

Last week we looked at WHY you play Table Tennis, and how this is the vital step that people often miss when trying to achieve anything in the sport.

This week we look at something equally, if not more effective...

=====
"How the Power of Beliefs Can Change Your Game"

When I was doing my life coaching training, there was one area that I learned that made a significant difference in my life (and thus in my table tennis of course!).

And I would like to share it with you now.

It was a shift in thinking that was so simple, so obvious yet immediately made anything seem possible.

And that area?

Limiting beliefs.

If there is one area that will affect how successful you are, not only in table tennis but in anything you attempt, it is what beliefs you choose to associate to whatever you are trying to achieve.

Some beliefs will serve you well and make your journey safer and happier and a lot more successful.

But some beliefs, without you knowing it, will hinder you along the way, creating unnecessary obstacles and stop you from achieving.

These are called '**limiting beliefs**'.

But I'm here to tell you the good news, and that is when you know to look out for these limiting beliefs, you can replace them with better beliefs, effectively killing them off!

And then, **ANYTHING** is possible.

When I realised these beliefs were holding me back in my game, I decided to do something about them.

I first decided to sit down, with a pencil and paper, and write down all the beliefs that I had that related to table tennis.

This list was looong, let me tell you!

But I was determined to do it right, so I basically kept writing until my hand hurt, and I'd totally run out of things to put.

Then I looked at the list, and separated the beliefs into three lists:

Beliefs **that served me** (excuse the pun! ;)), Beliefs that **held me back**, and **Neutral beliefs**.

The neutral beliefs were generally factual or inconsequential when it came to my game, from 'table tennis is a sport' to 'table tennis is the fastest racket sport in the world.'

But it's the 'Beliefs that held me back' column that we're interested in.

In that column I had things like:

- I am not as good as X.
- My backhand drive is my worst shot.
- I'll never get into the first team at my club.
- I hate losing.
- I wish I were fitter.
- If only I could smash harder.

I'm sure you can associate with at least one of them!

Just writing all of these down in one place was very therapeutic, I can tell you.

It was as though I had put all the negativity that I had associated to table tennis and placed it onto the kitchen table to do something with!

But the next two steps were the most important in terms of making a difference.

The first one was to realise and accept that those beliefs were holding me back.

This may sound obvious, but let's examine them a little closer.

"I am not as good as X".

Surely, just a statement of fact!

But the thing to remember about beliefs is that we're not interested in whether they are true or not, but **WHETHER THEY SERVE US OR NOT.**

This brings us onto the second step, which is to rewrite the belief, or as it's called in life coaching terms, move it down a level.

Because most of the limiting beliefs that hold us back is what is called "identity statements".

This means that they are beliefs that we attach to our own **IDENTITY.**

I am a poor server.

I am not as good as X.

I'm rubbish.

We have to rewrite those beliefs so that instead of hitting us on an identity level, they apply to a level that is less important, like a **BEHAVIOUR** level.

For example, adding the word "yet" to the first example changes its meaning from:

"I am not as good as X" (X is a better table tennis player than me)

To:

"I am not as good as X yet" (X currently plays TT better than me, but that could change).

The first statement is about your respective identities; the second statement is about your respective current behaviours.

I'm throwing you some pretty deep stuff here straight off, but I hope that you can see just how easy it is for people to effectively 'talk themselves out' of playing to their full potential.

There are a number of different rules to observe when rewriting your beliefs, but the most important one to remember is to phrase the new belief in the positive.

The reason that rewriting these beliefs works is that when your subconscious hears the beliefs that you are telling yourself all the time, without always realising it, it takes them at face value.

If you say you are not as good as X it says 'OK, fair enough, you're not'. And it will never help you become better than X.

In fact the only way you would then get better than X was if they played badly and you beat them, at which point your belief would then change. But we don't want to wait for that to happen!

So by saying you are not as good as X YET, your subconscious is free to accept that sometime in the future you will be better than X (or there is at least that possibility). And it will then work with you towards achieving that.

When I realised this, it made so much of a difference to how I approached the game.

Even when before I missed a simple kill and said to myself "you idiot" (or words to that effect!), I then realised just how much that would affect my game.

Am I telling you instead of saying to yourself "you idiot", say "I am an excellent TT player who just played a bad shot but will learn from the mistake"?

You bet I am!!

Once you replace the negative, IDENTITY statements with **positive, BEHAVIOUR** statements, you effectively have your subconscious' permission to play your best shot.

When the next ball smash comes along, your mind won't be thinking 'I am an idiot' and be thinking of the last shot you missed, because that was your BEHAVIOUR at a different time.

Instead it will help you to bury the ball in your opponent's half of the table!

I've thrown loads of good stuff at you here, so to sum up and simplify, here is your assignment for this week (maybe assignment's the wrong word - I'm not telling you to do these things, they are just what I would suggest you do if you are serious about improving your game!):

- Write down on a piece of paper, as I described earlier, all the beliefs that you associate with table tennis.

- Separate them into the three columns, "Beliefs that serve me", "Beliefs that hold me back" and "Neutral beliefs".

- Rewrite the "Beliefs that hold me back" column so that each one is positive and relates to your behaviour rather than your identity.

- Whenever these old beliefs come consciously to mind, replace them with the new beliefs.

- Observe at other times what you say to yourself and what level you are talking on. Is it a statement about your identity that could be holding you back?

Wow, my brain hurts now from all that, so I'll leave you in peace for now!

So next week, I'll put in a few smaller, lighter tips (but I warn you - they're no less effective!).

Until then, take care and believe yourself to success!

All the best,
Javad

The logo for Stealth Sporting Products is centered on the page. It features a large, stylized mountain range silhouette in a dark grey color. The word "STEALTH" is written in a bold, white, italicized sans-serif font across the middle of the mountain range. Below the mountain range, the words "Sporting Products" are written in a large, light grey, sans-serif font, following the curve of a circular border that frames the entire logo area.