

Hear No Ill of a Friend Nor Speak Any of an Enemy

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This favorite quote of Coach Wooden's is from Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*. The idea was a key component in how Coach approached life, personally and professionally.

In the Pat Williams book *How to Be Like Coach Wooden*, Dutch Fehring, who played with Coach at Purdue and then went on to become line coach for the UCLA football team, put it this way: John Wooden always had empathy for other people. *I have never heard him bad-mouth anyone. He always had respect for his teammates and his opponents.*

In his book with Don Yaeger, *A Game Plan for Life*, Coach Wooden discussed his father's influence:

My father refused to speak an unkind word against anyone. I know — I tried to get him to do it. My older brother Maurice especially liked the game. He would start a conversation and then ask my father for his reaction or response, but my father knew that we were trying to lure him into a slipup, so he would just laugh and refuse to take the bait. It was amazing; but growing up under such a strong example of that; I found that it inherently became part of my own character.

This idea became a key idea professionally for Coach in how he dealt with the media. Coach described it this way:

I would never publicly criticize a player for poor performance. Even in moments of extreme frustration, I would check myself because it just didn't seem right — because it didn't seem like something my father would have done. And I'm proud to say that to the best of my knowledge, I never did slip up in that regard.

Coach demanded the same behavior from his players. He wanted his players to concentrate on self improvement and not waste time being critical of each other. One of Coach's three rules for basketball practice was *never criticize a teammate*. If a player wasted time doing this he was subject to being kicked out of practice.

Through the John Wooden Course we are constantly trying to get businesses to embrace the idea that: *We don't complain to teammates about other teammates, things they can't fix or situations they can't change.*

Hear no ill of a friend, nor speak any of an enemy. This is simple advice that can yield a powerful positive result.

Yours in Coaching,
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