



HIGH PERFORMING PEOPLE
COMMITMENT

How to use this resource

We are really pleased to provide you with this resource on the topic of Commitment.

It sits as part of the **High Performing People Framework** and aims to provide some useful information on one of the framework's 13 identified characteristics. A resource will be available for each characteristic.

The recommendation is to use this resource to help you to understand the key theories that underpin Commitment and to provide you with practical recommendations as to how to apply the theories.

The resource isn't designed to be directly used by athletes, but instead to be used by the coach, to think about how the information might be best applied with the specific group they coach based on their age, experience, and unique characteristics. If you have access to a performance psychologist, then involving them in the conversation would be beneficial.

Enjoy the resource; we hope it stimulates some new ideas and, most importantly, actions.

Jonathan Smith BSc; MSc; PhD

Performance Psychologist - Olympic Sprint and Paracanoe



[Click to read about the High Performing People framework](#)



“Commitment means following a plan even when you don’t feel like it that day.”

Starting point

WHAT DOES COMMITMENT LOOK LIKE?

- Sufficiently conscientious, has a strong work ethic and values, knows what it takes to succeed and is prepared to do what it takes.
- Demonstrates persistence in achieving their goals, despite obstacles, over an extended period of time.

When you are serious about undertaking something, you need to start by checking that you have a real possibility of achieving what you are setting out to do (your purpose). There is no point in starting if you have not thought through whether you will be able to commit to the challenge.

It is important that you consider whether you emotionally and logically want to do it. It will not work if only one part of you decides to commit to the challenge.

There is no point in being successful if you are not happy, and vice versa, so you need a balance.

Having clarity on your purpose is a really important element to understand what success looks like for you. Take a look at the available Purpose resource for more information on this.

It is also important to recognise that our expectation about what commitment looks like varies depending on the age of an athlete and their experience in the sport. Commitment for someone new to the sport might be turning up to training sessions with the purpose of enjoying them.

COACH ACTION

Establish WHY an achievement would mean something to an athlete.

"Why would this make you happy / inspired / what would it do for you?"

Motivation v. commitment

MOTIVATION

- Motivation is emotionally driven. It is a feeling.
- Motivation generally happens when there is a great reward to gain or when you are suffering so badly that you want things to change.
- Motivation is helpful to drive us on, as it can bring added enthusiasm, but it is not essential to success.
- It is unrealistic to expect to feel motivated every day, no matter what you are doing.
- The problem with motivation is that it works on feelings from the “chimp brain” and these can shift very quickly.

COMMITMENT

- Commitment, on the other hand, is a rational choice and does not depend on feelings.
- It requires exploring facts and information which are combined with logic to rationalise the benefits of doing something.
- Commitment means following a plan even if you don’t feel like it that day.
- For example, a surgeon can’t say halfway through an operation, ‘Do you know, I just don’t feel motivated to finish this, so I’ll stop now!’ Motivation doesn’t matter; it is commitment that will finish the operation.

Learning how to act in line with your best interests even when motivation is absent is a critical skill. It enables us to develop the capacity to do what we need to do, even when a part of us doesn’t feel like it.

An important element of commitment is to understand our own values as these can guide our behaviour.

Motivation

TYPES OF MOTIVATION

There are different types of motivation, each with strengths and weaknesses.

Intrinsic motivation: engaging in behaviour because it is personally rewarding (e.g. fun, learning)

Extrinsic motivation: engaging in behaviour for external rewards or punishments (e.g. for the medal/trophy)

Ego-orientated motivation: engaging in behaviour which motivates us through demonstrating greater ability than others (e.g. winning, or doing a task with less effort)

Task-orientated motivation: engaging in behaviour which motivates us through demonstrating greater ability than our previous attempts (e.g. doing a task that we were unsuccessful at previously, learning something new).

All of these can be beneficial and research would support that it is a combination of different motivations that seems to have the most positive effect on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.



Values

Professor Steve Peters suggests that the word value can be used in two distinct ways:

1. **'Value' is something used to describe things that are important or valuable to you** (e.g. having fun, being content, car, family.)
2. **'Value' means what the right thing to do is, morally or ethically** (e.g. respect for others, justice, compassion, working hard, honesty.)

The first list are the things that are likely to make us feel secure and happy, whilst the second list form a moral code to our behaviour and are based on society and personal beliefs.

What these values represent is a way of knowing that we are doing the right thing. All of them are judgement based and give us a moral compass. They are measured by behaviours we display and actions that we take.

When we act upon our morals we create peace of mind as we know we have done the right thing.

If you don't live by your values then it is likely to lead to inner conflict. This will lead to a restless and uneasy mind.

ACTIVITY

Take time to work out your values. A value is a moral code to let you know you are doing the right thing. Values lead to behaviours.

Remember that the list will only work for you if you make sure you implement it.

Questions that might help to identify your values are:

1. What kind of person would you most like to be?
2. What do you want to stand for?
3. What do you want your efforts to represent?
4. What contribution do you want to make?
5. What qualities or attitudes do you want to bring to this area of your life?

Commitment to action

We now know that we cannot rely on motivation to always be there. It comes and goes. And there will always be things that we will never feel like doing. How do we make those happen, even when a part of us would prefer not to?

