

On Serving Yourself
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As I write this, the 2015 Super Bowl between the Seattle Seahawks and the New England Patriot is a few days away.

Speculations about the game itself have taken a back seat to a controversy over whether in the playoff game won by the Patriots to get them into the Super Bowl the Patriots illegally lowered the air pressure in the footballs they used in the game, making them easier to control in the adverse weather prevailing during the game. In particular, suspicion has centered around whether star Patriots quarterback Tom Brady directed Patriots personnel to decrease the air pressure in the balls used in the first half (accounts that have leaked indicate that the Patriots' balls were properly inflated during the second half). At this writing, Brady's culpability is still being determined.

Whether or not Brady is guilty of any wrongdoing isn't the focus here. What is is a statement he made during a radio call-in show during the heat of the allegations:

I personalized a lot of things and thought this was all about me and my feelings got hurt, and then I moved past it because it's not serving me."

Two things I picked up on in this quote:

First, the term "moved past it." "Moved past it," "move on," some variant of that, is very prevalent in the sport culture, and, my thinking, it's a good way to look at things and a good tactic for us non-sports people to have in our repertoire and employ. I wrote about it in a July 2012 thought for this site called "On Playing One Game at a Time and Putting Numbers on the Board":

"Move on." All you have in sports (and in life generally?) is today's game. What happened in the past happened. That's over. You aren't going to change that. If it was bad, it was a mistake; learn from it and then put it behind you, don't dwell on it, don't relive it, don't give energy to it, don't let it affect you or control you or tie you up. It's a new day. It's now and there's a game starting up; play it. Move on.

Indeed, that a great arrow to have in your quiver, so to speak. I'd like to think that if we get this *move on* concept in our heads and practice using it, we will get to the point that, within reason, we are capable of simply moving on when that's the best thing to do, and my read of things, it most often is the best thing to do. Let the past go: move on.

The other concept I picked up on in the Brady quote is "serving me." Brady has a criterion by which to assess what he is doing, including feeling hurt: is this serving me or isn't it?

To Brady, having his feelings hurt was not an automatic outcome of the accusations and suspicions around deflating the footballs. What was in his world was as it was—he was getting accused and eyebrows were going up. His response to that reality, however, was under his control. His first response, rather unthinkingly I presume, was to let it hurt his feelings. But, the important thing, it didn't have to stay that way. In his eyes, how he responds to circumstances, including his emotional response to them, is a choice he makes, not an automatic, unchangeable reaction to what happens. He isn't obliged to feel bad because something bad is going on around him; it isn't a simple matter of stimulus-response. He isn't a pigeon in a box or a rat in a maze; he is a human being with the powers of analysis and decision and volition.

So Brady applied his standard of measure: is living my life with my feelings hurt serving me? The answer: no, it isn't. The solution: move past it, move on. Done with that. Go to what's next.