



HIGH PERFORMING PEOPLE
RESILIENCE

How to use this resource

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

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 Resilience 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 you 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](#)

“**Resilience** is not about responding to a one time crisis. It’s not about rebounding from a setback. It’s about having the capacity to change before the case for change becomes desperately obvious.”

Resilience = ability to **withstand pressure**

Resilience = relatively **stable**, healthy levels of functioning and performance following a potentially stressful event

Resilience = **process** resulting from the interaction of an individual/team and their environment

Resilience = **preventative and proactive** approach to managing stress

Resilience ≠ rare or special quality found only in certain extraordinary people/teams.

Resilience ≠ fixed trait

Resilience ≠ found exclusively within a person

Resilience ≠ absence/suppression of emotions



Individual characteristics

SURVIVAL TO RESILIENCE

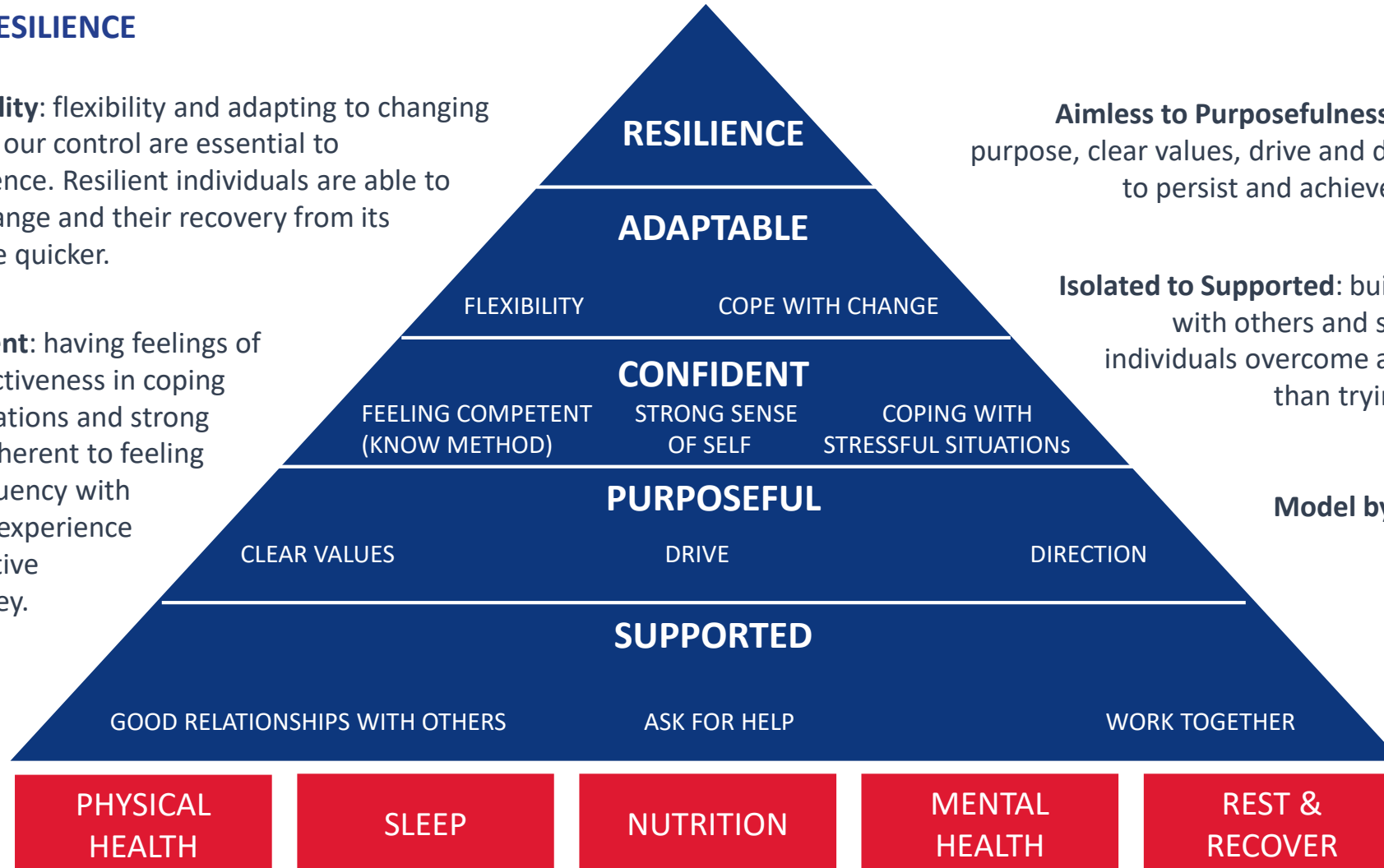
Fixed to Adaptability: flexibility and adapting to changing situations beyond our control are essential to maintaining resilience. Resilient individuals are able to cope well with change and their recovery from its impact tends to be quicker.

Fearful to Confident: having feelings of competence, effectiveness in coping with stressful situations and strong self-esteem are inherent to feeling resilient. The frequency with which individuals experience positive and negative emotions is also key.

Aimless to Purposefulness: having a clear sense of purpose, clear values, drive and direction help individuals to persist and achieve in the face of setbacks.

Isolated to Supported: building good relationships with others and seeking support can help individuals overcome adverse situations rather than trying to cope on their own.

Model by Robertson and Cooper



Environmental characteristics

Resilience demonstrated by an individual or team is influenced by the interaction between the individual's characteristics and the environment. In simple terms we can think about it as the support and challenge experienced by the individual/team in the environment.

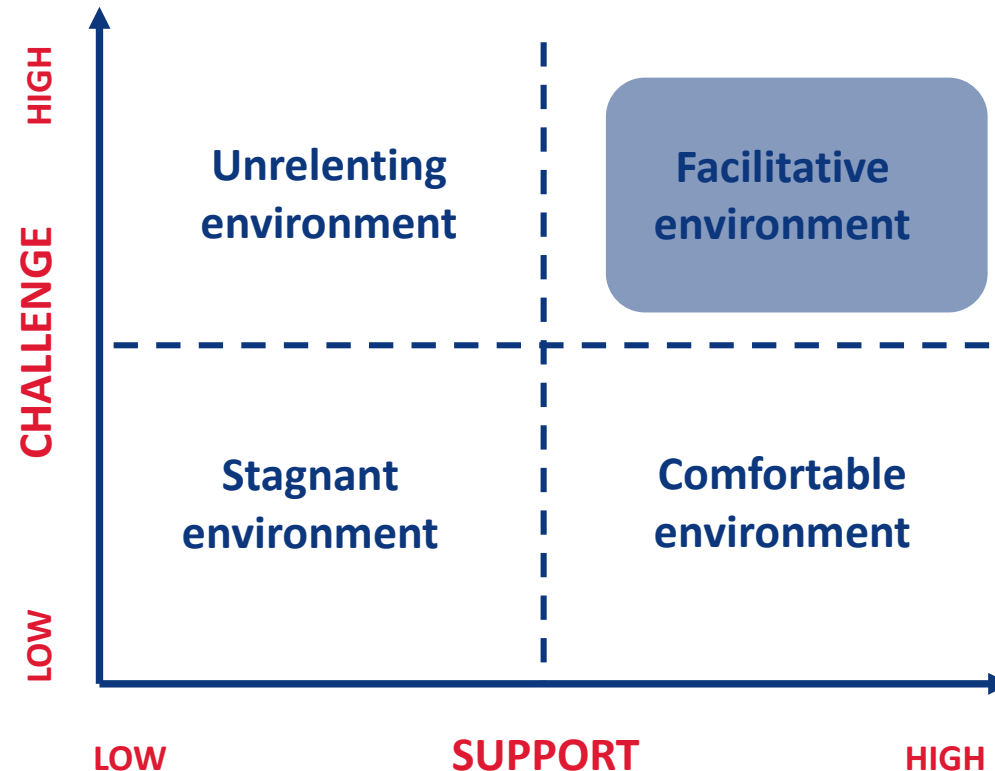
The challenge relates to the high expectation of people in both their behaviours and their performances. It is the level of responsibility or accountability that is required in the environment. Support on the other hand refers to the enabling factors that promote developing personal qualities, learning and trust between people.

