

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



## 418 Mistakes Later

*My Transition From Assistant Coach to Head Coach;  
18" is further than you think!!*

Everyone who knows me well, knows I am a “lister.” I make lists for almost everything. I have my Top 1000 Movies of All-Time ranked in order. I have my Top 1000 Songs of All-Time on a playlist. I have my Top 500 this and my top 25 that. I guess it stems from my love of baseball statistics growing up. Over the years, my lists have helped me grow in many areas and reach a rhythm with life on the court and off.

So, it should come as no surprise, that last year, I kept a log of the “Mistakes I Made” in my first year as a head coach. I kept it in a running list format in the Villa 7 Notebook that I received at the Nike event the year before. The Nike event that finally inspired me and gave me the courage to break out of my comfort zone of being a 14 year assistant coach. I kept it handy wherever I went because it was very apparent, very early that mistakes could take place anywhere, anytime. Some were small and probably went unnoticed to anyone watching. Others were huge and were obvious to everyone. Regardless of the size or the impact of them, I kept the record from Day 1 to Day 365. Grand finale total... 418!! An average of 1.14 per day.

In the end, my conclusion... The 18” you move over from Assistant to Head Coach, is a lot further than you think!

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

On day 366 of the job, I spent the entire day with the list. By the end of the day, I was able to categorize them into a dozen areas of similar reasons that I felt I had made them. I will list those 12 areas below and then once every now and then, update this document and go more in depth on each area.

1. I assumed being an assistant coach would prepare you to be a head coach
2. I told people the TRUTH before I had earned their TRUST
3. I got out of shape
4. I got out of alignment between Process and Results
5. I tried to do too many “things”
6. I was afraid to do “what I thought best”
7. I exhausted my daily decision energy on stuff that didn’t affect winning
8. I stopped confronting things that needed to be confronted
9. I let the Urgent overcome the Important
10. I forgot to keep myself “charged”
11. I didn’t realize how tight my friend circle would become
12. I had no idea how to manage a staff or how to “manage up”

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I ASSUMED BEING AN ASSISTANT COACH WOULD PREPARE YOU TO BE A HEAD COACH

We all know the saying about assuming (ASS-U-ME)... if you haven't, asked one of your kids to explain. Well, it was never more true than in the case of me assuming that my 14 years of being an assistant coach would have me fully prepared to be a head coach. While those years certainly helped and probably kept me from making 936 mistakes, it just isn't that simple.

The job description of a Head Coach is ***completely*** different from being as assistant.

So many of my actual mistakes fell in this category and some will overlap with later topics we discuss. I believe simply knowing that would have saved me from the first mistake I made that fall under this header. Over the course of 14 years I had accumulated resources that allowed me to be productive in my day. I had forms for this and that. I had a routine that led to an efficient day. So on Day 1 as a head coach, I expected that to be the same. But it wasn't. Not even close.

I didn't have a form for keeping up with people contacting me for jobs.

I didn't have a form for what to do when a recruit didn't want to come to Washington.

I didn't have a plan for delegating assignments to my staff.

I didn't have a plan for what do to when one of my "recommendations" didn't work.

For my entire professional career, I had been making suggestions. Some were used. Some weren't. Some that were used worked. Some didn't. None of them however ever came back across my desk to explain to the media or administration. Now my decisions had consequences. We will cover Decision Making much more in detail in a later piece.

For the last 14 years my decisions pretty much just directly effected me and maybe my immediate family. Now my decisions effected the lives of every player, coach, aide, manager, strength coach, athletic trainer, etc.

My biggest mistake was just ASS-u-ming again that "things would slow down" or "you'll get adjusted to the new demands"... I wish I would have gone in knowing that it was okay to be overwhelmed. That is wasn't going to slow down. That it wasn't going to just adjust. I needed a better plan. I needed support. I needed help. I wasted valuable time waiting for things to slow down or adjust.

What would I do differently: I would have spent "free" time as an assistant reading up on the area. I would have paid more attention to the job my head coach was doing. I would have picked their brains about how they manage their time. I would have asked to sit in on meetings with marketing, facilities, administration. I would have not kept expecting what I knew in the past to be good enough.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I ASSUMED BEING AN ASSISTANT COACH WOULD PREPARE YOU TO BE A HEAD COACH

My last observation concerning this category of mistakes is also a reminder of my PaPa Neighbors and his sayings. He always said:

***“Someone who is good with a hammer always makes everything into a nail.”***

I know it wasn't an original quote of his, but he was the one who best illustrated it to me over my childhood. And it certainly had application to me and to this situation.

