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Preliminary Investigation of Continuous Self-Improvement, Mindfulness, & Positive Thinking

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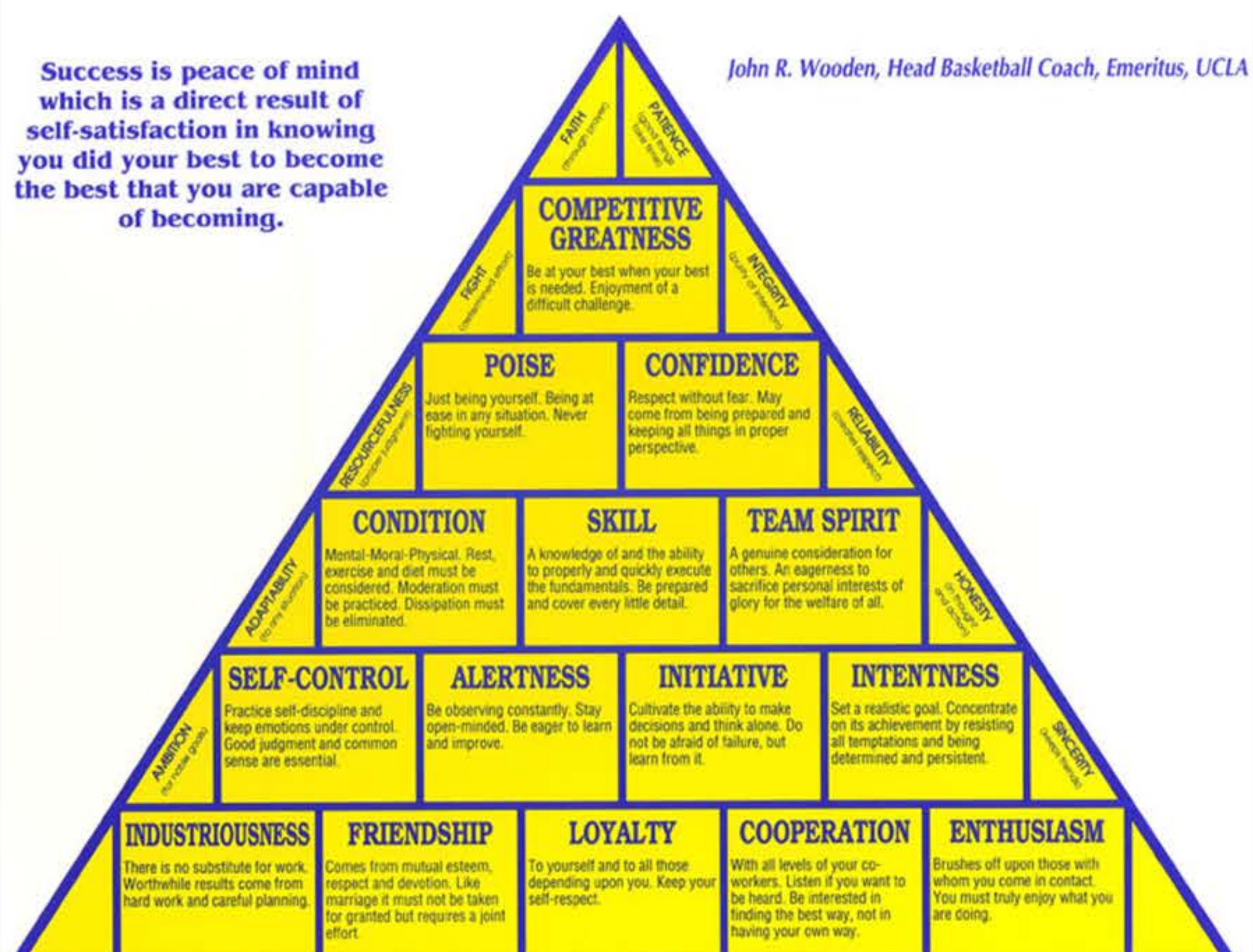
Background

Competitive Greatness

John R. Wooden's father shared two principles which were a major influence for his life: (1) "Don't try to be better than someone else, and (2) Always try to be the best you can be" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 17). The first principle was a reminder that a successful life does not find peace of mind by comparing one's self to others. There is an interconnection between the second principle and Wooden's competitive greatness construct (CG). The definition of CG: "Be at your best when your best is needed. Enjoyment of a difficult challenge" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 90).