The environment that is created by coaches can be separated into four categories, as shown on the right.

In a facilitative environment there will be:

- supportive challenge towards a goal, which looks at what we can learn from a situation
- individuals will have input into their goals
- leaders look to develop healthy relationships between individuals, where people support each other
- there is a feeling of 'we are in this together' rather than a sink or swim attitude

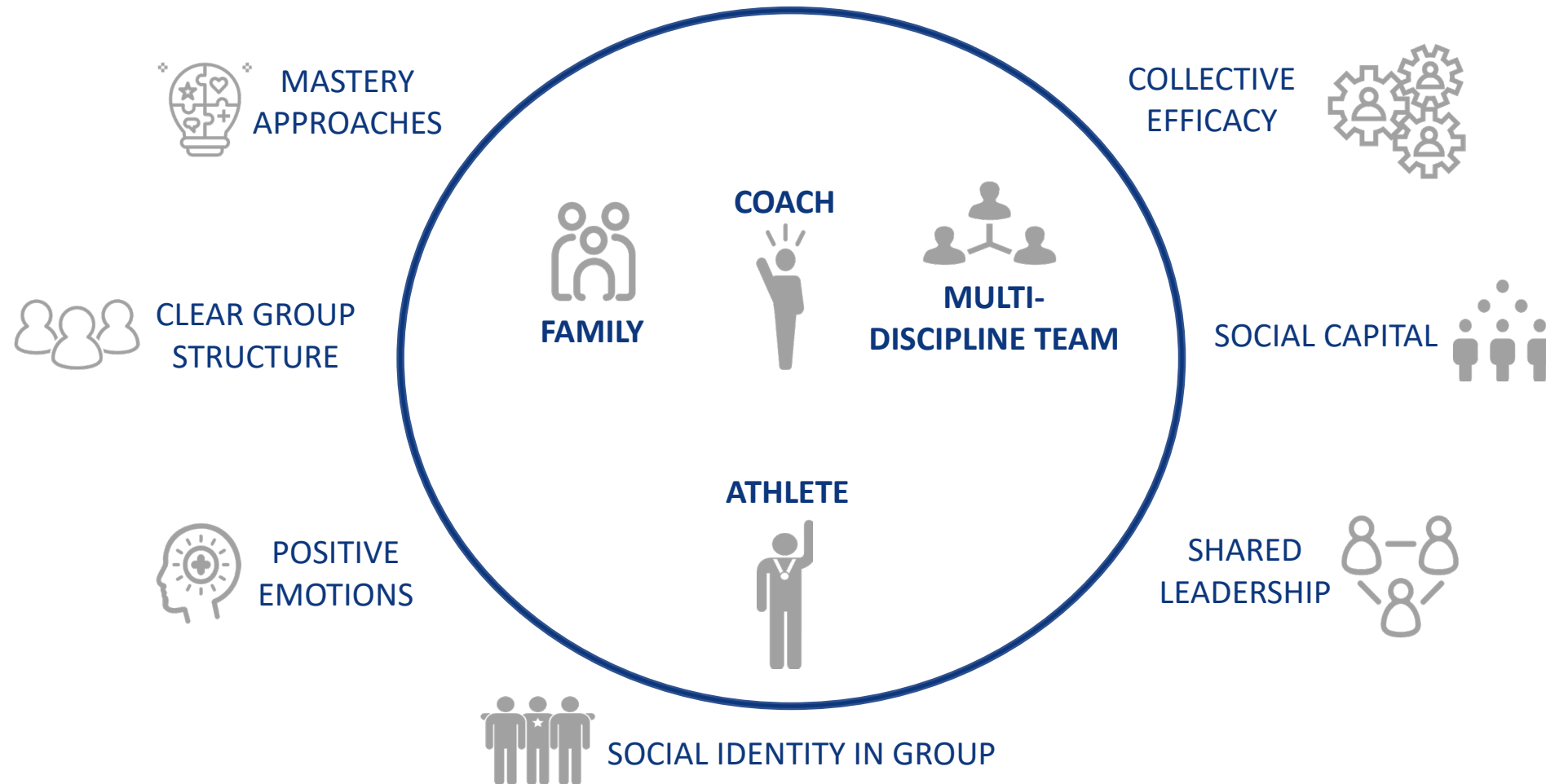
Fletcher and Sarkar (2016)



What would brilliant look like?

You can influence a number of people (e.g. coach), in the environment to create a facilitative environment.

Morgan and Fletcher (2015)



What would brilliant look like?

CLEAR GROUP STRUCTURE

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- shared vision
- group accountability
- open and honest communication
- frequent communication
- positive verbal communication
- humour during setbacks
- shared leadership roles
- clear roles – acceptance of roles

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- sessions designed for clear short & long term goals, created by all
- clarity of roles (e.g. captain; leading value)
- numerous communication loops (e.g. shared social space; individual sessions with coach; review meetings post block/competition)
- clarity of approach to communication type

COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- belief from past success
- drawing on experience of adversity
- fighting spirit in challenging situations
- sticking to the task in difficult moments
- commitment to the team
- sustaining team morale
- working together during setbacks
- others spreading belief after failure
- exhibiting a positive team attitude
- gaining feedback after disappointment

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- highlights board with struggles & how they have been overcome
- use of challenges to support the building of efficacy
- opportunity for players to share positives about each other (e.g. conversations around what they bring; regular player awards).

What would brilliant look like?

MASTERY APPROACHES

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- focus on learning & improvement as a group
- resetting the team focus
- reinforcing positives from poor performance
- preparation to withstand stressors
- refusal to give up despite setbacks
- digging in when facing challenges
- not dwelling on setbacks
- adaptability
- gaining experience of challenging situations
- flexibility
- learning from collective adversity and applying knowledge in the future

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- individual & group goal setting & review opportunities
- what-if planning meetings
- highlight boards of improvements & lessons learnt
- small group discussions between senior athletes & new athletes around areas learnt from
- opportunity for the athlete team to come up with solutions rather than staff team

SOCIAL IDENTITY WITHIN THE TEAM

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- band of brothers
- doing it for each other
- team identify
- shared experiences of adversity and attachment to each other

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- team kit
- opportunities for social exposure
- opportunities for team to experience adversity which requires group cohesion

What would brilliant look like?

