



How to Overcome Adversity and Distractions to Stay Composed in Competition

If you've been competing for any serious length of time, bad things have happened to you in competition. If you are like most athletes, what determines your performance is the **absence** of bad things happening to you on your 'big day'.

If you are fortunate enough to have a day when nothing bad happens to you, you will perform well and win. In the world of mental training, bad things that happen to you are known as "distractions" or "stressors" because they distract you from your "A" game—your best performance. *Every time these stressors show up, you tend to lose confidence and your performance suffers.*

Your "demon stressor" is the one event or situation that causes you to lose your connection to your sport and affects you above all others.

What Is Your "Demon Stressor?"

Your very first job is to identify your stressors - those things that bother you most while performing. To do this, you begin by listing in the space below your top 7 distractions. 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 distractions (things that trigger a loss of confidence):

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

Now, put your distractions in the following order from *most bothersome* to *least bothersome*.

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

Now you know what your stressors are. Your “demon stressor” is the thing that has the most potential to cause you to lose confidence, choke, or under perform. It is the first thing on the list. This is very powerful exercise, because now you have the opportunity to transform your game by carefully working with your reaction to your “demon stressor.”