

## The Champion's Approach

Handout #2

Athletes tend to approach a high pressure performance situation in one of two ways;

- **Failure Avoidant Approach:**
  - Sounds like “I don’t want to screw up” “Don’t pass the ball to me, I don’t want to lose it” “Don’t strike out” and “Don’t hit it into the water”
  - Increases anxiety and tension in the body, is distracting from performance and decreases the likelihood for success
  - Is all about what we do not want to do
- **Success Oriented Approach:**
  - Sounds like “I’ll find a way to succeed” “Pass me the ball, I’m ready” “Look for my pitch and hit it hard.” and “Drive the middle of the fairway.”
  - Minimizes distraction and increases the likelihood for success
  - Is all about what we want to do

➤ What is an example of a failure avoidant thought/approach to your performance?

➤ What is an example of a success oriented thought/approach to your performance?

### **“Focus on the Line”**

“An apprentice is asked to cut wood on the saw to be installed on a roof. The expert carpenter is shouting down measurements from above. They come to a point where a precision cut is needed. The carpenter yells down to the apprentice, “this needs to be perfect, you’ll have to hold your hand close to the saw line to make sure the cut is right.” The apprentice yells back, “but I don’t want to cut my finger off!” The carpenter replies, “don’t focus on your finger, **focus on the line.**”

Of course we do not want to cut our finger off! Of course we do not want to fail, let our team down, strike out or hit it into the water. This is the natural human response to something important to us. But how do we actually not screw up, we focus on what we want to do successfully. How do we increase the likelihood we don’t cut off our finger, we actually shift our approach and focus to what we want to do, and cut on the line.

**Champion’s Approach Assignment:** Identify an area outside of your sport that you find yourself being failure avoidant. Is it test taking, talking in front of others, video games? Whatever it might be, notice your failure avoidant thoughts and practice shifting gears manually to a more success oriented approach. Use a long deep breath to mark the shift toward focusing on what you want to do. Then notice if you feel any different in performing the task. Write down your experience and what you discovered in a notebook.