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WHAT IS CONFIDENCE?

“Confidence is a belief in oneself, the conviction that one has the ability to meet life's challenges and to succeed—and the willingness to act accordingly. Being confident requires a realistic sense of one's capabilities and feeling secure in that knowledge.” - Paula Davis J.D., M.A.P.P. Pressure Proof

psychologytoday.com/us/basics/confidence

Perhaps contrary to popular belief, confidence is not something you are either born with or without, but rather is a learned behavior. This is great news, because it means your player can grow his or her confidence, both on and off the field!

While a player's confidence is largely developed through his or her own words, actions and beliefs, it can also be affected by outside influences, such as the relationships players have with their family, coaches and teammates. As parents, you need to make sure that your child is taught and coached with positive reinforcements that will allow his or her self-esteem to improve. You can help set your player up for success by encouraging him or her through each of the stages described herein, and by reminding your player how crucial their attitude and effort is to their success.

Players develop confidence in their soccer skills in three different stages. For our purposes, skill is defined as the ability to perform an action with determined results with good execution, often within a given amount of time, energy, or both.

Stage 1: Observing the skill

In stage 1, players watch other soccer/futsal players performing the skill they want to acquire. In addition to helping the player better understand the skill by visualizing its elements and how it is performed, watching another player model a skill sends the message that it is doable. This stage is the foundation of confidence, where players come to understand that if they can see it, they can do it! As a parent, be sensitive to how your child perceives him/herself in comparison to those they are observing. Remind them that the point isn't to compare themselves to anyone else, but to realize that if someone else can learn the skill, they can too!

Stage 1 skills examples: Beginner players might watch a more experienced player juggle the soccer ball. Middle school players might observe how the coach is teaching a tactical lesson plan and understand how it will be implemented in a training session, game, or league. High school players might observe the speed of play from experts in their position.

Stage 2: Practicing the skill

Once a player observes and understands the skill, they can move on to the second stage of growth. In this stage, players learn by doing! As players focus on practicing a skill with 100% effort, they will see an increase in their ability and, in turn, an increase in their confidence. Confidence will also grow as players learn to navigate the inevitable successes and failures that come with practicing a skill, and as they begin to understand that their effort is the true indicator of success

Stages Of Confidence



To help make these concepts more concrete, players should focus on setting weekly S.M.A.R.T. goals (goals that are Specific; Measurable; Attainable; Relevant; and Timebound) relating to the skills they are practicing. As a parent, you can help your player set and track their progress towards their SMART goals. Post them in a prominent place along with an affirmation or two your player can say to him/herself to encourage a positive, determined attitude.

Remember, too, that you provide the environment outside of training & games where your child can find success practicing his or her skills. Make it fun and encourage the mantra that practice doesn't make perfect, but it does make for progress!

Stage 2 skills examples: Beginner players might focus on increasing the number of juggles in small increments. Middle school players could focus on being able to strike a ball with both feet with the same success rate on goal from a certain distance. A high school player might break down game film for their position and focus on 1 aspect that they need to improve.

Stage 3: Performing the skill

During this final stage of developing confidence, players need to execute the skill they have been practicing in a competitive environment. Players need to believe that the effort they put into practicing their skill in stage 2 will allow them to express that skill at game time. Being able to complete a skill under pressure will not only make your player's confidence soar, but it will also serve as concrete proof that they can grow through hard work and determination. Players that practice and then perform skills in a competitive environment are often the players with the most confidence and highest self-esteem.

Stage 3 skills examples: Beginner players might perform an individual ball handling skill during a game and beat a defender. A middle school player might take the penalty kick in a tournament game that wins the finals. A high school player might recognize that the opposing team changed their formation and be able to figure out the best way to break down the opposing team's defense.

Conclusion

Learning to become confident can be an emotional process, as your player will undoubtedly experience both many failures and successes. The most important thing is that each player believes in his or her ability to grow through the stages outlined herein and realizes that success is ultimately determined by the amount of effort s/he puts in for the results s/he wants to achieve. This process has no definite timeline and this process has no end, as there is always room to grow! As a parent, you can encourage your player to believe in him/herself and to observe, practice and perform the skills s/he wants to improve, secure in the knowledge that confidence will come as a result.