SOCIAL CAPITAL

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- deep emotional bond
- loyalty to each other during adversity
- trust and respect in tough times
- friendship in times of need
- emotional support
- tangible support
- esteem support
- informational support
- no blame culture when experiencing failure
- selfless exchanges during challenging situations
- frequency of positive interactions

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- create opportunities to create understanding of each other (incorporation of families in this process)
- buddy system for support
- recognising the effort that an individual puts in
- treating individuals with respect

SHARED TEAM LEADERSHIP

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- player and coach leadership group;
- active involvement in decisions

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- player and coach leadership group;
- development of skills to give feedback;
- player code on feedback based on key values

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- optimism
- enjoyment of experience

HOW MIGHT YOU CREATE THIS?

- individuals to role model optimism



**HIGH PERFORMING PEOPLE
OPENNESS TO LEARNING**

How to use this resource

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

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 Openness to Learning 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 you 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.

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“Openness to learning is the belief that our abilities are malleable if we put in more effort, learn new strategies, apply feedback and challenge ourselves.”

Openness to learning = abilities are malleable

Openness to learning = effort can lead to better results

Openness to learning = learning new strategies can lead to better results

Openness to learning = seeking feedback

Openness to learning = challenging ourselves to move to the boundaries of our comfort

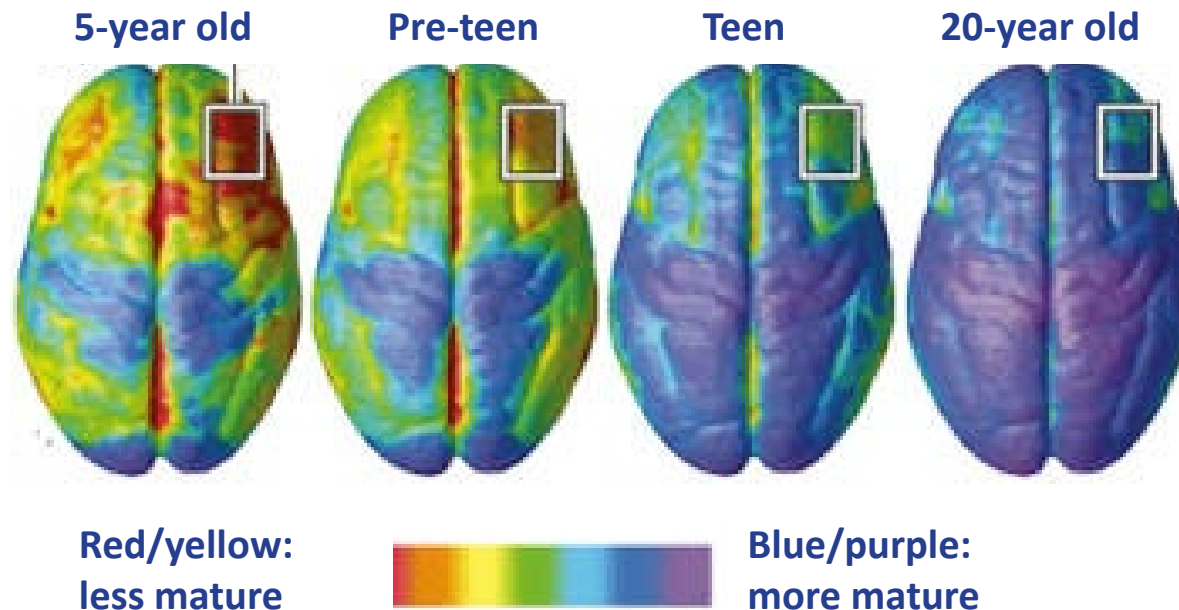
Brain plasticity

Science once told us that the human brain stops developing in childhood, however, we now know that the brain is constantly evolving and changing.

Recent advances in Neuroscience have shown us that the brain is far more malleable than we ever knew. Research on brain plasticity has shown how connectivity between neurons can change with experience.

With practice, neural networks grow new connections, strengthen existing ones, and build insulation that speeds the transmission of impulses.

This means that we can increase our neural growth through actions such as using good strategies, asking questions, practicing, and following good nutrition and sleep habits.

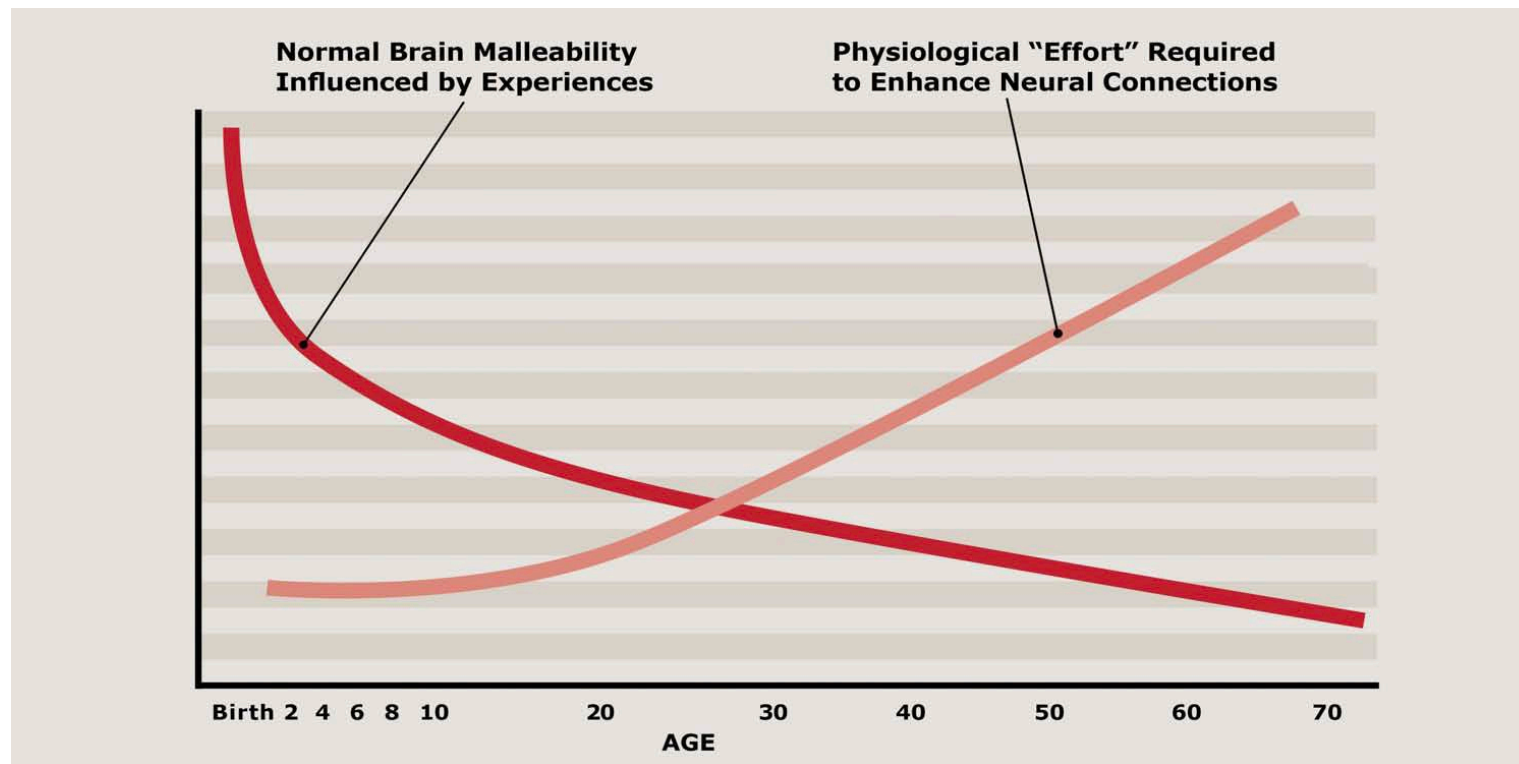


Brain plasticity

At the same time, researchers have been discovering the link between mindsets and achievement. It turns out that if you believe your brain can grow/develop, you behave differently.

