible, but without planning we can't be sure that we will either do as much as possible or, more significantly, do the most important things. Plan to succeed one important step at a time!

**#15 Failure to communicate.**

It is critical to communicate the following to your teammates:

- Expectations for commitment.
- Expectations for practice.
- Expectations for performance.
- Expectations for success
- Problems and concerns.
- Team dynamics issues.
- Appreciation.

You will be a better teammate for having done it and the potential to produce a great team will have been increased.

**#16 Failure to commit.**

"Commitment alone doesn't guarantee success, but a lack of commitment guarantees you'll fall short of your potential." - Terry Orlick

While it's important that, "Training and competition should be enjoyed", it is also important to recognize that training and competing at elite levels will require sacrifices and discipline. It is necessary that all team members recognize the level of commitment expected at the start of the program.

Commitment cannot be mandated. It must come from within.