When I was an assistant coach, I believed it was all about Player Development, Scouting, Defense, and scheduling. Recruiting was over rated. Give me a player that wanted to be there and I could make them good enough through skill development sessions. Give me enough tape on an opponent and I could help us win a game regardless of the opponent. Offense was for fans, defense wins championships. Give me the time and I could put together a schedule that would get us a good seed for a deep run into the NCAA Tournament. NOTHING else mattered. Nothing.

Well, guess what? Those happened to be areas I was in charge of and “had a hammer for.”

I didn't think all those other duties I had been doing on my way up the coaching ladder really mattered anymore. Since I wasn't in charge of them, they weren't important. Some other coach needed to worry about Academics. Not me. Some other coach needed to be interested in Community Service. Not me. Housing? Please, don't bother me with that mess. Per diem on travel? Don't interrupt my film session.

That type of thinking can't happen for a head coach. Everything matters. You need a hammer, a screwdriver, a wrench, a saw, a shovel, a level, a tape measure, etc. You can't just be good with a hammer.

If I hadn't been narrow minded in this area, there is no doubt we might have won a game or two more. There is no doubt my staff would have been much more sane. And, there is no doubt I would have been a better leader.

In the end...

Just know that your previous experience in the game will help, but it's not a guarantee your successes there will carry over.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I TOLD PEOPLE THE TRUTH BEFORE I HAD EARNED THEIR TRUST

Again ‘assuming’ got the best of me. I had assumed the trust I had earned with the players as their assistant coach would directly carry over to the new office and the new title. Not true.

So, when I began from Day 1 with TRUST as one of our three core values, I told players the truth. The truth about their situation at UW. The truth about how I saw them fitting in with the change of staff. The truth about my expectations for them moving forward in their career.

Mistake category #2 was born!!!

Have you ever noticed in your life you don’t listen to people you don’t trust? Think about it for a second. Friends. People you are in relationships with. Strangers. Enemies. You listen to people you trust. As always this comes back to a Papa Neighbors quote:

***“Don’t listen to anyone who doesn’t have a dog in the fight.”***

I am betting after you thought about it, you realized your life long learning advice came from someone who had earned your trust.

Look at it from another perspective. Do you tell people the 100%, truth and nothing but the truth, nothing held back TRUTH to people you don’t TRUST? Betting that’s a no again.

Read in a book that if you want to find out if someone trusts/likes/respects/gives a crap about you, simply ask them for feedback on something. If you get ALL positives...they don’t!!! So true. We have all given a presentation or a talk in which everyone tells you what a great job you did. But you know you fumbled some words. Or you had a ton of “verbal graffiti” like, you know, um, um, um, um. Only people that love you will tell you your fly was open. Only people that care about you will tell you that you have something in your teeth.

Not saying you don’t listen to others. Not saying you don’t consider their input. Saying that when it comes down to it, you only tell the truth to people you trust and you only listen to truth from people you trust.

As my first year was unfolding, my desire to be transparent, to be an open book, to be 100% honest was well intended, but not so well executed.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I TOLD PEOPLE THE TRUTH BEFORE I HAD EARNED THEIR TRUST

Will share will you the best example...

My team was struggling with shot selection early in the year. We had a strong returning group of players who had been our leading scorers for two years with an incoming McDonald's All-American who could also really score. I wanted it to be very clear what we viewed as an acceptable shot and what wasn't. We showed film. We pointed in out in practice. We charted every shot take in our pre-season and posted for everyone to see.

My intention: That our team driven, high basketball IQ kids could see the results and realize who needed the most shots and why.

Result: Through first 30 practices, a scrimmage game, an exhibition game, and our first two regular season games, we still didn't know.

My solution: Get everyone in the film room in front of a whiteboard. Break down for them that we get on average 70 FG attempts per game. Some games a few more. Some games a few less. But 70 on average. With that in mind, Player A needed between 12-17 of those. Player B needed 10-15 of those. Player C need 8-12 of those. The remaining shots would be available to those other players based on each game and need in each game.

All based on evidence from shooting in practice, in games, and extra shooting each of them put in. Evidence mind you. It was crystal clear to me that our team would want our best shooters taking the most shots therefore we would have a chance to win more games.

It was pretty much straight from the Don Meyer clinic on shot selection. How could it fail.

Well it failed. And it failed miserably. It completely backfired. It separated the team more. The players I said needed the shots even hated it. They felt extra pressure. They felt their teammates were counting their shots. For the next month, we were in recovery mode from my brilliant idea.

