

THE BRAVE ATHLETE

**CALM THE F*CK DOWN AND RISE TO
THE OCCASION**

**BY SIMON MARSHALL, PhD, AND
LESLEY PATERSON**

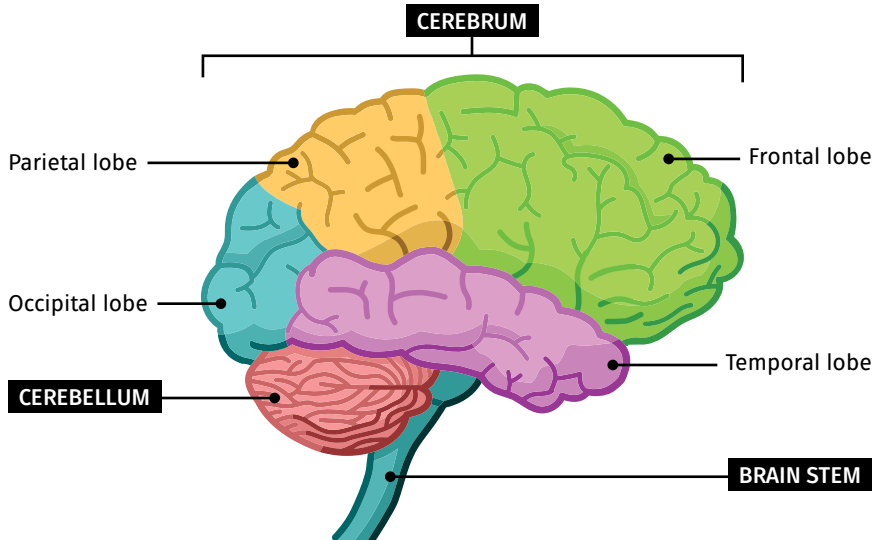
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