Feelings are often accompanied by urges. Those urges are suggestions, nudges, persuasions telling us to try this or that to relieve the discomfort that we feel or to seek the reward that we anticipate. While those urges can be powerful, we don't have to do what they say.

The opposite-action skill is the deliberate attempt to take an action that is the opposite of what the emotion is telling you to do. Often our understanding of our values helps with this.

"What action would I take in this moment which aligns with my values?"

Values are judgement calls that you have made and reflect moral and ethical principles that you intend to guide your behaviour in situations.

What values represent is a way of knowing that we are doing the right thing. They are all measured by behaviours we display and actions that we take.

ACTIVITY

Think about seeing how long you can keep a polo mint in your mouth.

The urge to crunch the mint keeps going up and can feel almost undeniable over time.

It demands intense concentration and focus. As soon as you get distracted and let your guard down, your brain would take over on autopilot for you and the mint would be history.

If you spend time noticing the experience, you can create a gap between the urge and the action.

Simply by paying attention, you get to choose whether you go with the urge or against it.

Commitment screening

In order to assess your commitment in a structured way, use the 'commitment screen', which is a list of questions to answer. The screen is composed of two aspects.

The first aspect is working out what you will need to do the job. The second aspect is preparing solutions to overcome anything that might stop you from succeeding.

FIRST ASPECT: WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE JOB?

We can break these down into three types:

Essential – these are the things that are critical for the venture to succeed. Essentials are both physical and emotional in nature and this is where it is worth doing two lists. The first is for logically and the second list is for you emotionally. The logical covers the practicalities and truths and the emotional covers the feelings and emotional skills needed.

Significant – these are the things that will definitely have an influence on the final outcome and therefore must be considered.

Desirable – these are the things that may or may not help but they will make things more comfortable.



Commitment screening

SECOND ASPECT: WHERE ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU MIGHT FACE?

We can break these down into three types:

Hurdles – these are the things there is just no getting around and you have to jump them.

There are always unpleasant or difficult things that you have to do in anything you undertake. Your job is to work out what these are and then have a coping strategy to deal with them.

There are no choices here, so you have to learn how to jump these hurdles. (e.g. if you want to get stronger, you have to do strength training).

Barriers – these are things you can get around with good planning.

This doesn't mean ignoring the difficulty, it means dealing with it by removing it. (e.g you have coursework due at the same time as a regatta. You can plan to complete the coursework ahead of time so that it doesn't impact your ability to compete at the regatta.) So it is very important to recognise the difference and then remove the barrier.

Pitfalls: these are areas that could easily be your downfall if you are not looking out for them (e.g. letting yourself become emotionally exhausted.)



Commitment screening

Here are questions you can answer as you go through commitment screening:

ACTIVITY

Is it really a dream?

- How important is this to you logically and emotionally?
- Do you logically and emotionally really want to achieve it?
- What are the benefits of achieving your dream?
- Are the benefits worth having, compared to the cost of getting there?

The plans and requirements to fulfil the dream

- What plans have you made to achieve this?
- What have you tried in the past?
- If it failed in the past, why was this?
- What are you going to do that is different this time?
- What new strategies have you got for the future?
- What worked in the past?
- Have you made sure that your plans are watertight by letting someone else check them with you?
- What are the essential, significant and desirable requirements for you logically and emotionally for the plan to work?
- Have you got the essentials in place BEFORE you start?



Commitment screening

Here are questions you can answer as you go through commitment screening:

ACTIVITY

Hurdles, barriers, and pitfalls

- Have you made a list of the hurdles you have to jump?
- Have you got a strategy to jump each hurdle?
- What will you have to sacrifice?
- What are your plans for dealing with the downsides?
- What stress will you face in trying to achieve this dream?
- What barriers do you think you will have to get round or negotiate on?
- What are your plans to avoid or get round each barrier?
- What pitfalls might you need to avoid?
- How will you recognise the pitfalls as you approach them?
- If you failed to reach your dream how would you feel and how will you deal with this?

Commitment screening

Here are questions you can answer as you go through commitment screening:

ACTIVITY

What will keep you going when you face problems?

- How will you deal with failing to meet a goal or target?
- Who have you got to help you deal with issues/problems you might face?
- Is this person clear on why and how they can help you?
- How will you measure progress?
- How willing are you to learn new strategies?
- How willing are you to change your approach?

If you find yourself wanting to give up your dream, ask yourself the following:

- Why do you want to give up?
- Can you change anything before you give up?
- Can you find a different approach?
- Who have you talked it through with?
- What are the advantages to giving up your dreams?
- What are the disadvantages to giving up the dream?
- What plans have you got for when you stop working towards the dream?



Commitment screening

Here are questions you can answer as you go through commitment screening:

ACTIVITY

Some suggestions to help you to stay committed to a plan:

- Be realistic with your resources – money and time are not elastic.
- Time management is a skill worth learning.
- Work effectively, not just efficiently.
- Prioritise what you need to do and don't allow yourself to get distracted.
- Doing one thing at a time, where possible, is the way to give it full attention.
- Avoid negative people or at least let them know what they are doing (nicely), and if they can't stop, don't involve them.
- Actively listen to advice and where necessary seek it out.
- Indecision is the best energy sapper, so once you have the information, make the decision and follow it through.

Monitoring and accountability

Commitment screening also allows for monitoring and an increased level of accountability.