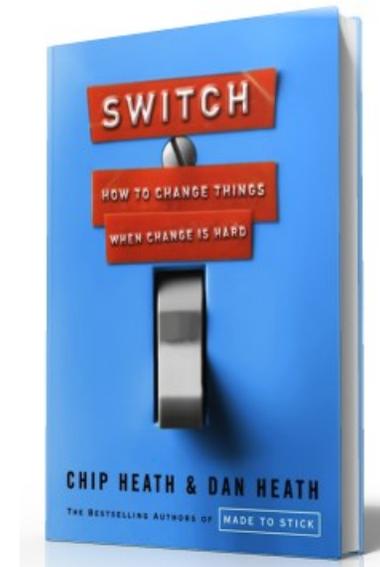
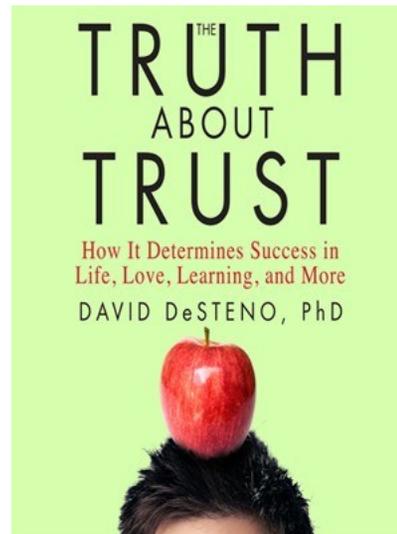
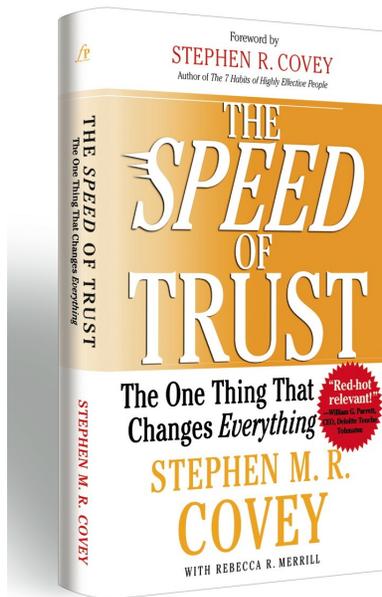
But you know what happened about ten games? My exact shot distribution began to happen. And everyone was completely fine with it. In fact, they could be heard during timeouts saying Player A needs a couple touches. Or Player A saying to player B, you're hot tonight I am looking for you!!

Conclusion: Once I had earned their trust and had earned each other's trust, it was easier to accept. They believe in before they buy-in (as Kevin Eastman told me at a recent clinic.) That could be restated... The Believe in after they Trust In...

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I TOLD PEOPLE THE TRUTH BEFORE I HAD EARNED THEIR TRUST

Have written in our Newsletter release about the impact becoming an avid reader has had on me personally and professionally. These books I have listed below were some of the best that helped me identify and correct the errors I was making in this area. Just like with set plays you can't use all the good ideas, but you must 'get' all the good ideas. Then make the ones work for you that fit you.



While I continue to still make this mistake from time to time, I have eliminated the frequency greatly. More importantly I believe I have learned how to utilize the knowledge of this concept to my advantage. It also further illustrates the genius of my Papa Neighbors' wisdom. He always said "No one knows how you know, until they know how much you care." That is the essence of Trust.

Spend your energy in the area of Trust early than I did. Don't assume Trust is automatically given to you in conjunction with your job title. Don't assume if you have earned their trust in one capacity that it will automatically transfer to another.

That knowledge would have saved me about 65 of the 418 mistakes I made.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I GOT OUT OF SHAPE

This one will be the most embarrassing one to speak about... but was clearly the easiest one to see occurring!!!

Call it happy weight. Call it stress eating. Call it what you want. Bottom line. I got to an all-time high weight of 236. At 5-11, it's not morbidly obese, but for someone who played at 185, the 53 extra pounds was not a good thing.

I was snoring uncontrollably and verged on sleep apnea. I didn't get diagnosed but based on my blood sugar level urges, I had to be getting close to some form of diabetic situation. I wasn't sleeping well. I obviously wasn't exercising. Good thing I inherited good DNA or I might have been 266!

I could include some before and after pictures but no one wants to see that I can assure you!!

I could give you a ton of excuses and even a few good reasons it happened.

But none of them should have mattered.

It was affecting my efficiency for certain and also my teams. They weren't getting the best of me. And you can only sell "Do as I say" so much before it falls on deaf ears.

With my energy levels lower than ever, I didn't watch as many films as I could have. I didn't have the energy to continue confronting all the issues that arise on a daily basis. I didn't have stamina to make it through a tough practice then still get in a car and drive to recruit... and even if I did, was I at my best when I got there? Probably not.

The list gets longer and more embarrassing.

So, I made a change. I didn't do anything crazy. Didn't have gastric bypass. Didn't take a single supplement. Didn't starve myself.

