

A Mental Toughness Formula



The
Courage
to Win
in Sport

How To Perform
Your Best Under Pressure

Lisa Lane Brown

The Courage to Win[®] in Sport
How to Perform Your Best Under Pressure

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What Athletes and Coaches Are Saying About The Courage to Win in Sport

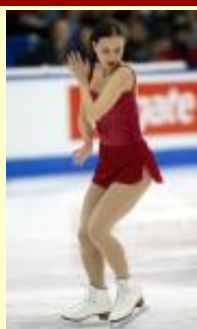
Genuine confidence is an absolute necessity and Lisa delivers your training at the exact level you need.



Genuine confidence is an absolute necessity if you want to reach your potential. I've worked with Lisa as a personal mental toughness coach and have accessed Lisa's talents in training teams I have coached. Lisa's work is very effective because she delivers the training at the level the clients need...and it's the type of training that you take with you and use on a daily basis towards success.

Shannon Miller, Olympic Coach, Women's Hockey

This course is changing me...I am growing.



This course is changing me. It is changing everything about my life. I have learned how human beings work...not just in sport but in life in general. I have taught my family about the things you teach me. They are mesmerized by what I read them. To understand human emotion changes the way I think and look at myself, and others around me. I am growing.

Leah Hepner, Figure Skating

Lisa teaches you skills you can use right away.



Mental toughness training gives you confidence. It's helped me play well under pressure and cope with injuries. I think it's essential if you want to perform to your potential. You owe it to yourself to do mental toughness training, and Lisa Brown's work is so practical because she teaches you skills you can use right away.

Stacy Wilson, Olympian, Women's Hockey

Lisa's mental toughness program made me a World Champion.



Lisa's mental toughness online program made me a 2 time World Champion. I was ready to conquer every possible distraction in international competition. I played my best, even in the most high pressure moments.

Laura Warner, Team Canada, Ringette

Lisa helped me obtain the mental edge.



Have you ever heard the adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"? Well, I was broke and I knew it. I knew Lisa was the person who could help me identify the root of my downward spiral. Lisa helped me "cut to the chase" and identify those things that were holding me back from attaining the mental edge I needed. Together we created a mental plan of attack that allowed me to stay empowered regardless of the circumstances.

Lori Sippel, Olympian, Women's Softball

I'm a better player, physically and mentally.



After mental toughness, I am now a better player physically and mentally. I am able to apply my focus for success. The program put everything into perspective for me.

Christine Parris-Washington, Olympian, Women's Softball

I am more focused and driven.



I am a more focused, driven, and prepared player because of the Courage to Win.

Charmaine Reid, Olympian, Badminton

My mental game was seriously lacking. Lisa's course was incredibly helpful.



Lisa's course was incredibly helpful. It's odd because psychology is my favourite subject in school, but my mental game was seriously lacking. My favourite part would be doing the assignments, I find that they ensure that I'm taking in what is being taught and that I'm applying the lesson on the court.

Michelle Stiphout, University Basketball

You made it so simple and saved me a great deal of money.



Your information on mental toughness saved me a great deal of money. You made it so simple, be your own mental toughness coach! In the past I would wait for other people to tell me how good I was. Now I can create this confidence from the inside. My national show is at the end of the year and I know I will turn pro. Thank you!"

**Joella Bernard, Finalist,
USA Women's Heavy Bodybuilding**

Lisa's course is a winner!



Lisa's on-line mental toughness programme has allowed our athletes, on an individual basis, to gain the mental toughness skills so necessary in today's world of high performance curling. It's a winner!

Bill Tschirhart, National Development Coach for the Canadian Curling Association

Mental toughness gave me the edge to become an elite athlete.



Mental toughness gave me the edge that I needed to become an elite curler. I had always been a good player, but weak mentally. I was able to overcome the one major obstacle that stood in my way. The mental toughness that I now have has helped in sport, life and my work. I am now better prepared to deal with people, because I am more confident.

Brad Kuhn, Elite Curler

The Courage to Win is the reason for my success.



The course has been very enlightening and gratifying. It has moved me further along the road to success and will help me for years to come. I have enjoyed the assignments and the feedback provided. I know that the work I have done with you over the past month or so was part of the reason for my success at my most recent high performance camp!

Keith Uthe, High Performance Basketball Official

For the first time I was able to maintain focus and WIN!



I am 47 years old. Since I was a kid I liked to play tennis but at that time was expensive for my parents and they couldn't afford it. Two years ago I had the chance to start having lessons, I thought that for this kind of sport you must start when you are a kid, but I was wrong. Soon I started to play matches and now I am playing in local tournaments. I have to play to 18 years old kids sometimes, and at 47 this is very tough but I like the challenge. Today against all predictions I won a tough match and I know your book helped me do it. I was most of the time down in the score, but I won anyway 4-6, 7-6, 7-6. For the first time I was able to maintain focus in the important moments in a very long match. Thank you very much!

Dany Urriza, Tennis Player
Tierra del Fuego, Argentina

This program has made me a much better coach.



Mental toughness has the athletes confront their Inner barriers and access their self-confidence. I'm a better coach today because I know how to look beyond the x's and o's of the game. I relate to my athletes better

Shawnee Harle, Head Coach
University of Calgary Basketball

I finished at the World Triathlon Championship with a personal record!



At my World Triathlon Championship, your words were in my head throughout the event. I kept thinking about rhythm throughout the day. When we spoke, I told you my goal was to be top 10. I finished 9th. I finished with a PR. My previous fastest time in a race of this distance was 5:47. I was hoping to go 5:45. I finished in 5:39. I am thrilled. Another exciting part is that my husband and I finished the race together. This has never happened before. Very cool that it happened in the World Championship. You really helped!

Gail Lohman
Triathlete

Losing was NOT an option!



Lisa, you won't believe the impact "The Courage to Win" had on my Junior Varsity Boys High School Volleyball team (gr10-11). It seemed whenever the team was in a playoff, they just could not win. For 2 full months we worked at skills and techniques to get over that hump of not being able to win the big games. Nothing seemed to work. Here in front of me was an offer to purchase an Ebook, the exercises take only 7 days. I will be honest, I was very skeptical, but it was local to Calgary and I really did not have anything to lose, except the cost of the book! I purchased the book. In 5 minutes I walked through the visualization with them, breaking down the skill to very simple components having them see themselves performing the skill through their own eyes. In a matter of 3 weeks the team went from not being able to win when it counts to losing not being an option, and our focus the entire time was never the win, but rather playing OUR style of game. I can't say enough about how this program has positively impacted my approach to coaching.

Corey Cowper
Volleyball Coach

I am shooting 81-84 almost every time out on the golf course.



Lisa, thank you! My golf game is much more consistent. I am shooting 81-84 almost every time out. I am much more relaxed and able to experience my swing much more clearly. I have also begun to develop greater confidence in my short game. I am so confident I am eager to play with players who can beat me!

Arlene Yost, Golfer
San Luis Obispo, California

The mental toughness training our National Team did with Lisa was invaluable.

We had become so focused on the fear of failure that we lost our confidence a lot. The mental toughness training we did with Lisa was invaluable because it allowed us to turn our focus on the game itself. More than anything, Lisa's training works because she uses a practical approach based on real experience...she even helped me become a better coach to my athletes.

Brenda Staniforth, Coach
Canadian Olympic Women's Softball Team

With Lisa's guidance, I have learned to manage the emotions causing the stress, and I have been successful in losing 45 lbs and reaching the Olympic Trials.



With the use of Lisa's guidance, I have learned to manage the emotions causing the stress, and I have been successful in losing 45 lbs. I have never worked with a more intelligent, talented, inspirational, and committed professional whom you gain an immediate respect and trust for. With Lisa Brown, problems are just solutions waiting to happen.

**Heather Rankin, Finalist,
Olympic Curling Trials**

Thanks to the Courage to Win in Sport, I have become the leader my team needs me to be!

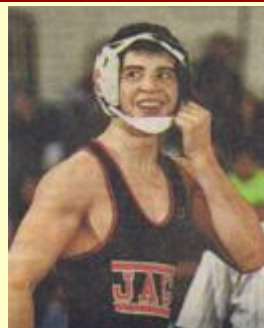


Lisa I was anxious heading into this season however, this was my most successful year as a coach. Thanks to the Courage to Win in Sport, I have become the leader my team needs me to be!

This past March we made it to the gold medal match knocking off the previous OUA champs in 5 sets. Thanks to your candor, honesty, insight and advice I was prepared to coach the many different personality styles my players had and be successful. You helped me understand myself this year and what I needed to do. I am way more confident in my coaching ability - thanks so much for everything you did to help me prepare for this year.

**Cal Wigston Head Coach
Men's Volleyball University of Guelph**

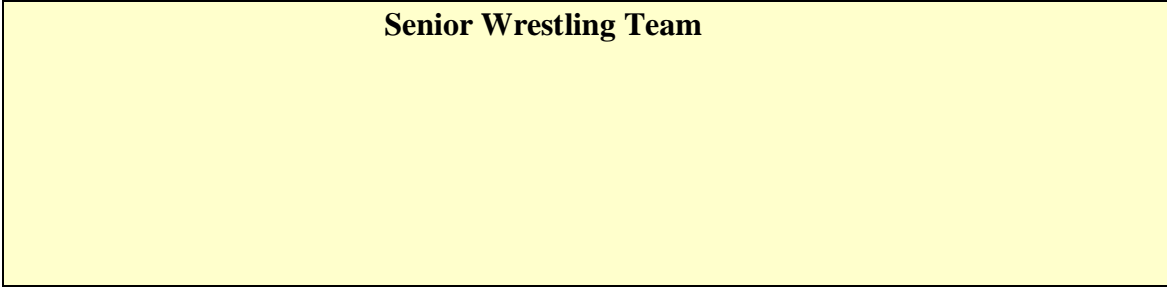
After I had a much better understanding of my anxieties and learned how to focus my energy in a positive way – and placed third in the country!



Lisa, I purchased "the courage to win" about three weeks ago. I read it thoroughly and did all the exercises numerous times. After I had a much better understanding of my anxieties and learned how to focus my energy in a positive way. I just returned from the USA high school Senior National wrestling tournament. Before your material I placed 12th in the state of NJ. I knew I was much better than that. After using your material I just placed 3rd in the country for 130lbs. senior wrestlers. Thank you so much. I will continue to use this focus for life.

BJ Young

Senior Wrestling Team



Your book changed my game!

Your book changed my game. I live and play in Victorville California--from the white tee box, the front 9 is 3236 yards. Yesterday on a par 36 I shot 41 with NOT three putts. My golfing partner (Terry) is amazed how much my putting has improved. Today I had 3 straight putts. I just want to say: thank you, thank you, thank you!

Jim Manning

These books taught me the truth about mastering my mind out on the course.

Dear Lisa, Thank you for writing these books, I'm a first year golfer and have taken the game far too seriously and haven't learned to just relax on the golf course, I take lesson after lesson but that never helped much. These books taught me the truths about mastering my mind out on the course. I've now had several people say that there's no way could be a first year. They're calling me a liar!! Thanks,

Brett Wilson

Thanks for all your great drills and ideas.

I came back to golf 12 months ago after 12 years away having children, just playing the occasional game I started playing when I was about 10 and best handicap was 8 as a teenager, I know I can do better than that this time!! I came back handicap 18 and have managed to get to 10 last week my goal for the year is single figures I'm nearly there. I have really enjoyed your books and have lessons and practice your drills regularly I have just been measured up for new clubs so I will have modern technology and mental awareness very soon I love my golf and my kids are starting to play also Thanks for all your great drills and ideas

Christine Clarke

You have had a huge impact on my son's bowling career – 12 strikes in a row!