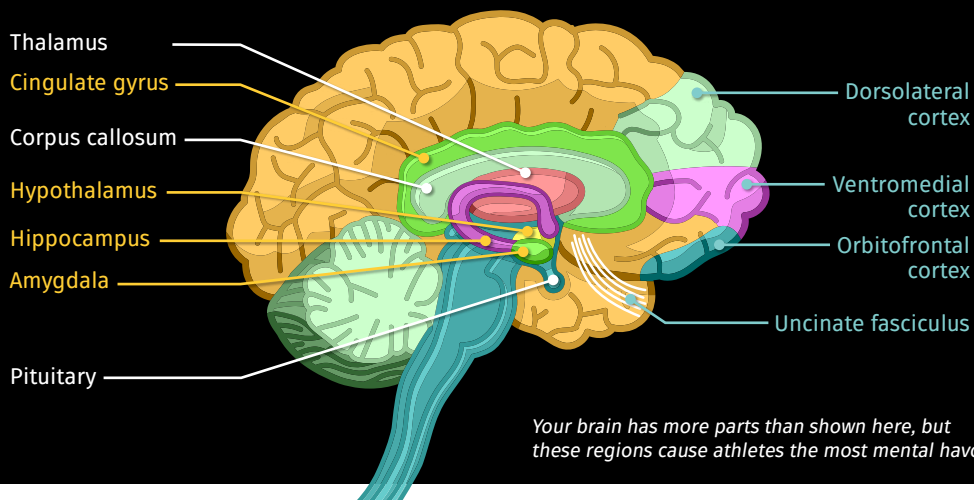
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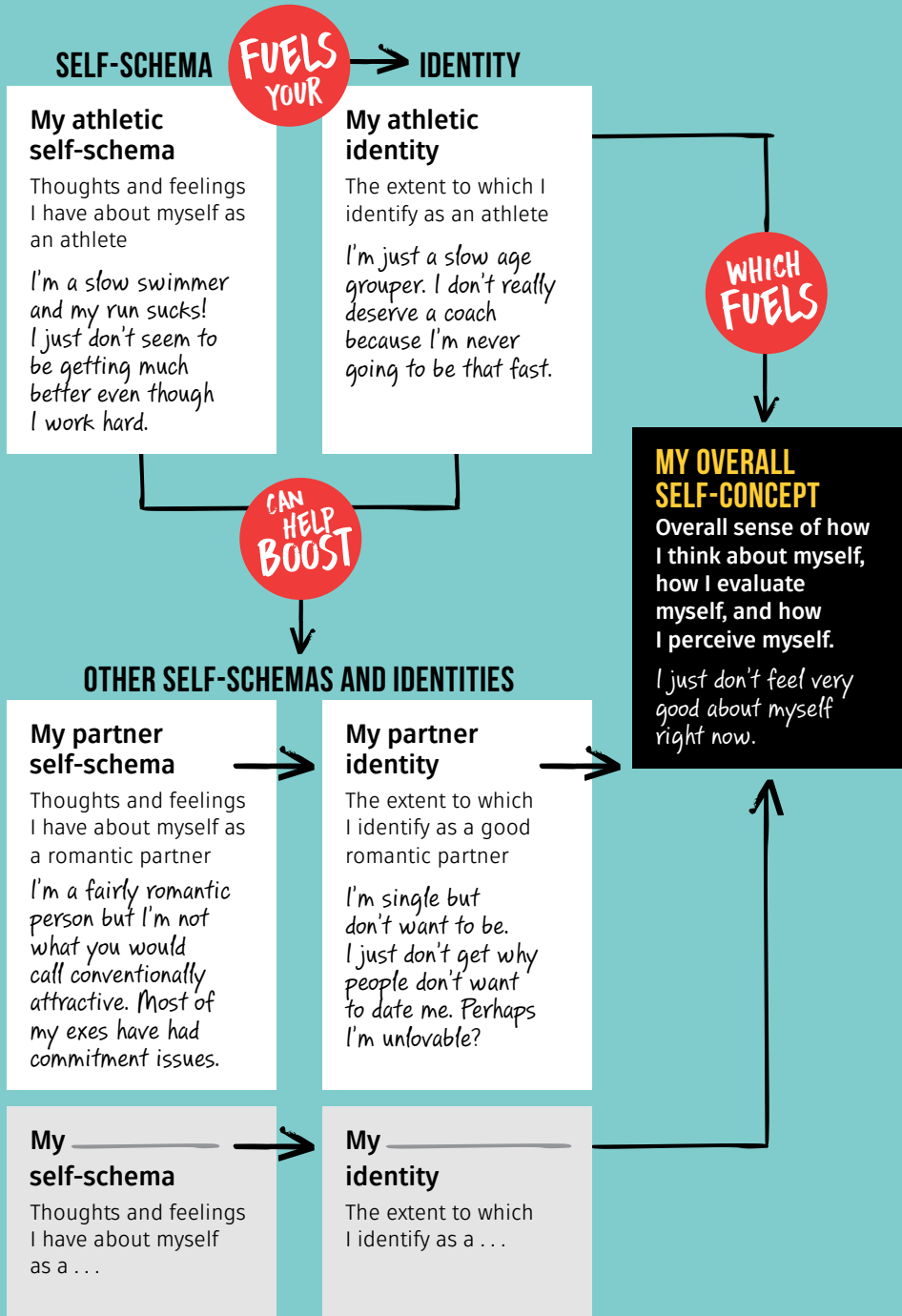
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PARTS OF THE BRAIN