I simply followed my own advice to my players... MAKE BETTER CHOICES...

On Day 1, I made one better choice. It was breakfast. For that last few years I had lived on a diet of Coca-Cola and Reese's Cups double packs... told ya it was embarrassing. So on Day 1, I just had the Coca-Cola and two cup Reese's instead of the Jumbo pack.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I GOT OUT OF SHAPE

On Day 2, I made two better choices. I ditched the Reese's all together and went with a protein bar.

On Day 3, I made three better choices. Ditched the Coke (went with water) and the protein bar.

On Day 4, I dropped the Coke at lunch.

On Day 5, I dropped the Coke at dinner.

And so it continued. After about 10 days, I had powered through the caffeine headaches and actually began to feel like exercising a little. So, I started slow. As more pounds shed, I felt better and better.

It only took about 30 days before there was a noticeable difference. My goal was to get below 200 lbs by our first game. A goal I was able to make with a week to spare.

Now the challenge is to stay below 200 during the long season... I'll keep you posted but so far so good.

When you go back through the list of 418 mistakes, I wonder if I would have made any of them if I had felt better. So, in a way I attribute almost everyone of them to this category in some form.

The sad part, is that this one was THE MOST controllable. It was totally on me. Nothing to do with my "readiness" for the job. Nothing to do with lack of experience as a head coach. Nothing to do with my team. It was controllable and it was on me.

There are lots of distractions that can nab you. As I mentioned in the opening, happy weight. The increased salary afforded me to buy the "good" Pork and Beans, then the "good" steaks, then the "add a shrimp skewer"... The increased demand on time forced me to eat later than normal... only thing open late around me Taco Bell, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and McDonalds... the triumphant of healthy meals!!!

In year two, I can already count the times being in better shape has helped me make better decisions, confront an issue with staff or team, watch and extra film that gave us an edge in preparation, or have enough energy to write that last recruiting letter.

Stay in shape if you are in shape. Get in better shape if you are out of shape.

Don't make the same mistake with your health that I did.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I GOT OUT OF ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PROCESS AND RESULTS

When you get your opportunity to be a head coach after years of being an assistant coach, you have a mountain of ideas on who you think you want to be. You have been watching your mentors for years making mental notes of ways you want to be like them and ways that you don't want to be like them. You have been attending clinics hearing speakers filing away bullet points of this you are going to do some day. You have observed, studied, researched, and compiled. You have most likely put together some form of portfolio for a hiring committee that details everything you have been thinking about. Probably took it to Kinko's and had it bound even. It's yours, but is it YOU?

I am not saying any of the above is a bad idea. But, I am saying, be careful of who you say YOU ARE, before you know who you are.

My biggest mistake in this area was talking about Process, process, process but in many causes becoming reactionary to Results. When that happens it alienates the people you are trying to lead.

You can't preach process then turn around and speak about results. The very second you do this, the process loses its punch.

It's okay to be results driven. It's okay to be process driven. It's not okay to teeter back and forth between the two.

If I had to do it all over again, I would have been a little more patient in announcing to the world who we were and what our identity was going to be. My mental image that had been conjured up over the years simply wasn't doable in the timeframe that I had all worked out in my mind.

I didn't understand how time consuming things can be. I didn't understand how long it takes to assemble a staff. I didn't understand budgetary issues. I didn't understand many aspects of the position of being a Head Coach. As a result my alignment between process and results was often a blurred line. Creating confusion and uncertainty among the people I was trying to lead.

Don't give you team three goals that they need to achieve to win a game, then lose your mind in the locker room afterward only to realize later that night they had met all three. Don't set standards that are met yet don't produce results. Don't celebrate good results that were not reflective of the process. All these things are easy to do because of human nature. And are very easy to do as a young head coach.

Be patient in deciding who you are and who you want your program to be. But when you decide, stick to it and don't get out of alignment with your team, your staff, your administration, and your loved ones.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I TRIED TO DO TOO MANY THINGS

This mistake shares a lot of crossover with the previous one we just talked about. It stemmed from years of observing and collecting ideas. I wanted to start this. And implement that. Wanted to have this and that. Wanted to promote our program in this way and that. I wanted us to travel this way and that. I wanted our locker room to have this and that. You get the picture.

What I quickly found was that even if you implement them all, you can't keep track of them all.

A few examples... At Xavier, Sean Miller gave a special colored practice jersey to the practice player of the week. Those guys fought like warriors to earn that jersey. It was amazing to watch them compete for it. Tried it. Complete and utter failure. Our girls didn't want to be different. They would actively avoid it. What worked for Sean Miller didn't work for me.