'Lisa I wanted to write and say thank you from my son and myself for The Courage to Win in Sport and to let you know what a difference it has made in my son's bowling game.

My son, Matt, is a 17 year old High School Junior who has been on his school's bowling team for 3 years. My son was bowling well at the beginning of the season, was not a varsity starter (5 man varsity team), but an alternate.

We purchased the book at the beginning of the season and he read it over the Thanksgiving break. Within the first week of coming back from the break, he was starting varsity. By the Christmas break he was the number 3 man on the starting varsity squad. He felt the book had helped him to focus and be mentally tough enough to out bowl his competitors and his team mates.

At the beginning of last week he felt he was in a bit of a slump, so on Wednesday night he reread the book. At Thursday and Friday's matches, he had high game and high series for his team at both matches.

However, his success didn't end there.

On Saturday at his home town's sponsored high school tournament, he bowled a perfect 300 game.

12 solid strikes!

This is only the 6th time in the 24 year history of the tournament that a 300 has been bowled. In the 10th frame, as he bowled the 3 strikes, he had close to 300 people watching him.

A reporter from The Newark Star-Ledger was present and interviewed him. Here is my son's quote: 'I was able to keep my focus, keep my eyes on the target and my hand behind the ball,' said Barros, who averages 202. 'When I was going for my last three strikes, I didn't realize anyone was here. It was just me and the lane.'

His comment to me after he had calmed down was, 'thanks for getting me that book, it really helped me to stay focused.'

The book and your email tips have had a huge impact on my son's bowling career. It really is a great book!

Sincerely,

Keith Barros

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Getting Started

Most athletes are crippling their mental toughness without realizing it.

That was me, 16 years ago.

I'm an athlete too (in the Canadian sport of ringette, similar to hockey).

When I skated on the ice, a powerful and graceful side of me came out.

Unfortunately, a dark side of me came out too.

My dark side manifested in extreme confidence swings.

One week I was invincible.

The next, my confidence came crashing down. I never knew why, and it hurt me all the time.

My insecurity reached its zenith at the 1991 Nationals, where we lost with one second left on the clock.

It's hard to express my despair over this game in words.

Losing hurt, but my deepest anguish came from the fact that I had choked in the biggest game of the year.

Worse, a friend of mine scored all 5 of our goals...but I wasn't happy for her. Outwardly, I pretended to be happy for her. "*Well done, Shauna. Way to go.*"

Inwardly, I was eating my heart out. I wanted to be a leader, but I had no idea how.

My coaches and friends said things like, "*You just need to believe in yourself,*" and "*Don't worry about it. You'll do better next time.*"

But no matter what they said, these failures really ate me up inside. Secretly, I knew that my failures had something to do with my mental game, and not just my circumstances. I seriously considered quitting for good.

Exhausted and depressed on the plane home, I broke, letting in the fear and shame I had been shutting out for years.

That's when I got serious about mental toughness training.

Fortunately, I'm a very stubborn athlete. I was obsessed with finding the answer to the question, "*What do superstar athletes and coaches know that I DON'T about mental toughness?*"

I wanted REAL answers...

Not something a guy with a PhD wrote in a book.

These answers didn't come overnight, but I had an early success that bolstered me and made me think I was onto something.

Here's what happened.

Three weeks before my first World Championship, my coach gave me a tape and said, "*Just listen to it.*"

It was a simple visualization audio.

Every night for three weeks I visualized playing at the Worlds before falling asleep.

I don't know why, but I kept getting an image of a tie game.

And then I would score to win it for Canada.

Pretty nice daydream, hey?

I didn't think much of it at the time.

Until the REAL final game, when the score was actually tied 5-5 with 1:25 left in the game.

I skated in, did a simple fake, and BAM!

Goal.

Gold medal at the Worlds.

Coincidence? Not in my mind.

But I still didn't talk about it to anyone.

Not even my sister, who played on the team...until the next World Championship, two years later.

Once again, the score was tied 5-5 in the final. Only this time, there was less than 30 seconds left.

I skated into the corner and picked up the ring. There was only time for one more shot.

BAM!

Goal - backhand, glove side.

Another gold medal.

This time, I was sure. I was sure about the mental toughness training I had been doing. I tried to tell my teammates about it, but most of them just smiled. One of my coaches even said, "*You're not going to get too into those head games, are you?*"

Until the next World Championship, two years later.

Yup, you guessed it...another close score. With 5:45 left, we were down by two goals.

I looked up at the clock and thought, "*We need a goal NOW.*" We went into their end. My linemates passed me the ring and went and set picks on Finland's defence for me.

"*Do it again,*" their eyes were silently begging me.

Lucky for me, I had done the mental toughness training.

I was ready.

And my team finally believed.

I skated and weaved through the defence (thanks to those picks) and
BAM!

Another goal. 6-5.

Then we tied it up and won the game in overtime.

Unbelievable.

Three World Championship gold medals, all with a 6-5 score.

These experiences transformed my life as an athlete forever. In all, I played for Team Canada for ten years, retiring only when age forced me to.

I tell my story not to impress you. I'm pretty sure you're not a ringette player.

But I am sure that you have a Dream. And that somewhere inside you, you know your Dream is possible.

But you're getting in your own way. Your mind, your beliefs, your fears - they are all bogging you down and crippling your potential.

That's why I developed The Courage to Win in Sport formula for mental toughness under pressure in sport.

After winning three World Championships I was pretty fired up, but I knew there was more work to do.

Sure, I had fixed myself, but how could I be sure it would work for other athletes and coaches?

I started with two basic questions. What is the courage to win in sport? And, how can I get more of it?

I started by finding out what the world's foremost experts on sports psychology and peak performance had to say.

I delved into Tim Gallwey's *Inner Tennis: Playing The Game*, Terry Orlick's *Psyching for Sport*, Charles Garfield's *Peak Performance*, and many more.

Then I studied the peak performance work of people like psychologist Martin Seligman, motivational speakers Brian Tracy and Anthony Robbins, leadership guru Stephen Covey, and dozens more.

Sometimes I'd just read newspaper articles about Olympians and professional athletes. I was surprised how often they said brilliant things (hidden among the clichés).

Other times I talked to my National Team teammates or my coaches. They were equally astute in their observations.

After three years, I knew that book learning had taken me as far as it could. To progress further, I would have to go straight to the horse's mouth.

First I booked appointments with all the sport psychologists in my city. Then I took apprentice training from transformational gurus like Nathaniel Branden (*The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*), Roger Callahan (*Thought Field Therapy*), and John Ruskan (*Emotional Clearing*).

By the end of six years I had studied and applied virtually every performance enhancement technique available including cognitive therapy, hypnosis, acupuncture, NLP (neurolinguistic programming), and psychotherapy.

I shared every approach with my athlete and coach clients, making sure they reported back to me. I carefully documented what was working and what wasn't.

Around this time I made three startling realizations that later became the basis of the Courage to Win in Sport.

They were:

1. **Think For Yourself**. A lot of sport psychology material is quite superficial and easy to misapply. If you misapply it, you will actually cripple your own mental toughness.

I will reveal how to avoid this trap by thinking for yourself.

2. **Work The Formula**. The few techniques that really do work to help you win under pressure are astoundingly simple. They are so simple that when I first stumbled upon them, I tended to dismiss them before giving them a proper chance.

This explains why there are superstar athletes who have never done any formal mental training: they simply learned these mental skills naturally.

3. **Be Consistent**. To be a true superstar - not just extremely good - you need to use the Courage to Win techniques consistently.

In other words, you need to change your mental game not "someday," but in the here and now.

Open Your Mind

Before we get started, I need you to change the lens through which you view ideas you “already know”.

If you see a strategy you *think* you already know, rather than dismiss or skim it, stop yourself and ask, “*Is this a mental toughness strategy I have truly internalized? And, am I doing it exactly and consistently the way Lisa has explained?*”

Years ago I operated a summer ringette school for young players. One of the first things I noticed was that the average performers were itching to learn the fancy plays. The fundamentals bored them.

The star performers were different. They would happily practice the fundamentals for hours. If you want to move on to fancy stuff before you’ve mastered the fundamentals of mental toughness, you aren’t mature enough to become a true superstar...yet.

Maturity is the reason so many athletes and coaches do not really have a true open mind. Even basketball superstar Michael Jordan struggled with this at first.

When his coach, Phil Jackson, brought in a sports psychologist to teach about getting in the zone, Michael thought it was crazy: “*When we first started meditating before practice, I’m closing one eye and keeping the other eye open to see what other fool is doing this.*”

Eventually, Michael dropped his pride and opened his mind. He said, “*I became more accepting because I could see everyone making an effort. I opened my mind to these teachings.*”¹

Michael opened his mind because he is a winner. I’m asking you to do the same.

Today is the dawn of a new era for you. Your confidence will grow, your skills will improve, and your fear will fade. You will think sport is easier, but it will be you who has changed.

What Is The Courage to Win®?

The Courage to Win® in sport is mastering fear to win under pressure.

Now, I'm not talking about normal, everyday nerves that happen when you compete. Nerves are completely natural. They make you alert and they activate you.

I'm talking about intense fear - the kind that makes you choke. The kind that makes your legs feel like jelly...that makes swallowing difficult...that makes you feel clumsy...that robs you of your aggressiveness.

The list of what we fear is endless. We fear losing; that we're not good enough; that we're disappointing people; that we'll never reach our potential.

97% of athletes never master choking fear.

The reason for this is simple.

They have never been taught how to properly master it.

And because they don't know how to master it, they make THREE mental errors over and over again in reaction to fear. These are:

1. PRESSING
2. Neglecting to psyche up
3. Falling into learned helplessness

The Courage to Win® in Sport Formula

Superstar athletes think differently.

Instead of making these three mental errors, they create breakthrough confidence under pressure.

Here is the Courage to Win Formula for creating breakthrough confidence and winning:

1. **Diagnose Your Fear and Cure It.** When you're anxious or frustrated in competition, diagnose the root cause of your fear and cure it.

2. **Psyche Up Before Competing.** Three weeks before a big event, start psyching yourself into a confident frame of mind.
3. **When Adversity Hits, Create Hope.** When facing adversity, setbacks and stressors, create hope and restore your aggressiveness.

Before we get started, it's critical to remember the three founding principles of the Courage to Win in Sport:

1. **Think For Yourself.** A lot of the sport psychology advice people will give you is superficial and easy to misapply. If you misapply it, you can actually cripple your own mental toughness.
2. **Work The Formula.** The Courage to Win® in Sport formula is astoundingly simple. It is so simple you might be tempted to dismiss it before giving it a proper chance to transform your mental game.

If you apply this formula for real, your results will astonish you.

3. **Be Consistent.** To be a true superstar - not just extremely good - you need to use the Courage to Win formula consistently, not sporadically.

In other words, you need to change your mental game in the here and now, not "someday."

The Courage to Win® formula will prevent you from making the THREE classic mental errors: PRESSING, failing to psyche up, and falling into learned helplessness.

The Courage to Win = Confidence

The Courage to Win® will also give you breakthrough confidence.

**Confidence is a profound belief in your athletic self.
You believe you can handle the challenges of competition and win.**

You might not always win, but you believe in your heart of hearts that you *can*, and this keeps you aggressive and relaxed.

Let's get started.

The Mental Error of PRESSING

The first mental error athletes make when experiencing fear is PRESSING.

PRESSING is trying to force something positive to happen in your event. It's basically over-trying. In an attempt to control things and give yourself confidence, you force and PRESS.

PRESSING is the opposite of letting your body lead...of letting the game come to you...of letting your event unfold naturally.

Before I started doing mental toughness training I was notorious for PRESSING, especially when it came to scoring goals.

