

Nine Principles of Baseball and Life

by Raymond Angelo Belliotti



Baseball is about parents taking their children to local fields and teaching them the sport. Baseball is about the bonding of parents and children in the context of 150 years of history and the excitement of the infinite possibilities of summer. Baseball is about preseason practices, with everyone playing a variety of positions, no one keeping score, everyone energized, yelling, and engaged. Baseball is passing down an American legacy, reinforcing family love, teaching values and a way of life, sharing joy and triumph, sorrow and defeat. Baseball can illustrate and enhance the meaning in our lives. Baseball is only a distant cousin to organized games, all star tournaments, or names appearing in the local sports pages.

My Sicilian parents taught me values about life that are applicable to playing baseball. My father made it clear: if I acted inappropriately on a baseball field, no umpire, no coach, no league official would have to intervene. He would run onto the field himself and physically drag me off. He was not in attendance to be embarrassed by a son who had not learned proper values. The most important rule: approach any task with great enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and with appreciation for the opportunity to participate. My 9 principles of baseball are more fundamentally 9 principles of living a rewarding life.

1. NO EXCUSES.

Do not blame teammates, umpires, coaches, fans, or the position of the moon for your performance. Take responsibility for what happens on the field. Stand up, make no excuses, refuse the excuses that others might offer you. Excuses get in the way of learning because mistakes are denied. Be accountable. Remember you are not expected to be a perfect performer. No one is. Baseball is not an easy game to play.

2. PLAY WITH HONOR.

Always hustle, run out every ground ball and pop up, encourage your teammates, especially after an error, bad pitch, or a strike out, carry yourself with pride and dignity. Do not in frustration throw equipment. Do not ridicule another team or an opposing player's name, physical appearance, skill. Do not taunt. Do not distract an opposing player with low-level antics. Be positive with teammates. Never ridicule or criticize your teammates. They need your encouragement the most immediately after they have made a mistake. Show your teammates, your opponents, the entire world the values you hold dear by how you play.

3. BE RELENTLESS.

Never Yield. Never Yield. Regardless of what the scoreboard says, you are never defeated unless you give up, unless you go belly up. No opponent can make you do this. Giving up is something you do. Regardless of what the scoreboard says, no opponent can extinguish the flame in your heart or crush the intensity of your will without your consent. Never surrender.

4. SLAY YOUR OWN DEMONS, THEN SLAY DRAGONS.

Ignore those things outside your control: the judgments of umpires, the conduct and ability of other teams, the weather, your amount of playing time, the final score (this is a tough one). Do not show frustration or disappointment. Do not allow your opponents to gain joy from your inability to cope with self-pity. Do not throw equipment or whine in anger or slump

your shoulders. Such behavior impresses no one. Maintain your poise. Learn, prepare, and focus on the next event. We cannot change the past. Instead, we should focus on the next action with determination, joy, and resolve.

5. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE THINGS UNDER YOUR CONTROL.

Your effort, your attitude, your commitment, and your approach to the game are under your control. Be enthusiastic, play with great effort, conduct yourself appropriately, meet this opportunity with great joy. Listen to your coaches. Be alert, play smartly, know the signs. You are always accountable. How you react to situations and circumstances reveals the person you are and the person you might become.

6. PLAY THE GAME ONE PITCH AT A TIME.

Focus on the current pitch. If you are a pitcher, what are you throwing now and where? If you are a fielder, what are you going to do if the ball is hit to you? If you are a base-runner, what are you going to do on a fly ball, line drive, ground ball, to the right side, to the left side? If you are a batter, what are you trying to accomplish on this pitch? If you are on the bench, how are you helping your team be successful?

7. FOCUS ON BEHAVIOR, NOT OUTCOMES.

The results of your performance are not fully under your control. The other team may be very good, or very bad. The bounces may go your way, or not. But your behavior and approach are under your control. At the end of the game, you, perhaps only, know whether you gave 100%, whether you did all you could to help your team. Those players who did are winners, those players who did not are losers, regardless of what the scoreboard says. Winners take care of the things within their control, enjoy their participation, and are justifiable proud of their effort. Losers make excuses, lose their poise readily, wallow in self-pity, and surrender at the slightest sign of adversity.

8. THE BEST PLAYERS ARE THE BEST LEARNERS.

Players who are coach-able are always trying to learn more about being successful ballplayers and people. They listen and apply what their coaches and teachers suggest. Are you coach-able? If you are, you are a winner. If you are not, you are a loser, regardless of what the scoreboard says.

9. BE A JOYOUS WARRIOR!

Be enthusiastic, positive, give 100%, understand that relentless effort in the pursuit of excellence is its own reward. The joyous warrior exemplifies the slogan "No Retreat & No Surrender." Win with humility, lose with dignity.

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