

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FOR ATHLETES

InnerDrive resources



BLOG 1

LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND KEEPING YOUR EDGE DURING LOCKDOWN



With the country in lockdown and sport of all kinds cancelled or postponed, we are certainly in unprecedented times. Understandably, there are lots of people out there feeling stressed and anxious, as well as athletes not being able to train and compete.

So, at InnerDrive HQ we thought we'd help athletes to understand why they're stressed, what they can do about it, and how they can best keep their competitive edge too.

WHY ARE WE STRESSED?

Uncertainty

One of the main causes of stress is uncertainty. For many, it can be scarier than the worst-case scenario. In the current situation, no one really knows what is going to happen.

For example, for a lot of our athletes, their season may have been stopped or may not have even gotten off the ground yet. Therefore, not knowing when they will next be able to compete, or even train, can be an extremely difficult prospect.

Control

Our brains also crave a sense of control. Whilst in the current climate there is very little that we can change or control, focusing on this too much will only make you more stressed. Instead, thinking about what you can do every day to help yourself will start to ease the stress and channel your focus into something productive.

For instance, a lot of athletes might now be focusing on the fact that they are unable to compete, when they could focus on things that they can actually control. To make that shift, at the start of every day, ask yourself: 'What can I do today to make sure I bounce back the best?'

Emotional Contagion

Emotional contagion is when feelings are spread from one person to another. This means that we can literally catch other people's emotions, almost through a form of osmosis. Lots of athletes are surrounded with and spend a lot of their time speaking to other athletes who may be stressed too. This means that there is a chance that you could start to feel even more stressed and nervous as their emotions start to rub off on you. To find out more about emotional contagion, [check out this blog](#).

So, if these are the causes for stress, then what can we do to look after our mental health? Also, how can we at the same time maintain our competitive edge?

6 TOP TIPS TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND KEEP YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Knowledge brings power

If uncertainty brings stress, then knowledge brings power. This means that both what you are reading, and where you are getting your information from are highly important.

Staying on top of any updates from governing bodies or event organisers can be invaluable as it will help to reduce

some of the of uncertainty that you are facing. In this vein, using any information you get to help plan for likely situations, will help you feel more in control and prepared.

Keep calm and carry on

Where possible, having a set routine is key. A great way to ensure that you stick to yours is to [set your daily tasks/goals](#) the night before. This will help you schedule your day and feel more positive about your achievements as well.

However, changing too much too soon can be quite a shock to the system. Therefore, new behaviours and tasks are more likely to be effective if you weave them into your daily routine. Researchers describe this as being '[subtle and stealthy](#)'. This means that keeping as much from your usual training schedule in place as possible is key. For example, exercising as best as you can, recovery and diet.

To read more about new habits and routines, check out our [blog here](#).

Communication is key

Self-isolation and loneliness can be key factors leading to feelings of depression. Therefore, talking to others is so important during these times and this can take many forms. Of course, talking face-to-face with people in your household can be really helpful. However, for athletes, talking to friends and training partners, or teammates and support staff over the phone can also have a really positive effect even if you aren't training or competing at usual.

These are complicated and stressful times, so look after yourself.

We often feel better when we know that people share or understand our feelings and emotions, thus, speaking to like-minded people can be a helpful strategy.

Sleep

When we don't have to leave the house, the temptation to stay up late and sleep less can be all too much. However, getting enough sleep is vital as it can have a serious effect on

both our mind and body. A lack of sleep causes moodiness and irritability, whilst also encouraging pessimistic thinking. It also means your body recovers more slowly and you will be more likely to get injured.

To make sure you get a good night's sleep, check out our [sleep guide here](#) and be sure not to make any of the [9 most common sleep mistakes](#). For athletes with usually busy schedules, this is a great chance to finally get your sleeping pattern right!

Stay active

Where possible, and of course within the government restrictions, staying active is going to be really important. As well as known physical benefits, exercise can help improve your mood, self-esteem and ability to deal with stress.

It's easy to put off training given that you're not competing at the moment, however [exercise also helps](#) combat fatigue, encourages better mental health and keeping you focused on the present. Additionally, if exercise is part of your usual routine, it is good to keep as much of this in place as possible.

Adjust your goals

When we have targets and goals to focus on, it is sometimes easy to forget what the bigger picture is. Remembering where you are going and where you want to be can increase your motivation to succeed. However, for most athletes, the goal posts may now have shifted.