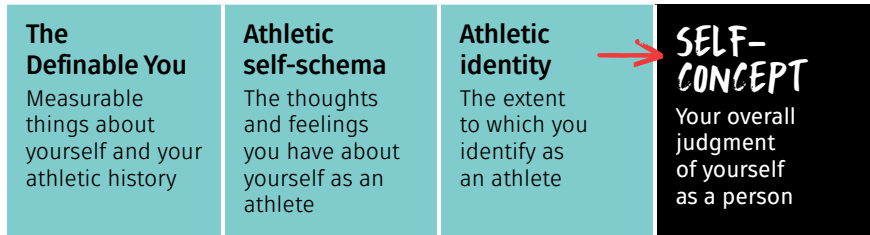


HELLO, BRAIN: WHERE OLD MEETS NEW





THE DEFINABLE YOU



EXERCISE 1

WATCHING THE SUCK

Do this exercise while sitting comfortably and in a quiet environment.

Recall a recent experience that you've had in sport that felt less than stellar, preferably one that totally sucked. It could have been a race that didn't go well, a training session that went sideways, or some other thing that felt awful.

Recreate that experience in your head—the sights, sounds, and smells, everything that makes it come back to life. Don't worry if you find this difficult. It is. Once you've got the movie playing, leave your body and hover above it, as if you were a human drone, following yourself around, watching yourself go through the suck. You can see yourself, but you are not you in the moment. I know, it sounds bananas.

Pick out the thoughts and feelings the “you” down on the ground is experiencing. Try to be aware enough to label the experience but not actually have it (a bit like watching a friend grimace in a race and just knowing what's going through their mind). If it helps, see thought bubbles appear with the stuff that was going through your head. Now start describing and labeling what you see and the thoughts and feelings you remember yourself having: *Oh yes, that's the part when Judith caught me. She's coming up on the inside. And now she's passing me. There's the first thought: “Judith is passing me? I mean, really? F*cking Judith?” And there goes the second thought: “I must be having a bad day if she's caught me. See how my whole body starts to tense because I'm so pissed at myself?”* And so on. If you find yourself wandering down and into the body of the you below, get back up to your drone!

Continue to label the thought bubbles for another few minutes.

Congratulations! You've just managed to detach yourself from a cognitive and emotional experience! The real you (the chess player) was up in the drone, while your thoughts and feelings (your chess pieces) were busy down below making your life hell. The next time you get overwhelmed by feelings of not being good enough or worthy enough as an athlete, use this exercise to separate the real you from the painful self-schema that's causing you problems. This technique is also used extensively in the practice of meditation because it helps us to avoid getting bogged down or overwhelmed by negative thoughts and feelings.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF AS AN ATHLETE

In the space below, describe yourself as an athlete. No one else is going to read this, so try to be as honest as you can. Know that there isn't a right or wrong answer—this is just a chance for you to write about your athleticism. Write whatever you want in the way that feels most natural.

Now reread your self-description and circle all the words or statements that relate to the Definable You (things that are factually accurate). Read it through a second time and underline all of the words or statements that reflect thoughts or feelings about yourself as an athlete.

Here's an example of self-description, coded for facts, thoughts, and feelings:

I'm Isaac, an age-group triathlete and mountain biker. I'm 34 and have been racing for about 6 years. It's hard to train as much as I want because I have a new baby and demanding job! I enjoy racing but love the training most of all. I'm a pretty decent athlete—I ran track and cross country in high school and was headed to UNC on a scholarship but injured my ACL in my senior year. In triathlon, I do sprint- and Olympic-distance racing. My run is my fastest sport but my swimming sucks! I didn't grow up as a swimmer, so I'm never going to be that good at it. I really want to improve, but I think that I lack a bit of confidence to really lay it all out there. When it starts to get hard, I mentally back down. Perhaps I just don't want to hurt that much. Etc., etc.

ATTRIBUTE #2: *I call myself an athlete.*

Current thoughts and actions:

Yes, I train my ass off and compete for a local XC team. I'm always reading trail-running mags. Work colleagues call me Forrest Gump!

I secretly love that they think of me as a badass athlete.

What I will say to myself: *When at the bigger races or around the top guys, tell myself that I've put the work in, and that I belong there.*

Actions I will take: *Be more proactive about the marginal gains. Get a biomechanical analysis (finally!) and use foam roller six nights a week!*

ATTRIBUTE #4: *I don't feel the need to prove it to others.*

Current thoughts and actions:

Yup, I'm guilty of posting my workout stats on social media to show that I'm a badass. Want people to see how hard I work and love seeing people comment on it.

What I will say to myself: *I will ask myself, why am I posting this? To show off? To encourage others? Does it really do that?*

Actions I will take: *Stop posting screen captures of my workouts on social media that are solely to fish for likes. Try to add posts about sessions in which I struggled or learned a valuable lesson.*

GETTING YOUR SELF-SCHEMA DUCKS IN A ROW

Let's take a look at how your current thoughts and actions match up with the self-schema of a mature athletic identity. The statements that follow are what we are striving toward. It doesn't matter if this isn't you now. In the space below each statement, describe how your current actions and thoughts do or don't match up. Then think through how you can modify them to better align with a mature athletic identity. In other words, going forward what things will you say to yourself to help nurture maturity, and what actions will you take to reinforce this thinking?