I wanted to score goals because they made me feel good. So I'd shoot all the time, I'd only use my best shot, and I'd force shots from bad angles. I didn't pass much and if I did, it was usually when I was tired instead of when my teammates were open.

PRESSING made me super-predictable. Defenders and goalies could figure me out and shut me down pretty quickly. The only reason I still scored was because my raw skills were good.

Also I rarely noticed trends in the opposition's defence - trends that would have told me how to beat them.

One game I remember well. I was in the middle of a scoring slump and repeating positive affirmations on the bench (everyone told me that to be mentally tough I needed to think more positively). But it wasn't working.

I finally turned to my sister who played on my team. I said, "*How do you get your confidence back when you're in a scoring slump?*"

She paused and said, "*I study the defence and goalie to see what they are doing to stop me. Then I use a better shooting strategy to beat them.*"

Ouch.

So simple!

Why hadn't I thought of that?

I hadn't thought of that because I was PRESSING.

I started watching the goalie. She was the best goalie in the country and never seemed to get rattled. I quickly realized we were all shooting wrist shots to her glove side. She was easily anticipating them.

I decided that if I got another chance, I would shoot low and surprise her.

In the middle of the second period, I got a break on the net, skated in, and shot the ring along the ice as hard as I could. The goalie never saw my shot coming -- her feet didn't even move.

We won the game 2-1 and advanced to the national final.

After that day I stopped trying to force goals by PRESSING. Instead I focused on how to score by noticing trends in my opponent during the heat of the battle.

I discovered some fascinating things...

- Most goals were scored from right in front of the net. I had been shooting from too far away, and goalies were reading my shots.
- If I paid attention, I could tell when a defender was in a bad position. I started exploiting those situations.
- My shots were good, but they needed to be faster and more accurate if I wanted to score consistently.

The more I worked on these three things, the more I scored. The weird thing was that the goals were a bonus. The real joy was getting better every time I played.

My experience taught me something I had heard many times but never really grasped.

Coaches were always preaching to me, "*You need to focus on what you can control.*"

This cliché bugged me.

It bugged me because I felt my coaches were being hypocritical. They were saying one thing and doing another.

My coaches were all about things they couldn't control. They were focused on scoring goals, and I couldn't control that. They were focused on winning, and I couldn't control that. They were focused on refs, and I certainly couldn't control that. So when they said, "*Focus on what you can control,*" I didn't believe them. I figured, "*They aren't walking the talk, so the talk can't be very good.*"

But later, when I stopped PRESSING and started paying attention to how to score instead, I felt really empowered.

Why?

Because I was focused on something I could control.

Whenever I thought about WHETHER I was scoring, I got anxious. And whenever I thought about HOW to score, my anxiety went away.

This epiphany is what got me to stop PRESSING for good.

Are You Pressing?

When you're pressing, you are impatient and overly aggressive. Here are some examples of PRESSING:

1. You interfere with your technique rather than letting your body lead.

If you're a golfer, tennis, badminton, squash or baseball player, you'll try to guide and steer the ball or over-analyze your swing mechanics, which messes up your strokes and erodes your game. Or, you'll try to crush it and deliver a 400 yard drive or home run instead of connecting to your swing rhythm or anticipating the type of pitch being thrown.

Often you'll try to win a rally prematurely, rather than being patient and looking for an opening.

If you're a curler, bowler, or billiards player, you'll try to guide and steer the rock or ball or analyse your technique instead of connect to the feel of the shot; you might also play an over-aggressive strategy instead of a patient, smart one.

If you're a basketball, lacrosse, soccer, football, volleyball or hockey player, you'll try to 'do it all yourself' and drive to the basket or net instead of reading the defence. Or, you'll lunge for the ball or puck before

your check has exposed it rather than wait for the moment to strike. You might become overly aggressive and take penalties.

If you're a swimmer, runner, or skier, you might over-analyze your technique or focus on your opponent instead of executing your own race plan. Or you'll go out too fast, focused on speed, rather than trying to connect with your rhythm or balance.

If you're a figure skater, gymnast, or dancer, you'll interfere with your technique and think about body parts rather than connect with the feel of your routine through the music.

2. You order yourself to be confident.

You pressure yourself to be emotionally perfect. You tell yourself to be calm, cool, and confident at all times, even when it's natural for you to be a little nervous or frustrated. Anytime you aren't feeling 100% confident, you become unglued about your mental game.

3. You pressure other people.

You pressure your teammates to play better, you pressure your coach to make changes, and you pressure the officials to shape up. You take your focus off the event and put it on stuff you can't control.

Courage to Win Exercise

In the space below, write down ways you try to control and PRESS rather than let things unfold naturally. How do you interfere with your technique? In what ways are you impatient or foolish? When do you lose your connection to your rhythm or the basic feel of your sport?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Why PRESSING Backfires

PRESSING is a huge disadvantage when you are trying to perform well and win. While PRESSING is a very tempting way to deal with fear, it only makes you anxious and clumsy.

Why?

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Because when you PRESS, you send yourself the message that **you and your body cannot be trusted.**

In sport, **you need to trust your body.** It is much smarter than you are and knows exactly what to do. If you override your body and start analyzing your technique or strategy, you'll lose your connection with your innate mental toughness.

Your innate mental toughness is your natural ability to *express* yourself out there simply by paying attention to two things: feel (in your technique) and trends (in your event).

When you're plugged into feel and trends, you gain the information you need to keep your technique and strategy sharp. Then you can raise your game.

When you PRESS, **you miss this information.** You *think* you're paying attention to your technique or strategy, but you're actually not...and your performance quickly deteriorates.

To keep things simple, let's separate technical pressing from strategy pressing.

Technical PRESSING

In competition, you should never try to analyze your technique while you are executing it.

When I say "analyse your technique" I mean barking technical orders at yourself in your head about specific body movements such as keeping your arms straight (golf), following through on your swing (tennis), bringing your arms down deep (volleyball spike), or releasing a rock (curling).

If you analyze your technique while trying to execute it, you will quickly become clumsy, make mistakes, and get frustrated.

Golf is a classic example. Because most golfers don't know how to correct their errors using feel, they engage in technical PRESSING 85% of the time.

Consider what pro John Daly said:

"The average golfer steps up to the ball and starts thinking a mile a minute: 'What's my target line, how's my grip, where are my elbows, take it back low and slow, remember to pivot, cock

my wrists, bring my shoulder down and through--what'd I forget?'

Shit, with all that thinking going on, it's a wonder every swing doesn't end up a whiff.

Let me tell you, by the time I'm ready to start my swing, I've stopped thinking. I've looked close at my lie, I've checked my distance, I've factored in the wind, and I've figured out where I want to ball to end up--all BEFORE I step up to the ball.

Then what I try to do is go blank. Not consciously think about ANYTHING. Just swing the club.”²

When you're making errors out there, **the best way to correct technique is to feel it, not analyse it.** Let your technique come to you using the correct RIGHT FOCUS (I will explain RIGHT FOCUS in the next module).

Strategy PRESSING

When you miss trends or patterns in your event, you cannot adapt your strategy to what's going on around you in a competition.

This is called **strategy PRESSING**. Here are some examples:

If you're playing basketball, you'll drive to the basket without noticing that you're being double-teamed and you should pass off.

If you're playing volleyball, you won't notice the opposition just ran the same play four times.

If you're golfing, you'll miss tiny nuances in the putting green that would help you assess the lie.

If you're playing tennis, you won't notice that your opponent makes errors on his forehand when you hit the ball deep.

If you're racing, you'll miss opportunities to be aggressive in turns or hills.

Courage to Win Exercise

In the space below, write down two examples of **technical PRESSING** and two examples of **strategy PRESSING** you've done in the past:

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1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Final Thoughts

The essence of PRESSING is trying to control outcomes rather than letting them unfold naturally.

The moment you start PRESSING, you become less aware of both technique feel and trends.

As your awareness plummets, so does your performance, making you more anxious. You PRESS more, and the vicious cycle starts again.

That's why PRESSING is definitely not for you. ☺

How To DIAGNOSE Fear

There is a better way to deal with choking fear than PRESSING.

You can listen to your fear and diagnose why you are afraid. This will give you the information you need to cure your fear so you can stop PRESSING and trust yourself.

This took me years to learn because for a long time I was convinced I wasn't supposed to have any fears about competing.

This idea was drilled into me by coaches and sport psychologists.

The books I read told me to "change the channel" of my mind any time I got scared or frustrated during competition. These authors implied that the reason I got scared was because my mind was weak.

I even had a sport psychologist tell me to put my fears into a mental Black Box and never think about them.

What a boneheaded idea.

Fear and frustration are part of competing. The faster you deal with them, the more mentally tough you will be.

The easiest way to deal with fear and frustration is to listen to them.

Most athletes are quite dismal at listening to their fears. We judge and condemn ourselves any time we are not 100% confident, positive, and happy.

Tremendous relief comes from listening to yourself, because you do not have to pretend, cover up, or stuff down your fears about competing.

You enjoy an inner relaxation that is heavenly.

And there is even more good news.

When you accept yourself in this way, it's easy to figure out WHY you are feeling stressed or frustrated.

You can DIAGNOSE why you're anxious and then PRESCRIBE a solution for it. Once you apply the solution, your fear will be cured.

DIAGNOSE Before You PRESCRIBE

The idea you should DIAGNOSE before you PRESCRIBE is as old as time itself. For example...

PROBLEM: Your motivation to practice is low.

You think you're being lazy.

But when you listen to your malaise, you DIAGNOSE that you have no idea why you lost your last major competition -- and can't face competing again until you do.

PROBLEM: You're terrified of choking under pressure.

You think it's because a big event is coming up.

But when listen to your performance anxiety, you DIAGNOSE that you've never competed internationally before, and you're totally unsure about what to expect.

PROBLEM: You get annoyed when your dad criticizes you.

You think it's because he's right, but when you listen to your fear, you DIAGNOSE that what you *really* need is unconditional support -- and he's not getting the memo.

PROBLEM: You're starting to doubt yourself.

You think it's because your coach is being harsh.

But when you listen to your stress, you DIAGNOSE that you secretly agree with his criticisms and want to change...but have no idea how.

You can see that diagnosing your fear is all about self-acceptance. You must be able to acknowledge your weaknesses and mistakes. This takes self-acceptance.

The Barrier to Self-Acceptance

The reason we find it so hard to accept ourselves is that sometimes, we are not the athlete we would like to be.

When we dislike something, we resist it--and the fears that come with it.

Consider anything you dislike about your skills, fitness, or conditioning. Is your attitude towards it one of acceptance or resistance?

You may be wondering, "*What if I despise something about myself? How can I accept it?*"

And, "*If I accept it, am I stuck with my bad serve, poor agility, or limited defensive skills?*"

The answer is No.

I am not asking you to accept an unsatisfactory situation.

I am merely asking you to accept your fears about it so you can DIAGNOSE their root cause.

The courage to accept your fears (and yourself) paves the way for mental toughness.

I know what you may be thinking. "*Lisa, seriously...why can't I just order myself to stop being afraid?*"

Because trying to manipulate yourself like this will not work. It will not work because most of the time, *your fear exists for a reason.*

Something is happening to cause you to doubt yourself.

Maybe you're making mistakes...maybe you're being over-powered by an opponent... maybe your strategy is all wrong...maybe you were ill-prepared...maybe you came out flat...maybe you're especially tired or just not feeling good in your skin today.

No matter what the reason, you're either ill-prepared or not performing well. And this is creating deep fear inside you - choking fear.

Remember, choking fear is different from typical nerves. Nerves are normal. They are a form of excitement and they energize you. Choking fear makes you clumsy and self-conscious. It is an athlete's worst nightmare.

During moments of choking fear, your body is saying, "*Wake up! Pay attention!*"

Your body is talking to you.