Therefore, making sure that you adjust your expectations over the next few months will be crucial. Those that don't will find they become more frustrated because they will be fighting against the new reality rather than accepting it and working towards it.

FINAL THOUGHT

With isolation increasing and rising uncertainty, it's easy to be swept up in all the chaos and feel alone. However, following these easy 6 top tips will help you feel more positive, productive and prepared.

KEEP CALM AND SLEEP ON



Given that there is a pause on all sport at the minute, it gives athletes a great time to work on some of their 'non-negotiables'. These are key things that they will commit to doing every day that they know will positively affect their performance. Now you might be wondering: how does this link to sleep?

Well, despite having years and years of experience at sleeping, most of us are still rubbish at it. Most people see going to sleep as a passive thing; meaning that when they feel tired, they go to bed and that's it. However, in reality, sleep should be an active behaviour that you think about as an investment in your recovery, performance and well-being.

The best athletes see sleep as one of their hidden weapons and as one of their 'non-negotiables'. So, given that we have more time now than ever to work on our own 'non-negotiables', we thought we'd explain why we sleep should be on your list, how it helps and how to do it better.

Why is sleep so important and how can you get better at it?

WHY DO WE SLEEP?

There are several different beliefs on why we sleep. For example, some suggest that we sleep as it helps our body to

heal, rest, grow and conserve energy, whereas others suggest that we sleep to help our brains grow, process and consolidate information that we have learnt better. We still don't have a precise reason for why we sleep, but regardless of what stance you take, it is beneficial to all athletes.

HOW DOES SLEEP HELP?

In general, sleep improves our concentration, memory, insight, creativity and helps to boost your immune system too. But why is it even more important for athletes?

The way in which an athlete prepares for a game is extremely important; and this starts the night before with a [good night's sleep](#). Research has shown that when basketball players got a sufficient amount of sleep, their [speed increased by 5% and their shooting accuracy increased by 9%](#). These margins are hard to ignore in sports where small differences can make a big impact.

[A study](#) examining the impact of sleep on recovery in elite footballers highlights how sleep deprivation may lead to impaired muscle damage repair and muscle glycogen repletion. Furthermore, from a psychological standpoint, [sleep has the ability](#) to improve cognitive functioning and reduce the likelihood of mental fatigue. This means that the with more sleep athletes can improve their reaction times too. [Another study](#) also showed that players with more sleep displayed better decision-making as well.

Another important reason to get more sleep is because a reduced amount has been linked to an increase in injury rates and illnesses too! For example, [one study](#) showed that adolescents who had less than 8 hours of sleep were more likely to experience injury compared to adolescents who had more than 8 hours of sleep.

So, how do you know if you are getting enough sleep? Time to take the pillow test...

The Pillow Test: The National

What better time than now to work on your sleep habits?

Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes states that if you fall asleep within 5 minutes of your head hitting the pillow each night, you probably aren't getting enough sleep. Try this tonight, and if you notice that you're falling asleep too quickly, make it a priority to get more sleep.

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH SLEEP?

There is no exact answer for how much sleep people need, but experts tend to recommend about 7-9 hours a night on average. The amount of sleep you need depends on your age, with adults and older teenagers needing less than children. [A recent survey](#) found that most of us are getting less than 6 ³/₄ hours of sleep each night.

WHY IS SLEEP HARD FOR ATHLETES?

When competing, there are a few reasons why getting the right amount of sleep can be tough for athletes, for example:

- Often athletes train early in the morning and can compete late at night.
- Some athletes must travel a lot which reduces when they can sleep.
- Most environments that athletes compete in are very stimulating.
- Lots of athletes also compete in a very physical environment too.

Interestingly, if you look at the list of reasons why athletes usually struggle to sleep, you will notice that due to the current situation, they are not likely to be experiencing these things at the moment. This is why now is the perfect time to get into a good sleep routine. So, what can athletes do to make sure they get better at sleeping?

