

Don't show your frustration on the ice

I have to admit: I used to be one of those players who would bang their stick on the ice after missing an open net. I'd roll my eyes when someone missed a pass that I thought she should get. I'd mutter something under my breath when I was annoyed.

I would let my frustrations get to me on the ice. And I didn't think it was having an effect on my performance. It was just "what I did".

It wasn't until a few weeks into my freshman season at university that I was set straight. My college coach let me know that it was unacceptable behavior to bang my stick, roll my eyes or show any kind of frustration on the ice.

She told me that I had to learn to play as if nothing bothered me.

Before we had this chat, everyone on the rink would not only know that I made a mistake, but I would show them that I let it rattle me by the way I reacted.

It was hard to break a bad habit. I wasn't able to stop cold-turkey. But, in fact, I actually learned how to shake off my mistakes and hold myself accountable in the strangest of places: The racquetball court.

One of my teammates and I used to play racquetball as a warm-up before off-ice workouts during the season. We didn't have any real idea of what the rules were or what we were doing, but we ran around like mad women and competed as hard as we could to win our strange version of the game.

I'm sure that people who walked by the courts when we played were wondering why we were playing with full body contact.

The teammate I was playing with was a great athlete. She played for Team Canada and was a superstar on our college team. Being able to beat her on the ice wasn't exactly easy. But I thought I had a shot at beating her on the racquetball court.

So I decided I would try out this new technique of staying positive all the time and not showing my frustrations in our one-on-one racquetball games.

If I hit a bad shot, I'd smile. If she made a great shot, I'd just smile. I didn't let anything get to me one way or the other. I just played my game and stayed positive. I developed a great poker face.

And here's the funny thing:

After practicing this new habit for a few weeks, I started to win. And I didn't just win some of the time, I won every match.

I wasn't a superior racquetball player and I



was certainly not a superior athlete. But I decided that I would stay positive, no matter what happened and that "winning" mindset translated directly into me winning more games.

Once I had the first-hand experience of my new attitude getting me great performance results, all I had to do was transfer it over to the ice.

And, it worked there too.

I'd smile to myself when I missed an open net. I wouldn't react at all when a teammate missed a pass, other than working hard to help them fix the mistake right then and there. I played the game as if no mistake ever rattled me, and it made me a significantly better player.

It was like night and day.

All of a sudden, more pucks would go in the net, I was getting more ice time and I was playing on special teams regularly. Don't get me wrong, I was still frustrated. I just never let it show.

It wasn't easy to change my mindset and attitude on the ice. The habit of letting my frustrations show was hard to break. But once I made the change, it completely transformed my on-ice performance.

So if you find yourself getting frustrated out on the ice, try your best to never let it show. I promise that changing your mindset, developing a great poker face and staying positive will make you a better player.

Work Hard. Dream BIG. Stay Positive.

Your friend and coach,

Kim

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