



THE REVIEW

Central Arizona Fire and Medical - 8603 E. Eastridge Dr., Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 – **May 28, 2021**

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**"Hard work doesn't guarantee success, but
without it – you don't have a chance."
-Pat Riley – NBA player, coach and Executive**

The Assistant Chief's Desk

By: Dave Tharp

Recently, after picking up my kids from school, I was talking to my 11 year old daughter, Naya, about how she was doing. She was struggling. More to the point, she felt she was failing. Her nemesis is math. She has struggled since 1st grade and last year was assigned to a special math class to give her remedial help. As parents, we have worked hard with her to not only help her complete her assignments, but to prepare for her tests. But the hardest hurdle is not the mathematical concepts – it's the confidence. If anyone knows Naya, she has a personality that is bigger than life... constantly active, creative and at times, challenging. She loves to perform, dance and test boundaries. She does not lack confidence. So to see her struggle and doubt her abilities (because she is good at math) is foreign and a little sad. As we continued to discuss her performance in school, she related that she currently has a "C" grade in the class, but she recently received an 88% on her test. I told her that was great and asked her how she felt about the test and her progress. She asked me if I thought the test score was enough to bring her grade from a "C" to an "A" for the class. I honestly said, "no", but I told her that was ok because she was improving. Her response to me was dubious and sarcastic – "yeah sure... like you are really ok with me getting a C or even a B. *No one* in our family gets those kind of grades. I can't match up to them!" My older son, Eli, was in the car and casually listening to our conversation. Before I could respond to Naya's comment, he piped in and said, "Dad only has two rules relating to school – do your best and keep improving." Frustrated that her brother is now in the conversation, Naya tells him to be quiet – but not in a nice way – and that this is not about him. His response was classic Eli, "You're right, this isn't about me, it is about you – and that you are getting in your own way – quit comparing yourself to others and get out of your own way. *YOU are your own worst enemy!*" From the mouths of kids...

How often have we become our own worst enemy? As an agency, we abide by the Compass and strive to be progressive – but ultimately our organizational success is based on individual abilities working towards a common goal or objective. But what if we were inhibited because “we are standing in our own way”? What if we become paralyzed by fear of failure, lack of confidence, or unwillingness to change the status quo. We truly become our own worst enemy.

I have watched and interacted with candidates that have recently gone through either Company Officer or Engineer promotional processes. While nervousness and anxiety may be a given due to the stress of the process, I reminded some of the candidates that their ultimate success is dependent on themselves. If they are unsuccessful, again, it is dependent on themselves. So really, they are not testing against one another, they are testing against themselves. When we look at ourselves in the mirror, how do we match up? Are we looking at ourselves and our development (professional and personal) to improve daily or are we hyperfocused on comparing ourselves to others – letting fear and insecurities control our outcomes.

TED Talks – To overcome challenges, stop comparing yourself to others

By: Dean Furness

https://www.ted.com/talks/dean_furness_to_overcome_challenges_stop_comparing_yourself_to_others?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tedsread

Assistant Chief's Desk Continued

Overcoming “ourselves” is not an easy process. It takes time and a lot of effort with a laser focus on self-improvement. And humility... a lot of humility to be truthful towards what really needs to be done. As an organization, CAFMA will be starting to prepare for the accreditation process. Every fire agency gets into the habit of comparison – “we are better than such and such agency because we have better equipment, better people, better traditions and ways of doing stuff, etc.” - the rhetoric becomes an agency’s cultural belief that wraps them in a warm blanket of complacency. It fosters an attitude of false superiority that leads to an idea that limited or no change is necessary and stagnation ensues. Those who remember when the CYFD was accredited, it forced us to take an honest look at our organization and identify areas of improvement. It humbled us in a way, because we had to prove that we actually did what we said... and we found out that wasn’t always true. Chief Freitag often asks “what is the difference between perfection and excellence?”. At CAFMA, we are committed to excellence - understanding that perfection is unattainable. Striving for excellence includes a hunger to be looking at our weaknesses to create plans of improvement. Again, not easy – humbling and painful at times - but necessary to become better than yesterday. I am reminded of something my friend and boss has said (paraphrasing) that there is no greatness in being better than another person; true greatness is being better than you were before. “May we never lose our way.”