This was the beginning of the work by Carol Dweck and colleagues around, what she termed, a growth mindset.

Despite the neurological facts, some people still think that you're stuck with the talents and 'smarts' you're born with.

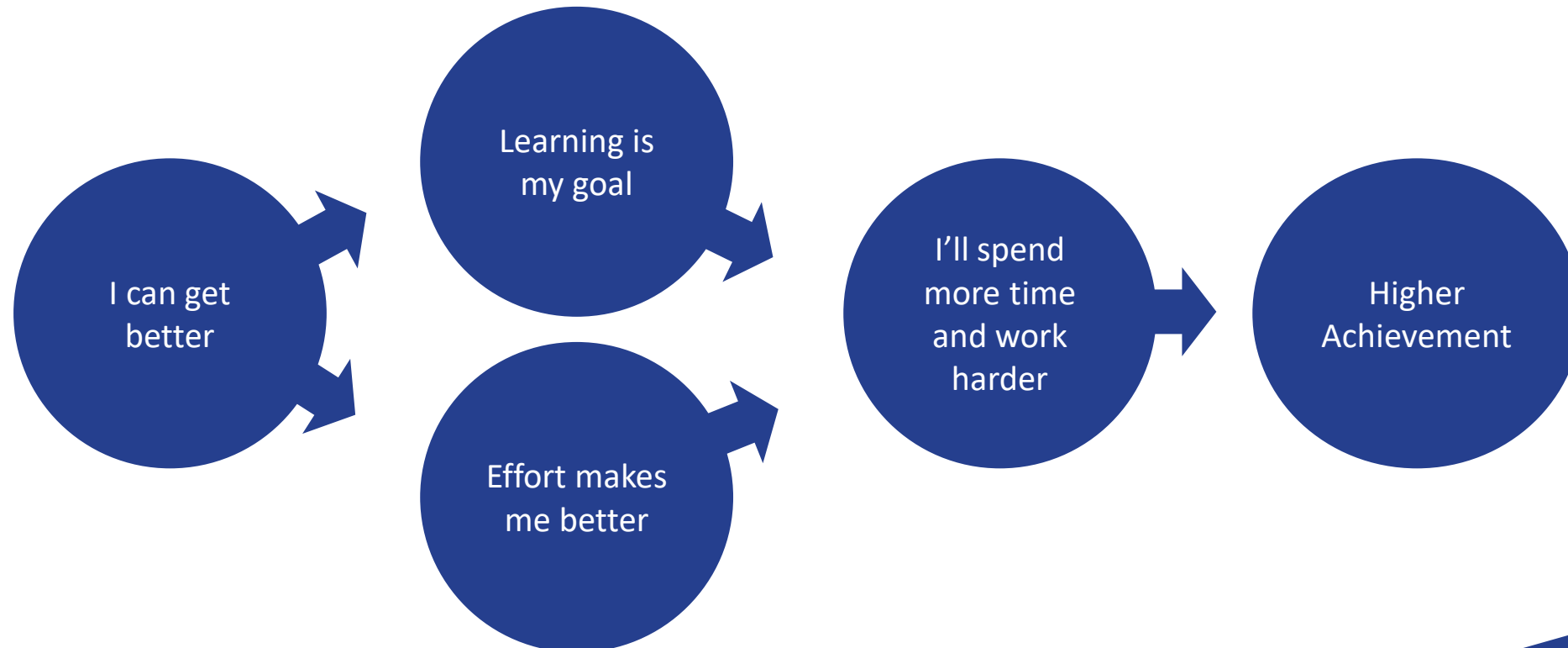


Growth mindset

A Growth Mindset describes the underlying belief that people have about learning and intelligence. When people believe that they can get smarter/better, they understand that effort makes them stronger. Therefore, they put in extra time and effort, and that leads to higher achievement.

Carol Dweck suggested that the individual's mindset sets the stage for either performance goals or learning goals.

A person with a performance goal might be worried about looking good all the time and avoiding challenging work. On the other hand, a person with a learning goal will pursue interesting and challenging tasks in order to learn more.



Growth mindset

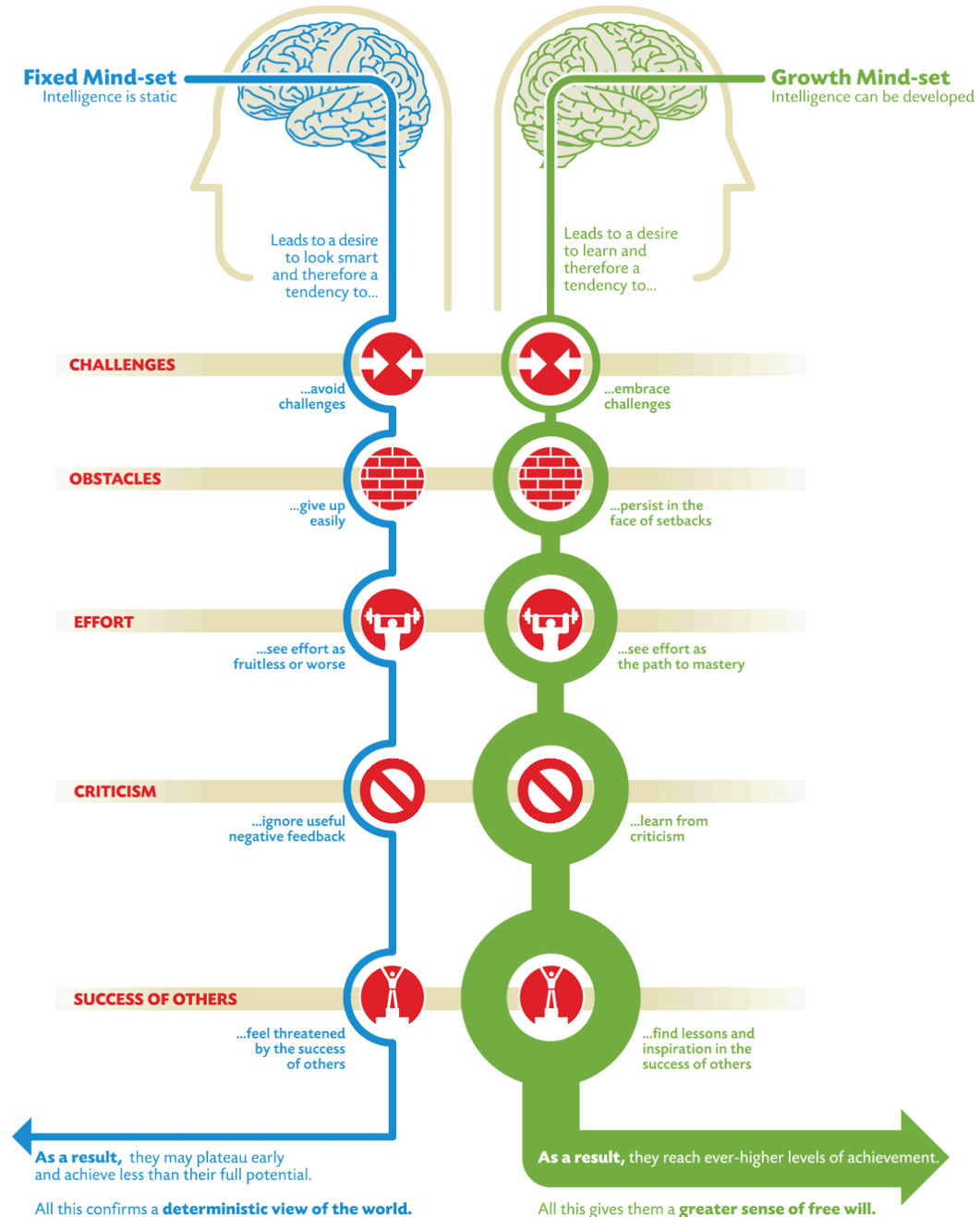
In later studies, Dr. Dweck found that people who believe their abilities are malleable are more likely to embrace challenges and persist despite failure.