At Tulsa we had great success sitting our team down and explaining our shot selection process. We had adopted the Don Meyer method of evaluating our shot efficiency. It led us to unprecedented success with the program. Complete and utter failure with my first team. It, in fact, hurt us. It caused more problems than it did good.

We had team goals, game goals, position goals, four minute war goals, etc... The result was that no one knew what to really focus on. Didn't know what was important and what wasn't.

It carried over to our X's and O's too. We had too many actions. Too many defensive thoughts. Too many "what ifs"... again creating confusion with our team.

It was the same with my staff and support staff. We had so many things we were trying to do that we weren't very good at any one thing. It was difficult to even keep up with the projects we constantly had on-going. I lost track of who was doing what, when I had expected them to be done, and ultimately even what the purpose of the project was.

The solution was to SIMPLIFY...Once we started to strip away and get to what WAS important, we improved. Our theme of ONE was born and from that point on, we all focused on ONE thing at a time... and now the second that we begin to look ahead, someone in our basketball family is quick to point out that we are getting ahead of ourselves.

You have to try things for sure. You have to make mistakes to learn from them. But don't be stubborn and don't be afraid to change or be different... That leads us into the next category.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I WAS AFRAID TO DO WHAT I THOUGHT BEST

For 14 years as an assistant coach, I never had a bad idea exposed. Although many of my suggestions were unsuccessful, there was never one time I was asked to comment on it by a reporter. My name was never attached on a message board when one of my scouts wasn't spot on or when my breakdowns didn't actually prepare us for the big game. But the second you move into that new chair in the new office, that all changes.

Now all eyes are on you. It's your call. And that's scary.

I allowed that fear to keep me from trying some things. I think we all have our mentors that we bounce ideas off of. Problem with that practice is that those people usually care deeply for us but have no actual knowledge of our situation. They offer great advice based on similar experiences they might have encountered. They are there to talk us out of bad ideas and into better ones. But at some point, to be successful, you have to trust YOU!!

I spent my first three or four months on the job too worried that what we were doing around our program was the "way it should look." I'd seen Gary Blair lead teams to the Final Four. I'd seen Kathy McConnell-Miller resurrect a once dormant program into a tournament team. Witness Coach Gardner battle in the nation's toughest conference with less than most had. And then sit next to Kevin McGuff lead a small, mid-major to within a lay-up of the Final 4 before moving to Washington to start our rebuild. I knew what IT looked like. But it wasn't my plan. I was just a part of it. Those first 120 days were a continually situation of me asking myself, "What would (insert one of their names) do in this situation?" And each and every time it was usually a combination of what I thought I should do and what I thought they would do. None of the decisions led to disaster and many of them were successful to some extent.

It really had more to do with having the guts to do something that I thought one of them would do differently.

I was worried that I would try something that would so drastically fail that one of them would call me up in disbelief and disappointment that I had not learned better from them. I didn't want to let them down. I didn't want to be that "rookie" coach that was in over his head. I didn't want to be that first-year coach that people were making fun of around the profession.

It finally came to a head for me on a plane ride home from Christmas break with my family. Our team was off to an okay start. 8-4 overall but the problem was, we weren't getting better.

We had a depleted roster due to some injuries and for the first two months of the season our practices were disjointed. Three of our players had injuries that allowed them to practice for 20-30 minutes and still be available for games. Another couple needed extra

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I WAS AFRAID TO DO WHAT I THOUGHT BEST

days off all together. While we were able to field a team come game time, we weren't improving as a team and my healthy players were actually digressing...

For the first time as a head coach, I made a decision without consulting anyone. I came up with a plan and implemented it.

Since we were entering PAC12 play, our calendar was set. Our routine could be defined for the remainder of the season.

I mapped out this weekly plan:

- Monday: OFF day. Take care of studies and 'life'. If you have no training room stipulations you can workout out voluntarily, but if you have modifications you spend any extra time in re-hab not on the court
- Tuesday: SKILL DAY. Players with no injuries worked with position coaches on Skill. Players with injuries again spent the day in the training room receiving treatment.
- Wednesday: PRACTICE. If you couldn't practice full this day (after two off days) then you would be unavailable for the games that weekend.
- Thursday: PREP DAY 1... we prepared for our Friday opponent. Scouting, film, walk thru, shooting, offensive breakdowns.
- Friday: GAME 1
- Saturday: PREP DAY 2... same as Thursday but possibly lighter and maybe in sweats
- Sunday: GAME 2

We would follow this plan the rest of the season. Once I implemented it with my team, I finally shared it with some of my confidants. They told me I was crazy, it was a bad message to send, I might get fired if word got out, and some that I can't share in PG format!!

