

Finesse

The first thing I see when I say the word finesse is an image of the world's best golfer swinging a club or watching a swimmer finish a race in world-record time. Isn't it amazing how easy they make it look? Yet seconds later we see the power that comes from applying proper technique and finesse.

This is true also in the dynamics of a family. The way you discipline yourself in communicating with your family requires finesse.

Although this might seem obvious to most, I would challenge you to incorporate these words into your vocabulary:

1. Please
2. Thank you
3. You're welcome
4. Excuse me
5. Sorry

Remember the power that comes from a world-champion athlete using proper technique and finesse. There is also power in using these words with those you love. Try it and tell me how far it went!

Fitness

Two components to fitness are intensity and consistency.

This week, we focus on consistency. There are days and moments where the energy and excitement to move our bodies just isn't there. Those are the times when I think of what my friend, Fletcher Watson, often tells me, "It's not all or nothing...it's all times something."

Be encouraged, Olympic athletes struggle with these same issues. If we're not going all out in a pool, then a stroll around the block doesn't seem like much of a workout, but it is.

This week don't get discouraged if you can't make it to the gym or pool. Implement a few other activities like parking further away from the grocery store or office. Go to the mall and walk around for 20-45 minutes.

A favorite activity with our children is dance party. We put in some fun dancing music and all of us start dancing for 45 minutes in the evening. Remember our bodies were created to move. The goal is "something."

Commit this week to MOVING. Your body wants to live and the way you give it life is by moving it!

Keep on moving forward!

Flexibility

With our fast pace culture and family packed schedules, how do we set up our families to succeed? We learn how to be flexible.

Flexibility equates to strength. The more flexible you are, the stronger you'll be. I believe this is true of families, as well.

Try these stretches for your family relationships:

- Lengthen the time it takes you to get angry
- Lengthen the time you spend with your children and parents
- Lengthen the time you praise your children and spouse in front of their peers and other adults
- Lengthen your patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control and forgiveness

If you focus on increasing your flexibility in these areas, you'll have one of the strongest families around!

Physical Flexibility

In 1999, I started really focusing on my flexibility leading up the Sydney Olympic Games. I stretched after every practice for about 40 minutes. The following year, I broke the American record.

Flexibility is the hidden training that produces the strength you need to be the BEST!

If you want to live a quality life, you must focus on aligning your body in the way that it was designed. Keep your muscles long and maintain good posture.

To find out if you're flexible enough to function optimally, you should be able to do the following with ease:

- While seated in the driver's seat, turn your neck to see the passenger directly behind you without moving your shoulders.
- Standing straight, lean to the side without bending your knees and touch well below the knee.
- Touch one heel to your buttocks maintaining the body straight and knee pointed down.
- Reach one hand up behind your neck and clasp the other hand from the under direction between the shoulder blades.
- Touch your toes.
- Breathe in so that your chest expands without your shoulders going up.

This week, don't be afraid to stretch yourself emotionally, mentally and physically.

Fueling

The Habit of Sustaining Optimal Energy

While driving my car the other day, the "check engine" light came on. Although most men would have pulled out the jack and pumped up the car, I just turned the corner and pulled into the repair shop. I have no pride when it comes to vehicles. I am clueless! But what I learned that day was something very interesting.

The mechanic popped the hood and plugged in the computer box. I watched from the waiting room curious to know how much the repair was going to cost. As the mechanic walked toward the door, my wallet began to burn in my back pocket. He said, "Mr. Davis, you've got a case of bad gas."

I just about died! I couldn't believe the stench was still lingering. Morning practice and breakfast tacos don't always make the best combination! I quickly said, "Excuse me, I'm not feeling very well."

"Mr. Davis, I'm referring to your car. It has bad gas."

"Oh, of course!" I said. Completely embarrassed, I jumped in the car and drove to the next gas station to get "good" gas.

Okay, so I don't know much about cars, but that day I learned that sustaining optimal energy in our bodies isn't any different from cars. What we put in it affects performance. We need high quality fuel to operate at our very best.

Our bodies are the only vehicle we have in our lifetime. Here are a few of our "check engine" lights that might be flashing in you. Heed the warning for optimal performance:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Cramping
- Dry skin
- Thirsty
- Depressed
- Clothes are too tight
- Joints hurt
- Difficulty focusing
- Slow recovery time from illness or exertion

These signals might indicate a simple case of bad gas. Take a look at what you're eating. It's either keeping you alive or it's killing you. If your body feels run down, it probably is. What are you putting in it?

There's a simple solution: Change your fuel. Decrease the processed food (food that comes in a box) and increase the fresh foods – vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, lean meat and drink water.

Let's see if we can get some of those check engine lights off this week!

Fun & Focus

We all want life to always be fun. Truth is, it's not.

