

## **The Power of Poise**

By Lora Cecca Lyons for *Westwood Press* and *Medfield Press* – June 12, 2008

Recently on news radio, I heard commentary about Celtics player Paul Pierce. It wasn't the topic of basketball that caught my attention, but how his behavior impacted how he played and won the game. What made a difference for Paul and his performance was a matter of poise.

It seemed strange to me to hear about poise in the sports world. Images of models and performers with perfect postures usually come to mind. Never did I think of this word in terms of staying present to oneself in a situation and towards one's intention.

According to the dictionary – poise means: *a state of balance or equilibrium; a dignified, self-confident manner or bearing; composure; self-possession; steadiness; stability*. And what made Paul Pierce a winner in a clinching game with the Pistons was Pierce's ability to keep his poise or stay focused and present to the task at hand. He did this in the face of an unfavorable call where he typically would have been distracted, lost his cool and made a scene. Instead, by staying present to the bigger picture, Pierce moved past the hurdle, kept his composure and equilibrium and achieved something that he has never done before during years of losing his poise, as well as made a huge contribution to his team. He had an intention and successfully remained grounded in it – and he did this through his body and his mind.

Perhaps we can learn something from Pierce and his matter of poise.

Here are some ways to bring the practice of poise into our professional and personal life:

1. Set your intention or objective for the day. What outcomes do you want to produce? What is important? Write it down.
2. Sit in your seat, relax your muscles and take a few moments to notice your breath. Studies show that by breathing deeply and slowly, we have the ability to release stress and think more clearly and effectively.
3. When you are faced with an obstacle or unexpected situation, return to the intention or outcomes you set for yourself today. Then bring attention to your breath and take a few moments again to breathe slowly and deeply.
4. Choose how you want to move forward and the type of impact you want to make. What moves will best serve your intention and keep you in relationship to yourself and others?

This may sound simplistic and Pollyannaish, but it does work. If it worked for Paul Pierce, it can work for the rest of us.

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