This model of the fixed vs growth mindset shows how cognitive, affective, and behavioural features are linked to one's beliefs about the malleability of their intelligence.

A growth mindset is where you believe your ability and talent can be developed over time through effort, good coaching, and persistence compared to a fixed mindset where you believe that ability is fixed – so if you're not good at something, you might believe you'll never be good at it.

A fixed-minded person usually avoids challenges in life, gives up easily, and becomes intimidated or threatened by the success of other people.

This is in part because a fixed mindset doesn't see intelligence and talent as something you develop—it's something you "are".



Developing a growth mindset

1. REALISE THAT, SCIENTIFICALLY, YOU CAN IMPROVE

One of the most direct methods of fostering a growth mindset is helping the athlete understand that brains are built to grow and learn.

By challenging themselves with new experiences, they can form or strengthen neural connections to 'rewire' their brain which, in turn, can make them better.

2. REMOVE THE 'FIXED MINDSET' INNER VOICE

Many people have a negative inner voice that acts against a growth mindset.

Try to help them to flip their thoughts such as 'I can't do this, to 'I can do this if I keep practising' to nurture a growth mindset.

3. REWARD THE PROCESS

Although society often rewards those who achieve excellent outcomes, this can work against a growth mindset.

Instead, reward the process and the effort exerted. One study by Dr Carol Dweck showed that rewarding effort over results on a maths game improved performance.



Developing a growth mindset

4. GET FEEDBACK

Try to encourage them to seek feedback on their work. When athletes are provided with progressive feedback about what they did well and where they can improve, it creates motivation to keep going.

Feedback is also associated with a pleasurable dopamine response and enhances a growth mindset.

5. GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Encourage them to be brave enough to leave their comfort zone to help foster a growth mindset.

When faced with a challenge, try to encourage them to choose the harder option that will allow them to grow.

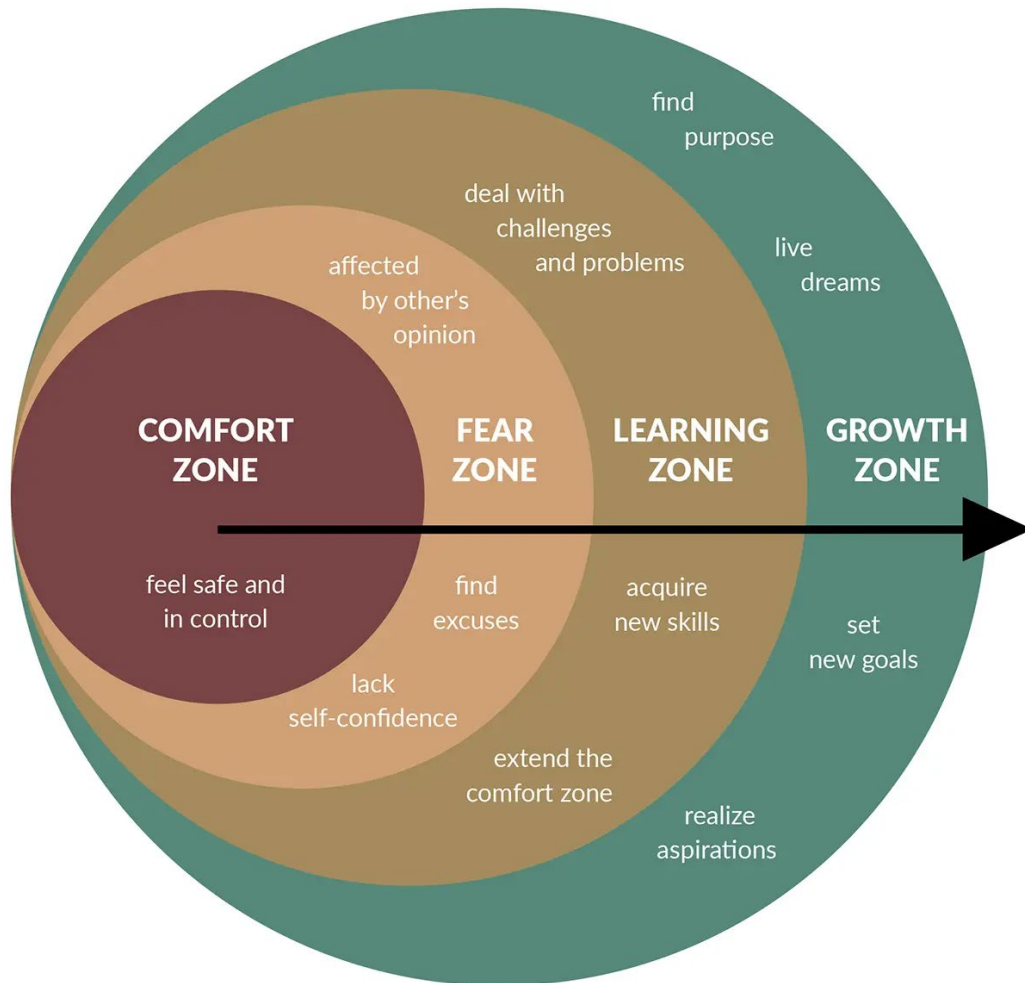
6. ACCEPT FAILURE AS PART OF THE PROCESS

Failure, setbacks, and initial confusion are all part of the learning process!

When trying something new, see occasional 'failures' as positive learning opportunities; help them to try to enjoy the discovery process along the way.



Challenge



To enable growth and development, an athlete will be required to move outside of what they are comfortable at doing (comfort zone).

This comfort zone is a behavioural state where a person operates in an anxiety-neutral condition, where they are able to deliver a steady level of performance, usually without a sense of risk.

Within the comfort zone, people aren't challenging themselves to reach new heights of performance. It's here that people go about routines devoid of risk, causing progress to plateau.

When leaving the comfort zone, we step into the unknown where we are unsure about what might happen and we let go of some of the control we have of the outcome.

People might experience some fear at this point, but this can be a necessary step to the learning and growth zone. It takes courage to step out of the comfort zone.

Without a clear roadmap, there's no way to build on previous experiences and you are looking for new ways of doing things which can be anxiety provoking.

Challenge

Persevere long enough, and you enter the learning zone, where you gain new skills and deal with challenges resourcefully.

After a learning period, a new comfort zone is created, expanding one's ability to reach even greater heights. This is what it means to be in the growth zone.