I currently participate in sports or exercise.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

I call myself an athlete.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

Others call me an athlete.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

Continued

I am not embarrassed about my athletic ability or performance. I don't feel the need to prove it to others.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

I don't engage in excessive self-criticism or self-aggrandizement about my ability or performance.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

I have pastimes or hobbies outside of sport. I have non-athlete friends and/or I enjoy talking about non-sports-related topics in social situations.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

I have emotional reactions that most people would consider reasonable when shit goes wrong.

Current thoughts and actions:

What I will say to myself:

Actions I will take:

LESLEY PATERSON'S *ALTER EGO*

Name: Paddy McGinty

Characteristics: An old-school boxer. Not graceful or pretty but a rough-around-the-edges fighter. Thrives on being the underdog. Loves tough conditions. Turns feral when backed into a corner. Will out-suffer anyone. Gets knocked down five times, will get up six. When in pain or discomfort, raises the stakes by asking, "Is that all you've got?"

INSPIRATION

My alter ego reminds me of... Tom Hardy's MMA character in the movie *Warrior*. William Wallace in *Braveheart*.

Their backstory: Started with nothing. Fought against impossible odds to win. People always write him off, but he out-works and out-suffers everyone. Finishes every match beaten and bloody but still standing.

How I will get into character: I become Paddy when I put on my race suit or certain types of training gear for hard sessions.

How I will act: Avoid eye contact with other competitors before the race starts. Wear hoodie and headphones. Walk everywhere with strong body language and real sense of purpose. Shoulders up, chest out. Eyes say "not to be f*cked with."

Things I will say to myself: Always fight. It's never over.

Something I will wear or do: Write "I am Free" and "Be Brave" in big letters on my forearms before a race. Being brave is about having the courage to give it everything. "I am free" reminds me to not care about expectations. On good days and bad days, being free is about just getting lost in the personal struggle.

EXERCISE 4

ALTER EGO DEVELOPMENT KIT

Name:

*Give your alter ego a name
that fits his or her personality*

Characteristics:

*Describe the traits or
personality of your alter ego*

INSPIRATION

My alter ego reminds me of...

*List people or characters whom
your alter ego reminds you of*

Their backstory:

*Describe the kind of life your
alter ego has lived;
things already endured*

How I will get into character:

*Describe how you will
mark the transition*

How I will act:

*Describe your posture, how you
will walk and talk, or other actions
that get you into character*

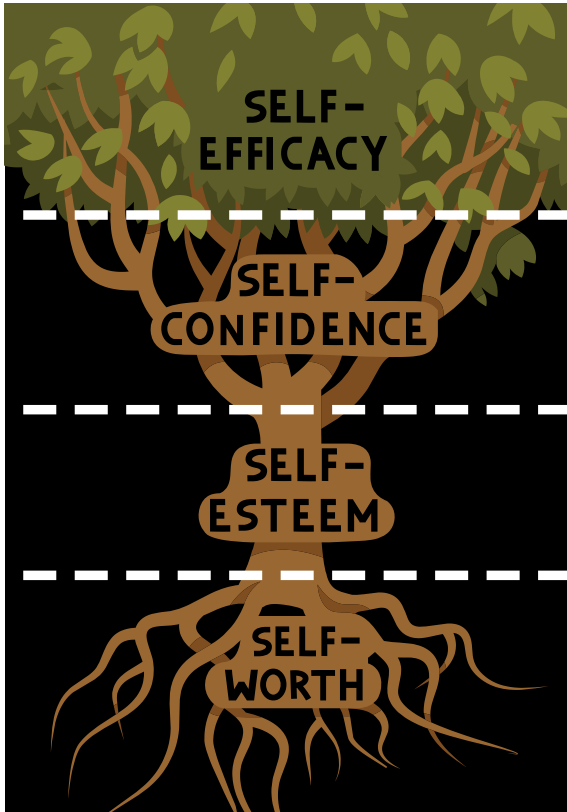
Things I will say to myself:

*Include statements or
mantras that are typical of
how your alter ego thinks*

Something I will wear or do:

*Describe physical reminders
you can use that will
be noticeable during races*

SELF-WORTH TREE



The belief that you can perform a specific task at a certain level

I'm 80 percent confident that I can run a flat 5K in under 20 minutes.

