

Perseverance

persistence in doing something despite
difficulty or delay in achieving success

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Ethos of Learning

“You can’t simply persevere with doing the same thing again and again without change. You need to tweak, adjust, read, research, seek guidance, seek support, look outside the box.”

Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster

Last night I watched a documentary about the Leeds Rhinos Rugby League Team. It focussed on the 2015 side that went on to win all three major rugby league trophies in one season. This is an incredible feat. The programme centred around one of the greatest players to ever play the game, Kevin Sinfield. It was an amazing insight into a team which peaked at the right time. The success was based around hard work, team spirit and character. Kevin had played for Leeds since he was signed as a 13 year old. He had captained the side from juniors up to the First Team. He was a natural leader and had amassed over 500 caps! Mid-way through that 2015 season Kevin announced he was retiring from rugby league at the end of the year to pursue opportunities in rugby union. His body was falling apart and he wanted a fresh challenge. It is unclear as to whether this decision was discussed with the coach but a few weeks later Kevin was dropped from the side. This caused widespread shock in rugby league circles. Kevin relentlessly talks about the importance of the team above all else, did he really mean this? He was obviously disappointed but his reaction was to continue to support his replacement in the following weeks to ensure Leeds continued to succeed. In truth he was devastated. He went away and worked harder than ever at his game, eventually he could not be ignored and was reinstated as captain in the starting side. The season culminated in them

winning the Grand Final and Kevin getting Man of the Match in his final appearance. He said he hated that final year. He felt he was continually having to prove himself and was counting down the days until the season ended. He did it because he wanted the team to succeed and he had a burning desire to always “do the right thing”. He said the best bit about winning those trophies was seeing the joy on his players’ faces when they celebrated with a beer in the changing rooms afterwards. He felt all the sacrifices he had made were worth it. He likened it to Andy Dufresne in the Shawshank Redemption when he does the tax returns for the prison officers in return for his “workers” being given a beer. The joy Andy feels at being able to see their faces makes him feel like a free man and that is similar to how Kevin felt.

Now this is a nice anecdote of toil and perseverance but actually the process should still be enjoyable if you are pursuing a passion. Just because something is difficult to overcome does not mean it should be unenjoyable to achieve. We all have challenges to rise to, whether that is preparing for exams, interviews or presentations. It may be the challenge of juggling life whilst caring for a loved one. In meeting these challenges you will have setbacks, you will fail and there will probably be tears. It is how you respond to these setbacks that truly shows who you are. It has been fascinating to work with my young son on his lego and if it gets too tricky he is very quick to give up. Initially I got frustrated by this attitude, but actually realised all he needed was a little guidance and support to get him back on track. You can’t simply persevere with doing the same thing again and again without change. You need to tweak, adjust, read, research, seek guidance, seek support, look outside the box. That is perseverance. The individual needs the determination to want to reach the end goal but they also need humility and intelligence to seek the right support.

Sometimes tasks can seem too intimidating. How can I possibly learn all 10 of my GCSE subjects? How can we possibly even consider repairing our broken fence in the garden? I will never be able to learn that music piece for the concert. This is when you need your Carol Dweck ‘Growth Mindset’. You need to feel you can achieve the task. One key way to make it more manageable is to break the project down into smaller tasks which give little victories along the way and provide that sense of satisfaction which is crucial on a long journey. You need timeframes and target setting. The joy of success in something you have worked incredibly hard for is unparalleled.



A final thought...

Leeds Rhinos had 30 seconds left to play in the Grand Final of the Super League. They were two points behind. Kevin Sinfield then kicked a penalty to bring the sides level with seconds left. They received the re-start and went the length of the field for the winning score. The helicopter carrying the trophy was on its way to Wigan when it had to be called back to Leeds! You do also need a little bit of luck!

For further information on the Ethos of Learning please refer to the RGS website: www.rqshw.com or Alex Wallace, Deputy Headmaster, arw@rqshw.com.