

MENTAL POWER PLAYS

LIZARD BRAIN

THE POWER PLAY: The phrases “I have to,” “I need to,” “I better,” “I must,” “I should,” and “I got to,” are phrases we have all said to ourselves in hopes of getting us pumped up in an attempt to will us to perform. However, they often have the opposite effect. When the brain hears these phrases, it senses a threat. Since the brain’s primary responsibility is to keep us safe, it immediately transitions to what we call Lizard Brain.

What is Lizard Brain? It is the brain’s way of protecting us and conserving energy. Our muscles tighten up, our reflexes slow down, and our decision making also slows down. Think about it. Can you perform at your best with tight muscles and slow reflexes. Don’t you need to be able to make quick decisions?



ACTION ZONE:
Take an inventory of your self-talk. How often do you say one of the above phrases to yourself? Maybe you say “I have to get a certain time,” or “I need to score,” or “I better”. Think about what type of situations you say them in. Say them now out loud to yourself. How does that make you feel?

The Learning Zone:

1. Reflect on how it makes you feel when you say these phrases out loud to yourself. Think about how you feel when a parent or a coach tells you that “you better” or “you have to”
2. Let’s reframe those thoughts. What can you say instead?
 - a. I have worked really hard. I am excited to see what I can do.
 - b. I am curious about(how many goals I can score, or shots I can block, or how fast I can go).
 - c. It is my goal to go a certain time or score a certain amount of points or goals.
 - d. I would like to go a certain time or block a certain amount of goals or score.
3. Now, say these new phrases out loud to yourself and notice how they make you feel. They should motivate and elicit a sense of excitement. Very different from feeling threatened. The next time you have an important game/competition, pay attention to your thoughts in order to keep the lizard from showing up

