

Coach's Corner

Optimism: the medicine for adversity

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By Sharon Pahlka, NKC Kidney Patient

Dealing with kidney disease is sometimes a fight for your life. Because of this, staying in the game is important, and optimism is one of the keys to success.

A wonderful model of the eternal optimist is the worldclass cyclist, Lance Armstrong. One day he was diagnosed with advanced testicular cancer, which had spread to his brain. He chose doctors who used chemotherapy that did not permanently affect his lungs. This is important because a worldclass cyclist needs lung capacity. Even though he was single, he had his sperm frozen so he could have the beautiful children he has today. On breaks between massive dosages of chemo, he rode 50 to 100 miles a day to stay in peak shape

His Mom said, "He was always optimistic. We knew, even when the doctors didn't, that Lance would not only make it, but return as a world class cyclist." On July 27, 2003, Lance won his fifth Tour de France—the most difficult cycle race in the world. He says he'll be back for his sixth.

When we approach life's obstacles with optimism, we not only increase our chances for success and survival, we inspire others to move forward with hope.

Coaching Question:

Are you willing to be an optimist?

Coaching Tip:

Ten ways optimism can be practiced are:

1. Surround yourself with a loving circle of people.
2. Welcome your strengths and appreciate your weaknesses.
3. Start each day with gratitude.
4. Avoid negative thoughts. Think it once, and put it away. Counter negative thoughts with positive ones.

5. Choose what you do and do your best.
6. Connect with beauty each day.
7. Have fun every day.
8. Accept full responsibility for your life.
9. Act on something you are passionate about.
10. Develop a deep, spiritual connection.

Quotes:

"The way a man's mind runs is the way he is sure to go." *Henry B. Wilson*

"Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create that fact."
William James

Resources:

LEARNED OPTIMISM: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life by Martin Seligman

<http://www.authenichappiness.com>--personal growth resources

<http://www.lancearmstrong.com>

Sharon Pahlka is a life coach specializing in helping those with chronic health challenges live well and meaningfully. For more information, visit her Web site:
<http://www.lifeisagift.com>.