And when someone as important as your body is talking, the right thing to do is LISTEN.

If you do, you can easily figure out why you're scared - and what you need to do to cure your fear.

Choking Fear Is A Symptom

The bottom line?

Think of choking fear as a *symptom* of a deeper challenge in your event you need to face and solve.

When you act like a doctor and DIAGNOSE why you're not performing well and then come up with a solution, you cure your poor performance and your fear.

In the following case studies, I ask every athlete two important questions: “What are you afraid of?” and “What is your fear asking you to learn?”

Their answers were very powerful. Check them out for yourself.

Karen, Figure Skating

Karen* came to see me because she had lost her motivation four months after a bad fall.

Karen said she had no confidence in her ability to win anymore. And, she was frustrated with her coach and parents, who were constantly giving her pep talks.

At first Karen scoffed when I asked her to listen to her fears about competing.

She just wanted to talk about discipline. How could she get back on track?

I persisted.

I kept asking Karen to visualize a time she felt really confident when jumping. I knew this would force her fear to come to the surface.

After many tries in which she couldn't get an image, Karen made a breakthrough. She finally touched the fear in her heart about missing axels, falling, and re-injuring herself.

I asked Karen what her fear was asking her to do. It was easy for her to answer: *"My timing is a mess. I don't know how long to wait before jumping. Sometimes I jump too soon or too late."*

Karen left my office determined to get her timing back.

If you don't listen to your fear and DIAGNOSE what it is asking you to do or learn, your fear will grow stronger. Your body will literally yell at you, making you anxious and even panicky.

That's why you need to be open to what your body has to say at all times.

*All names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Joan, Tennis

Recently I worked with Joan, a tennis player who had choked at the key moment in her doubles match.

She had no idea why.

After some probing she admitted, *"Lisa I hit an overhead smash to win but the other team called it out. I was wild with anger and wanted to protest, but my doubles partner didn't back me up. Instead of sticking to my guns I backed down. But after that, I wasn't the same. I lost all the key points."*

The reason Joan had lost her confidence?

She violated her own integrity and overrode her instincts. This weakened her terribly. To restore her confidence, Joan needs to be honest with her partner and assert herself. Otherwise her anger will eat away at her from the inside, causing her to punish herself with mistakes.

Brandon, Badminton

“Lisa I won the first match and was up 18-12 in the second. I just needed three points to close it out. But I got anxious. I hit the bird into the net and then out. He got momentum; I got frustrated...I ended up losing the tournament. Lisa I need more mental strength.”

Can you see Brandon’s MAJOR problem?

What he’s missing?

He’s thinking about the fact that he got nervous and choked.

And he's putting himself down for choking.

He forgot to ask WHY he got so nervous.

So I asked Brandon the one question he WASN'T asking: *“What was happening in this match that filled you with choking fear?”*

As it turns out, Brandon’s opponent is a long time rival. Brandon beat him five months ago by moving him around the court.

See, Brandon’s trademark is his quickness. He specializes in exhausting the other player, moving him around the court so he can’t get shots back.

That’s how Brandon won five months ago.

But then the inevitable happened.

After he lost, Brandon’s rival got mad.

Then he got better.

When he saw Brandon again, he was returning Brandon’s shots. This unnerved Brandon, whose strategy hinges upon his opponent not being able to get the bird back. He doesn’t have a great or disguise shots well, so this is his major way of getting points.

Here’s what you can learn from Brandon...

There’s a story behind every match, every game, and every race. There are physical, technical, and tactical REASONS why one side wins.

There aren't many flukes in sport.

That's why it's so sweet when you win.

But Brandon forgot to dig up the story. He got upset about his fear instead.

Again...no matter what the cause of your choking fear, there's usually a very good DIAGNOSIS -- technical, strategic, mental, or physical.

Once you know what it is, you can fix your performance issue. In Brandon's case, he needs to stop being a one-trick pony. He needs to develop a great serve and a stellar drop shot. He also needs more patience when his opponent returns his shots.

Nadia, Golf

Nadia, a golfer, called me because she was suffering from 'overwhelming nerves.'

Nadia's nerves were so bad she couldn't get her hands to stop shaking before important putts.

Usually when an athlete is having really intense emotions it's because there is a build up of emotional baggage from the past.

I asked Nadia to reflect on past disappointments in golf and open up to her choking fear instead of blocking it.

Nadia was really shocked to discover that underneath her anxiety was tons of anger. This confused her. Anger? She had always associated anger with hurt. She didn't realize she could be angry about golf failures.

Nadia finally realized she was angry about her lack of progress in recent years. She said, *"Players who aren't nearly as dedicated are playing better than me. I'm no longer considered the best golfer in my club. I am just another golfer."*

I asked Nadia to interview the two women in her club who were playing better than her and ask them why they had improved.

Both women said it was their new golf clubs - something that shocked Nadia.

Golf clubs aside, Nadia realized that her anger was keeping her from learning anything new about golf. An intense perfectionist, Nadia needed to feel totally dominant over all the other players to feel confident.

She said, *“I have really been trying to protect an image of myself as being the BEST, the one who makes NO mistakes.*

I dropped this and I’m getting curious about different technical elements of my game, and I’m learning a lot. For example, in my last tournament I kept missing putts. Instead of pretending I was having a good day, I asked one of the fellows here who is a really good putter for help. He told me how to deal with really fast greens.”

By listening to her fear, Nadia learned strategies about golf she never would have discovered otherwise.

Now you know the true value of fear. It’s your friend. It will tell you exactly what you need to learn to win.

Courage to Win Exercise

What are your WORST fears about competing? What are the mistakes or losses that terrify you? What are you most embarrassed about in your career?

What is your fear asking you to learn as an athlete? Do you need to improve a technical skill? Fix a weakness? Address a conditioning problem? Do you need to understand the strategy of your sport better?

What is the ONE technical, strategy, or physical improvement you could make as an athlete that would wipe your fear off the map?

The RIGHT FOCUS

How To Correct Errors, Cure Fear & Restore Self-Trust

Now that you know *why* you're scared, it's time to PRESCRIBE a solution.

The solution is always the same, and it's to improve your skills and performance.

For this you need to know how to correct errors. To correct errors, you need to trust yourself. This will cure your choking fear, because self-trust is the essence of athletic confidence.

You gain self-trust by using the proper RIGHT FOCUS.

What Is A RIGHT FOCUS?

A RIGHT FOCUS is a specific variable that, when you pay attention to it, corrects your technique or strategy and restores your self-trust.³

Olympic Miracle Story

Snowboarder Maelle Ricker pulled off a miracle at the 2010 Winter Olympics using a simple RIGHT FOCUS.

Ricker, wiped out in her first qualification run, ending up 17th. She needed to be at least 16th to qualify.

Because of weather conditions, organizers were thinking of cancelling the second qualification run due to weather.

For a moment it looked as though things could not get worse for Ricker.

Until you remember the 2006 Olympics, when Ricker suffered a wipe out so severe she had to be taken off the hill by helicopter.

To this day she cannot remember the accident.

Did I mention this is a miracle story?

The weather held and Ricker DID qualify, eventually winning gold in snowboard cross.

Her magic secret?

Keeping a simple RIGHT FOCUS of working her landings.

Said Ricker afterwards: *"I really focused on working the landings. When you do that, you can really pick up speed. I kept my board flat, looked forward, kept my line, and really worked those landings."*

A RIGHT FOCUS is always under your direct and immediate control. Here are several examples.

Carly & Batting

Carly, one of the best hitters on the Canadian softball team, was not batting well.

I wanted to diagnose what part of Carly's batting had gone awry, so I asked her to watch the pitcher carefully and tell me *exactly when the pitcher was releasing the ball* by saying the word "pitch".

The first two times she said it, she was late - instead of saying "pitch" exactly when the ball was released, she said it a fraction of a second after the release.

I told Carly this, and she quickly corrected it and said "pitch" at the right time.

We then chatted for a few minutes until I asked her to resume the exercise.

Once again, Carly was late calling the pitch too late, but she didn't realize it. I had to point it out to her.

This told me what had gone wrong with her batting - Carly was reading the pitch too late, and therefore swinging her bat too late.

Why was Carly doing this?

...probably because she was a little afraid of the pitch.

By making her RIGHT FOCUS the *timing* of the pitch, she was able to self-correct her batting and hit with confidence again.

Bear in mind that there can be many different RIGHT FOCUSES for one skill.

For example, Carly's problem could have been reading pitches (not being able to tell the difference between a ball and strike).

In that case, I would have asked her to say "*ball*" every time she thought a ball had come over the plate and "*strike*" every time she thought a strike had come over the plate.

When you are making errors such as hitting the goalie (hockey), slicing a ball (golf), hitting the ball out (tennis), getting beat on defence (basketball) or over-throwing a rock (curling), it's because you are not paying enough attention to a certain RIGHT FOCUS—*you just don't realize it.*

Joanie & Shooting Baskets

Joanie, a basketball player, was consistently missing three point shots. She was shooting the ball with a really flat arc, so her ball wasn't high enough to drop into the hoop.

Her coach recognized this and said to her, "*Joanie, you need a higher arc on your ball.*"

Joanie: "*Ok coach.*"

Joanie then proceeded to shoot 22 more shots, all with the exact same FLAT arc.

Joanie's coach had been to my seminar. She instantly recognized that Joanie THOUGHT she was shooting with a high arc. So she said: "*Joanie, if a normal arc is about 50 degrees, I want you to shoot with 75 degrees of arc (more arc in the shot so the ball goes higher).*"

Swish.

Perfect arc.

When Joanie tries to shoot 75 degrees of arc, she ends up shooting a proper arc. She naturally self-corrects her flat arc by shooting the ball higher.

The perfect RIGHT FOCUS for Joanie when shooting is, "*Let's get 75 degrees of arc!*" As Joanie memorizes the feel of 75% of arc, it will be easy for her to trust her body when shooting.

How To Find Your RIGHT FOCUS

A sport can have many RIGHT FOCUSES - one for each skill or strategy, in fact. You can learn them all for your sport over time.

For today, your job is to find the RIGHT FOCUS that will cure your choking fear.

The first step is to understand the concept of RIGHT FOCUS better. Let's identify the RIGHT FOCUSES that have helped you win in the past.

Courage to Win Exercise

Please answer the following two questions. Write down what you were thinking about/paying attention to during your **best performance** in a high pressure competition:

Write down what you were thinking about/paying attention to during your **worst performance** in a high pressure competition⁴:

Your BEST Performance: The RIGHT FOCUS

If you're like most athletes, in your best performance *you were paying attention to elements under your control*. This is a RIGHT FOCUS. For example:

Badminton. "I was paying attention to the mistakes my opponent was making, particularly the fact that his backhand was weak."

Golf. "I was connecting to my swing rhythm, particularly its spd."

Fastball. "I was watching the pitcher release the ball to predict the timing of the pitch."

Hockey. "I was thinking about driving to the net as aggressively as possible before shooting."

Skiing. “I just went out and had fun and attacked the hills. I wasn’t even thinking about the race.”

Basketball. “I was trying to stay between my check and the basket at all times.”

Curling. “I was paying close attention to the ice and hog to hog times.”

Tennis. “I wanted to keep my approach shots low, deep, and to the corner.”

Distance running. “I was breathing deeply and keeping my gait consistent.”

Volleyball. “I wanted to be aggressive on my blocking and extend deeply through the block.”

Your Worst Performance: The Outcome Focus

If you’re like most athletes, in your *worst* performance you were probably thinking about the *outcome* of your performance (or worse, life outside sport!). When I say outcome, I mean things like winning, losing, scoring points, making a shot, scoring goals, making baskets, etc. Here are some examples:

Badminton. “I was thinking about trying to smash and score a point fast.”