I've learned that some of the hard things in life help us to enjoy the good things even more.

To reach our full potential and fully explore our gifts during our lifetime, we must focus on setting goals, working intensely, making great grades, training hard in our sport, etc. Easier said than done, isn't it? I certainly don't always feel like doing these things, yet, I know I must.

Here's how I find the motivation to push through to do the hard things and focus on my goals: I trick myself. I change my thoughts and attitudes to make the activity FUN.

You can trick yourself, too. Smile and perceive the activity as positive. It starts with your thoughts...Thoughts affect attitude. Attitudes create actions. Habits display character. Character produces one's life destiny.

Your life destiny starts with a simple thought. If you make that thought an "Attitude of Gratitude," you can transform any activity into a fun one.

Over the next few weeks, I'll help you work on having fun while focusing. These tips are centered on an "Attitude of Gratitude."

Here are a couple of positive thoughts to employ this week. They'll help you have fun while you focus on attaining the goals you have for your family, career, sport or academics.

1. Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching?
2. As you push towards your goal ...practice SMILING!

Have a blast this week and don't miss next week's habit!

Family and Friends

This habit emphasizes the importance of serving others for a successful and satisfying life. I learned a long time ago that the secret to life contentment is in direct relationship to our service to others.

In this context, "service to others" means working on having healthy relationships with the people in your life (including brothers and sisters). I'm always amazed how, over time, the quality of our personal relationships can make or break a practice, a season and sometimes a career.

Basically, the nicer you are to your brothers and sisters and friends, the faster you'll swim. And the more you obey your parents, the faster you'll swim!

Not convinced? Read on.

Healthy relationships with family and friends produce low stress and a happy heart. And low stress leads to peak performance.

Healthy relationships based on service to others = Low stress = Peak performance

The opposite is true, too.

Bad relationships = High stress which = Hindered performance

How high school, college and even professional athletes choose to relate to others absolutely affects their performance outcome. For example, dating and breaking up in an unhealthy way can throw off your training for days and possibly weeks.

Of course, some high-stress life events you can't control, such as a death or divorce in the family. On the other hand, you choose your friends (and eventually who you date and marry) and how you treat people, including your family.

Through healthy relationships marked by purity and service to others, you experience low stress and have a happy heart for peak performance.

Try it! Once you've tasted how rewarding humbling yourself through service to others is, you'll never want to go back to arrogant, selfish attitudes that produce unhealthy relationships, unhappy hearts and poor performances.

Remember, when you make someone's day better, you make your day better. Good service translates to good swimming!

Now, go clean your sibling's room just for fun, and I guarantee you'll have a better practice today and drop at least 1/100th of a second – all because you like yourself more knowing you helped someone.

Faith

Before we talk about this important topic, let's clarify two things:

- First, people are equal. Every human being on the planet is wonderful, special and worthy of dignity and respect. All of us are equal. I'm not better than you and you're not better than I am, we're just trying to get better than we were yesterday. All of us are on this journey together, and all of us are equal.
- Second, ideas are not equal. Some ideas are not as good as others. If I decide to cross the highway and neglect to look both ways, is that a good idea or a bad idea? Bad idea! Don't ever do that. If I tell you $2 + 2 = 5$, do you believe me? No...do you still love me? Yes, we're friends, I love you, you love me. I just can't do math very well.

Do you see the difference between the person and the idea? People are equal, ideas are not. Some ideas are good, some are bad. Some are true, and some are false.

So it's best to put our faith in the most reliable idea we can find.

What are some of the ideas that people live their lives for in our culture today? Money is a big one. So many people pursue money to define their lives and to get happiness. Does money make you happy? Well, it helps: At first glance, money might seem to help, but in the end having the coolest stuff doesn't ultimately fulfill one's soul.

Some people put their faith in fame, power, gold medals, world records. Others believe in Buddha, Allah, Jesus or even themselves. Everybody has faith in something. All six billion people on the planet got up this morning and started their day with some bottom line motivation of why they exist. But the crux of it is to strive to put your faith in the most reliable idea you can find.

Here are some suggestions to help you identify your reliable idea. First, ask your parents what defines their life. Then, I encourage you to research and study the different perspectives of the world's current and historical humanitarians, religious and political leaders. As you reflect on these ideas, ask yourself if any ring true for you. Does any idea line up with reality? Does it work? That is, does it help people reach their full potential of freedom, fulfillment, dignity and productivity?

All of us should be skeptics - a seeker of truth, one that questions and continually searches for the most reliable idea to put faith in. And, honest skeptics don't have to search indefinitely, because when they find the truth they accept it and embrace it.

If you'd like to know about the reliable idea I've found for my life, visit my Web site, joshdavis.com.