HOW TO GET BETTER SLEEP

What to Avoid

There are lots of mistakes that people make before they go to sleep, in fact we wrote a blog about the [9 most common sleep mistakes](#) that people tend to make. This list includes:

- **Staying in bed when unable to sleep** – If you can't fall asleep within 20-30 minutes, get out of bed and do something that occupies your brain without stressing out. Interestingly, for those people that stay in bed for longer, their brain starts to learn the association between being in bed and being awake which makes it harder to fall asleep!
- **Being on your phone in bed** – Melatonin (the sleep hormone) gets released when it is dark. If you are on your phone or tablet in bed, your brain is fooled into thinking that the bright light from your screen means it is daytime, and [stops melatonin](#) being fully released, keeping you wide awake.
- **Napping for too long** – The research still isn't clear when is the perfect time for a nap, although anything over thirty minutes can leave you feeling groggy for quite a while before you feel the full benefits. If you nap for too long before your normal bedtime, you won't feel tired again until very late into the night.
- **Caffeine** – For athletes, caffeine can be like a doubled-edge sword. On one side, it can boost alertness, increase reaction times and [enhance endurance](#) and intensity on shorter exercises. On the other hand it can take up to an hour to wear off and can have a 4 ½ hour shelf life. So, we think the best advice is to manage your caffeine intake and factor your sleep into it too. For example, where possible, try to avoid caffeine 4 hours before bed.

What to do instead

- **Have a regular bedtime / wake up time** – Where possible, getting into a habit of sleeping and waking up at specific times will help keep your body clock consistent. For example, during the week between matches. This is something you can get very good at now!
- **Take a hot bath at night** – Your [body temperature drops when you sleep](#). You can prompt this sleepy state by taking a warm bath. This will also help relax your muscles and make it

easier to fall asleep.

- ***Wake up properly in the morning*** – Doing certain things when you wake up, like hitting the snooze button, can affect your sleep cycle as well as making you feel groggy and less refreshed and prepared for the day. Check out our guide on [how to wake up properly here](#).

FINAL THOUGHT

So, the research is pretty conclusive: those who get a better sleep at night get a range of physical and psychological benefits and this is more profound for athletes. A final note is that sleep is about consistency. One good night's sleep the night before a match may work in the short term, but for longer term benefits make sleep your priority.

9 WAYS OLYMPIANS DEVELOP RESILIENCE



How important is resilience? Research suggests that the ability to persevere and overcome setbacks is a key component in helping Olympic champions achieve their goals. But is it something that can be taught? And if so, can we apply the same sort of principles to help other people (such as students and businessmen/women) to develop a more resilient mindset?

A HOT TOPIC

Resilience is becoming an ever increasing hot topic in the media. Terms like 'grit', 'resilience' and 'persistence' are becoming more and more common. Politicians are [keen for schools](#) to improve student resilience. [Others aren't](#) as keen on this as they worry that students won't want to ask for help for fear of looking weak. However, [a recent study](#) found that this is often not the case, with resilient students adopting positive behaviours to help them cope with stress and [another recent study](#) finding that resilience and self-regulation are closely linked. Indeed, asking for help is a strategy that many resilient people use.

GRIT VS. RESILIENCE

Grit, which is a perseverance and passion for a long term goal, has been linked to success in a diverse range of settings, which include student grades, military training and even in national spelling competitions. But can grit be taught? [Angela Duckworth](#), the leading researcher in this field, says it probably can, but that the research isn't there just yet to tell us how to do so.

[The Sutton Trust](#) highlights the difference between grit and resilience, noting that resilience includes a '*positive adaption despite the presence of risk*'.

Although it may be too early to conclude how best to develop grit, a lot more is known about resilience, especially in elite athletes. Could we learn from the lessons in sport and apply them to other walks of life?

Resilience will help you in sport, but also in the rest of your life.

OLYMPIC RESILIENCE

Research fellow Dr Mustafa Sarkar has spent a lot of time studying mental [resilience in Olympic Champions](#). Many of the elite athletes he [has interviewed](#) cite the importance of resilience in their success, noting that the path to gold medals is rarely straight forward and simple. Based on his research, he has suggested several ways that Olympic champions developed resilience. We have highlighted 9 of them here:

Develop a positive personality – For the Olympians, this included being open to new experiences, being optimistic, competitive and conscientious, as well as being proactive.

View your decisions as active choices not sacrifices – This helps maintain a [sense of control](#) over the situation. This will also keep intrinsic motivation high.

Use support available to you from other people – Seek out people who can help you. This can include technical advice on what you are doing, or just social support to make you feel better when times are tough.

Identify your motivation for success – Identify what's important to you to stay motivated and determined, especially when you have had a setback or your goal seems far away.