We're basically talking about "underpinning qualities" we are looking to develop. Breaking it down to everything that could have an influence on someone achieving their purpose

Without this, athletes can often lack a real direction. They need to know exactly where they're going and what needs to be addressed (as well as why) in order to keep on pushing/keeping up the hard work,

I also find it helpful for them to outline what "Gold Medal Winning Standard" would look like/be in each of the qualities to help give them further guidance/something to aspire towards. This can then also provide a further element to their monthly reviewing in relation to getting nearer to that "Gold Medal" level.

What this looks like varies for the age of the athletes. It is also very logic based. Their emotions will need constant nurturing, rewarding (i.e. praising of effort and reminding of progress made) and reassuring that there will be a reward at the end if we keep on pushing, it's just not possible yet!



Commitment to a race plan

1. A plan that has been agreed to and not just dictated!

On a race day we want an athlete to commit to their race plan. To do this there are three main things for us to consider:

1. Unless a plan has been agreed to, people will never fully buy in and commit (i.e. they will likely hesitate.)
 - They will therefore never stick to the plan because emotionally they won't settle down
 - This can all be mitigated if we make sure that the athlete is happy and has had a say in the creation of the plan
2. There is a difference between not committing and not being confident. Our confidence is based on our ability to "give our best" (under the constraints.)
3. **Crucially, recognise the fine line between the "theoretical best plan" and the "athlete's preferred plan"**
 - It doesn't matter how good the plan that you make is, unless they 100% believe that it is the best for them and that they can do/execute it, they will emotionally pull out



Commitment to a race plan

2. A plan that we are emotionally on board with

This means the level/source of risk is minimal or the reward is strong enough.

Emotionally we are always on the look out for the percentage chance of risk in a situation. If there is even 1% risk, we won't want to do it!

So, we can summarise this by understanding that emotionally we will look for risk and will refuse to accept it. Hence the importance of considering the truth as well!

- How big is the perceived risk?
- Is this the same as the actual reality of the size of the risk?
- Emotionally we will often be very sneaky and clever, and will twist it into thinking that the risk is bigger than it actually is. It's important to get the facts and statistics!
- In other words, prove the difference: weigh up the size/likelihood of risk against the size/likelihood of reward of the different options.

The “crossing the road” analogy:

You all crossed the road this morning because there was a relatively small risk.

If there was a known maniac on the road, you might think twice.

All of our athletes have been “hit by cars” during their career which have scarred them.

We have to find out is that risk still looming for them?

Commitment to a race plan

3. Motor programmes are well developed

The plan should be understood and specific, don't assume knowledge or confidence.

We must try to create a culture of "No Assumptions" within our staff when it comes to creating plans and instructions for athletes.

Motor programmes need clear specific instructions: not too much information or complexity, just real clarity and specificity. Therefore, if we are using words as cues, does the athlete know **exactly** what these mean? I.e. do they know what the **exact** plan/intended action is at certain points?

Test them: if they can't tell you immediately, they have no chance of being able to execute it under pressure!

How to programme this best:

1. **Practice** it, once the exact response has been clarified
2. **Test** it under pressure, with consequences
3. Take it to **competition**

Sudden death points: does the athlete know the exact plan?

Autopilot it: it's not the 'wrong' decision that often kills you, it's usually hesitating that does.





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Ownership is associated with a range of positive behaviours including increased commitment to a plan.

Ownership:

- the athlete owns their plans; they write them or get help or delegate
- they are organised

Responsibility:

- the athlete is disciplined (carries out their plan) and is accountable for their own progress and performance
- they must report back and seek out help

An athlete can only be accountable for what they can control.

What is ownership?

To increase the chance of success it is vital that we have a plan that we own.

Having ownership of something always excites us as it offers all kinds of rewards. We will generally take things more seriously when given ownership. We take things personally and invest more energies into the venture.

Therefore, **to increase your chance of success you need to have ownership of your plans** because following someone else's plan's, no matter how good they are, is not the same unless you fully agree with them.

Owning the plan means that you have either formed it yourself; had a major say in it, or believe that the plan is ideal for you and you couldn't do better.

If there are any parts of the plan that you do not own, that is, you don't agree with, then your chances of success are likely to diminish.

The factory owner

Imagine you work at a factory and the owner asks a lot of you. We will assume that you are a good person, who work hard and is conscientious. You are committed to your job and have high standards.

One day, the factory owner decides to retire and calls you into the office. She says that she has decided to leave the factory to you. You will now own the factory. How hard do you reckon that you will work, now that you own the company and all the profits are yours? Nearly all of us would work longer hours and put everything into it. *This example is taken from the Chimp Paradox by Steve Peters.*



Underpinning drive of control

By supporting an athlete to take ownership, we increase the perception that they feel are in control over their own actions as opposed to events in life occurring because of external forces. This, therefore, increases the underpinning control drive which helps us to manage our emotions.

This also means that we are more inclined to take personal responsibility for our behaviours and are likely to put in more effort.

When we don't feel that we have control over a situation, we are less likely to take action because we don't believe our action will make a difference to the outcome.

INTERNAL CONTROL

- If I work hard, I will succeed. I am in control of my life.
- I didn't work hard enough to succeed, I will improve and do better next time.
- I achieve my goals because I consistently work towards them.