Golf. “I was trying to two putt the hole.”

Fastball. “I was worried about getting a hit.”

Skiing. “I was worried about how big the ruts in the course were.”

Horse riding. “I was thinking about the whole pattern of the routine instead of taking it one step at a time.”

Hockey. “I really wanted to score a goal.”

Basketball. “I really wanted to nail the three point shot.”

Curling. “I wanted to draw to the button.”

Tennis. “I was trying to break my opponent’s serve by overpowering him.”

Distance running. “I was running ‘flat out’ down hills trying to pick up speed.”

Volleyball. “I was trying to nail a spike.”

Now that you understand the concept, you're ready to correct errors in your performance using a RIGHT FOCUS.

How To Correct Errors Using RIGHT FOCUS

Paul, a bowler, sought me out because he had no idea what to do when he started missing the headpin (the middle).

"Why can't I get back on?" he would fume. Choking fear soon followed. Here's the exact conversation I had with Paul on finding the proper RIGHT FOCUS that would correct this error.

Paul & Throwing Strikes

Lisa: *"When you aren't hitting the middle of the lane, why aren't you? I'm sure there's more than one technical error that could cause you to miss the middle."*

Paul: *"It could be several things. It could be not looking at my target...it could be not bending low enough...it could be dropping the ball too soon instead of letting it go on the upswing. I could be rushing the shot,"* Shannon listed off.

Lisa. *"Okay. We have several places to start. We'll start with the last thing you said, shot speed. In practice, use a scale of 1-10. 1 represents a very slow shot speed. 10 will represent a very fast shot speed."*

I want you to throw five shots at a speed of 3, five shots at a speed of 5, and five shots at a speed of 8.

Then notice: What speed gives you shots down the middle of the lane?

Let's say a 7 out of 10 speed works best.

Your next job in practice is to determine the feel of a 7 speed. A speed of 7 will feel much different than a 4. Memorize the feel of a 7 in your body.

After a week of practice, you should be able to throw a 1, a 6, and a 9 shot speed on command. A 7 is the ideal speed, but you should be able to do them all easily."

Shot speed might not have been the culprit here. But Paul can use the exact same process with every variable to find out.

If the problem is not looking at his target, he could throw 10 shots looking at his target and 10 shots not looking at his target.

If the problem is not bending low enough, Paul could throw 10 shots very low, 10 shots medium low, and 10 shots with a high bend. He would then be able to memorize what “low enough” feels like.

If Paul is dropping the ball too early, he could throw 10 shots releasing the ball too early, 10 shots releasing the ball too late, and 10 shots releasing the ball just right. Then he can memorize what “just right” feels like.

Does using a RIGHT FOCUS mean there isn’t any room for technical analysis in sport?

Of course not. Your technical analysis is critical. It’s what leads you to the proper RIGHT FOCUS.

But after that, it’s all about feel.

No matter what part of your technique is off, you always use this exact same formula to determine the RIGHT FOCUS for self-correcting it.

How To Find Your RIGHT FOCUS – Re-cap

Let’s re-cap how to find your RIGHT FOCUS in practice:

1. List all the technical reasons why you might be making the error. If you have no idea, ask a coach to watch you and give his opinion.
2. Once you have a variable selected, try the move, shot, jump, or swing three different ways in practice.

Remember *Goldilocks and The Three Bears*? It’s just like that: too soon, too late, and just right; too short, too far, just right.

Example: Your golf instructor tells you that you’re hitting the ball fat. You should hit 20 shots fat, 20 shots thin, and 20 shots just right. You’ll gain enough awareness of fat vs. thin to self-correct.

3. Once you are doing the move with the correct RIGHT FOCUS, memorize the FEEL of the move. Rinse and repeat until you can do the move correctly on command in practice.

Your RIGHT FOCUS & Competing

Once you can easily self-correct an error in practice, it's time to bring your RIGHT FOCUS into competition. This will ensure you don't start making the mistake again under the pressure of competition.

To bring your RIGHT FOCUS into competition, set a specific RIGHT FOCUS goal for your event.

The following questions will help you get started.

Courage to Win Exercise

I want you to select three RIGHT FOCUSES that are **under your control** for your next big event. The best way to come up with them is to ask the question, *"When I'm performing well, what am I doing that is under my control that works?"*

For example, if you are a badminton player, you might set a goal to move your opponent around by mixing up your shots. If you are a figure skater, you might set a goal to make sure you have a long enough preparation (set up phase) for each jump. If you are a basketball player, you might set a goal to "box out" and stay between your check and the basket. If you are a curler, you might set a goal to have supreme awareness of hog to hog times so you can make sweeping calls.

Remember, your RIGHT FOCUS is always under your direct and immediate control and gives your body the information it needs to succeed.

Make sure your RIGHT FOCUS will cure your choking fear. For example, if you are a softball player who isn't hitting well, there's no sense in setting three RIGHT FOCUS goals for playing first base! Make sure at least two of your goals address your hitting problem, such as getting your timing back or recognizing which pitches to swing at.

REMINDER: a RIGHT FOCUS is not a super-technical focus on a certain body part. For example, if you're a golfer, a RIGHT FOCUS is not to think about keeping your wrists stiff while putting. This would make you clumsy, because you're interfering with your body. A better RIGHT FOCUS would be to imagine that your arms and wrists form a triangle, and you want to swing them like a pendulum. This is a feel Right Focus, not a technical Right Focus because it gets you in touch with the feel of the move rather than encouraging you to think about a specific body part while trying to move it. The image of a

pendulum in your mind just prior to putting will automatically cause you to stiffen your wrists without thinking about it directly.

Create three RIGHT FOCUSES below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why We Lose A RIGHT FOCUS

I've never met an athlete who makes mistakes on purpose.

The reason we lose the RIGHT FOCUS needed to perform a skill flawlessly is because we're a bit anxious.

Performance anxiety lowers awareness.

The best time to correct your technique using feel is to remind yourself of your RIGHT FOCUS during natural breaks in your sport. For example: walking to the next hole (golf), sitting on the bench (hockey), between points (tennis), between jumps (figure skating), while changing sports (triathlon) etc.

There is only one exception to this rule. If you are in the early stages of learning a sport or you've deliberately decided to make specific technique changes, you can think about technique while executing it - *but only in practice or training...*never in competition.

Final Thoughts

Superstars DIAGNOSE fear and cure it. The way we DIAGNOSE fear is by listening to it. What is your fear asking you to learn?

Once you DIAGNOSE, you can PRESCRIBE a solution. And, the solution is always the same - to improve your skills and performance using self-trust.

You gain self-trust using the proper RIGHT FOCUS. This is a variable in your sport that, when you pay attention to it, gets you to self-correct your technique or strategy.

By restoring self-trust instead of PRESSING, you restore your confidence and power. You gain a distinct mental edge over your opponents.

GAME FACE

How To Psyche Up Before A Big Event

The second mental error athletes make is they don't psyche up before big events.

I once met a world class figure skater who actually retired because she vomited before every competition.

Most athletes do nothing. Others rely heavily on superstition. For example...

In tennis, you're not supposed to wear yellow and step on court lines.

In hockey, it's considered bad luck for sticks to lie crossed.

In golf, any ball with a number higher than 4 is said to be bad luck.

If your GAME FACE routine consists only of superstitions, you're in trouble.

Success at the highest levels of sport is as thin as a razor's edge.

It's not the best athlete who wins on game day.

It's the athlete who *performs the best* that wins.

Now I'm not saying you should abandon your favourite superstitions. If you *think* something works, it works....and even superstars have their rituals.

Michael Jordan always wore his blue North Carolina shorts under his Chicago Bulls uniform for good luck.

Baseball star Wade Boggs ate only chicken on game day. He used to draw a symbol that means "To Life" in the dirt before every at-bat.

But a common mistake your competitors make the day of the event is a) doing nothing or b) using superstition alone.

This is leaving your GAME FACE up to chance, and I do NOT recommend it.

In this module, you'll discover how to master intense pre-competition nerves (performance anxiety).

You'll do this by using a planned GAME FACE routine to psyche up before competing.

Remember, performance anxiety is different from choking fear. Choking fear is sparked by an underlying problem in your skills or strategy that is bothering you.

Pre-event nerves arrive unbidden from your unconscious mind because you're about to perform - and the pressure is on!

These nerves make you alert and they activate you. But while they may *be* good, they certainly don't *feel* good.

As you learn how to master intense nerves with style and grace, you'll perform better and enjoy your event a whole lot more.

The Dumbest Advice I Ever Got

The dumbest advice I ever got when I had intense performance anxiety was, "*Lisa, just be more positive.*"

This advice drove me crazy.

It drove me crazy because no one ever taught me HOW to be positive.

So I'd pace up and down in the arena, repeating positive affirmations. You know what I mean...that artificial, sterile self-talk that never sinks in...

"You're the best and you're going to kick butt today."

"They'd better watch out for me."

"I feel confident and ready!"

A 'fake 'it till you make it' approach.

Exhausting.

It's exhausting because it doesn't work when you're overwhelmed with nerves (it does work if you're not nervous though).

Later, when I was working with other athletes, I realized it didn't work for them either.

Look, if you could eliminate pre-event nerves just by saying one sentence to yourself, every athlete would shine under pressure.

Few do.

The trick is to turn your anxiety - your 'scared energy' - into excitement and confidence. You do this with your GAME FACE routine.

The GAME FACE Routine

The second ingredient of the Courage to Win in Sport formula is to bring out your GAME FACE using a specific routine.

GAME FACE is your alter ego. It's your Sasha Fierce. It's bringing out your sun energy - your force of will. It's your cocky, aggressive self.

At some point, virtually all superstar athletes develop a routine for getting their GAME FACE on, no matter how informal.

You start by admitting that your current GAME FACE can be improved. This moment was central to Nancy Kerrigan's success as an Olympic gold medalist in figure skating.

In 1993 Kerrigan was on fire at the World Championships - in fact she was in first place after the short program.

The problem was she had an ingrown toenail on her big toe and had it removed before her long program.

That was the day Kerrigan realized, *"I don't know how to compete."*

Specifically, Kerrigan didn't know how to handle the forty minutes of pain between her warm up and her long program. She recalls: *"If I could have kept my head together, I could have been Ok...but I skated last in the long program...What are you supposed to do during that time?"*

Fortunately for Kerrigan, she went on a mission to handle wait times between performances.

“In practice I’d pretend that I skated 4th...I had about 22 minutes, so I had to figure out what I needed to do. I realized if I sat and waited, my muscles got cold and I would get nervous. Sitting did not allow me to get my nervous energy out...I realized that the tightness in my legs was from nervous energy, so if I could really warm up, I could get rid of that feeling - so I would sprint for three or four laps down the hall.”

The 4 Ingredients of GAME FACE

A GAME FACE routine is personal and highly individual. You’ll want to come up with the one that suits you best.

There are four ingredients I highly recommend you include. They are:

1. Emotional visualization (start three weeks before your event)
2. A physical warm up that activates you
3. Your RIGHT FOCUS goals
4. An affirmation to accept your nerves

To fire up your imagination, here are the intimate details of the GAME FACE routine I used to score the winning goals in three World Championships.

Lisa’s GAME FACE Routine

Before I started doing mental toughness training I didn’t have a routine at all.

I decided that for the World Championships, I wanted a GAME FACE routine that got me really psyched.

Terry Orlick’s books had taught me that changing major patterns before a big event would throw me off. So, I kept it simple.

I started visualizing three weeks before the Worlds.

Visualization is the technical term for mentally rehearsing success inside your mind.

Canadian Olympic swimmer Mark Tewksbury is famous for his visualization skills. When Mark was eight years old, he watched the 1976 Olympics on T.V.