Focus on personal development – Don't spend too much time comparing yourself to others. This can increase stress and the fear of failure. As the director Baz Luhrmann says, *'the race is long, and in the end, only with yourself'*.

View setbacks as opportunities for growth – Ask yourself what you have learnt and what you would do differently next time. These questions can help improve your [metacognition](#) and [growth mindset](#) as well as your resilience.

Strengthen your confidence from a range of sources – Drawing on a range of sources can make your confidence more robust. This can include your preparation, your previous successes or the faith that other people have in your ability.

Take responsibility for your thoughts, feelings and behaviours – Avoid the temptation of playing the blame game. Externalising all your problems may protect your self-image for a little while, but is unlikely to help you get better in the long run.

Concentrate on what you can control – Focus on what you can control. This means focusing on the process, not the outcome.



CAN THIS APPLY TO EVERYONE?

So there are the 9 ways that Olympians develop resilience. But can we apply these lessons to other areas of life? Maybe. In [a different study](#) on the resilience of high achievers, which included successful people from sport, business, law enforcement, medicine, media, education and politics, many of these 9 tips are mentioned as being key to their resilience.

A lot of the people in these studies may have already been very motivated to succeed. These 9 tips would have helped them along the way. We can't necessarily apply these tips to everyone and expect them to be high-achieving super-successful resilient individuals; however, for some, especially those who are motivated or who have a clear goal, these tips could be a very helpful guide along the way to them developing mental resilience.

Developing a growth mindset is a great way of improving resilience, find out [more about it here](#).

HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP YOUR MENTAL TOUGHNESS?



'Mental toughness' is probably the most over-used phrase in sport. It is often held up as this magical quality that will ensure success to all those who have it. But despite its importance, many athletes are still left feeling short-changed when they don't know how to actually develop it.

'Mental toughness' is also one of the most damaging phrases in sport. This is because it conjures up images of having a stiff upper lip and not admitting to having any weaknesses. There is often a fundamental misunderstanding of what mental toughness actually is: it isn't simply 'wanting it', it's not always being confident, and it's not being a loud leader. If athletes thought that was all it was, they would spend their time chasing the wrong thing.

So, what actually is mental toughness, and how can it be developed? Here's what our sport psychologists say...

MENTAL TOUGHNESS IS...

Showing an awareness of your emotions

Athletes who demonstrate mental toughness are those who are aware of and able to control their emotions. This ensures that they are able to think clearly and correctly under

pressure. One strategy to help with this is to encourage athletes to talk to themselves in a [positive and helpful way](#). By asking themselves good questions, such as 'what would I do differently next time?' and 'how can I maximise my strengths?', they can stop dwelling on mistakes and focus on learning for the future.

Asking for help

Many people often perceive [asking for help](#) to be a sign of weakness, rather than a sign of strength.

However, [recent research](#)

has shown that people often falsely believe that admitting to their own weaknesses makes them seem vulnerable - whereas it is actually perceived as a positive trait by others. Asking for help is an act of courage and demonstrates a willingness to learn and improve.

Wanting to get better

[Fear of failure](#) can stop some athletes from attempting new skills or taking much needed risks when they play. However, athletes who have high levels of mental toughness are able to learn from their mistakes and see them as an opportunity to improve.

Talking to others when you are down

When we are upset, we tend to isolate ourselves. But as the famous proverb states: 'if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'. [Talking to others](#) (coaches, family, teammates...) allows us to gain new perspectives which will

Developing MENTAL TOUGHNESS in Athletes
by @inner_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk

MENTAL TOUGHNESS IS:	MENTAL TOUGHNESS IS NOT:
Showing an Awareness of Your Emotions	"Wanting it"
Asking for Help	Thinking you are Always Right
Wanting to Get Better	Wanting to Prove Yourself
Talking to Others When You Are Down	Putting on a "brave face"
Learning from your Mistakes	Never Making Mistakes
Being Authentic and True to Yourself	Acting how you Think Others Want you to
Being Curious and Asking Questions	Having False Confidence
Being Committed to the Team	Only Being Committed to Yourself
Being Hungry to Learn	Being a "born winner"
Helping Others to Play Well	Always Taking Centre Stage
Being a Good Listener	Being Loud
Actioning your Feedback	Arguing with Feedback

help us deal with upcoming challenges more effectively.