Beliefs about your general abilities

I'm a good athlete.

Generalized emotional judgments about yourself based on what you've experienced in life

I'm a competent person.

Deeply held beliefs about your value and worth as a person

I'm a good person.

A CHECKUP FOR YOUR SELF-JUDGMENT SYSTEM

In each category, we've included a sample of the questions that tap into different aspects of your self-judgment system. Remember to get a second opinion from someone who knows you well.

	COMPLETELY TRUE	MOSTLY TRUE	SOMEWHAT TRUE/FALSE	MOSTLY FALSE	COMPLETELY FALSE
SELF-WORTH					
1. I could disappear from the surface of the earth and nobody would notice or care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I feel worthless and useless.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I will never amount to anything or anyone significant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I don't deserve to be loved and respected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I constantly ask those I care about whether they love me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I think I'm a failure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SELF-ESTEEM					
1. I think that overall, people find me boring to talk to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I mess up everything I touch.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I feel as though I let down those I care about.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. When someone criticizes me, I can't help but feel that I really am incompetent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I avoid having arguments with others because I don't want them to get angry or dislike me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I modify my personality, opinions, or appearance in order to be accepted by others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Continued

	COMPLETELY TRUE	MOSTLY TRUE	SOMEWHAT TRUE/FALSE	MOSTLY FALSE	COMPLETELY FALSE
SELF-CONFIDENCE					
1. When I face difficulty, I feel hopeless and negative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If something looks difficult, I avoid doing it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I am not confident I've done a good job unless someone else points it out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Before making any decision, I ask other people if I'm doing the right thing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I will never be as skilled or as smart as I should be.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I rarely achieve the goals that I set for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SELF-EFFICACY					
1. I am great on long endurance efforts, but I'm not very good at shorter, faster efforts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I'm not very good at strength work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I look at a scheduled workout and wonder how I'm going to get through it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I don't perform well in the heat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I avoid group workouts until I'm fast enough.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I'm not very good at pacing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SELF-CRITICAL THOUGHT: I am so slow, it feels pointless. I am hopeless.

TRY TO AVOID . . .	YES, GREAT!
I'm not slow and it's not pointless. As long as I try my best, that's all that matters.	I may be slow, but I'm training in the heart rate zone that my coach wants me in and I finished the session. It wasn't pretty, but I'm no quitter.
I will be faster soon. Just suck it up and do the work.	So I'm one of the slower athletes. Who f*cking cares? If I can't keep up, the sun still rises.
It doesn't matter what other people think of me. All that matters is that I'm out here.	No matter how fast or slow I am, there will always be athletes above me and below me. Getting faster won't make me happier. I will find the joy in today.

EXERCISE 2

CONFRONTING THE BULLSHIT

Use the left-hand column to write five of your most common, yet specific, self-criticisms you notice. For each self-spank, create a meaningful and factually substantiated alternative way of interpreting that thought. You don't even have to agree with the alternative; just offer it and write it down. Try to develop counter-statements that focus on self-acceptance, rather than self-criticism. Follow our lead.

My Self-Critical Chimp Talk (Self-spanks)	Alternative Interpretation (Ask yourself, "So what?")
I'm never going to be fast enough to ride with that group.	I'm fast enough to start with them and hang in for as long as I can. No one except me cares if I get dropped.
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

EXERCISE 3

YOUR DAILY GRATITUDE LOG STARTS HERE

Write down three things you are grateful for every day for three weeks—and watch it work.* Avoid the banal, the vague, and the cheesy, or things in the future. Focus on things you noticed that make you smile or feel happy, even if just for a few seconds. To get started, complete the first week of log entries below.

Today I am grateful for . . .