He decided then and there that he wanted to go to the Olympics and win. He wasn't very good at sports, but he knew how to swim. He talked his parents into letting him join a swim club:

My first experience at the swim club was a shock. I had thought I would represent Canada at the next Olympics, four years from 1976. It never occurred to me that I would only be able to swim a couple of lengths when I started.

At first I clearly held onto my memories of the 1976 Olympics, but it didn't take long for them to fade. The reality of my situation made my long-term goal seem completely out of focus. Instead of always thinking about the Olympics I had to look at short-term goals.

It had never occurred to me that before I could be the best swimmer in the world I would have to be the best in my club, then the best in the city and so on.

More importantly, before I could be the best in the club I would have to see myself as being the best.

Intuitively I began seeing each race before I swam it. I tried to imagine positive results in my mind so that when I went in to a race I would be in control. Without knowing it, I was using what is now known as visualization.⁵

I love Michael Jordan's story too:

"I have used visualization techniques for as long as I can remember. I always visualized success. It wasn't until later I realized it's something people have to learn. I had been practicing the principles naturally my entire life.

I visualized how many points I was going to score, how I was going to score them, how I was going to play and break down my opponent. If I was playing a scorer like Reggie Miller, I would envision his tendencies, his favourite spots on the floor, how he liked to receive the ball. It's like I would watch this little game unfold in my mind.

Then I'd make decisions based on what I saw. Should I attack early and put him on his heels? I had to stop him as well as

score on him, so I'd devise a plan based on what I had visualized.

...It didn't always play out exactly how I saw it, but most of the time it did.”⁶

Visualization is not new. There are hundreds (if not thousands) of athletes who have used it to catapult themselves to the top.

The problem is that most athletes don't visualize. And even if they try, they do not properly harness its power.

To avoid these two traps, I recommend you do emotional visualization (E.V.). It's a special brand of visualization I developed from spontaneous trial and error.

Emotional visualization is the first element of your GAME FACE routine.

1. Emotional Visualization

When I started visualizing, I realized that just imagining myself executing a play was not enough.

I needed to see and feel myself do it with *emotion*.

In emotional visualization, you 'see' the performance you want and connect to the positive feelings it evokes in you.

Here's what I did.

I started practicing emotional visualization while falling asleep in bed at night.

At first I couldn't get any images at all. So I tried to remember anything good I did in my last practice. I'd remember my best shots, my best passes, and my best checks from that day.

Then I deliberately made myself think about the World Championships. I imagined being there and executing the very same moves.

At first my nerves were so great it was hard to stay with this exercise. Often the image would break up right away, or I'd get distracted.

After several days I noticed it was getting easier. I started being able to imagine myself checking, scoring, and passing at the actual event - from the inside, as though I was dreaming.

Once I was comfortable visualizing in bed at night, I was ready to visualize at the arena before games.

That's when I created a new physical warm up routine featuring my emotional visualization.

Before each game I went for a jog around the arena alone. Listening to special music, I visualized myself scoring goals and playing perfect defence.

I loved Olympic diving champion Sylvie Bernier's GAME FACE routine so, like Sylvie, I also listened to the soundtrack of the movie Flashdance. The song Flashdance has a lyric that says, "*Pictures come alive.*"

And that's what I wanted to do at the World Championships: make my pictures come alive.

I also listened to the song 'Maniac' a lot because it had a fast beat and really energized me.

My GAME FACE emotional visualization - alone before each game - became a sacred ritual to me.

It was my time to go inside and connect with my true genius at ringette. I'd get goose bumps just visualizing my secret dreams.

Through this process I learned to **transform performance anxiety into excitement.**

Secret Keys to Emotional Visualization

Most athletes visualize without emotion. They violently resist this.

If you want to go from nervous to confident before a big event, *you need to have the courage to bring your nerves into your visualization.*

Otherwise, you're just doing it intellectually and you won't be emotionally prepared to compete.

Why was I different? Why was I able to bring my emotions into my visualization?

I think it's because I didn't get upset if fear, anxiety, or doubt crept into my mind. I instinctively knew that these feelings were a natural part of competing. I allowed them to be there and just kept visualizing anyway. Over time, my excitement outstripped my nerves.

I never worried that I was making myself "worse" in some way just because I was getting nervous. I knew that if there was a problem with my skills or strategy, I'd resolve it in practice.

Later, when I was working with athletes, I discovered that virtually all of them gave up on visualization too soon.

If their images broke up, they'd get frustrated and stop. If they got anxious, they'd stop. If they visualized a mistake, they'd panic and stop.

I gently worked through these issues in my visualization, and it paid off.

The moral of the story?

It's easy to make breakthroughs if you are prepared for the mental roadblocks I just explained. If you give emotional visualization a proper chance, you will transform your pre-event jitters into confidence and excitement.

To help you, I've recorded a special audio session. It will lead you through your emotional visualization. This MP3 file is on your Courage to Win in Sport download page. If you only ordered the Ebook version of this program, this audio file is not included.

Courage to Win Exercise

This exercise has two parts. First, listen to the audio I recorded for you. I recommend you listen to it every day starting three weeks prior to your next big event.

After you listen to the audio for the first time, answer the questions below.

Please write a few lines on what you experienced during this exercise. What happened to you? Were you able to recall a situation? What feelings did you have? If you couldn't summon any feelings, describe what happened to you emotionally. Feel free to describe your thoughts; however, please make sure that you also describe the emotions you had during this exercise. If you were not able to access any emotions, please record exactly what you did feel. Describe what did happen.

There are several things that may have happened to you during this exercise. Do not be concerned if you felt distracted, numb, or even negatively at any point during it. Merely record your experience.

As you continue to visualize success *with emotion*, you will gain more and more access to your confidence. **Listen to this audio daily, and watch your ability to access confidence before big events grow.**

When To Do Emotional Visualization

Start doing your emotional visualization at least three weeks before every big event.

If you're new to E.V., try it right after practice or training.

As you get momentum, I strongly recommend visualizing before you fall asleep at night...even five minutes is great.

On site, some athletes prefer to visualize immediately before competing. Other athletes visualize as much as an hour before their event. Some only do it the night before and don't use it in their GAME FACE routine at all. Try all three and see what works best for you.

2. Physical Warm Up

The second ingredient of your GAME FACE routine is your physical warm up.

Your physical warm up will be unique to your sport. How long or intense it is depends on how much activation your sport requires. A defensive tackle in football will need a more intense physical warm up than a billiards player.

I highly recommend you experiment with your personal warm up. Early on, I did not do this and I think it cost me some wins...let me explain...

In the beginning I went for a light ten minute jog around the arena.

But the older I got, the more I found that a light jog just wasn't cutting it. We have to skate at top speed after only a two minute on ice warm up. As I aged, I just couldn't come out flying anymore.

I added ten minutes of sprints to my physical warm up, even though I really didn't want to. I wasn't used to working so hard before a game! But these changes in my GAME FACE had a huge payoff. I only wish I had figured it out earlier.

Sometimes the smallest adjustments can give you a major edge. To quote Tom Peters, "*God is in the details.*"

3. Commit To Your RIGHT FOCUS

The third ingredient of your GAME FACE routine is to deeply commit to your RIGHT FOCUS goals.

Remember, the biggest reason we get anxious is because we cannot control three outcomes: performing well, feeling confident, and winning.

If we could control them, we'd always do all three.

Since we can't control them, we need to bring a supreme commitment to our RIGHT FOCUS goals. They are the quickest path to all three outcomes.

The key is to genuinely care about your RIGHT FOCUS - not just give it lip service.

Here are three examples of athletes who learned how to care about their RIGHT FOCUS.

Jim Furyk, US Open Champion

Jim Furyk, US Open Golf Champion, took awhile to buy into his RIGHT FOCUS.

For years Furyk used to slice the ball.

His Dad wanted Furyk to improve his alignment by laying his club down parallel to his target before swinging.

This would help Furyk keep his shoulders parallel and aligned to the target.

But Furyk was stubborn and refused. He just kept hitting the ball, trying to nail a straight shot.

Finally Furyk got fed up with being inconsistent. He started carrying rulers around in his bag, putting them down parallel to his target line every time.

This RIGHT FOCUS meant that Furyk practiced his alignment on every swing. Now he's a consistent ball striker and his confidence is consistent too.

I can relate to Jim's struggle to actually care about his RIGHT FOCUS.

Back when I started my GAME FACE routine, I didn't really understand the concept of RIGHT FOCUS. All I knew was that obsessing about goal-scoring was killing my game.

So I made a firm, unequivocal promise to myself that during the World Championships, I would NOT think about whether I was going to score.

Instead I set a simple goal: "*I want to do good things all over the ice.*" If this resulted in goals, that was fine, but I was not going to obsess.

I repeated this RIGHT FOCUS to myself all through my GAME FACE routine.

Committing deep in my heart to this RIGHT FOCUS goal worked extremely well for me.

During each game, I didn't think about whether or not I would score. In the final game, where this was most important, I managed to keep my RIGHT FOCUS of "*doing good things all over the ice.*" It really built my confidence because I noticed all my contributions, not just goals.

When I scored the winner with 1:25 left on the clock, I knew it was because I had deeply committed to my RIGHT FOCUS.

Courage to Win Exercise

In the space below, write down *how* your RIGHT FOCUS goals are going to help you win. Then write down when you will remind yourself of these goals during your GAME FACE routine.

4. An Affirmation To Calm Your Nerves

The final ingredient in GAME FACE is an affirmation to calm your frazzled nerves.

Sometimes your event is so important you are just overwhelmed with performance anxiety. This can happen even when there is nothing wrong; you simply have a strong case of the jitters.

In these situations, the easiest way to reduce performance anxiety is to *accept* your nerves.

Nerves, when not resisted, tend to dissolve. Why? Because your anxiety is a natural energetic response - your body is asking you to be alert and activated.

If you accept this reaction without resistance, your body knows you have 'heard' the request and your nerves will naturally subside.

The easiest way to accept your nerves is to create an affirmation - a positive thought - that will convince you to stop resisting them. I used this strategy with amazing success in 2001:

We were playing our arch-rivals for the Provincial title. They had been winning since 1999, and it was as close as any sporting event could be.

I had been cut from the National team the previous summer, which led me to doubt my ability for a few months. I decided to come back the following season and extract some revenge.

I was nervous. At 34 years old, I was the veteran on the team—a player my teammates might look to for some courage.

My nerves surprised me a little. They were as strong as I could remember in 28 years of competing. I was having trouble just swallowing normally.

I decided I needed a short-term strategy to manage the butterflies. I knew fighting my fear would never work, so I quietly said to myself, "Lisa, it's OK to be afraid."

Skating on to the ice, I said to myself, "Lisa it's OK to be afraid."

In between whistles, I said to myself, "Lisa, it's OK to be afraid."

Every time I said this, I relaxed more. I scored a goal on the first shift, and the rest is history. My team went on to win the Nationals.

When my name was called to receive the first team all-star award, my coach leaned over and whispered in my ear, "No one deserves this more."

I guess it is OK to be afraid.

Courage to Win Exercise

Pick a situation that could occur in your event. Develop an affirmation about it that begins with, "It's OK". Here are some examples:

It's OK to feel powerless.

It's OK to miss shots, make strategy errors, be clumsy, etc.

It's OK to be anxious.

It's OK to be frustrated.

Record your affirmation below:

Repeat this affirmation to yourself as often as necessary in your GAME FACE routine to ease your performance anxiety. Remember that you are not saying that you *approve* of this situation or feeling. You can be as upset about it as you wish. You are just accepting your anxiety because it is part of you.