EXTERNAL CONTROL

- Why even bother trying? Most things are not in my control.
- There is nothing I can do about my future.
- The times I succeeded are mostly due to luck or random chance.

Responsibility

Responsibility introduces accountability to our plan.

Owning the plan is a great step forward towards success. If the plan has been carefully prepared then all that remains is to carry it out. Carrying out the plan is about having responsibility and being disciplined.

This is where most people fall down because they begin to work on feelings (e.g. I'm motivated to do this) and when this stops (e.g. it's cold and I can't be bothered) they then stop being disciplined and doing what they know they need to do.

Being organised is the easy bit. Most students are excellent at sorting out a revision plan before exams. They can detail down to the smallest items how and when they will study. However, most are then unable to discipline themselves and fail to carry out the plan.

Responsibility is all about managing ourselves and our feelings, and getting down to business without excuses. If you have responsibility for your plan then you must be held accountable for it.

The chances of success increase when we reflect back on how things are going. Having deadlines and reporting back makes us feel obligated to act.



Developing a plan

When embarking on a journey for athletic development, it is important to be clear about what the journey looks like. Know what the key milestones are and what will help paddlers/coaches to develop the skills and attributes to get there.

The journey presents a great opportunity for paddlers to learn about themselves as a person, athlete and team member.

It will also help to develop and shape skills that are transferable to the world outside of sport.

Success can happen regardless of a plan. However, having a structured plan improves your chance of success and allows you to know that you did everything (took ownership) you could to achieve your dream.

Key areas to consider:

Begin with the end in mind

- What are their aspirations?
- Developing paddlers with a breadth of capacities is essential in developing athletes to progress with sport.

What the process involves

- Developing as an athlete is an individual journey specific to them. It involves many opportunities to test themselves.

Understanding their pathway

- Their location, priorities, education, injury/illness are some of the factors that will shape their journey.
- Be prepared for setbacks. These may be due to performance outcomes, injury, selection, exam breaks, there are many individual setbacks that are part of the journey.

Begin with the end in mind

A performance backwards approach: **clarify the aim, quantify it to create a goal. Use the goal to build a race model. Use this model to compare with current performance.**

AIM: if we understand the aim, we reduce the potential mismatch between coach and athlete which otherwise could create tensions.

GOAL: quantifying the aim moves thinking from hypothetical to tangible.

This may be achieved through statistical means, but should incorporate coach insight and athlete agreement when setting goals.

MODEL: goals are then broken down to create a race model. This should clearly outline what it will take to achieve the goal. This can be simple, such as creating race segments, or complex.

The model should fit the athlete as it is their performance we are trying to influence.

COMPARE: This should show the difference between 'ideal' and current' performance levels.

This process should identify key area for improvement in training.

Potential probing questions:

What is it we intend to achieve?

What is Gold Medal Standard and/or appropriate marker/s?

What is the desired result?

Where would you like them to get to in 12 months time?

What would the race need to look like to achieve the goal?

Where are they now in comparison to what the race would need to look like?

Are there any key milestones that influence the end point (e.g., programme funding, age group events?)

Are the goals realistic?

Goals and dreams

Psychological evidence says that we need to dream big and set extremely challenging goals if we want to increase our chance of success. Don't aim for the moon but the stars.

The 'moon' is a goal that you know you can achieve by effort. The 'stars' are a goal that you could achieve by great effort, and it will feel fantastic to reach this goal. If you aim for the moon, you can get complacent but if you aim higher for the stars you will be more likely to commit to it and get excited by the big challenge.

When thinking about the goals that you are looking to achieve, it is beneficial to identify the difference between a goal and a dream. A goal is something that you can set and achieve because you have full control of them. In contrast a dream is something that you want to happen, but it is not fully under your control. The dream has outside influences and therefore you cannot guarantee that it will happen; it is just a wish. Goals will increase the chances of dream happening.

The distinction between goals and dreams is important because whenever the brain recognises that it doesn't have full control of any situation it sends the blood supply to our emotional brain. This results in unease, and you will feel under threat. The consequence of this is that our decision making, and our actions are more emotionally governed.

Example dream: wanting to win a race

Goals: Regular training, good diet & correct mental attitude



Foundation stones

Once you have identified the dreams and goals, the next step is to identify the underpinning components that you can work on to achieve your dreams.

Each component can be given a goal that you can measure and achieve, with each one being under your control. If you reach each one, it will make the dream more likely to happen.

It is important that you don't aim to work on too many things at once. Instead focus on only a couple of things and then swap to a new target when you have achieved it.

Once you have the components then you need to construct your plan, which is best based in smaller chunks.

Each chunk needs a realistic time scale to show exactly where you intend to be at these given points in time.

It is important that you are realistic because being unrealistic will inevitably lead to failure and an unnecessary sense of disappointment in yourself.