MONDAY

1

2

3

TUESDAY

1

2

3

WEDNESDAY

1

2

3

THURSDAY

1

2

3

FRIDAY

1

2

3

SATURDAY

1

2

3

SUNDAY

1

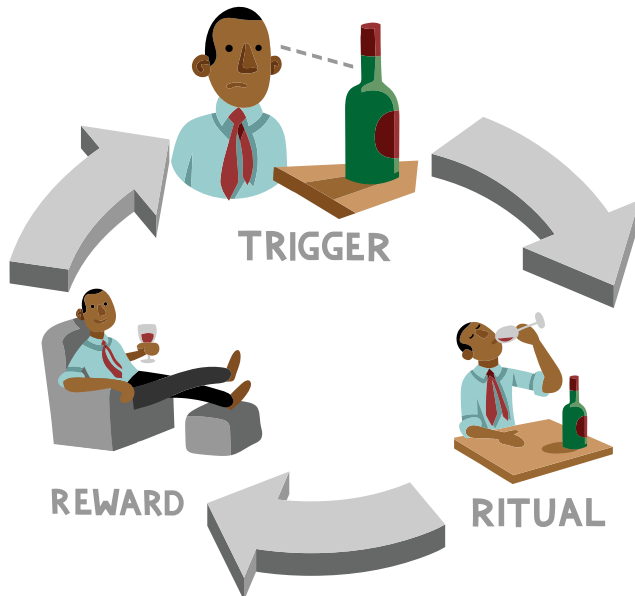
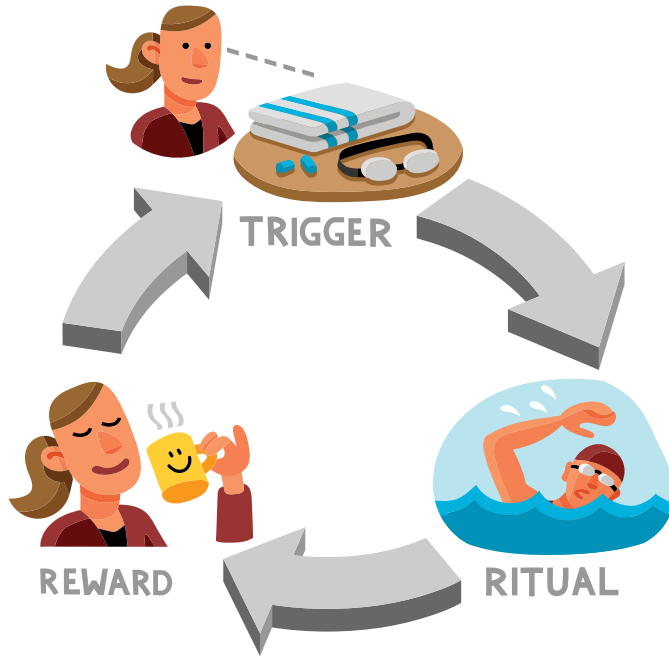
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3

Now that you have some momentum, for Weeks 2 and 3, e-mail your daily gratitudes to yourself.

* Emmons and McCullough, "Counting Blessings Versus Burdens."

TRIGGER/RITUAL FLOW CHART



KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO *JUST DO*


List two new important athlete-related behaviors and one silly behavior that you want to start (or stop) doing or want to simply become more consistent at doing. For the two important behaviors, pick actions that help you as an athlete (e.g., stretching and rolling, doing a really-early-morning training session, uploading your data, etc.).

The things I'm trying to *just do*:

1

2

For the third and silly behavior, pick something that is interesting (or amusing), simple to do, and helpful to you or someone else but doesn't require much physical effort. This third behavior helps you practice the art of ritualizing an action and doesn't have to be connected to sport in any way. It just makes you a better person. If you're stuck for ideas, here are some great ideas:

 › Men: Putting the toilet seat down after you pee. › Women: Taking the trash out. › Teens: Making your bed. › Squeeegeeing the shower door after each shower. › Saving your spare change for a good cause. › Unloading the dishwasher. › Doing 25 push-ups a day. › Not checking your phone after 7 p.m. › Calling your mother. › Engaging regularly with a quiet or shy work colleague. › Performing a random act of kindness every day.

A small or silly habit that I want to start or stop doing:

3

Once you have listed three behaviors, rank the two important behaviors. You will attempt to start your small or silly habit next week. Once you've made a habit of it, start number 1, and then number 2.