Learning from your mistakes

Mistakes, if used correctly, can be an opportunity to learn and improve. There is a danger though that people over-romanticise failure. We don't necessarily want athletes to fail more, but we do want them to [fail better](#). Mistakes can also boost an athlete's motivation levels and encourage them to make improvements, so that when they encounter a similar problem again, they know exactly how to solve it.

Being authentic and true to yourself

Oscar Wilde once wrote that you should '*be yourself, everyone else is already taken*'. In the quest to develop mental toughness, athletes may try to act in a way that they think they should. True confidence and motivation come from being comfortable in your own skin and being the best version of yourself, not an inferior version of someone else.

**"Mental toughness"
may be the most
misunderstood term
in sports.**

Being curious and asking questions

Being mentally tough is all about being coachable and open to learning. Over time, athletes who make the most progress are the ones who are willing to engage and action the feedback they're given. Those who are mentally tough [listen well](#) to others. It therefore makes sense to educate our athletes on [common mistakes people make when asking for feedback](#) and also [how to receive feedback better](#).

Helping others to play well

Michael Jordan stated that '*talent wins games, but teams win championships*'. Truly great leaders put themselves before the team. They dedicate themselves to a higher cause. It is far easier to tell others what they need to be doing, but it is far more effective to inspire them to do it. Humility and self-sacrifice are a much truer hallmark of mental toughness than scrambling for the limelight.

FINAL THOUGHT

In order to develop 'mental toughness', it is important that athletes understand that it is more than just passion or 'wanting it'. It's about the behaviours and attitudes that lead to them getting better and performing to their potential. By focusing on the skills and strategies to do this, athletes have the best chance of succeeding and maximising their abilities.

HOW TO HELP INJURED ATHLETES



There are two types of athletes: those who are injured and those aren't injured yet. So which athletes are most likely to be injured and how can we best help them?

WHAT ARE THE KEY PREDICTORS OF INJURY?

[Research has shown](#) that there are some key and clear predictors of which athletes are likely to get injured. These include those who have a history of injury and those who are experiencing high levels of stress. Furthermore, those who have poor coping skills whilst injured are also far more likely to get injured again.

INJURIES AND STRESS

Stress causes changes to our brain's normal functioning, leading to a decreased flow of information between our thoughts and our actions. This bottleneck negatively influences our [decision making](#), which in turn increases the likelihood of injury.

[An interesting study](#) has shown that emotional reactivity to these negative emotions causes decreased activity in the area

of the brain where attention is managed, resulting in increased risk of injury due to additional attentional load.

When a negative event occurs, [stress](#) can be associated with it. With decision making and attention being negatively impacted by stress, [research has shown](#) that athletes are more likely to then put themselves in situations beyond their capacity to control, hence putting themselves at higher risk of injury.



HOW TO HELP INJURED ATHLETES

Set Goals

[Goal setting](#) can help athletes follow their rehabilitation programmes by providing focus and motivation. A short term goal can provide focus whereas a long term goal helps maintain motivation during tough times.

Communicate

Understand the psycho-social pressures being experienced by the athlete. Offer encouragement and be empathetic in your approach. This helps athletes reduce any ambiguity and doubt about what they need to do in order to come back better than before.

Education

When athletes are educated about the treatment of their injury, they are more likely to believe in the efficacy of the treatment. Knowing is always better than not knowing, as uncertainty breeds stress,

**Being out of action
is frustrating - but it
doesn't have to be lonely.**

frustration and anxiety.

Offer Support

Arrange for the athlete to talk to or meet up with athletes experiencing the same injury problems. It offers them a chance to understand they are not the only ones in that situation. Isolated athletes struggle, so by [building a team around you](#), you benefit from having a wealth of different experiences in your armoury.

FINAL THOUGHT

Injury happens. But by helping athletes to perceive their negative situations in a more positive way we can help them avoid and recover from injury more effectively. The challenge for all athletes when injured, is can they be the best injured athlete possible.

FEAR OF FAILURE IN FOOTBALL



Former England manager Sven-Goran Eriksson stated that *"an athlete often has a great deal more potential than he manages to use, but his fear of failure locks him into his performance cage"*. Indeed, The Lewis Review, which was a report commissioned to explore the state of youth football in England noted that a climate of fear exists. This has been confirmed by comments made by ex-internationals Steven Gerrard and Joey Barton, and ex-FA chairman Greg Dyke.

