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Live with Passion. Lead with Purpose. Leave a Legacy.

The Worst Four-Letter Word of Them All

There is a single word in the English language that will bury you. It's the worst four-letter word of them all (psychologically speaking). It's the word "don't."

The problem with this word is that your subconscious mind doesn't understand the word "don't."

To illustrate, try this:

Don't think of a piping hot pizza. Don't picture it coming out of the oven with steam rising off the top of the bubbling cheese and glistening pepperoni. Don't think of the amazing smells wafting from the kitchen.

Just writing that caused me to drool on my keyboard. If you are reading this at approximately 10am, my apologies. Treat yourself to a mid-morning snack.

You thought of the pizza, didn't you? That's how our minds work.

What Water? A Lesson from Golf

When I was 16, I was an average competitive golfer. I'd only been playing for three years, but for the past year my progress had stagnated. My biggest struggle was with the mental side of the game. I simply could not keep the negative thoughts out of my head.

Then my dad forced me to take nine weeks off from the game. This was like torture for a 16-year old aspiring professional golfer. But during that nine-week break, he bought me a book that set me on a path toward eventually being one of the top ranked college golfers in the nation. It literally changed my life and impacts me even today.

The book was *Golf is Not a Game of Perfect* by Dr. Bob Rotella, a performance psychologist who works with many of the top athletes in the world as well as top companies. That book showed me how the subconscious mind doesn't process the word "don't" quite like we want it to.

"Don't hit it in the water left" translates instantly into an image of the ball traveling left, splashing into the water. When I say things like "don't hit it left," I was solidifying in my mind the very thing I didn't want. I experience all the accompanying emotions of the ball in the water, as if it had really happened:

- Disappointment
- Defeat
- Frustration

As I read the book, I thought of one particular hole at my home course that had given me fits over the years. There was water all down the left side of the hole. I'd probably hit forty balls in that lake over the years and every time I stood on the tee, I tensed up.

As I read the book, however, I began to visualize the hole without the water. I focused on picking a specific target in my mind. I played the hole over and over again in my mind. Each time, I hit the ball right at my target. I must have rehearsed that tee shot a thousand times in my mind before I played it next.

From that point forward, I never worried about the water. In fact, I often forgot that it was even there. It wasn't until recently that I saw an aerial view of the hole that I realized just how narrow the fairway is. To me, because of my mental training, it seemed a hundred yards wide. It was, in fact, less than twenty-five yards wide.

Statistically, at my skill level, I should have hit at least a few balls in the water after that, but I never once hit another ball in that lake. All because I eliminated a single word from my golf vocabulary and focused on a clear, powerful, and positive vision of the result I wanted.

Where your Head Goes

I read a story once about a tightrope walker. He was asked about the secret to his success. His reply summed up what it takes to achieve any goal in life:

The secret is to keep your eyes fixed on where you are going. You never look down. **Where your head goes, that's where your body is going too.** If you look down, there's a good chance you will fall. So you always have to look to **where you want to be.** From *Become a Better You* by Joel Osteen (emphasis mine)

When a tightrope walker looks down, it only shows him where he *doesn't* want to be. Looking down leads to thoughts such as "don't fall," which causes him to think of falling. The vision then plays out in his mind of him falling to a nasty death.

Instead the skilled tightrope walker keeps his focus on where he is going.

Key Takeaway

The key to any success is to focus on the positive, not the possible negative. It's simply how our minds are wired.

Eliminate that one four-letter word and you'll start to achieve more of what you want in life.

Have you let "don't" cause you to do the very thing you wanted to avoid?