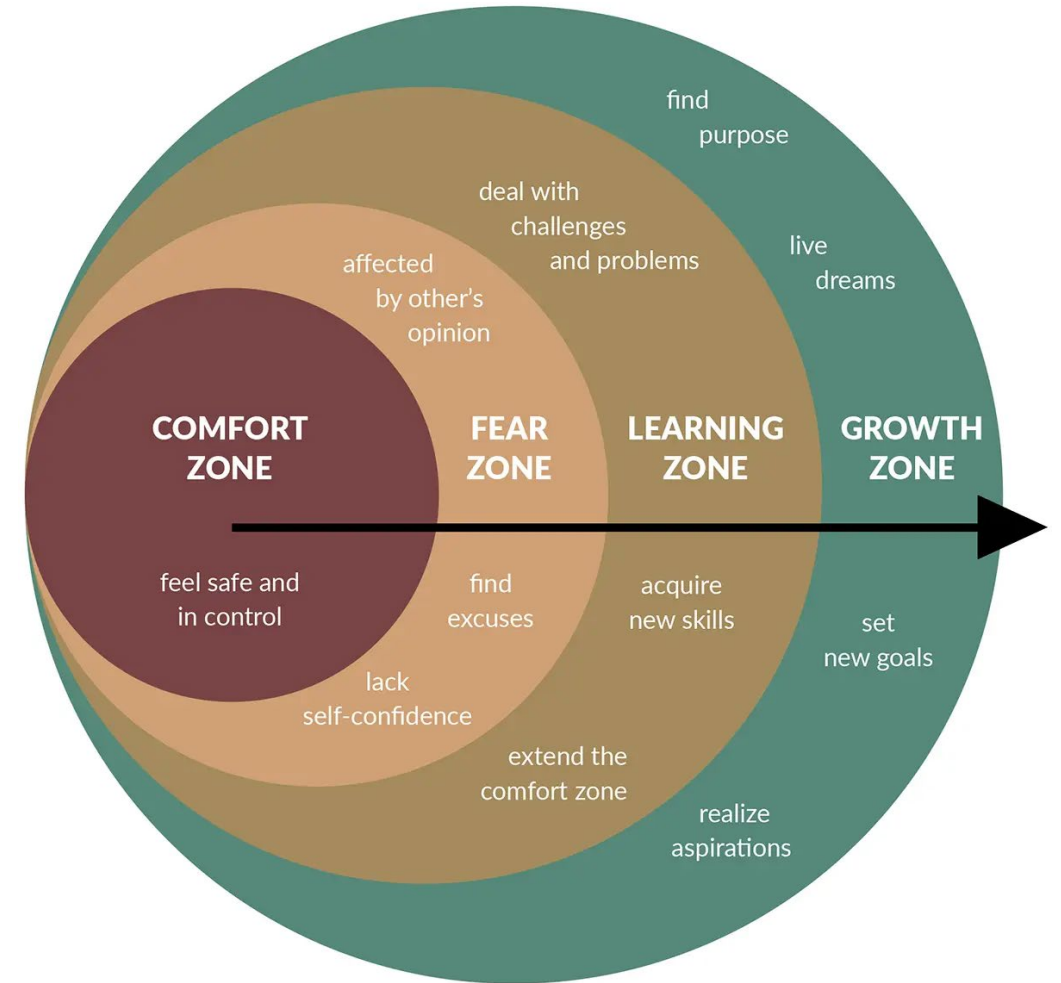
In reality, the process of moving from the comfort zone to a growth zone may not be linear. Peaks, troughs, and plateaus often complicate the journey.

Sometimes, we even need to retreat to the comfort zone periodically before mustering the strength to leave again.

Nevertheless, appreciating the steps can help in tolerating uncertainty.

While occupying the comfort zone, it's tempting to feel safe, in control, and that the environment is on an even keel. It's smooth sailing.

The best sailors, however, aren't born in smooth waters.



Feedback

Feedback is one of the fastest ways to focus our efforts, correct our course, and achieve our goals.

Receiving feedback and putting it into action is especially important in order to grow. None of us are perfect, and we all have blind spots. It can sometimes be tough to handle, especially if it's detailed feedback from a coach or another athlete with whom you have been working with for a while.

Those who can gracefully receive feedback and put it into practice are more likely to get the benefit of the doubt. The extra attention to their training can make the difference between good and great performance.

While the idea of feedback may seem simple, our emotions and ego can often get in the way, making it more complicated. Being deliberate in asking for feedback and being in the right headspace to receive it is key to the feedback process.

When you know how to receive feedback, it results in honest, thoughtful comments and follow-through. You can also take constructive criticism and turn it into an opportunity for professional development.

Let's take a look at how to ask for feedback, what makes it valuable, and how to give actionable feedback to others.



Asking for feedback

Feedback can be intimidating. Feedback is often understood as backward-looking and when we ask for feedback from people, we are also choosing people based on their experience working with us.

With our athletes it is useful to help reinforce these key messages.

1. REFLECT ON WHAT THEY HOPE TO GAIN

Help them to know the goal in asking for feedback.

Most of the time, their goal will be to gain an accurate picture of what they're doing well and where they can improve.

The goal is to walk away with actionable takeaways that you can implement.

They know feedback is valuable when they have a clear sense of something they will do differently.

Productive feedback allows them to grow. It also allows them to recognise their strengths.

2. IDENTIFY THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO ASK FOR FEEDBACK

Get them to consider whom to turn to for advice, above all else, consider the source.

Athletes should only ask for feedback from people whose intentions they trust and who will have a relevant perspective.

To get a well-rounded perspective, consult different people, they'll benefit from seeing themselves from more than one angle.

3. SPEND SOME TIME REFLECTING

Whether there are areas where they often struggle or where they sense there might be a disconnect.

Asking for a specific example, or saying "Can you tell me more about that?" Let the person giving feedback know that you really want to understand their perspective.

Receiving feedback

Receiving feedback can sometimes be difficult. Here are a few suggestions to help your athletes enhance their ability to use the feedback they receive.

1. TAKE NOTES ON YOUR FEEDBACK

Feedback is a gift. Just as important as seeking feedback is hearing advice with an open mind and a desire to implement it.

Remember that feedback is an opportunity to understand how others perceive you and your work. Help them recognise that they don't have to agree with it, but knowing others' perspectives is more useful than not knowing.

Put themselves in the other person's shoes and keep in mind that it can be just as hard to be the person giving the feedback. Try to help them to put their ego aside & accept advice with a positive attitude.

2. GRACIOUSLY REFLECT & REVIEW

Get the athletes to think about what they'll do with the feedback after they've received it. Organise the feedback so that they can refer back to it. Make a step-by-step plan that outlines how they'll implement the feedback in tangible ways.

Consider sharing that plan back with at least some of the people who gave it. Receiving input isn't always easy, especially if you don't like or agree with it.



Receiving feedback

3. BE WILLING TO ACCEPT INFORMATION WITH A POSITIVE, OPEN MIND

Feedback is about someone else's perception — in this case, perception is reality.

The athlete's default may be denial or defensiveness to someone else's views. Help them to understand the situation from the perspective of the feedback provider. Understand that they are most likely giving that feedback with positive intent.

That is, they believe that they are giving helpful feedback that will result in a positive change to your behaviour.

It can be useful for them to keep in mind that becoming defensive when a professional gives them advice will not work in their favour. They'll be far less likely to receive honest responses in the future.