If the term “OK” bothers you because it suggests approval, use the word “acknowledge”. For example, you could say, “*I acknowledge that I am nervous.*” Breathe and say it with as much conviction as possible.

This strategy works because you’re not trying to manipulate yourself into being emotionally perfect. You’re just trying to accept yourself.

If you could control your nerves, you would...since you can’t, you need to accept them so you can move forward and focus in the NOW. Remember, the event is the focus...not your feelings.

Courage to Win Exercise

To re-cap, here are the four ingredients of a basic GAME FACE routine:

1. Emotional visualization (start three weeks before your event)
2. A physical warm up that activates you
3. Your RIGHT FOCUS goals
4. An affirmation to accept your nerves

In the space below, describe your personal GAME FACE ingredients:

1. Emotional visualization (start three weeks before your event)

2. A physical warm up that activates you

3. Your RIGHT FOCUS goals

4. An affirmation to calm your nerves

Final Thoughts

The second mental error most athletes make is to neglect their psyche up before big events.

Most athletes don't have an excellent GAME FACE routine. Either they do nothing or they revert to superstition.

Unlike your opponents, you are going to develop a stellar GAME FACE routine that is unique to you. Using this routine, you will learn how to transform nerves into excitement and perform your very best when it counts.

The Comeback Kid

How To Create Hope When Adversity Hits

The third mental error athletes make is falling into learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness is a special type of fear. When things go wrong in competition, you lose hope and slowly start to give up.

Learned Helplessness – The Giving Up Response

In ancient times, when a merchant needed to train his baby elephant, he'd wrap a rope around the elephant's leg.

Then he'd tie the rope to a stake and pound it into the ground.

The baby elephant would struggle and strain against the rope, but he could never escape it.

Later, the merchant just needed to tie a rope around the grown elephant's leg.

The elephant would instantly freeze and stay in one spot.

The elephant was strong enough to bulldoze an entire house to the ground, but he would stand there as long as a rope was tied to his leg.

The elephant had LEARNED to be helpless.

One of the breakthrough discoveries made by psychologists in the 20th century is that human beings are just like these elephants. Most of us give up very quickly when facing setbacks.

Another name for learned helplessness is pessimism. It's a special type of fear that makes us passive.

Once adversity hits in competition -- a bad start, an early mistake, an opponent who is on fire -- we decide, *"Nothing I do will make a difference. I can't perform well or win today."*⁷

But, we're not aware of our learned helplessness. It's an *unconscious* decision to give up.

I used to get learned helplessness all the time. If I didn't score in my first few shifts, I'd become pessimistic, shoot less, and Wham!

Hello slump.

My teammates and coaches could see it. They'd look at each other and say, "*She's done now.*"

Has this ever happened to you?

You try to score a point, hit a spike, sink a three point shot, or make a putt for birdie...

...and you FAIL...

...and suddenly you're infected by learned helplessness.

But, as I said, you don't know it. All you know is that you feel a bit passive and sort of numb...like you're going through the motions.

Here are some classic examples of learned helplessness. Try to spot yourself:

- **Hockey.** Your coach sat you on the bench during the last power play. You don't trust him; you think he will sit you no matter how well you play. You lose your motivation and play without passion for the rest of the game.
- **Baseball and softball.** You're facing a pitcher you've never seen before. You're not reading his pitches well and strike out twice. The third time you step into the batter's box you feel intimidated. Instead of trying to read the pitch closely, you go through the motions and strike out again.
- **Golf.** You're golfing with a foursome and one of the people in it is on fire, shooting 'lights out'. Another person in your foursome is ohh-ing and ahh-ing over this person's shots. You feel embarrassed that you are not leading and instead of golfing with confidence, you play it safe.
- **Bowling.** You're in the middle of a competition and your throwing rhythm has left you. You can't figure out how to correct it, so you resign yourself to a dismal score.

- **Soccer.** Your soccer check has beaten you wide several times. He's very aggressive and trash talks you at every opportunity. You want to put him in his place but instead you implode and play more and more passively.
- **Curling.** Your teammate is in cranky mood and starts coaching you on your shots. You want to ask her to stop but you're worried she will have a temper tantrum, so you say nothing and seethe with resentment. You're so distracted that by the time the game is over you've lost draw weight.
- **Basketball.** You missed your last six three point shot attempts and have no clue why. You gradually stop shooting and pass instead. You even start playing passively on defence.
- **Volleyball.** The last three times your setter set you up, the blockers easily stuffed you. You become quiet, start hitting around the block and missing wide, and hope the ball doesn't come to you again.

Courage to Win Exercise

In the space below, write down three times you can remember falling into learned helplessness (losing hope) after a setback in competition. Did you become passive and if so, in what ways?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now that you understand learned helplessness, you can see how important your thoughts and beliefs are.

In fact, study after study in psychology has shown that we don't make decisions based on what's happening to us.

We make decisions based on what we THINK will happen to us.⁸

We don't go to work because we get paid. We go to work because we THINK we'll get paid.

You don't miss a shot because you missed your last one. You miss a shot because you missed your last one -- and you THINK you'll miss your next one.

This is another way of saying that beliefs form a powerful filter. Once we decide to believe something, we are invested in being right, and we'll edit out evidence that doesn't match up to our beliefs.

This is huge. It means our beliefs dictate our reality. Once we decide, "*I can't score,*" or "*I can't win,*" this belief is now THE TRUTH in our mind.

In competition, you start to hedge your bets. You become defensive and play it safe. Rather than competing to win, you try not to lose. It's as though you are trying to hide, right in the middle of a competition.

Sometimes you're not even aware you're starting to give up. All you know is that something is off.

Your aggressiveness, your edge, is slipping away from you, and you can feel it. You just feel blah. And you're worried...because blah is not going to get you winning and keep you winning.

Why We Fall Into Learned Helplessness

I know what you're thinking. "*Lisa, why would any athlete want to give up? This is the opposite of mental toughness!*"

Simple.

Most athletes cannot bear failure or disappointment. They are too competitive. So, when things go wrong in competition, they try to protect their heart by withdrawing energy. "*What's the point in trying? I'm not going to prevail.*"

By giving up hope, you think you can avoid disappointment. "*There's no point in wanting something I can't have, so I might as well just give up.*"

The problem with this solution is that it doesn't work.

It's naive to think you can avoid disappointment by pretending you don't care. **We never truly relinquish our desire for success.**

You can tell yourself that you 'don't care', but this will not diminish your disappointment one bit. In your heart of hearts, you desperately care. It's the agony and ecstasy of sport.

Why Learned Helplessness Backfires

The problem is that learned helplessness does not protect us from failure - it guarantees it. By giving up, we doom ourselves to poor results.

Please don't read this and become despondent. *"I'm a mental wuss."* Learned helplessness is a natural reaction to setbacks. You just need the right mental toughness strategies to defeat it.

The antidote to learned helplessness is hope.

Hope is the stuff of champions. Hope keeps you confident, bold, and aggressive in the face of setbacks. In this module, I will teach you five proven mental toughness strategies for creating hope when adversity hits.

You start by discovering your stressors in competition.

What Are YOUR Stressors?

I'd like you to identify your top 7 stressors - things that bother you most while performing.

Courage to Win Exercise

List your top 7 stressors below. Here are some examples athletes often cite:

- Getting a bad start
- Opponents are annoying you
- Teammates are under-performing
- Losing a period or rally by a large margin
- Teammate, coach or parent says something negative to me
- Being given a role on the team I don't like or want
- Not being able to read the competition properly
- Competing against a particular opponent
- Opponent is playing obvious "mind games"
- Having a bad warm-up
- Family member or friend is watching
- Conflict with a teammate prior to sport
- Being pre-occupied with life outside of sport, e.g., a problem at home
- Equipment or weather hassles
- Being late or given a schedule change
- Feeling sick or unusually tired

In the space below, list your top 7 stressors (things that trigger a loss of confidence):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Now, put your stressors in order from *most bothersome* to *least bothersome*.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Now that you know what your stressors are, you need to understand why they bother you.

Each stressor is merely an event. By itself, it is neutral.

The reason your stressors bother you is because **they trigger learned helplessness in you. They make you lose hope and tempt you to give up.**

I'll prove it to you.

Write your Demon Stressor as an "I can't—" statement. For example, if your Demon Stressor is "not scoring early", you'd write it as, "I can't score." Here are some other examples:

- "I can't pass my opponent."
- "I can't serve with enough power."
- "I can't find draw weight."
- "I can't find my swing rhythm."
- "I can't throw a strike."
- "I can't shake my check."
- "I can't stay with my man."

Now step back and read your “I can’t” statement carefully. This statement is a belief you think is true based on past experience. This is your learned helplessness.

If you’re like most athletes, seeing your “I can’t” belief on paper is quite shocking. A comment I get often is, “*Wow. I cannot believe I actually think something this harsh.*”

This moment is a great awakening. To master your stressors, **you need to be aware of how easily you are losing hope.**

How To Create Hope In The Face of Stressors

When a stressor shows up, here are five mental toughness strategies for creating hope:

1. Be Optimistic, Not Positive
2. Expect The Best AND The Worst
3. Channel Your Frustration & Tap Into Your Pride
4. Be Your Own Best Friend
5. Heal Your Disappointment

1. Be Optimistic, Not Positive

A question I get a lot is, “*Lisa, how do I stay positive when my Demon Stressor shows up?*”

My answer: You don’t.

When faced with your Demon Stressor, you will be angry, frustrated, and disappointed.

This is natural because you’re a competitive athlete and things aren’t going your way.

If you realize it’s natural for you to be angry, you’ll stop putting pressure on yourself to feel good during setbacks.

Rather than trying to be positive, ask yourself for optimism instead.

Here's why: being positive means finding something good in the situation, such as, *"It's great that I lost that competition because I need a day off."*

The problem with trying to be positive is that there may not be anything good about this stressor.

Optimism is not being positive.

Optimism is being able to BELIEVE the stressor you are facing is temporary.

If you miss a shot, you think, *"Now my nerves are settled so I can really shoot with accuracy."*

If your opponent scores, you think, *"I can use what I just learned about him to anticipate the next play."*

Tom Brady's Natural Optimism

The New England Patriots got off to a rocky start in 2006. One cause was the subpar play of Tom Brady, New England's Superbowl MVP quarterback.

Brady finally admitted that the trade of a top receiver and the loss of other offensive players upset him and the team.

But, like the champion he is, Brady viewed the slump as temporary. He said: *"We'll improve everybody's state of mind and body language. It will be good for our confidence to go out and play to the level we're capable of."*

The easiest way to be optimistic?

Improve your own performance. Use a RIGHT FOCUS goal to raise your game, correct your technique, or devise a new strategy.

Tom Gilbert's RIGHT FOCUS

Tennis pro Tom Gilbert was a master at using the proper RIGHT FOCUS to create hope and stay mentally tough.

Gilbert had been losing to Aaron Krickstein for years because of Krickstein's powerful forehand.

Gilbert had never found a way to neutralize it.

During their next match Gilbert noticed that when he hit a slice backhand short to Krickstein's forehand, the forehand he got back was different.

It was just a routine forehand.

Gilbert quickly figured out that Krickstein loved to hit from the baseline because the ball would sit up for him.

But when Gilbert hit a soft slice, the ball would land short and stay low. In these situations Krickstein couldn't crank his topspin forehand - there just wasn't any pace for him to use.

Gilbert went on a mission to deliver as many short slice backhands as possible, beating Krickstein in straight sets.

The upshot?

Find a REASON why your stressor could be temporary, and then use your RIGHT FOCUS to wipe it off the map.

2. Expect The Best AND The Worst

Going into any big event, you should *expect to win*.

But you should also *expect the road to winning to be ridiculously difficult* - filled with setbacks and adversity.

