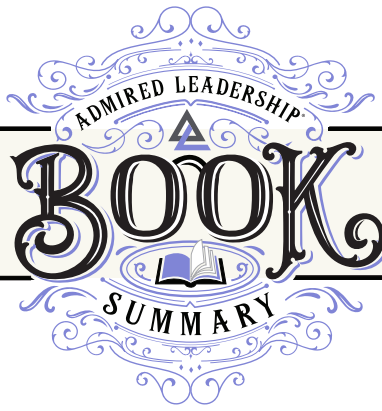




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



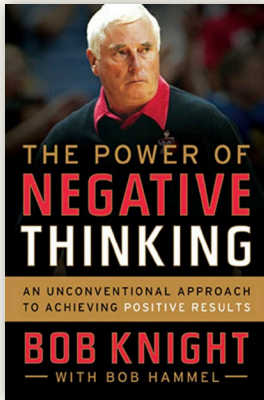
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The Power of Negative Thinking

An Unconventional Approach to Achieving Positive Results

Published 2013

BOOK AUTHOR: BOB KNIGHT



Bob Knight is one of the most prolific coaches in the history of college basketball. He is most famously known for being the head coach of the Indiana University Hoosiers (1971-2000) and leading the 1975-1976 team to an undefeated regular and NCAA tournament season. In his memorable and quote-laden book *The Power of Negative Thinking*, Knight attributes his and his teams' successes to what he calls "negative thinking"—recognizing what's missing or what can go wrong and focusing on closing the gaps and removing obstacles. By starting with negative thinking, Knight coaches his players to understand their weaknesses, but also direct their focus on the things at which they already excel.

Key Quote:

"Having the will to win is not enough. What matters is having the will to prepare to win" (p. 116).

Key Points:

Keep Pollyanna on the Bench. Hope and desire are great motivators but preparation and action get results. In a loss, don't "blame" the other team, but instead, examine where **you** failed.

What Is There About the Word No? Be honest and straightforward about limits and possibilities and don't be afraid to tell people "no." "You have to recognize when what you're doing isn't working and get out of it" (p. 35). Knight urges leaders to "eliminate the sloppiness or risky plays" that could lead to defeat (p. 44).

A Limit to Negativism. A good leader is “quick to recognize good performance” and “never overlook the chance to be positive” (pp. 54, 55).

History’s Negatives, Starting With the Bible. History is full of great leaders and documents reminding us what not to do. Seven of the Ten Commandments begin with “Thou shalt not.” Determine what habits, behaviors, and thought patterns to avoid and don’t try to please everybody (pp. 69, 83).

Napoleon, Hitler, and Other Positivists. Misplaced optimism throughout history has led to terrific downfalls and defeats. “Napoleon had seemed invincible until he invaded Russia with 500,000 men and returned with 27,000 in a six-month venture in 1812 that decimated his army, shattered his reputation, and ended his European conquests” (p. 91).

Negative Thinking in the First Job. Starting out in your career – regardless of your experience and talent – know your own limits and seek out a job that will allow you to learn. Seek to become proficient in basics from mentors who know the field. Right out of college – though head coach opportunities were available to him – Knight opted to take a job as an assistant coach under a head coach he knew he could learn from.

Negative Routes to Big, Big Wins. Winning and success take time. Focus on defense and wait for the good shots – don’t just take any shot. And don’t question your expertise if you know what to do.


By Your Pupils. Don’t be afraid to learn from the people you’ve taught. If they listened and learned, they will have things to teach you.

“You’re Representing Your Country.”


Cast a vision. When Knight coached, he explained to the players that, unlike regular season games, “This game is going to stay with you forever” (p. 196).

The Proud Author of a Cliché. Knight embraces the clichés we frequently hear as they often express basic truths about life. Some of his favorites are: “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread,” “Don’t live someone else’s dream,” and “You’re playing for the name on the **front** of the jersey” (pp. 201, 202).


