

I Can't Accept Not Trying

I visualized where I wanted to be, what kind of player I wanted to become. I knew exactly where I wanted to go, and I focused on getting there.

Michael Jordan

On Fears

I never looked at the consequences of missing a big shot. Why? Because when you think about the consequences you always think of a negative result.

Some people get frozen by that fear of failure. They get it from peers or from just thinking about the possibility of a negative result. They might be afraid of looking bad or being embarrassed. I realized that if I was going to achieve anything in life I had to be aggressive. I had to get out there and go for it. I don't believe you can achieve anything by being passive. I'm not thinking about anything except what I'm trying to accomplish. Any fear is an illusion. You think something is standing in your way, but nothing is really there. What is there is an opportunity to do your best and gain some success. If it turns out my best isn't good enough, then at least I'll never be able to look back and say I was too afraid to try. Failure always made me try harder the next time.

That's why my advice has always been to "think positive" and find fuel in any failure. Sometimes failure actually just gets you closer to where you want to be. If I'm trying to fix a car, every time I try something that doesn't work, I'm getting closer to finding the answer. The greatest inventions in the world had hundreds of failures before the answers were found.

I think fear sometimes comes from a lack of focus or concentration. If I had stood at the free-throw line and thought about 10 million people watching me on the other side of the camera lens, I couldn't have made anything. So I mentally tried to put myself in a familiar place. I thought about all those times I shot free throws in practice and went through the same motion, the same technique that I had used thousands of times. You forget about the outcome. You know you are doing the right things. So you relax and perform. After that you can't control anything anyway. It's out of your hands, so don't worry about it.

On Commitment

I approached practices the same way I approached games. You can't turn it on and off like a faucet. I couldn't dog it during practice and then, when I needed that extra push late in the game, expect it to be there. But that's how a lot of people approach things. And that's why a lot of people fail. They sound like they're committed to being the best they can be. They say all the right things, make all the proper appearances. But when it comes right down to it, they're looking for reasons instead of answers. If you're trying to achieve, there will be roadblocks. I've had them; everybody has had them.

But obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.

Michael Jordan