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## From the Picklehood

March 2024

By Jack Hodges

"For the record, not all positive change felt positive in the beginning." —S.C. Lourie

If you ever experienced disappointment in your game, especially on a recurring basis, then you've also experienced the urge to give up on this fun game with the funny name. You tell yourself it's not fun anymore. You take a tiny part of your game—the serve, the return of serve, the dink, drop, volley—and you let your inability to consistently be successful with one or two of these 'parts' take the joy out of playing. In your head, you say "I'll never master a couple of those skills, so what's the point?"

The point is, what you say matters. Self talk matters. Positive reinforcement matters.

You need to find enjoyment in the tiniest moments of success. Your serve was returned into the net. Your drop shot was perfect. And perfect again. And again. You and your partner won a dink rally. Same with a volley rally!! You compliment your partner and yourself. You fixate on those moments of joy.

Soon, you'll come to this realization.....it is much more fun to play this game in a friendly, positive environment. It is much easier to learn in positive surroundings. Improving becomes more important than winning. Those tiny moments of joy multiply and it all started with an understanding that you have a big say in your learning environment. What you think, say and do matters.

You can play pleasant, positive pickleball until the cows come home, but positivity only goes so far. This is my 27th Picklehood column, dating back to August of 2021, and the circuitous theme throughout those two plus years of paragraphs is that you must play this game regularly to improve. If you can mix in a drill session or two weekly you'll



A final comment on positivity and joy. There's no substitute for those two. None. They don't guarantee success, but without them, you don't stand a chance. Everything you do with paddle in hand should bring you pleasure. Not always success, but pleasure. You miss the shot. You know why. Over time, those tiny moments of collective positivity and joy will change you as a pickleball player. That's progress. That's happiness. And it means all those small moments counted.

Jack Hodges

District Pickleball Ambassador

State of Hawaii

Kaua'i Resident

Note: I was a local Ambassador and a District Ambassador in California for four years before Stephanie and I moved back to Hawaii (Kaua'i). We helped start pickleball in many communities in Southern California and on the Central Coast of California. Played the game at maybe 50 different venues during those years. Without hesitation, I can say that our Kaua'i players are the most enthusiastic, friendly, positive, joyful players we have ever been around. California players were close, but our Kaua'i Picklehoods have just a little more Aloha. Maika'i.

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