Remind them that feedback on performance isn't personal. Receive the comments pragmatically instead of emotionally.

4. ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

Although difficult, feedback is a positive asset that will help them to improve and achieve their goals.

The opposite of a growth mindset is one that's fixed. A fixed mindset views feedback as an attack on self-worth.

Remember that any negative feedback about their performance is all part of the process. Be thankful that the feedback reveals potential blind spots that could prevent them from reaching their full potential.

5. BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL

Release any judgments or preconceived notions of the person giving the feedback. Assume that the advice-giver has good intentions.

Assuming the best creates a neutral environment for a peaceful and productive exchange to take place.

Receiving feedback

6. BE VULNERABLE

They may learn something new during feedback — that's why they've asked for it.

But don't be afraid to allow them to express their feelings. The best way to avoid misunderstandings is to ask clarifying questions.

Encourage them to, when in doubt, simply respond, "Thank you for sharing that with me." They're allowed to have authentic reactions.

But keeping them professional and appropriate will ensure that they continue to get useful feedback in the future.

No one wants to take the effort and risk of providing honest feedback if the receiver is defensive, dismissive, argumentative, or overly emotional.

7. SEPARATE PERFORMANCE FROM IDENTITY

It bears repeating that teammate or coach feedback is about the athletic performance, not about them as a person.

It can be hard at first, but reminding themselves of this helps them not to take criticism personally.

If, at any point during the conversation, they feel belittled or humiliated, give them a moment to distance themselves and take control of their emotions.

If necessary, coach them to be honest and say, "I'm going to need some more time to process that one. Let's move on for now."

They can follow up later via email or another conversation if they feel the difficult feedback warrants more exploration.



Resources

- **Mindset**
by Carol Dweck
- **How the brain learns**
by David Sousa

YOUTUBE

- **Growth Mindset vs Fixed mindset**
- **The Growth Mindset | Carol Dweck | Talks at Google**
- **Growth Mindset of Athletic Ability**

A female canoeist in a white long-sleeved shirt and sunglasses is shown in a dynamic pose, paddling a white racing canoe on a body of water. The canoe has a red letter 'A' and the word 'WILLOW' on its side. The background is a blurred blue water surface with some orange buoys. A red and white diagonal graphic element separates the image from the text below.

HIGH PERFORMING PEOPLE SELF-AWARENESS

How to use this resource

We are really pleased to provide you with this resource on the topic of Self-Awareness.

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 Self-Awareness 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 you 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.

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Self-awareness is the ability to make oneself the object of one's own attention.

- Able to demonstrate a good awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses, values, motivations, emotions and learning preferences.
- Able to use this awareness to realistically evaluate their own performance and development.



What is self-awareness?

Anthony K. Tjan states “**without self-awareness, you cannot understand your strengths and weaknesses, your super powers versus your kryptonite.**”

Athletes who can become honestly self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, motivation, habits, values and beliefs can develop their ability to be consistent and ultimately control performance.

At any one time, attention may be turned outward toward the environment or directed inward towards the self but may not be focused on both at the same time.

Unfortunately, many athletes are not very self-aware. Younger and less experienced athletes may find it difficult to recognise certain aspects of themselves and their performances.

Increased self-awareness has been shown to lead to a number of predictable consequences.

Individuals who are self-aware have been found to be more likely to:

- conform to standards of correct behaviour
- help others and to decrease the urge to cheat
- recognise bodily states, attitudes, and feelings
- give better feedback
- attribute personal responsibility to themselves
- make behavioural attempts to reduce discrepancies between one's self and one's values and standards



Factors influencing self-awareness

Any stimulus or situation that reminds an individual of himself or herself can lead to a heightened salience of self. For example, seeing oneself in a mirror, photograph, or video can lead to increased awareness of particular self-dimensions that are most relevant at that time.

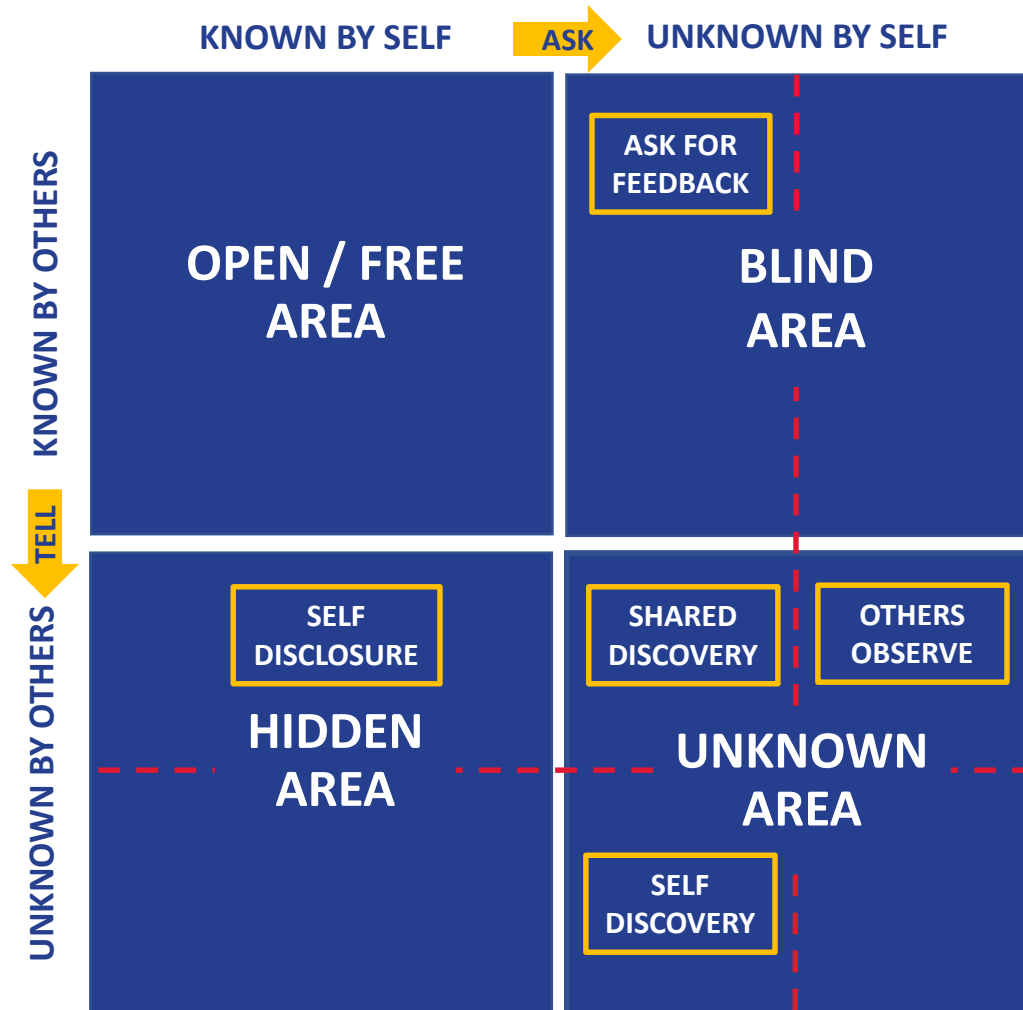
Dependent on the situational factors, the relevant dimensions may be related to task performance, attitudes, beliefs, or physical appearance.