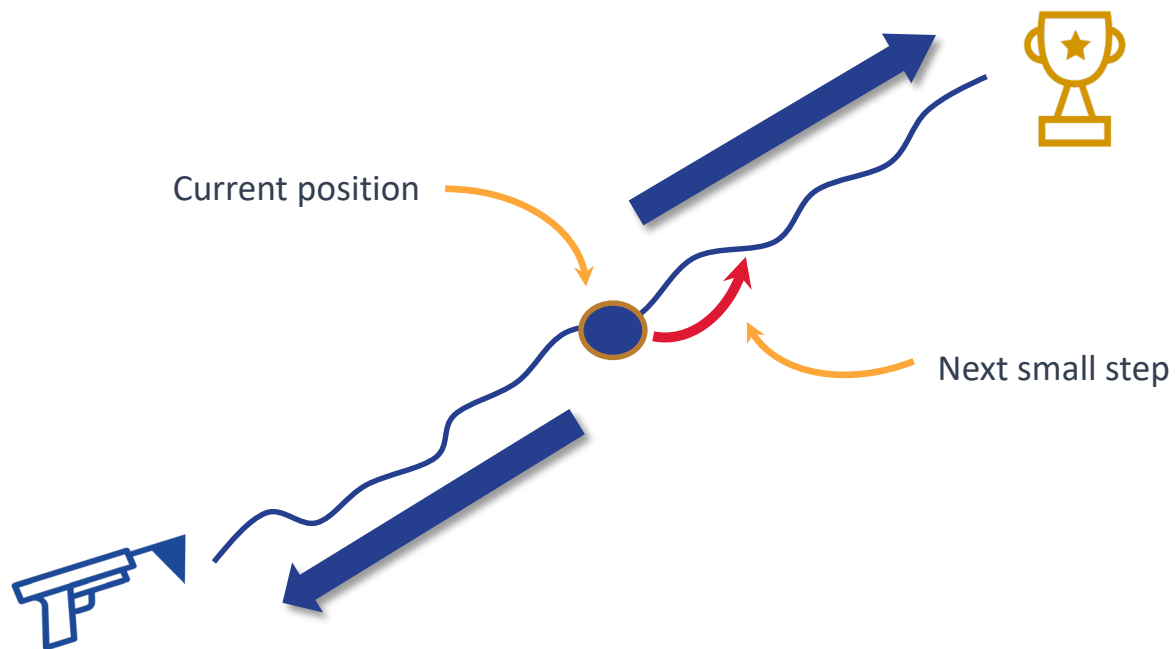
Reviewing the plan

TO DRIVE DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Comparing where you currently are with where you want to be in the future can help with direction, but can also cause frustration and miss opportunities to increase confidence

Comparing where you currently are with where you started from helps to identify and acknowledge improvement, builds confidence, and supports motivation.

Progress is key – what is the next small step in your journey?



Potential probing questions:

How are we going to know when we have been successful?

Are there any milestones to check that we are on track?

How far have things progressed from the start?

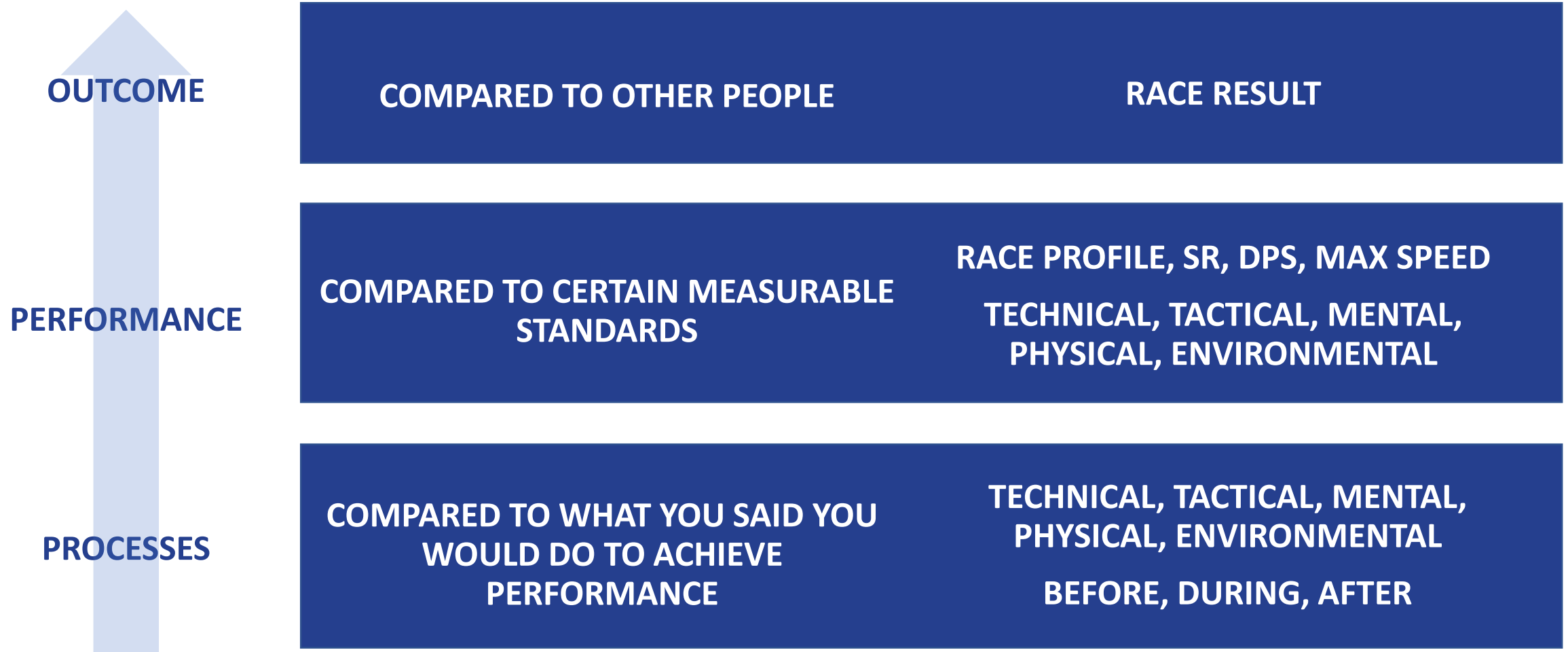
What helped you to achieve that progress (individual and environment)?