Now I was more scared than before. It was like the scene from Moneyball when Brad Pitt tells the Jonah Hill character, "This had better work!!!"

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I WAS AFRAID TO DO WHAT I THOUGHT BEST

From the implementation, we saw improvement. The uninjured players said they felt better than all year because we had focused on their skills, we had maximized our time together as a team, and they felt fresh.

A couple of weeks in, we went on the road and won for the first time in PAC 12 history at USC and at UCLA. We came home and lost a close game to #12 Cal before upsetting #3 Stanford. Needless to say the 'believe in' and turned to 'buy-in'.

We saw reduced injuries and need for re-hab.

We saw more energy in games than our opponents.

We saw more concentration and execution of the scout than when had spent more court time covering.

We saw a spike in our team GPA with extra time available for study.

We saw a surge of team togetherness.

Needless to say, it helped salvage our season that ended with 20 wins and a trip to Final 8 of the WNIT.

More importantly it taught me a lesson to trust my instincts. What I learned was that all those experiences of watching other coaches do their things what was the most important was they did what THEY believed in. It was them knowing their team better than anyone. It was them listening to the input, looking at all the information, and trusting themselves to do what is best.

That BIG decision made it much easier to pull the string on less high profile, but equally as important decisions.

It's your team. You will be held accountable for the actions of your team. So, you better do what YOU think is best and that YOU can put your head on the pillow at night feeling good about.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I EXHAUSTED DAILY DECISION ENERGY ON STUFF THAT DIDN'T AFFECT WINNING

Ever wonder why the POTUS (President of the United States) doesn't choose his daily suit and tie? It's not because we are wasting tax payer dollars on needless things. It's not because he is fashion challenged. It IS because it has been proven that we only have so much ability and energy to make decisions. That energy can be diminished and ultimately exhausted on a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly basis. When you consider the sheer number of important decisions a day the POTUS makes, then you see why simply taking away the task of deciding which tie matches which suit and goes better with the back ground of the set and won't offend someone watching and, and, and... you quickly see why taking this decision away can pay big dividends as the President is deciding whether to give the "GO" order to attack Bin Laden!! Okay, maybe I have watched Zero Dark Thirty one too many times.

When making the move from assistant coach to head coach you will quickly realize you also go from making suggestions to making decisions. I am sure making suggestions would eventually become exhaustive, but I never reached that number as an assistant!!! I could suggest this and that and another and another and so on and so on and... never got tired of it.

When you are on the other end of those suggestions, people are looking to you for decisions. Correctly making them can mean the difference in the success of your first year and ultimately your success going forward. YOU ARE BEING PAID TO BE RIGHT... Great advice I got from Vic Schaefer at the Final 4 when he spoke about the transition. When you need to be RIGHT, you will find yourself agonizing over every detail and every decision you must make.

So, what do you do about it?

First... Let go of some of the "what tie am I wearing decisions"... in other words delegate decisions to don't affect winning to other people on your staff you TRUST. You hired em, so let 'em work. Does what travel suit you order from Nike really affect winning? Does where/when you eat a meal on off days affect winning? Does where you put recruiting files in the office really affect winning? Does the background color of your business card really affect winning? Even if you think some of those do affect winning, then educate someone on your staff what you want and let them make the decisions. This allows you to have a clear head when you get that call from across campus that a player is in academic distress or if you have to choose a tournament to play in over Christmas break.

Second... Understand you need to make decisions that DO affecting winning are made at your energy peak. We can all look back on bad decisions we've made. I would bet the vast majority of them were made when you weren't at your best in one way or another... sad, depressed, discouraged, angry... On the flip side, the best decisions probably were made when you were in a "good place."

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I EXHAUSTED DAILY DECISION ENERGY ON STUFF THAT DIDN'T AFFECT WINNING

Third... Learn what affects winning and what doesn't. This is the hard part because experience is a great teacher. But it's a must do. You have to understand that because YOU think it is important, your players and your staff may not. And in the grand scheme that makes a difference. Your pulse on your program will be your greatest guide. This is where this mistake overlaps with some we have previously discussed about listening to advice and being afraid to do your own thing. Use your energy determining this more than choosing your tie or your pre-game meal locale.

Papa Neighbors always told me to make decisions about myself with my head and decisions about others with my heart. That advice is always part of my checklist when dealing with discipline issues that arise.

There is also a great book by the popular author, Malcom Gladwell, title *BLINK*. Highly recommend it to anyone in a decision making position. It will teach you how to 'thin slice' and 'chunk' which in turn helps you BE RIGHT more often than you are wrong without the exhausting agonizing that we put ourselves through during the process.

