

New Year's Resolutions- How Do You Eat an Elephant?

Written by Les Detterbeck
Friday, 13 January 2017 10:22



College football playoff national champion coach, Dabo Swinney, has the answer: "One bite at a time." His Clemson Tigers did it Monday night when they scored in the last second of regulation to edge Alabama's Crimson Tide. Fantastic game! Kudos to both teams and their coaches!

Both teams are champions. Both have high goals and have a process in place to accomplish these goals. For those of us in the second week of our New Year's resolutions there are some real lessons to be learned by the way Clemson and Alabama go about putting together their championship seasons. They don't do it the same way, yet both have had great success.

Alabama coach, Nick Saban, has created the "Elephant" of college football, guiding Alabama to four of the last eight national college football championships. He's all about process. Coach Saban is often called a control freak who is never satisfied. Here are some of his great quotes:

"There are two pains in life. The pain of discipline and the pain of disappointment. If you can handle the pain of discipline then you'll never have to deal with the pain of disappointment."

"What happened yesterday is history. What happens tomorrow is a mystery. What we do today makes a difference-the precious present moment."

Coach Saban knows that "discipline is about changing behaviors." His players know that the process is accomplished one step at a time. That's certainly a key point toward keeping New Year's resolutions.

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Dabo Swinney's process is different, though every bit as successful. Nick emphasizes the journey, Dabo focuses on the joy in the journey. It's no surprise that Coach Swinney loves Chicago Cub skipper Joe Maddon's style. Dabo visited Wrigley field last summer and was "blown away" by the disco ball, drum set and celebration room in the Cubs' clubhouse. Of course, Clemson's new football facility includes miniature golf, a bowling alley and a movie theater. Joy needs to be part of the journey. Perhaps it is not by coincidence that both Dabo and Maddon have celebrated recent championships.

Now, let's take these championship lessons and apply them to the setting and keeping of your New Year's resolutions. Approximately 50% of Americans make resolutions each New Year. The top ones include weight loss, exercise, stopping smoking, better money management and debt reduction. You're probably still doing well on your 2017 resolutions after only two weeks. Historically, by February most people start backsliding. And by the end of the year, people are generally back to where they started or often even further behind, due to another year of "failure." Keeping resolutions isn't easy. We're talking about changing behaviors and changing your thinking.

Here are some suggestions on making and keeping your resolutions:

Be realistic. Don't resolve to "eat an elephant." Break up your long-term goals into smaller "bites."

Focus on the process, not the outcome. If you want to run a marathon, don't be disappointed if you can't run 26 miles initially. Simply resolve to run a little farther each time and gradually work your way up to longer distances.

Rework your thinking. You have to create new neural pathways in your brain to change habits.

Set positive goals. For example, don't verbalize the goal as losing 50 pounds but, rather, reinforce how good you'll feel, in many small ways, once you've done that.

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Celebrate successes. Add joy and fun to the process. Focus on your wonderful journey at hand and the milestones your reach, not the distant outcome.

Use an Accountability Buddy and Coach. You need a trusted friend to help you set your objectives, help you monitor your progress, provide suggestions and criticism and encourage you to meet and exceed your goals.



Next week's blog will continue this New Year's Resolution theme by focusing on your financial goals and how a trusted friend, such as DWM, can help.