What could we do better if we were to do it again?

What will the next small improvement look like?

What support would you need to achieve this small improvement?

Levels of review



Review process – 4 whats & a how

What was expected to happen?

What were the objectives?

What were you intending to do? (before, during, after)

What actually occurred?

Describe what actually happened without determining what was good or bad.

Be specific in this and avoid generalisations, focus on facts whilst acknowledging feelings. Future recommendations have to be based on agreed facts.

What went well and why?

Start with the good points. What were the successful steps taken towards achieving your objectives?

We should be seeking to build on best practices, and identify strategies to ensure that successful practices are built into the future.

What can be improved?

Given the information and knowledge we had at the time, what could we have done better?

Given the information and knowledge we have now, what are we going to do differently in similar situations in the future to ensure success?

How are we going to improve it?

How are we going to develop the skill/strategy?

How and when is it going to be in training?



HIGH PERFORMING PEOPLE
PURPOSE

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“Every one of us has a WHY, a deep-seated **purpose**, cause or belief that is the source of our passion and inspiration.”

(Simon Sinek)

Starting point

Fulfilment is a right and not a privilege. Every single one of us is entitled to feel fulfilled by what we do, to wake up feeling inspired to go turn up, and feel that we contributed to something larger than ourselves.

It is not a feeling reserved for a lucky few who get to say: "I love what I do."

Every one of us has a WHY, a deep-seated purpose, cause or belief that is the source of our passion and inspiration. You may not yet know what yours is or how to express it in words. But, I guarantee, you have one.

Fulfilment isn't another word for happiness. All kinds of things make us happy: hitting a goal or completing a training block. But, happiness is temporary; the feeling doesn't last. The intensity passes with time.

Fulfilment is deeper. Fulfilment lasts, the difference between happiness and fulfilment is the difference between liking something and loving something.

We don't necessarily find happiness in what we do every day, but we can feel fulfilled by what we do every day if it makes us feel part of something bigger than ourselves. **Fulfilment comes from when what we do connects directly to our WHY.**

COACH ACTION

Establish WHY an achievement would mean something to an athlete.

"Why would this make you happy / inspired / what would it do for you?"



Why is it important?

Research shows that finding your purpose is linked to living longer. Researchers surveyed nearly 7,000 older adults on the relationship between mortality and finding your purpose.

Participants who did not have a strong sense of meaning in their lives were more than twice as likely to die prematurely as those who had figured out their purpose in life.

Having a sense of purpose also reduced the incidence of cardiovascular events like heart attack and stroke.

These results were universal, even when controlled for income, race, gender and education level.

Researchers concluded that finding your purpose helps you live longer. It's also essential for happiness and fulfilment.

[Read the research here](#)

What do we mean by purpose?

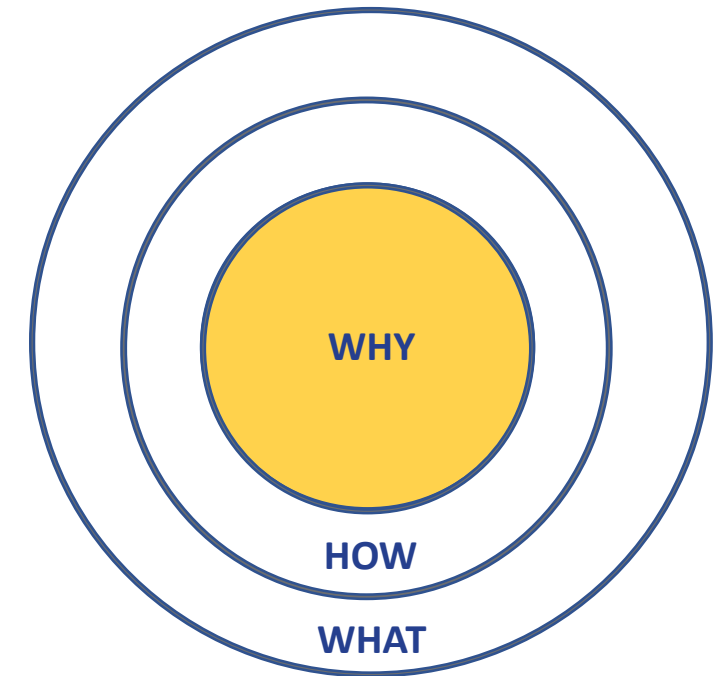
Every organisation, and every person's career, operates on three levels, as shown in the illustration: what we do, how we do it, and why we do it.

We all know what we do: the jobs we do. Some of us know how we do it: the things that we think make us different or stand out from the crowd. But, very few of us can clearly articulate why we do what we do.

"Hold on", you might say. "Let's be honest here – aren't most people doing it to win medals? That's the obvious 'why'". First, a medal is a result. Though it is a part of the picture, it's not what inspires most of us to get out of bed in the morning.