While any number of situations could potentially lead to heightened self-awareness, four situational factors have been demonstrated to consistently lead to increased self-directed attention, arousal, and increased pressure:



These can be influenced in our coaching to develop appropriate self-awareness

Johari's window



In developing self-awareness, we can consider a number of sources and approaches to increase it. Johari's window (Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham, 1955) is a model that explores this.

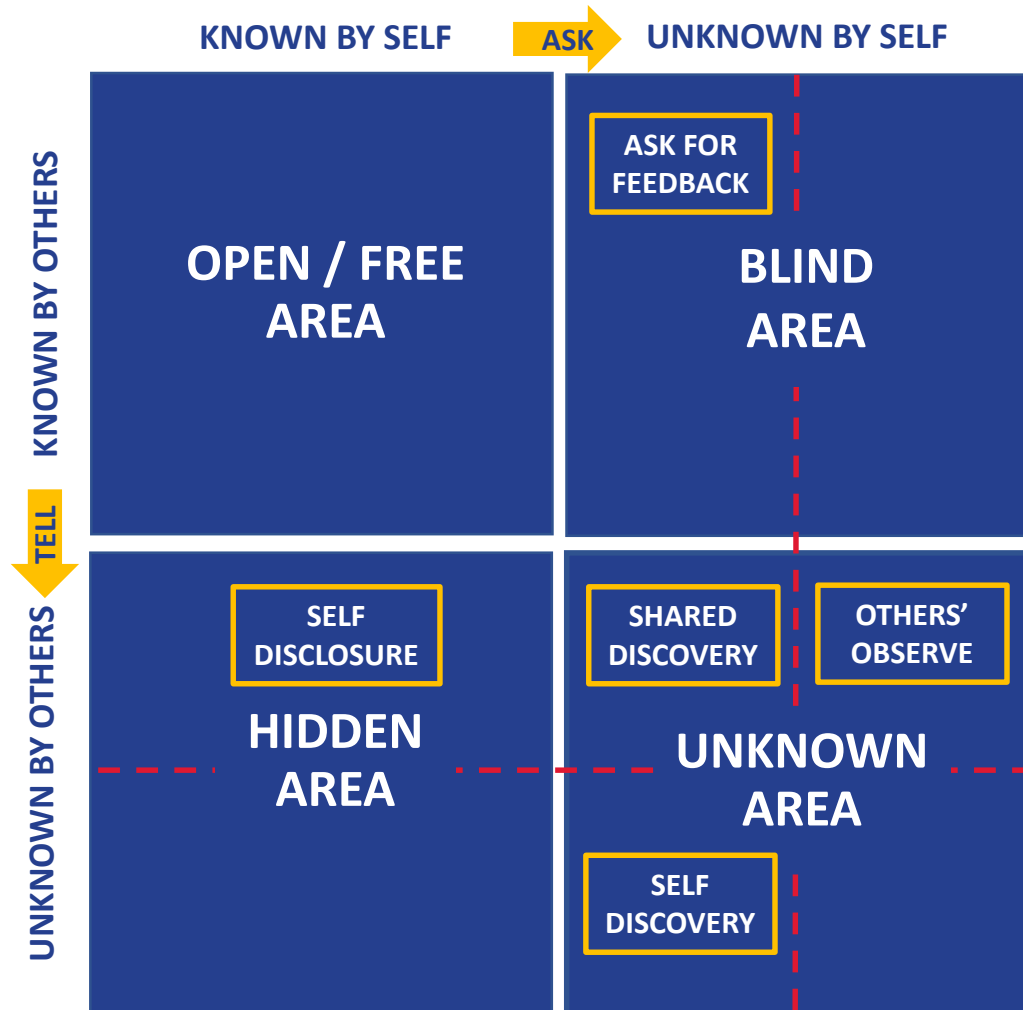
The model works using four area quadrants. Anything you know about yourself and are willing to share is part of your **open area**.

Individuals can build trust between themselves by disclosing information to others and learning about others from the information they in turn disclose about themselves.

Any aspect that you do not know about yourself, but others within the group have become aware of, is in your **blind area**.

With the help of feedback from others you can become aware of some of your positive and negative traits as perceived by others and overcome some of the personal issues that may be inhibiting your personal or group dynamics within the team.

Johari's window



There are also aspects about yourself that you are aware of, but might not want others to know; this quadrant is known as your **hidden area**.

This leaves just one area which is unknown to you or anyone else – the **unknown area**.

The balance between the four quadrants can change. You might want to tell someone an aspect of your life that you had previously kept hidden. For example, maybe you are not comfortable contributing ideas in large groups. This would increase your open area and decrease your hidden area.

It is also possible to increase your open area by asking for feedback from people. When feedback is given honestly to you it can reduce the size of your blind area.

What coaches can do

LEARNING TO PAY ATTENTION

Encourage athletes to observe and pay more attention to their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Athletes can be taught to be more aware and focused in the present moment.

A simple exercise would be to ask the athlete to close their eyes and observe their normal breathing pattern. Ask them to notice the rhythm, rate and depth of their breathing.

POST-TRAINING & POST-REGATTA REFLECTION

After every training session take a few minutes to evaluate what happened in a journal.

- Ask yourself, did you achieve your goals?
- Did you follow the plan?
- What went well and not so well? What should work on in training based on this performance?

WATCH FOOTAGE

Watching footage of past performances can open your eyes whether it is during a slump or just to become more aware of your patterns of behaviour in competition.

When you watch footage it allows you to spend time looking at body language, eyes, and routines especially before and after big points and critical changes in momentum.

LOOK FOR SIGNS DURING COMPETITION

When and how does the athlete get down on themselves?

What are the trouble spots when performance drops?

Knowing this allows a coach to develop a plan to overcome it.

What coaches can do

Becoming aware of more than just strengths and weaknesses

Some sports coaches may be aware of the performance profiling tool used to help athletes become better aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

To expand upon this tool, use a **S.W.O.T analysis** as a follow-up discussion on how an athlete can use their strengths, overcome weaknesses, and consider their opportunities and threats.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths and weaknesses can be systematically identified via a performance profile or through brainstorming exercise.

Ask the athlete to describe how others would see their strengths and weaknesses (e.g., how would your coach and/or team mates describe some of your strengths and weaknesses that you may not be aware of?)

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

Ask the athlete to reflect on what opportunities exist for them in the future. These could be potential future strengths.

Similarly, what are future threats? These are potential goal-busters that might be challenges that hinder the athlete from achieving their goals.

CREATE STRATEGIES THAT WILL GET USED

Ask the athlete to reflect on the 4 areas and what they have learnt about themselves from the above task.

Next, encourage the athlete to think about how they will use this information.

The following questions may support developing useful strategies:

How can you **Use** each strength?

How can you **Stop** each weakness?

How can you **Exploit** each opportunity?

How can you **Defend** against each threat?

What coaches can do

Core beliefs and values

Helping athletes to become better aware of their identity as well as core beliefs and values can be a useful exercise.

ASK AN ATHLETE TO WRITE THEIR OWN 'MISSION STATEMENT'

It will help them understand what's important to them and remind themselves of the reasons why they participate in their sport.

This activity may be particularly helpful for athletes who are struggling with their motivation or facing difficult decisions about their future.

Some questions that may help in writing their final mission statement are:

- What values are most important to you?
- What are your contributions to various areas of your life (the world in general, family, friends, team mates, community, etc.)
- What are some of your successes that you are most proud of?
- Identify some goals (short-term and long-term)

