

## 6.6. THE THREE P's

### Perseverance, Patience, Perspective

In a town where I developed several buildings, I came to know an extraordinary woman who not only ran several businesses but also was a board member of several non-profit organizations. In spite of some very extreme challenges, the businesses and organizations were very successful. How did she do it? What was her secret? I realized that she mastered the three P's; she took the long view, had patience, and didn't quit when the going was difficult. These traits don't come naturally, especially to kids. By teaching them the 3 P's you'll be setting them up for success.

### Perseverance

Talent and luck may play important roles in defining success but more often it's a matter of hard work and not giving up. The common thread of famous discoveries and works of art – perseverance; a “never give up” attitude. Michael Jordan said: “I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

Did you ever wonder what happened in Oz after Dorothy went back to Kansas? This is the story of Percival and Penelope who lived in a small village at the edge of Oz County.

Percival was in love with Penelope. Penny was the smartest and the most beautiful girl in the village. Percy was – well, he was just average in every way. Percy knew that he needed to be special in order to get Penny's attention and her affection. Everyone knew how the Scarecrow got his brains from the Wizard so Percy decided that he would travel into the big city and ask the Wizard for something special. But what would be special?

- **Brains?** Percy wasn't dumb by any means but he knew of others that were certainly smarter than him. Does being smart matter that much?
- **Beauty?** Percy wasn't handsome; he never caught any furtive looks from the girls. But he wasn't ugly either. Are looks that important?
- **Talent?** He could play a few tunes on the calliope but it didn't come naturally to him like it did to some people. Would talent impress people?
- **Athletic prowess?** Percy is a little short for an athlete. His skills and coordination are – average. Would Penny like someone strong and fast?

Percy couldn't decide how to make himself more special, so he started the long journey down the yellow brick road with plenty of time to think along the way.

On his second day he met a very frantic Scarecrow who was trying to free his friend stuck under a large rock. Percy scratched his head for a few minutes then told Scarecrow to find a large pole and a smaller round rock. Using the rock as a **fulcrum** and the pole as a **lever**, Percy and Scarecrow lifted the big rock just enough to free Mortimer Munchkin.

Mortimer exclaimed: "Holy smokes! This reminds me of that physics class we all took. Scarecrow was the smartest guy in class; he never had to study for long and got straight A's but it was Percy who figured out how to use physics to get me out of a jamb." Percy remembered that he had to study for long hours to understand physics and get those practice problems correct. Percy said "Sure I had to study a lot longer but so what - **what else would I be doing?**"

The following week Percy made it to Munchkinland. "Wow", he thought, "One would hardly recognize the place. It's amazing what Munchkins can do when they don't have to worry about witches." The annual Frisbee Festival was only two days away. The Blue team's best thrower was sick from eating too many lollipops so the Guild pleaded with Percy to fill in for him. Percy had very little experience with Frisbees but decided to give it a go. He practiced and practiced and then practiced some more. The tournament was a huge success and the blue team made a very good showing. Everyone was so impressed with the dedication Percy showed to mastering Frisbee throwing. Percy said, "My arm is a little sore and I had to practice a lot longer than if I was an athlete but it was time well spent. Besides, **What else would I be doing?**"

Finally, the towering spires of the City of Oz were in sight. Percy stopped at Glinda's Inn to rest for the night. Glinda had a large calliope in the living room and had promised to play "Somewhere over the Rainbow" for the tour group coming the day after next. The problem was that Glinda had bad blisters on her wand hand from making the magic rose garden and wouldn't be able to play. Could Percy be talked into learning and playing the piece? Well, you know Percy. He memorized the notes and practiced playing the piece until he knew it by heart and could play it with feeling. The tour group couldn't have been more impressed. Percy said, "no, I don't have any special talent, I just really focused hard and kept practicing until I got it right. When they asked how he found the time, he simply said. "I just made the time; besides, **What else would I be doing?**"

The very next day, Percy rode into town on Glinda's horse-of-a-different-color. And who was waiting for him but the Wizard himself. He had a letter for Percy that was from Penny. You see, Percy wrote to Penny every day telling her of all his adventures, and ideas for the future, and how smart and beautiful she is. Penny's letter to Percy was nothing

short of astonishing. She told Percy that "you kept at it and kept at it and eventually wore down my resistance. I can see that you are very special indeed and I want my children to be just like you. I'll be here waiting for you when you come home."

