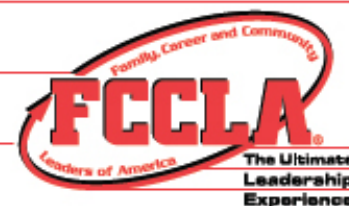


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How to Maintain Enthusiasm by Paul Vitale

“How do you maintain enthusiasm in this whirlwind life today? No, really—how do you keep your level of energy spiraling upward, not downward?” That’s a commonly asked question that many answer a variety of ways. As an FCCLA adviser and leading member of one of the most respected student organizations in America, one of the greatest opportunities you have is to be enthusiastic.

Enthusiasm is often defined as simply having a passionate interest in something. But what does being enthusiastic really accomplish? For starters, the passion that is generated through enthusiasm sets an important tone and pace that greatly influences our daily activities. It helps define objectives that are important to us and provides the incredible chance to create positive change.

Now that sounds good, but on any given day, how does possessing enthusiasm become second nature? There are a few key questions that you can ask to find this significant answer.

First, where does your self-confidence measure today? Our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become. Having self-confidence is not about being arrogant, but possessing a belief in our true ability to succeed. Accomplishing or succeeding in anything takes a state of mind that is passionate, resilient and willing to learn from the trials and tribulations of everyday experiences. As we know, life’s battles don’t discriminate. If we think we have been beaten, we definitely have; if we want to achieve, but think we can’t, it is almost certain we won’t; if our self-confidence is lost, so is our will.

Remember—preparation creates confidence and through continuous practice, confidence evolves into competence. At that point, we find ourselves accomplishing tasks enthusiastically and with great assurance.

Second, are your reactions calm, steady and composed? By demonstrating grace under pressure, each of us inspires others to stay calm and act intelligently. When major issues arise, it’s natural to want to hide in a hole instead of taking a stand or position. Through a calm, steady and composed reaction, we have the opportunity to respond to what has to be done, when it needs to be done, for however long it takes. Things will continuously happen and people will always act and react in certain ways. We might not be able to control that, but we can keep this in mind—maintaining our composure is in the details. It’s not what we say; it’s how we say it.

Remember—at times, composure’s greatest enemy is anxiety. Try not to worry—you can’t change the past, but you sure can ruin the present by worrying over the future, while zapping your energy in the process. The large majority of the things we worry about never happen and the rest are going to happen anyway. Calmness is an extension of our self-confidence and faith that in the end, everything will work out.

Third, is your communication flow moving freely? Two people can look at the exact same thing, but perceive it in totally different ways. Just as two people can hear the exact same thing, but interpret it in many different ways. The quality of the exchange of information between individuals sets the table for either success or failure. When we each have a true understanding and connection to those around us, the exchange of feedback and the value of accountability are made easier. Keeping the lines of communication open helps eliminate misunderstandings that can jeopardize our level of enthusiasm.

Remember—explain to people what you expect. Develop a plan for accomplishing your goals and objectives, and then launch the plan. Be the first to listen

for feedback that may signal the need for a strategy change. When things go wrong, take two things—charge and responsibility. When things go right, share two things—glory and praise.

Fourth, are you continuing to look inward—then outward? Most people don’t want to be managed. They want to be led. Who has ever heard of a world manager? World leader, yes. Education leader, political leader, religious leader, community leader, business leader. They lead, they don’t necessarily just manage. Individuals who are able to look inward and get excited about their own lives are then in turn provided the incredible opportunity to look outward and enthuse others through FCCLA. If we concentrate on managing ourselves first, and do that well, we’ll be able to stop managing and start leading.

Remember—no great leader ever succeeded alone. There is always a team of followers. It’s much easier to find great followers if the leader is able to generate excitement for the cause.

Life is chaotic and it is easy to feel beaten down. Nonetheless, find what moves you to become excited about the day ahead. Focus on the small joys of life and allow them to fuel your enthusiasm. Use the energy derived from the high moments to carry you through the lows, while never forgetting to help others do the same. Do this consistently and soon you will find yourself answering the question, **“So, how do you maintain enthusiasm in this whirlwind of life today?”**

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