WHY focuses much deeper to understand what motivates and inspires us. It is the purpose, cause or belief that drives us.

It is important to recognise that our WHY changes with age and time within a sport. Someone's WHY when they first take part in the sport might be about enjoyment or learning. As someone engages more time, this might change to something else.



ACTIVITY

[Click here to watch Simon Sinek's talk about WHY on TED.com](#)

What do we mean by purpose?

The outer section of the golden circle – the WHAT – corresponds to the outer section of the brain – the neocortex.

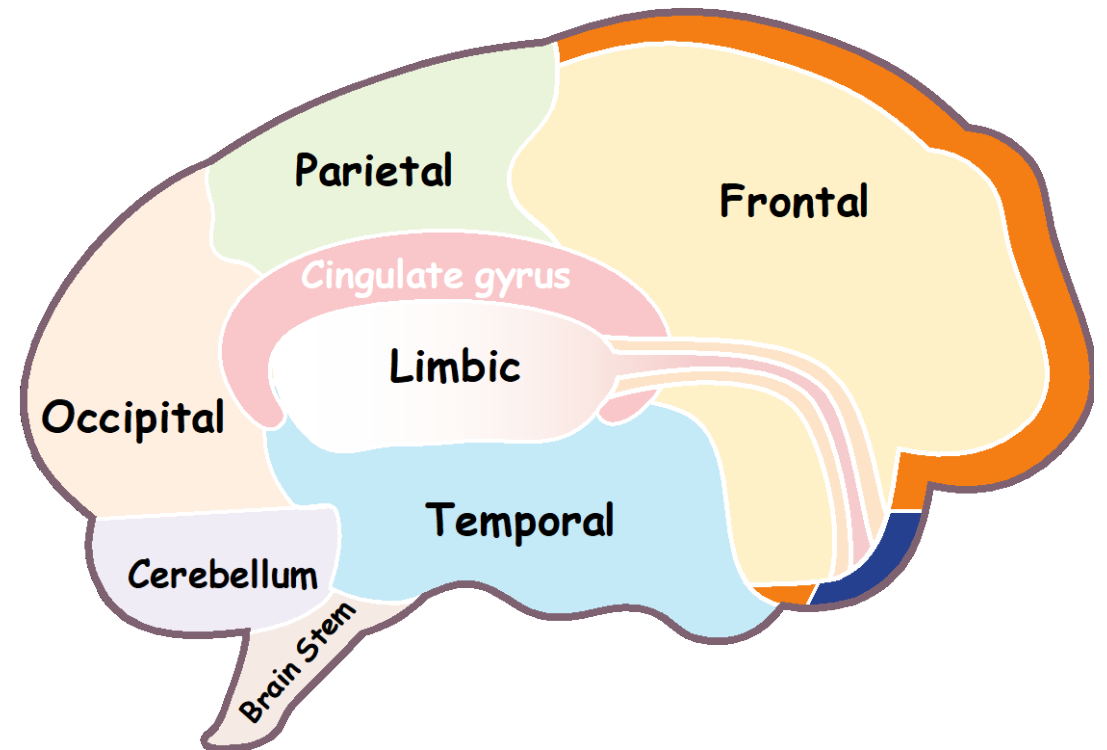
This is the part of the brain responsible for rational and analytical thought. It helps us understand facts and figures. The neocortex is also responsible for language.

The middle two sections of the Golden Circle – the WHY and HOW – correspond to the middle section of the brain, the limbic system.

This is the part of the brain responsible for all our feelings, like trust and loyalty. But, unlike the neocortex, the limbic system has no capacity for language.

The limbic system is where “gut feelings” come from. It’s not our stomach. It’s a feeling we get about a decision we have to make that we struggle to explain.

Once you understand WHY you’ll be able to articulate what makes you feel fulfilled and to better understand what drives your behaviour when you’re at your natural best.



Identifying purpose

STEP 1: STORIES

Your WHY is born from past experiences; it is the total of the lessons you learned, the experiences you had, and the values adopted while growing up. You're looking for stories that fit the bill, jot down notes on each so you can recall them.

GUIDELINES FOR GATHERING STORIES TO LEAD TO YOUR WHY:

Think of specific experiences and people in your life that have shaped who you are today. You may choose an important event, but it could be a less obvious one, like a defining moment you had with an old coach.

If the event meant something to you, helped you become who you are, taught you something or made you proud, write it down.

As you think of the people who have been the most influential in your life, try to recall specifics about what they said or did that made such a difference to you.

Since your WHY comes from your past, which is the period from your birth until yesterday, you can draw your stories from any time in between those markers. The memories may come from school, home, work or any other areas of your life.

You may recall times or events that you would gladly revisit. Or you may retrieve memories of painful episodes that you would never want to relive. What both kinds of experiences have in common is that good or bad, they helped make you who you are.



Identifying purpose

STEP 2: THEMES

As you pan for your stories and share them, themes will start to emerge and insights about yourself will begin to come to light. As the process unfolds, one or two of those nuggets will seem to shine brighter than all the others.

They will feel bigger, more important. They will shine so brightly that you'll point to them and say, "That's me...that's who I am". These themes become the foundation of your WHY statement.

