

“Reaching your Dreams by Choosing Optimism”

What is a dream? Not the hazy visions you experience while sleeping, but something you want; a passion or a flame that drives you. So what does it take to achieve it? Not all dreams are the same, but they all take work, dedication, and most importantly – Optimism. The end result hopefully will be seeing yourself on the podium reaping the fruits of your labor. Optimism is the driving force in any bit of change one might experience, the thought of what the future may hold if we applied ourselves to our passion. Optimism helps us drown out the pessimism one experiences when being tested by the elements.

Optimism is defined as having hope or emphasizing the good in anything. Hope is simply believing in something, to think that no matter what, things can improve. Think of it as the ability to see an opportunity, realizing your vision can be executed. Seeing the world through the lens of change and improvement inspires the growth needed for change. Optimism is the daydream that motivates you to go practice, hit the gym, or study for that degree. Optimism is why kids want to be astronauts, or zoo-keepers, or doctors, or anything that excites their imagination. Optimism is the bridge from fantasy to reality, keeping our wildest thoughts just within reach to keep us working towards something we aren't just yet.

Take me, for example, I want to play tennis amongst the best players in the world. I want to be considered professional. Maybe one day someone will even have a poster of me in their room. Out of the tens of millions of people to pick up a racket I want to be a household name. It has the potential to be difficult, but nevertheless, possible. I want to infuse that possibility into every ounce of practice I can, then practice some more. To achieve one's dream one must realize the challenge and be willing, never losing sight of their optimism and passion. Dreams aren't

carried out through optimism, but optimism is a tool to stay dedicated to your craft. Optimism is every bit of pride I feel winning a match, or tournament. Optimism is what keeps me coming back after a tough loss, feeling like I'm not good enough. Optimism is accepting the reality of your situation and countering with a plan to succeed; if your plan doesn't work, make a new one.

But what's the difference between someone with a dream and someone with optimism? Simply wanting your dream to come true isn't optimism; rather I'd say the opposite. Not even giving yourself the benefit of the doubt to at least act on things you're passionate about is far more dangerous than not dreaming at all. To choose optimism is to choose the path of dedication. Optimism is the filament between your imagination and hard work. Imagine if all the people in the world settled for less than what they truly desired. It would be misery, regret, just holding on till the bitter end. However, in light of all this, optimism isn't just a "glass half full" argument. Optimism takes the ends and uses it to justify the means, seeing your dream come true motivates you to do the work.

I'd like to mention my brother as an example of exceptional optimism. During a volleyball tournament over the summer, he tore the ligaments in his ankle. This injury had the potential to be very detrimental to his upcoming golf season. However, with a therapy boot and most importantly, a hopeful attitude, he and his team still went on to claim the All-City title again just winning it for the first time in 15 years the season before. To me, the reason this example is so powerful is that he had no control over his injury, but had control of his effort. The most difficult obstacles to overcome are those we can't move, and it would be easy, even understandable for him to give up, but nothing was going to keep him from his passion.

Imagine a world void of optimism, one where innovation is impossible, simply because people deemed it so. Everything has elements of difficulty, from going to the bathroom, to curing

cancer. Optimism is simply deciding it's not too difficult to attempt, and that the effort and sacrifice are simply the prices you willingly pay to achieve your dreams. Hoping for the best isn't always easy, but it's so much better than expecting the worst.