

Develop and Understand your WHY

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When I first started in strength and conditioning, I had no clue how much of an impact I would have on young people's lives. What got me interested in being a strength and conditioning coach was the fact that I didn't have a certified strength coach when I was a student-athlete. What I did have was one of my position-coaches filling in and doing the best that he could to help us get stronger, faster and more explosive. When I would come home for visits I would see the programs my friends had from the colleges they attended and thought to myself "I wish we had a program like that." This is when I made the decision that if I ever had the opportunity to help athletes become stronger and faster, I would dedicate my life to it and be great!

A student-athlete must not only be physically prepared for their field of play, but they must be mentally strong as well. I was fortunate to have interned and worked under strength coaches who had similar philosophies as me so that the transition to being an effective coach came easy.

Being aligned with the right coaches early in my career helped me to hone in on my overall purpose in this profession. I answered my *why* early.

Professionally, it is important to know your 'why' in order to plan on having a long, effective career. Having a purpose helps everything else fall into place. When you know what you're setting out to accomplish on a daily basis, you reach your short term goals which in turn manifests as a positive attitude that rubs off on the people around you. If your student-athletes have a positive attitude as a result of your positive attitude, they will work hard for you.

Over the 17 years I have been involved in athletics, I have learned that in order to help students get better, you must love what you do. You set the tone for them to feel great about what happens in the weight room and the results they get in their field of play. You make them love who they are because you motivate them to be better. This is what coaching is all about.

Our job is to be an external motivator that encourages student-athletes both on and off the field. Because this is our job, sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the money, prestige, bowl games, championships and competition with other strength coaches and forget about why we first stepped into this field. As interns and graduate assistants we had to hustle in order to advance in our careers. When a new strength and conditioning coach approaches you and asks for advice and mentorship, remember that you were once in that place. Talk to them, mentor them, and even help them find job opportunities that will advance their careers. Someone did it for you so *pay it forward*.

In giving advice, we must give good advice to the coaches we mentor. Yes, having football and basketball experience is necessary in our field. However, most schools have more than those two sports and working with a variety of teams will help with program development as well as out-of-the-box thinking.

Remembering our *why* when we touch the lives of student-athletes and newcomers to this field will make us better coaches and mentors. Ultimately, it will continue to solidify the necessity of our presence in collegiate athletics while producing outstanding strength and conditioning coaches who will eventually take our places in the field.