

Growth Mindset

I resumed playing badminton in March after stopping for a year due to Covid 19 restrictions (so happy!). An incident took place on the court recently.

One of the games ended prematurely because my opponents argued over where they should each stand on the court. Positioning, as it is known in badminton, is a big deal just like every other team sport because where one stands on the court affects his or her teammate. Where a player stands is largely influenced by whether they are in offence or defence, shuttle speed and the quality of the shots.

After a long 8 minutes or so, one of the guys said, "I am not as fit and agile as the rest of you", of which his teammate replied, "That's ok, which is why it is even more important that you get your positioning right so that it saves you a lot of energy. That's why you need to learn and adjust."

All our jaws pretty much dropped when the first guy replied, "I don't want to and I don't like to learn anything new. I don't need to improve."

I hope the guy's refusal to learn new things is confined only to badminton; after all we are casual, recreational players. I feel sorry for him because he is missing out on so much fun in badminton; and all it takes is a willingness to learn and adapt.

A growth mindset is vital and powerful. It opens up possibilities that we may never dream of for ourselves. George Marshall (1880-1959) who served as the Chief of Staff to two US Presidents and subsequently as Secretary of State & Secretary of Defence, in reflecting on his first years of being Chief of Staff of the

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patrick.pacificpillars@gmail.com

US military during World War II - *"It became clear to me at the age of 58 I would have to learn*

new tricks....to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills" (Roderick Magee, *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 1998). George went on to implement the Marshall Plan, US aid to rebuild Western Europe after World War II and received the 1953 Nobel Peace Prize.

Learning something new or adapting to new behaviours are often not a walk in the park endeavours. They require some courage and perhaps humility to laugh at ourselves when we are clumsy in making our adjustments. Sometimes the journey of adjustments is so great that one needs an advocate to walk alongside.

Next time when encountering an uncomfortable situation, instead of saying, 'That's not me', why not have a go at it. With a growth mindset it could open up a new horizon for us to become bigger versions of ourselves.

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