Competitive greatness is linked to continuous self-improvement. By making the focus of life primarily on individual growth and development, there are endless opportunities to expand our skills and abilities. In Wooden's words: "We don't have to be superstars or win championships to reach competitive greatness. All we have to do is learn to rise to every occasion, give your best effort and make those around us better as we do it. It's not about winning. It's about learning to give all we have to give" (Wooden & Carty, 2005, p. 91).

Wooden created a pyramid of success as guide to the continuous self-improvement process. In his books, Wooden provides explanations for each of the 15 building blocks. Key words for each block are: (1) hard work and planning (Industriousness), (2) enjoyment (Enthusiasm), (3) mutual



Background (cont'd)

esteem & devotion (Friendship), (4) beneficial work (Cooperation), (5) self-respect (Loyalty), (6) discipline (Self-Control), (7) observation & open-mindedness (Alertness), (8) decisions & action (Initiative), (9) realistic goals (Intentness), (10) physical, mental, moral, & spiritual (Condition), (11) timing & performance (Skill), (12) eagerness & sacrifice (Team Spirit), (13) true to self (Poise), (14) respect without fear (Confidence), and (15) loving a difficult challenge (Competitive Greatness).

10-80-10 Principle

According to Urban Meyer (2015, pp. 161-162),

There is a theory about human behavior called the 10-80-10 principle ... Think of your team or your organization as a big circle. At the very center of it, the nucleus, are the top 10 percenters, people who give all they've got all the time, who are the essence of self-discipline, self-respect, and the relentless pursuit of improvement. They are the elite—the most powerful component of any organization ... Outside the nucleus are the 80 percenters. They are the majority—people who go to work, do a good job, and are relatively reliable. The 80 percenters are for the most part trustworthy and dutiful, but they simply don't have the drive and the unbending will ... The leadership challenge is to move as many of the 80 percenters into the nucleus as you can. If you can expand the top 10 percent into 15 percent or 20 percent, you are going to see a measurable increase in the performance of your team.

Continuous Self-Improvement (CSI)

In the academic environment, Wooden's competitive greatness can be linked to Continuous Self-Improvement (CSI). By focusing on individual growth and development, there are endless opportunities to expand our skills and abilities. Meyer's 10-80-10 principle estimates that 10 percent are in "... relentless pursuit of improvement" or CSI. A CSI nursing students function at an exceptional level of engagement and deeper learning processing of material from textbook readings and lecture presentations. Using an intrinsic reward system, they internalize content and concepts and continuously apply them in new, unique ways. These students appear to feel the satisfaction and receive the validation they are going to be excellent nurses. Not only do they understand the scientific and theoretical aspects of nursing, but they also demonstrate the art and caring nature of an excellent and compassionate nurse.

Methods

The participants (N=28) in this educational intervention were Bachelor of Science in Nursing Students. Instrumentation: CG/CSI scale was measured by the Wooden Pyramid of Success Questionnaire (Hilty, 2017). Positive thinking was measured using the Positive

Methods (Cont'd)

Thinking Scale (PTS) by Diener et al. (2009). According to Diener, "the possible range of scores is 0 (most negative thinking) to 22 (most positive thinking). A high score indicates that the respondent sees much that is positive in the world and himself or herself, and in other people. A high score thus represents a tendency to think in positive ways and to not think in negative ways. The assessment of mindfulness was based on Baer et al., (2006) constructs: Observing, Describing, Acting with Awareness, Nonjudging Inner Experience, and Nonreactivity to Inner Experience. Baer named the questionnaire Five Facet of Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ).

Findings

The CG/CSI scale was used to create two groups (e.g., high scores, moderate-low scores). Using SPSS 25 (independent t-test), a significant difference was found between the CSI and the non-CSI students on the following scales: Positive thinking (p=.014), Acting with Awareness (p=.001), Nonjudging Inner Experience (p=.011), Nonreactivity to Inner Experience (p=.018). CG/CSI correlations were: Positive Thinking (.475), Observing (.202), Describing (.171), Acting with Awareness (.508), Nonjudging Inner Experience (.504), and Nonreactivity to Inner Experience (.328).

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