There are no limits to how many themes your stories yield. You may end up with eight, ten, fifteen. That's ok. The first step is getting all the themes down on paper.

With your themes all in one place, take a couple of moments to look them over. In some cases, the themes will be in every story.

STEP 3: DRAFT AND REFINE A WHY STATEMENT

With one or two shiny nuggets in hand, you're ready to take a crack at your WHY statement.

Try to make yours simple and clear, actionable, focused on the effect you'll have on others, and expressed in affirmative language that resonates with you.

Eventually, you will put your WHY statement into this format:

TO _____ **SO THAT** _____ .

The first blank represents the contribution you make to the lives of others.

The second blanks represent the impact of your contribution.



Applying a personal purpose



HOWs and WHATs

Once we know our WHY, we then need to explore HOW we apply it in WHAT we do.

Our HOWs are the strengths that we want to bring to a situation. These are the things that make you unique and world class.

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To understand your strengths you can look back at the themes that you identified and then turn each one into actions.

For example, if one of the themes is Optimistic, then making it actionable could include:

- Find the positive in everything
- See the glass as half full
- Look forward, not backward.

Once you have done this you need to give some context to them: WHAT do they look like in the context of



How can we use this?

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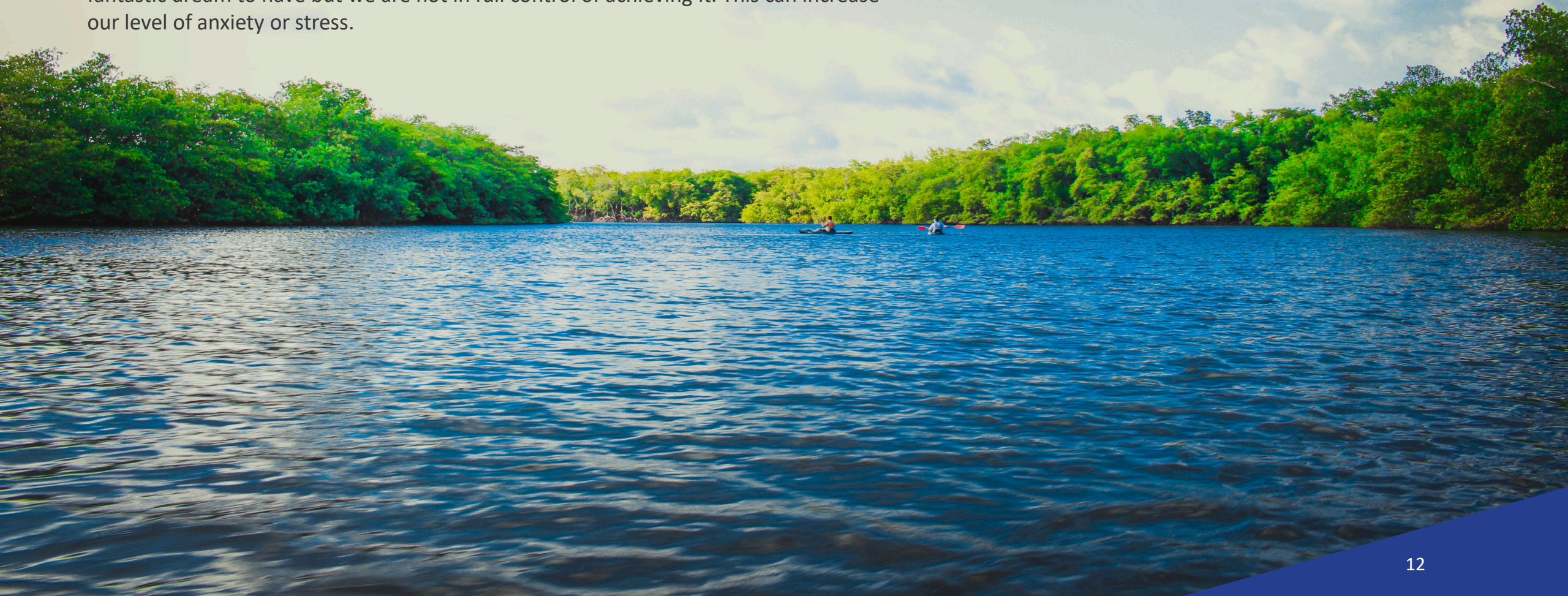
- Spend time exploring WHY an athlete wants to be involved in the sport.
- Provide opportunities for the athlete to reflect on how well what they are doing links to their purpose.
- Create an environment that aligns with the athlete's purpose (e.g. if their purpose is around fun, how do you create an environment that is fun for them to train in?)
- Think about how your communication aligns with the athlete's purpose (e.g. if their purpose is about learning and developing and you, as the coach, are talking about winning then the purposes are not aligned.)
- Think about how your purpose, as a coach, aligns or not with the athlete's purpose.



To be careful of?

Having a purpose that has an end point. This is likely to be a goal and when we reach it, we may feel a sense of loss at the end of the process

Having a purpose that is not in your control. Winning a medal at a competition is a fantastic dream to have but we are not in full control of achieving it. This can increase our level of anxiety or stress.



Resources

- **Find your Why**
by Simon Sinek, David Mead and Peter Docker
- **A Path through the Jungle: A Psychological Health and Wellbeing Programme to: Develop Robustness and Resilience**
by Steve Peters