I suggest that you expect every stressor on your list to show up. This makes you immune to learned helplessness because you cannot be surprised or fazed in competition.

“No One Blinked.”

In the 2011 Superbowl, The Green Bay Packers came out strong early, scoring a touchdown and following with a cool pick six (interception plus touchdown) to take a big lead.

It looked like they were going to dominate.

But championship games are never won easily.

At some point, adversity hits...and that's exactly what happened to Green Bay.

First Charles Woodson (the team's emotional leader and defensive star) went down with a broken collarbone.

Later in the half, Green Bay lost their top receiver to another injury.

Then Green Bay's opponent, the Pittsburgh Steelers, found their game and strung together several scoring drives.

In a post-game interview, linebacker A.J. Hawk was asked, "*A lot of teams would have folded... what is it about you guys that allowed you to overcome that adversity?*"

Hawk's answer: "*An NFL season is a roller coaster and you can't jump on it. At halftime, we knew there was no need to panic. Ya, we'd let them score at the end of the first half but during that emotional halftime we just focused on the fact that we were still up by 11 and would have the ball first to start the second.*"

It's a cliché, but honestly, we just stayed the course."

Or, as head coach Mike McCarthy put it, "*No one blinked.*"

Like I said, when preparing for a major event, you expect to win. But you also expect every one of your stressors - and more - to show up.

You're optimistic about the outcome, yet pessimistic about the journey.

This is the biggest difference between rookies and veteran players. Veterans have seen it all. They've 'been there, done that' and are ready for battle. This makes them impervious to stressors that tempt rookies to give up.

3. Channel Your Frustration

Sometimes, bad stuff just happens in competition.

And when it does, you're going to get mad.

Most sport psychologists or coaches will never tell you this, but...

It's ok to be angry and frustrated - as long as you CHANNEL your frustration properly.

Boxing champ Sugar Ray Leonard learned this the hard way.

Leonard, the flashy Golden Boy, breezed through every opponent since turning pro and held the undisputed WBC Welterweight crown.

...until he met Roberto Duran.

Duran, nicknamed "Hands of Stone," gave up the lightweight championship to challenge Leonard.

In the lead-up to the bout, Duran bad-mouthed Leonard at every opportunity. *"Leonard is not macho. He is a pretty boy who has everything given to him; the money, the easy fights, the television coverage.*

He will meet a real fighter for the first time."

By fight time, Leonard was so angry he foolishly tried fighting Duran's style, going toe-to-toe with Duran.

Duran won by unanimous decision.

Leonard later admitted: *"I wanted to knock his head off. Stupid. I'm a competitor and a very proud man."*

Leonard's mistake?

He gave into his Dark Side.

See, there is BAD anger and GOOD anger.

BAD anger makes you panicky, causing you to lose focus and make bad decisions.

GOOD anger motivates you and keeps you focused.

Leonard learned his lesson, though. Barely five months later, the rematch occurred.

This time, Leonard kept to his style of fighting, sticking and moving. Duran was overwhelmed.

"The whole fight, I was moving, moving," Leonard said. "I snapped his head back with a jab, once, twice. He tried to get me against the ropes, I'd pivot, spin off and Pow! Come under with a punch."

Near the end of Round 8, Duran turned completely away from Leonard and told the referee, "No mas."

The fight ended in a TKO.

The third meeting, nine years later, was a debacle with Leonard winning easily. Duran finally admitted: *"No man hurt me like Leonard. He is a great, great fighter."*

You see, BAD anger really is learned helplessness in disguise. You feel overwhelmed and insecure, so you go wild.

Sometimes you get penalties; other times you just PRESS and make a mess of things.

But it's easy to turn BAD anger into GOOD anger. All you need to do is tap into your pride as an athlete.

Here's exactly how to do it.

Courage to Win Exercise

Have you ever gotten angry in a competition and performed better?

Describe the last time you were performing poorly, but tapped into your personal pride and turned things around (you got angry in the good way and performed better).

Tap Into Your Pride

The **Tap Into Your Pride** strategy is your tool for tapping into GOOD anger...the kind of anger that energizes and focuses you. **Tap Into Your Pride**

lessens your frustration because you are not denying or trying to manipulate how you feel. You are *channelling* these feelings instead.

Your anger in sport stems from the fact that you like yourself and know you can do better. When you channel your anger into getting back your RIGHT FOCUS, you turn it back into personal pride—which you can use constructively. Without using the **Tap Into Your Pride** strategy, you merely suppress your fear. It harbours inside you, making you implode in competition.

There are three simple steps to **Tap Into Your Pride**.

- **Step One:** Express your anger and self-criticism
- **Step Two:** Ask yourself for what you want
- **Step Three:** Express positive support for yourself¹⁵

Step One: Express Your Anger

Talk to yourself about your anger.

Example

“John, you’re playing like a complete idiot! It’s as though you’ve never hit an overhead smash in your life! You make me so furious when you completely under-perform!”

Guideline

Use “you” statements, not “I” statements. For example, do not say, “I’m a total loser for playing defensively.” Instead, say, “John, you’re a total loser when you sit back. You look like a complete amateur when you do that!”

Step Two: Ask Yourself for What You Want

Ask yourself for the specific improvements you want.

Example

“I want you to calm down and stop trying to win every point immediately with a smash! I want you to move him around and only smash when it’s appropriate! I want you to be aggressive and smart at the same time. I want you to watch and determine what strategy he’s using!”

Step Three: Support Yourself

Express your positive feelings about yourself.

Example

“John, you have so much talent! You have incredible touch and instinct for how to set up and end a point. You are a truly gifted athlete and I know you can take control of this match.”

Courage to Win Exercise

Write out this strategy in detail and try it over the course of the next week. If you are not training or competing this week, try it in a different part of life that may be frustrating you.

4. Be Your Own Best Friend

Most elite athletes and coaches are overly critical of themselves. They struggle to appreciate themselves no matter how hard they work.

If this describes you, then creating hope will be difficult.

It will be difficult because your stressors are probably things you beat yourself up for constantly, such as making mistakes.

So when you make a mistake in competition, you feel so ashamed that you fall into learned helplessness. Being optimistic or channelling your anger seems impossible because you're filled with shame.

On a gut level, you actually don't believe it's Ok to make mistakes, including mental game ones.

What you are missing is that perfectionists - people who are defensive about mistakes - are not LEARNING.

An incredibly effective strategy for creating hope when things go bad is to be your own best friend out there.

Dave Stockton's Mental Habit

I like golf pro Dave Stockton's technique. He forces himself to think about his strengths constantly.

Rather than berate himself for his poor drives, Stockton thinks about his short game instead: *"My father would tell me not to get mad because everybody was out-driving me.*

He said the pressure I could put on them with my next shots offset my lack of length off the tee, because none of them could putt as well as I could.

So I would never give up mentally."

Coach Miller's Advice

The difficulty with being your own best friend is that most people cannot focus on their strengths for any reasonable length of time.

I asked Shannon Miller, the winningest female hockey coach in history, her theory about this. She said:

"Most people are inherently negative. They've been trained since the age of five to think, talk, and be negative. By the time they reach adulthood, it is a deeply ingrained habit."

Being your own best friend doesn't mean putting on your rose-coloured glasses and ignoring reality.

It means focusing on where you're REALLY good.

After talking to Shannon I started thinking about every superstar athlete I've ever met.

They all have ONE characteristic in common: They really *do* think they are the cat's meow. Even when they make mistakes or lose, they minimize such trivial things in their mind.

Want to test my theory? Watch a big competition like the U.S. Master's Golf tournament or the Stanley Cup. Listen to the interviews of the losing athletes.

They RARELY insult themselves after a loss.

In fact they're almost always talking about how well they played, even if they choked or unravelled.

Being your own best friend by constantly thinking about your strengths is a really important skill. You need to cultivate this habit, pronto.

Here's a quick and easy way to start.

Courage to Win Exercise

Right now, without thinking, write down your top three strengths as an athlete or coach.

How did you do? Were they easy to come up with?

If not, do it once a day until it is automatic.

The Power of Self-Acceptance

Remember, you do not need to win to accept yourself. You can be extremely disappointed over losing and still accept yourself. Winning is only the icing; the cake is self-acceptance.

Cultivating self-acceptance will make you appreciate your efforts more. Here is a quick exercise to accomplish it.

Write 5-10 endings to the following sentence for 14 days. You will be shocked at how much easier it is to create hope when things go bad in competition.

If I were 5% more self-accepting today--

5. Heal Your Disappointment

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, you do not win or put forth a peak performance.

Unless you heal yourself of these disappointments, your fear of failure will build up and become very intense. When this happens, you cannot stay calm and find hope when your stressors show up.

The way out is to become an expert at healing disappointment.

To heal yourself of disappointment, you need to experience your pain over losing without resistance.

There is a wonderful healing that comes from letting yourself have your disappointment and sadness. It's easy to nurture your heart through disappointment. Emotionally, the worst is behind you. You feel whole again.

“I Just Want to Cry A Little.”

It was a five-year-old named Lyndsay who taught me how to heal disappointment.

At my ringette school many years ago, we tried to take Lyndsay rollerblading with her group, but none of the rollerblades fit her. Her lip started to quiver when she realized she wouldn't be able to go.

About this time, her mother showed up.

Her mother was clearly tired; when she saw Lyndsay crying, she became impatient. “Lyndsay, stop crying,” she said in exasperation.

Of course, Lyndsay's crying turned into hysterical sobs.

The mother lost her patience completely. “If you keep this up, I'm going to take you home and not bring you back tomorrow.” Lyndsay sat down and paused. After a few moments, she looked up at her mother and said, “I just want to cry a little.”

She was only five, but she got it.

Sometimes, when winning is not possible, the crying IS the healing.

Courage to Win Exercise

The next time you are disappointed, let yourself have your feelings of regret and sorrow. Weep if you want to. The next day, you will feel light, and you will know what changes you need to make to improve your performance next time.

You will find yourself remarkably hopeful and refreshed afterwards.

Final Thoughts

The third mental error athletes make is falling into learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness is a special type of fear. When things go wrong in competition, you lose hope and slowly start to give up.

Most athletes lose hope very quickly when adversity hits. In an effort to avoid disappointment, they withdraw energy. Instead of competing to win, they are trying not to lose.

Unlike your opponents, you are completely prepared for your unique stressors. You know what your stressors are. Using the mental toughness strategies here, you also know how to create hope and stay aggressive.

ADVANCED Training

Thank you for being part of the Courage to Win[®] in Sport. It has been a genuine pleasure serving you. If you get stuck, or want one on one mental toughness coaching, you can email us at The Courage to Win office at info@lisabrown.ca. We truly want you to be the best athlete you can be, and we're available to help you.

If you want more advanced mental toughness strategies, I've developed an ADVANCED 30 Day Home Study Program. For details, go here: <http://www.thecouragetowin.com/sportstudy.html>



Your friend,

Lisa Lane Brown
The Courage to Win[®]

Endnotes

¹Michael Jordan and Mark Vancil, *For the Love of the Game: My Story*, Crown, 1998.

²John Daly with Glen Waggoner, *Golf My Own Damn Way*, Harper Collins, 2007.

³The concept of RIGHT FOCUS was inspired by Tim Gallwey, *Inner Tennis: Playing The Game*. Random House, 1976.

⁴These questions about focus were pioneered by Terry Orlick in his excellent book, *Psyching for Sport: Mental Training for Athletes*. Leisure Press, 1986.

⁵Mark Tewksbury, *Visions of Excellence*, Viking, 1993.

⁶Michael Jordan and Mark Vancil, *For the Love of the Game: My Story*, Crown, 1998.

⁷⁻⁸Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How To Change Your Mind And Your Life*. Vintage, 2006.