

A LESSON LEARNED THROUGH BASEBALL: A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Kathy Haskin

With the first batter, the first game of the season began. Strike one; strike two; strike three. Parents and players surrounded the field with cheers. The next teenager strode up to the plate. Ball one; ball two...after four he took his base.

“OK, just throw strikes,” the coach directed. The next batter waited through two balls, one a wild pitch in the dirt. “Your body isn’t following your arm!” the coach tried a new direction. With two more outside pitches, the runners advanced.

“That’s ok, get this batter...just throw it in there,” Mom’s voice added to the growing din.

The next pitch met the batter’s shoulder with a fast thud. Bases loaded, the pitcher retreated deep into his thoughts. Looking up, he found Coach standing in front of him, the catcher at his side. The parents wondered what was being said, the players knew.

Return to play introduced a surprisingly new tone. The coach turned and said (not shouted), “Throw it in there Cody, hit the mitt.”

The shortstop spoke, “Throw a strike Cody, I’m right behind you.”

Strike One.

The second baseman supported the play, “Yes, throw a strike, we’re right behind you.”

Strike two.

Voices continued from the fields – right, left and center, “Right in there Cody, if they hit it we’ll get it.”

Strike three! The batter returned to the dugout, as the next one approached. Bases still loaded, two outs.

“Right in there, come in fast.”

“Right behind you...” The coach challenged; the players coached. Strike one, two, three! In the end, no hits were earned while he was on the mound. At the beginning of what is sure to be a great season, this team created a victory with the power of support.

Just one year ago, this young man most likely would have slipped into one of the drama triangle roles after the eighth straight ball, certainly after he hit the batter with the curveball that didn’t curve. From that perspective he would have had the choice of any of the



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problem-focused roles. Victim, “Why can’t I throw a strike?!” Persecutor, “What is wrong with that umpire?!” Or a search for a rescuer, “Why doesn’t Coach replace me?”

Was it his growing maturity? Or his growing skills? Was it the outcome-oriented approaches of his teammates and coaches? Whatever it was, he was clearly a creator in the moment. It was great baseball that night and a glimmer of what our son can do with his growing skills, confidence and the empowerment dynamic.

Author David Emerald describes these outcome-oriented choices in his book *The Power of TED** (**The Empowerment Dynamic*). It is a matter of attention and intention to produce the results you want. What are you focusing on? Does the problem have your attention? Does the next batter, the prospect of an earned run against you, or something else you want to avoid have your attention? If your answer is yes, your focus is on victimhood and within the drama triangle.

Emerald would suggest that you shift that focus toward what you want to happen, to your desired outcome. “I will strike out this next batter,” the pitcher would say. That is a creator’s voice, someone focused on an outcome.

A creator is a role Emerald identifies as an antidote to the victim role, and subsequently an escape from the drama. He also identifies a challenger and coach to be the outcome-oriented alternatives to the roles of persecutor and rescuer.

What is your intention? What helped to shift the inning into the creator orientation was when the baseball coach and players made clear their intention – to support the pitcher through the next few batters. Acting as challengers and coaches, their words guided and assisted him in focusing on outcomes, rather than problems. “If he hits it, we are here,” assurance from the coaches on the field. “Throw it in there, hit the mitt,” the Coach used a challenger’s choice of words to keep the intention clear.

That night on the baseball field it was in the AIR (Attention – Intention – Results). With his attention on the outcome he wanted, with his intention clear on how it would happen, the results followed. Hopefully our son’s life lessons will continue on and off of the baseball field. Like many of us, he will often have the choice to address the moments of life through a lens looking at the problems he wants to avoid or a shift to a focus directed toward the outcomes he wants to create. Life’s lessons – here’s to the learners in all of us!