The Wizard of Oz held a feast and had Percy sit at the main table. After dinner but before dessert, the Wizard made a big speech. In the speech, the Wizard told everyone that he had never met anyone as special as Percy. Percy had qualities even more impressive than being smart, talented, beautiful, or athletic. Percy never gave up, he worked very hard, he was always willing to take a challenge and to help people. And the best part is the stick-to-it-ness yielded better results than if he was born with those other qualities that people seek. In Percy's honor, the Wizard made a new word that defines these special qualities. He labeled these qualities "Percy-verance".

## Patience

Patience is a virtue. Patience is annoying - who wants to wait around? Our civilized life with its ever-increasing demand for better, faster, and cheaper is tugging us in the opposite direction. Many of us believe that society's frantic pace, people's impulsive behavior and our desire for instant gratification is causing multiple layers of stress and duress. People that are patient are calmer and usually much better off. A few benefits of patience and pitfalls of impatience are presented.

"**Good things come to those who wait**" is a popular expression which tells us that if we can wait a little longer, we'll be better off. Sometimes we just have to be patient. Here are some examples:

- **Money:** Those people that invest or put money into savings accounts - the longer they wait, the more money they make.
- **Jobs:** If a person takes the first job that comes along, he might miss the opportunity for a really good job that comes up later.
- **Baseball:** A hitter needs to be patient at the plate - he needs to wait for a pitch that he can hit.
- **Predators:** Wild cats and spiders have to wait a really long time, but they also have to be ready when the prey comes along. If they can't wait, they starve.
- **Gadgets:** Even though you're in a hurry to buy something, if you wait a little bit, the new model will come out which may be better and cheaper. OR, you'll have more time to research and find something better.

- Survival: Experts tell us when you're lost to stay put, then calmly think everything through. If people get in a panic and don't wait for help, they can get into worse trouble.

Patience is a cousin of persistence and perseverance. While you keep practicing and working at your objective, you *have* to wait for the results. Stay focused and keep calm. Think about how nice it will be when you finally get there. Learn to be patient and eventually you'll accomplish your goals. ("Better late than never.")

Dad, you can teach patience by example. Instead of giving a quick yes or no answer, take the time to listen, think through the permutations of a situation with your child. Think of rewards you can give your child to reinforce the benefits of patience. Taking the time to think through problems instead of acting impulsively will lead to resilience and self discipline.

## Perspective

In the context here (along with patience and perseverance) perspective means seeing the bigger picture and thinking long-term in order to achieve your goal.

## Smart or Dumb?

1. The catcher dives into the dugout chasing a foul fly ball during:
  1. A spring training game
  2. The potential last out in the world series

Thinking of the big picture entails analyzing the risk of being hurt and the value of a healthy catcher for the remaining games versus getting an out. "a" is dumb and "b" might be smart - the catcher has the long off-season to heal.

1. Clara Klondike's company gave away free mint chip cookies on St. Patrick's day.

Clara was operating under the expression "you're better off in the long run". She didn't make a lot of money on St. Patrick's day but she hopes the free samples will attract many new customers. She is thinking of long term profit, not one days' profit.

Being smart is about having Perspective; knowing what parts of a situation are more important than others, seeing the bigger picture and looking into the future a little bit. Two more expressions that pertain:

"Can't see the forest for the trees" means that a person is too involved with details to see the situation as a whole. The expression suggests that the trees are in the way of seeing the forest - but wait a minute!, the trees *are* the forest!.

"He won the battle but lost the war". In military terms, a war is comprised of many battles. If you use all of your resources in one battle, you might not have any left for the battles yet to come. An example would be for an employee to argue with a boss to prove she's right. She could win the argument but she could also make the boss mad. Who do you think would be the first person to be laid off?

Dad, speaking of perspective, I once heard about a father being upset about his rambunctious kids messing up his prized garden. His wife said, "Harold, right now, we're raising *kids*; we'll have plenty of time later to raise *flowers*."

An idea for an impulsive kid: Encourage him to take up the game of chess. To win at chess definitely requires the three P's.