

# PEAK ATHLETIC CONSULTING, LLC.

## Why Trying Won't Work

**By: Jeff Anderson**  
**MS in Psychology**  
**(Specialization in Sport Psychology)**

**Web:** [peakathleticconsulting.com](http://peakathleticconsulting.com)

- “If at first you don't succeed; try, try, again”.
- “Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try”.
- “Mistakes are proof that you are trying”.
- “Let's try something new”.
- “A winner never stops trying”.
- “I tried; what else can I do”.

These are just a few of the many slogans or quotes which come up if you search the word “try” on the internet. For years I've heard the same types of quotes over and over. I've been asked “how will you ever know if you like boiled squash if you don't try?” While that may seem silly and have nothing to do with your mental skills during athletic competition it says a lot about our willingness to commit. While I may have tried the boiled squash, I sure didn't like it and will not eat it to this day. There was no commitment.

Don't get me wrong here, I for one am a fan of many of the quotes listed above. They are inspiring to us. But do they invoke a willingness to commit? “Trying” implies that you gave an effort, but it also gives you an out, or escape clause if you don't like it at first, or don't succeed. You can always fall back on the old adage “well I tried it, but it didn't work for me”, or “I tried, what else do you want from me”. I used these same phrases the first time I “tried” to learn how to cross country snow ski. I was a college and professional athlete, talented athletically, yet standing up on a couple of boards and sliding through the snow was very challenging for me, and I have never tried it again.

So I guess this brings us to a sort of cross road as we consider our use of the word “try” and how often we use it in our day to day vocabulary. It makes us feel good to try, it gives us a sense of accomplishment to be able to say “I tried”, but it also allows us to step out, or quit if things do not go as we had planned. We look at others and see them succeed and wish we could compete at that level without knowing what kind of commitment they were willing to offer in order to reach their current accomplishments. Whether it is business, recreation, or competitive athletics we need to change our commitment level. We've all heard the stories of athletes who lost it all and then re-tooled themselves and made it back to the pinnacle.

I re-watched a movie the other night which exemplifies this very concept. “Cool Running's”, if you haven't seen it, is based on the true story of a Jamaican sprinter who has dreamed his whole life about running in the Olympics. During the Jamaican qualifier he is tripped up and falls to the ground watching others finish ahead of him. His dream is dashed in the matter of seconds. He's trained his whole life for that moment, and it was gone. So he has a choice, accept that he tried and things just didn't work out for him, or re-tool. He chose to re-tool, starting up the Jamaican Bobsled Team, he qualified for the Olympics, the “Winter” Olympics (I guess he wasn't specific enough when goal setting). He had a goal to run in the Olympics and accomplished that goal even though he had to take a different path to get there. There was no “try”; he had a “do” attitude.

For any and all of you “Star Wars” fans out there, especially the old ones, Master Yoda may be one of your favorite characters of all time. Small in stature but large in life; Yoda had mastered the art of mental toughness. You see, from Yoda's perspective trying was not good enough; he saw the need to commit and accept nothing less than success. Even the talented and gifted Luke Skywalker found out the hard way that a decision had to be made, commit or get out. Rigorous training drained Luke of his resources and pushed him farther than he thought humanly possible, yet Yoda persisted. My favorite one liner, which has recently

# PEAK ATHLETIC CONSULTING, LLC.

become my own personal challenge, comes at a point in the movie when Luke is feeling defeated and unable to perform. Yoda states:

**“Do or do not, there is no try”.**

So...I'm curious about your thoughts? Is the old cliché acceptable? Does the word “try” mean as much to you as it did before? I had to face this challenge myself, and have come to the conclusion that while the effort to try something new may seem valiant, it does not push me toward success, it does not imply commitment. I've used that word literally hundreds of times in my life as I would try this business or that, or start work on an advanced academic degree, which I did twice only to make and excuse and give it up. The word “try” simply is not good enough. As Master Yoda says; do commit, do move forward, do everything in your ability to succeed, nothing else is acceptable. You either “do” or you “do not”, there is no room for “trying”.

So you want to be given a college scholarship? What are you “doing to make that happen”?

So you want to go to the Olympics? What are you doing about it?

So you want to play professional golf, or baseball, or tennis, or basketball, or football (the list is long), what are you doing about it?

There are many things in these pursuits which are out of your control, which is a whole different article to be written later, but what are you doing about the things you can control? When your friends are out partying, do you join? Or do you decline and do something else which will move you one step closer to your dream? The list at the top is a short one, very few have the “do” attitude. As soon as it becomes ok to step off the path to success, you accept that trying will have been enough. When success passes you by you have a built in excuse that it just wasn't meant to be. Where are you? Are you a doer?

**“Do or do not, there is no try”.**

-Yoda