Conclusion. “Optim-ism. Pessim-ism. Real-ism. The ism I’m arguing for is the third one: realism” (p. 219).



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continued

Key Concepts:

BEING A NEGATIVE LEADER

The difference between winning and losing often comes down to leadership. The key determinant of strong leadership is the ability to move people out of their comfort zones. A negative-thinking leader is more likely to understand when average preparation and an average game (within the team members' comfort zones) aren't going to beat an average game from the opponent (p. 36).

Leaders also help individuals recognize and understand their comfort zones. It's important to know what you're good at, what you can improve, and what you simply cannot do.

"All the willpower in the world won't lift an average high jumper over the bar at seven feet" (p. 55).

Push people beyond where they are, but lead with intelligence. "Don't demand of people what they can't do. Demand what they can do" (p. 109).

The best leaders also understand how to demand the highest performance from their followers and maintain a degree of intolerance. "Always remember that the people you lead are going to be satisfied with the minimum of what you demand" (p. 109).



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NEGATIVE THINKING STRATEGIES

Don't prepare to lose, but have a plan in place for recovery from a loss. Use a loss to learn and eliminate the factors that caused it (p. 10).

Last Game – Next Game Theory: Pay more attention to what's next rather than spend time celebrating the current success. Toward the end of games where his team had a big lead, Knight would pull the starters out, put the second string in, and begin talking to the starters on the bench about the next opponent (p. 13).

Kenny Rogers Principle: "For the coach or leader, the strategy is knowing how to use your personnel and knowing how you can't. Know when you've got everything going your way, and know also when things aren't going the way you want and you have to make some adjustments. Know when to hold them, know when to fold them" (p. 35).

Sun Tzu's The Art of War: "The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy." And "The opportunity to secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself" (p. 73).

- Knight coached his teams to focus on eliminating the sloppy or risky plays that led to mistakes and gave the opponent the winning advantage.

- Knight also specialized game strategies for different opponents, knowing that looking for weaknesses and attacking them one by one is better than attempting to overpower the other team on a general level (p. 94).
- “Fundamentals eliminate ways to fail, ways to lose. The greatest fundamentalists – in coaching, in warfare, in theology, in business – were and always have been more concerned about losing than about winning” (p. 220).

NEGATIVE SUCCESS

While coaching at West Point, Knight instilled the following bylaws, which he carried into the rest of his career:

“Winning with talent isn’t necessarily the way to go about things.

There are some things you can do and some things you can’t do.

Elimination of mistakes is more important than the will to win.

Never let the status of the team we’re playing affect the way we play” (p. 122).

Knight reflects on his strategy for the 1984 NCAA regional game against Dean Smith’s North Carolina team with Michael Jordan:

He knew right away that his team could not play at the same fast pace as the Tar Heels and also that his team could not stop Jordan at everything. Rather than try to stop Jordan from taking outside shots, instead, he told his team early that they would commit to stopping Jordan at what he was best at – offensive rebounds and driving from the backdoor – and slow down the pace of the offensive game by passing quickly (p. 143). Indiana beat North Carolina in a 72-68 upset.

As coach of the 1984 Olympic team, Knight gave every player a 3 x 5 photograph of a gold medal to keep in his pocket at all times. He gave them an 8 x 10 copy of the same picture to hang over their beds. Then, he had 1948 Olympic gold medalist Alex Groza come and speak to the team and show them his medal, which he had made into a necklace for his wife. Each player knew what he was going to do with his medal before actually receiving it at the games in Los Angeles.



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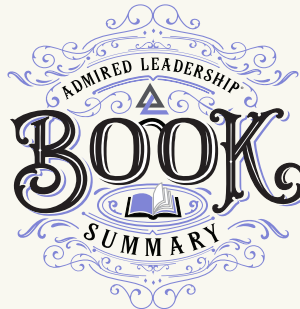
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Knight, B. (2013). **The Power of Negative Thinking: An Unconventional Approach to Achieving Positive Results.** Boston: New Harvest – Houghton Mifflin Harcourt



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