WHAT DO ATHLETES FEAR?

It is not failure itself that people fear. It is the perceived negative consequences that follow the failure which causes them the most amounts of stress. This fear can lead to lowered self-esteem, avoiding challenging tasks, being pessimistic and even cheating.

Psychologists have identified the five main things which people fear that failure will lead to:

- Experiencing shame and embarrassment
- Readjusting how you see yourself
- Having an uncertain future
- Upsetting important people

- Important people losing interest

HOW TO REDUCE THE FEAR OF FAILURE

So how to overcome fear of failure? Here are seven suggestions:

No Shame Policy

In a study of footballers, the most common fear was the fear of shame and embarrassment. This is seen in athletes who play it too safe as they don't want to be the one who makes a mistake. For these athletes, the fear of making a mistake is larger than the hope of doing something well. To overcome this kind of thinking, create an environment where failure is followed by support, encouragement and positivity, rather than embarrassment, punishment and negativity.

Address The Problem

Psychologists believe that there are three ways people cope with situations. These are Avoidant, Emotional and Problem Focused.

Let's say you are worried about snakes in your garden. You could decide to never go into your garden again (avoidant focused), or convince yourself that having snakes in your back garden isn't that bad (emotion focused) or go into your garden and get rid of the snakes (problem focused).

Where avoidant and emotional focused coping may provide some short term relief, problem focused coping addresses the issue head on, allowing you to make long term gains. Don't be an ostrich and bury your head in the sand.

7 Ways to Reduce the Fear of Failure
by @Inner_Drive
www.innerdrive.co.uk

- No Shame Policy**
Be part of a group where failure isn't followed by laughter, ridicule and embarrassment.
- Address the Problem**
Don't be an ostrich and bury your head in the sand. What can you do to make the situation better?
- Learn From Your Mistakes**
Real failure is someone who has blundered and not cashed in on the experience.
- Don't Bottle It Up**
Talk to someone, like a parent or friend.
- Question Your Fears**
Are they actually irrational and highly unlikely to come true?
- Focus on What You Can Control**
A lot of the things you worry about are out of your hands and potentially down to chance.
- Embrace the Grey**
Success and failure shouldn't be seen as black or white. This all-or-nothing thinking can increase stress and anxiety.

If something is worrying you, work out how you can make it better.

Learn From Your Mistakes

[Forty years ago](#), a psychologist in America studied how primary school students viewed an upcoming test. Some viewed it as an opportunity to see how much they'd learnt; others saw it as a chance to compare themselves to their classmates. Those who focused on their learning are called task-orientated.

Creating a task-orientated environment (focusing more on individual development and less on comparison to others) [should increase](#) motivation, confidence, self-regulation, academic performance as well as reduce anxiety.

Don't Bottle It Up

Teams are often stronger than individuals, so if something is worrying you, talk to someone like a family member, friend, team-mate or coach. These people can give advice, support, or even just listen to you. Using the support available to you is a strategy that Olympic champions use to [develop their resilience](#).

What do you actually fear: failure, or its consequences?

Question Your Fears

Are your fears actually irrational and highly unlikely to come true? Mark Twain once said, "*I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened*". This is a great quote as it captures perfectly how many athletes end up worrying about the worst case scenario, often for no logical reason. It's good to reassure them that if they have put the hard work in, there is no reason to assume the worst.

Focus On What You Can Control

When people focus on things that they can't change, it often makes them stressed or nervous. By helping people focus on what they can control, it gives them a sense of certainty and confidence. Elite athletes, such as Tom Daley, call this being process focused, which is not focusing on

the outcome (i.e. the result, which they can't control), but focusing on what they need to do (the process) to give them the best chance of success.

Embrace The Grey

In sport, sometimes, the result can paper over the cracks. Young people can think that winning in their last competition means that everything is good. On the flip side, suffering a defeat can mean that everything becomes all 'doom and gloom'. This sort of black and white thinking can lead to stress, anxiety and fragile self-esteem. Judging yourself on your attitude, effort and what you've learned are better markers and more likely to result in the wins that you desire.

FINAL THOUGHT

To recap, failure in itself isn't threatening. It is just a source of feedback on your current level. It is the negative consequences that people think will follow that they fear. The most common of these is the fear of shame and embarrassment. Helping players overcome these fears can liberate and free them from their 'performance cage', allowing them to achieve their full potential.