This is not to say there aren't days you're going to finally crawl into bed exhausted. We all know that is part of being a coach. What I am trying to say is that you won't crawl in there exhausted from making decisions.

In the first 100 days on the job, everyone will naturally be looking to you to make decisions. As the new Head of the program everyone will be aiming to please you and do things in a manner you approve of. The quicker you delegate duties and responsibilities to others, the quicker you can point everyone in the proper direction.

I made various people HEAD COACHES in area's of responsibility. I then made a table which I distributed to everyone connected to our program with a COMMUNICATION CARD. For example, I put Adia Barnes in charge of community service. From that point on, every time someone reached out to our campus for a player to read to an elementary school, Adia was contacted. She reached out to our players. She arranged for them to participate. It didn't take more than a month of people reaching out to me and me referring them to their table of duties to know who to contact.

The little extra work on the front end is worth it.

If I had to do it all over again, that table and card would have been in effect from Day 1 instead of day 201!!

I obviously continued making some bad decisions throughout the year, but it wasn't because I had exhausted my energy.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I STOPPED CONFRONTING THINGS THAT NEEDED TO BE CONFRONTED

This one occurred as a result of combining other mistakes... getting out of shape, exhausting my daily decision making energy on meaningless stuff, trying to do too much stuff. Those mistakes left me exhausted when issues that needed to be confronted arose. I had wasted my energy on things that didn't matter that I simply ignored areas that needed the most attention.

Some examples to help explain... poor body language during practice, staff missing "deadlines" on things that needed to be done, off the court actions that threatened our standards, cliques forming on team as result of long season together, sleeping/eating habits, studying hall and class absences... etc.

I would have exhausted my natural body allotment of energy on things that didn't matter by noon and a matter come up after lunch that I didn't confront but should have.

It takes A LOT of energy to consistently CONFRONT. It is emotionally draining to talk to players about roles and role acceptance. It is excruciating to talk about and explain playing time. Many coaches simply refuse to do it as a result. And I believe that is a huge mistake too for coaches to make and could write up another full piece on that, but it's NOT one of the mistakes I made last year. I learned that one back as a high school head coach. You HAVE to talk to players (and their parent's) about playing time.

Back to topic...

When you stop confront, you start allowing—Papa Neighbors

Heard it said many times at clinics by many great coaches... you are either coaching it, or tolerating it!!

And if your players think you are tolerating the wrong things, you will lose them. You will lose your GOOD ONES. They see you allowing a player to exhibit poor habits, you lose their respect and run the danger of them doing it as well.

Feed your Eagles, starve your turkeys... another Papa Neighbors illustration right there. If you feed your "turkeys" you lose your EAGLES and none of us as coaches can afford to lose our few EAGLES.

So, you better keep your energy up. You do this by conserving your energy in wasteful areas and having the experience to know what to confront and what to tolerate.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I STOPPED CONFRONTING THINGS THAT NEEDED TO BE CONFRONTED

You have to know what you will tolerate and what you won't... Know Your No's... That was a great topic that Kevin Eastman once covered. You need to make your list out. You need to KNOW your NO's... How can you expect your players to know if you don't even know yourself!!

You can't take Pat Summitts Daily Dozen, or Coach K's Gold Standards, or Bob Knight's this, or Geno's that. It HAS to be yours.

You are the person that knows you best. And you should also be the person that knows your team better than anyone.

Get the list... Confront any of your NO's

Keep your energy up by staying in shape, eating/sleeping the best you can as a coach, use your decision making energy wisely, and delegate things that don't pertain directly to winning and losing.

This mistake probably cost us a couple of games and without a doubt led to me not having our team peaked at the right time. I won't go into a ton of detail in this written piece, but grab me at a Clinic or the Final 4 and we can talk about it in more depth.

Of all the mistakes we have covered so far, this is the one that I HAVE NOT MADE in YEAR 2!!

I still don't eat like I should all the time. I am in better shape but not great shape. I still am afraid to try some things. I still don't always delegate well.

**BUT... I DO CONFRONT!!!**

A book that really helped me was CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS by Paterson-Grenny-McMillian-Switzer.

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I FORGOT TO KEEP MYSELF CHARGED

I was on day 145 of the job when this one hit me. We were eating as a staff at our favorite “working lunch” spot that happened to be next door to the Apple Store. The move to head coaches office also meant I needed a “personal phone” and a “personal ipad” due to the state ethics laws in the state of Washington. Needless to say, I need more chargers than I had outlets in my office!!! After my usual chicken lettuce wraps had been devoured, I snuck over to the store and bought 10 lightning cables. I thought it was the best investment I had made yet...and the smartest. I would have a set of chargers at home for nights, at the office for days, in my backpack for travel, and in my truck for travel. I wouldn't be wasting anymore time worrying about did I pack them. I wouldn't waste time unplugging and replugging. Good time management decision. Good investment.

