

Emotional Hijacking

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We all know that competition can be very emotional. We had a very positive emotional experience last Tuesday night when our team raised the championship banner in the 2008 NBA World Championship ceremony. These are the emotions we all work for and dream about. But we also know that we have to deal with the other side of the emotional spectrum with our players and ourselves — those negative emotions.

Every team will go through some tough times this year. What will separate the teams that get through these times successfully is the attitude the players and coaches bring to the court every day. I can tell you first hand that championship teams are often stocked with extremely motivated, passionate, and emotional players and coaches. Part of the DNA of a championship team is the passion and emotion the players and coaches bring to the floor every practice and every game.

Boston Celtics Head Coach Doc Rivers spends a great deal of time thinking not only about the game but about the players and how to best motivate them and manage our team. Not only is he an excellent coach, he is an amazing motivator and team builder. Doc has a term that we will get to in a minute. We use it for those situations in games when the emotions get so strong that they sometimes take away from the focus of the team.

There will be times when your players get angry at themselves, their teammates, or even their coaches. It happens to all of us. But the championship team will hold itself and each of its players to a level of responsibility that ensures that this anger, this disappointment, this distraction, will *never* have an adverse effect on the team.

We have all seen a player get taken out of a game, leave the floor, and cross in front of the bench with body language that says even more than the words he may or may not (and definitely should not) say. Typically another player or coach then has to divert his focus and energy to go over and calm that player down. To us this is a just like a turnover except that it can be more costly. It can rob a teammate of some precious gas in his emotional tank.

This is a case of “emotional hijacking” and our team will tell you that this cannot be tolerated under any circumstances! Championship teams know they cannot rob themselves of their best resources. They cannot hijack the very strength they have because a teammate has put himself and his issue ahead of the team.