IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE Michael Jordan

**Goal Setting**

I have the goal of being the best, but I approach everything step by step using short-term goals. When I meet one goal, I set another reasonable goal I can achieve if I work hard. Each success leads to the next one. Each time I visualize where I want to be and what kind of person and player I want to become. I approach it with the end in mind. I know exactly where I want to go, and I focus on getting there. As I reach those goals, I gain a little more confidence. It’s all mental for me. I never write anything down. I just concentrate on the next step.

**Fear**

I’m not afraid to ask anybody anything. Why should I be afraid? My attitude is “Help me; give me direction.” I could apply that approach to anything I might do. It’s no different for the person whose goal is to become a doctor. All those steps are like pieces of a puzzle. They all come together to form a picture. If it’s complete, you reach your goal. If not, don’t get down on yourself.

**Don’t Think About Failure**  
I never look at the consequences of failing. Because when you think about the consequences, you always think of a negative result. If I’m jumping into any situation, I’m thinking I’m going to be successful—not about what happens if I fail.  
Some people get frozen by fear of failure by thinking about the possibility of a negative result. They might be afraid of looking bad or being embarrassed. I realized that if I was going to achieve anything in life, I had to be aggressive. I had to get out there and go for it. I don’t believe you can achieve anything by being passive.  
I know fear is an obstacle for some people, but to me it’s an illusion. Any fear is an illusion. You think something is standing in your way, but nothing is there—only an opportunity to do your best and gain some success.  
If it turns out my best isn’t good enough, then at least I’ll never be able to look back and say I was too afraid to try. Maybe I just didn’t have it. Maybe I just wasn’t good enough. There’s nothing wrong with that and nothing to be afraid of either. Failure always made me try harder the next time.  
My advice is “think positive” and “find fuel in failure.” Sometimes failure gets you closer to where you want to be. The greatest inventions in the world had hundreds of failures before answers were found.  
Fear sometimes comes from a lack of focus or concentration. If you know you are doing the right things, just relax and perform. Forget about the outcome. You can’t control anything anyway.  
When you make a presentation in business, you may do all the things necessary, but then it’s out of your hands. Either the clients like the presentation, or they don’t. It’s up to the client or the buyer. So don’t worry about it.

**Failure and Lack of Effort**

I can accept failure. Everyone fails at something. But I can’t accept not trying. It doesn’t matter if you win as long as you give everything in your heart and work at it 110 percent. If you put in the work, the results will come. I can’t do things halfheartedly. Because I know if I do, then I can expect halfhearted results. That’s why I approach practices the same way I approach games. I can’t dog it during practice and then, when I need that extra push late in the game, expect it to be there.  
But that’s how a lot of people approach things. And that’s why they fail. They sound like they’re committed to being the best they can be. They say all the right things, make all the proper appearances. But they’re looking for reasons instead of answers.

**Overcome Obstacles Through Fundamentals**  
Managers, like coaches, have to find ways to utilize individual talents in the best interests of the company. It’s a selfless process. In our society sometimes it’s hard to come to grips with filling a role instead of trying to be a superstar. We tend to ignore or fail to respect all the parts that make the whole possible. Talent wins games, but team-work and intelligence win championships.  
Everything I achieved can be traced back to the way I approached and applied the fundamentals, the basic building blocks or principles that make everything work. I don’t care what you’re doing—you can’t skip fundamentals if you want to be the best. But some guys don’t want to deal with that. They're looking for instant gratification, so maybe they skip a few steps. They’re so focused on composing a masterpiece that they never master the scales. You can get away with it through the early stages, but it’s going to catch up with you eventually. The minute you get away from fundamentals—whether it’s proper technique, work ethic, or mental preparation—the bottom can fall out of your game, your schoolwork, your job, whatever you're doing.  
When you understand the building blocks, you see how the entire operation works. And that allows you to operate more intelligently. It sounds easy, but it isn’t. You have to monitor your fundamentals constantly because the only thing that changes will be your attention to them. The fundamentals will never change. There is a right way and a wrong way to do things. Get the fundamentals down and the level of everything you do will rise.

**Lead By Example**I’ve always tried to lead by example. I never tried to motivate by talking because I don’t think words ever mean as much as action. A picture carries a thousand words. So I tried to paint a picture of hard work and discipline. Why not? If the person out front doesn’t work hard, why should anyone else?  
A leader has to earn that title. You aren’t the leader just because you’re the best player on the team, the smartest person in the class, or the most popular. No one can give you that title either. You have to gain the respect of those around you by your actions. You have to be consistent in your approach whether it’s basketball practice, a sales meeting, or dealing with your family. Those around you have to know what to expect. They have to be confident that you’ll be there, that your performance will be consistent from game to game, particularly when things get tight.  
Ultimately, coaches or players can say anything they want, but if they don’t back it up with performance and hard work, the talking doesn’t mean a thing. A leader can’t make any excuses. There has to be quality in everything you do—off the court, on the court, in the classroom, on the playground, inside the meeting room, outside of work. You have to transfer those skills--that drive, to whatever environment you’re in. And you have to be willing to sacrifice certain individual goals, if necessary, for the good of the team. A leader is also a person who has had past successes in certain situations and isn’t afraid of taking the chance to lead others down that road again.  
Along the way, you also have to stand up for what you believe and hold on to your convictions. Every home, every business, and every neighborhood needs someone to lead. Excellence in Action: “Think positive” and “find fuel in failure."