Then it hit me. I had just spent more time, effort, and money to re-charge my technology in one afternoon than I had spent on “recharging myself” in the previous 144 days!!!

I hadn't picked up my guitar. I hadn't updated my Top 1000 movie list by watching a new movie in theaters or on the ipad I just spent money to keep charged. I hadn't been to a live music show. I hadn't read a book that didn't include the word “leadership”, or “Management”, or “Strategy”, or “Motivation. I hadn't played golf. I hadn't grilled out. I hadn't done anything to charge myself!!

Unlike the last few mistakes we have covered that dealt with WHY I didn't have energy, this mistake had everything to do with not paying attention to the toll a transition of positions takes on your body.

I will bet that you make sure you pack your phone charger everywhere you go. I bet most of you reading this have a mophie or some other form of backup battery. While it's certainly a necessity for coaches, you can't forget to pack something that will charge you as well!

You have to do things to stay in coaching rhythm. I have long given up on trying to find “balance”. It's impossible in this profession and people that try to find/have a balance are wasting valuable time. Find the rhythm. That comes by charging yourself every time you charge your phone. So, I started doing just that.

At night when I would charge my gadgets, I would pick up my guitar and play until my fingers hurt. If I charged my phone in the car, I would plug in a CD and listen to the latest Wade Bowen, Randy Rogers, or Josh Abbott Band CD. If I plugged my phone into an airplane outlet, I would pull out a book like Boys in the Boat, or Unbroken, or Let's Go Crazy (the Prince book about the movie Purple Rain.)

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I FORGOT TO KEEP MYSELF CHARGED

Just think about all the things you do or have done to keep your phone charged. Answer these truthfully:

- 1) Have you ever carried a charger into a restaurant to charge while you are dining out?
- 2) Have you ever sit on a nasty airport carpet just so you can be near a plug in?
- 3) Have you ever paid someone or offered someone money to borrow their charger?
- 4) Have you ever plugged your phone into someone's laptop without their knowledge?
- 5) Have you ever turned down your screen brightness just to save that last 5% of charge to make one last text?

I'm guessing you probably have some that I haven't even thought of!!!

We will delete apps, close open apps, and turn of roaming just to save that 1 or 2 precious %'s of charge.

Don't treat your gadgets better than you treat yourself.

Technology and equipment are a necessary evil in today's work place. They can make us more productive. They can get separate us from people who choose not to use them. They can be a resource. But never, are they more important to success than you.

The hours a coach spends to perform the many duties we are given must include things that bring joy to your life. The book "How Full is Your Bucket" is a great resource to cover this more in depth. We have long hours. We have hard hours. And we have unexpected hours. If you aren't charged, you aren't going to be as good as you can be.

You obviously don't have the available number of hours to do everything YOU want to do. So simply your life. Do the things that bring true joy into your life. Strip away the things that can wait until a later time. Strip away things that waste your time. And be sure to strip away things that drain your battery.

Charge yourself every time you charge a gadget!!

# UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW TIGHT MY FRIEND CIRCLE WOULD BECOME

Papa Neighbors said, "When you get to the top, you don't make new friends. So on the way up the ladder you better know who your true friends are and fight like hell to keep em."

I remember the lesson/lecture vividly today, but took me more than a 100 days to realize it when I went from assistant coach to head coach.

Some old "friends" were jealous. Some old "friends" didn't feel like I was one of them anymore. Some "old" friends were upset because I didn't hire them on my staff. Some old "friends" suddenly thought we were better friends than we really were.

Your circle of friends will shrink instantly.

You will have mixed emotions initially but in the long run, it's a good thing.

The short run however is a challenge.

People you have been sitting on those hard, wooden bleachers during the recruiting period as fellow assistants will look at you differently. Some of them were expecting their cell phone to ring with job offers. And when it doesn't, they will treat you differently.

People you have been hanging out with at the Final 4 in the piano bars and hotel lobbies will think that because you have shared a beer with them, that you believe they can organize your recruiting or handle your scouting.

You will feel alienated but along the way it will become clearer and clearer who your true friends are.

This mistake may NOT have been avoidable. It may be one of those necessary "learning opportunities" that everyone must endure. I do think, however, that I could have handled the disappointments better. The learning these people "aren't my true friends" experience.

I wouldn't have let it bother me as much or as long. I wouldn't have dwelt on the repercussions of losing friends. I wouldn't have spent as much energy and effort trying to follow my Papa's advice and fight to keep them as long.

Hopefully making you aware this happened in my situation could help you manage the inevitable better than I did.