DEFINE YOUR STEP-BY-STEP RITUAL

Describing your ritual is a lot like writing instructions for a recipe. It's a logical, step-by-step series of instructions that spell out exactly what you plan to do. Leave no room for interpretation, and no loopholes. When you actually try it, some parts may feel awkward or a crucial step may be missing, so it may take one or two drafts to get it right. When I planned my morning run routine, my beloved act of drinking a single espresso was missing. This alone made a huge difference to helping me get my ass out the door.

1

2

3

4

5

Now, make a contingency plan to deal with all circumstances that threaten to destabilize the ritual. If you're trying to, *ahem*, do push-ups after flushing the toilet, you may also need to think through dealing with floor cleanliness and bystanders.

For example, if I check my phone in the morning and there is something urgent I need to respond to before my run, then I will do this: Create a new habit of putting my phone on airplane mode when I go to bed at night and not reconnecting with the Interwebs until my run is done.

IF _____, then I will do this:

IF _____, then I will do this:

IF _____, then I will do this:

FIND OUT WHAT TRIGGERS YOUR BAD HABITS

Answer these five questions on at least three occasions that you do your bad habit. It often takes three “recordings” to reveal noticeable patterns.

The behavior I’m trying to stop: *Trying not to have that second glass of wine.*

1. **Where were you, exactly?** *At home on the couch in my living room.*
2. **What time is it?** *8:05 pm*
3. **What is your emotional state?** *Tired from work, zoned out, feeling a bit lonely.*
4. **Who are you with?** *On my own.*
5. **What were you doing immediately prior?** *Finishing my first glass and watching TV.*

The behavior I’m trying to stop:

Occasion 1

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Occasion 2

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Occasion 3

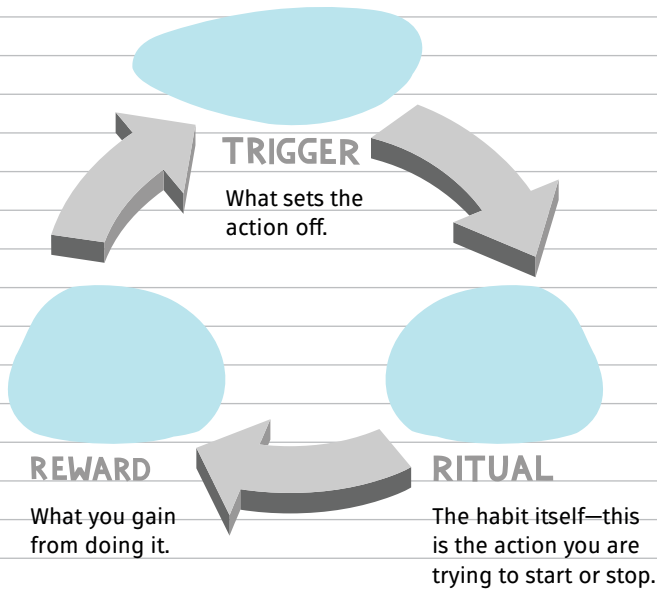
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

EXERCISE 4

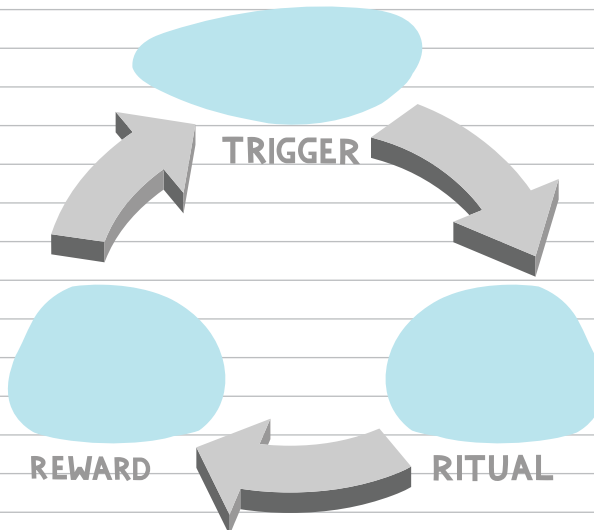
BUILDING OR BREAKING YOUR HABIT LOOPS

In the blank discs below, enter your triggers, rituals, and rewards for one good habit you're trying to start and one bad habit you're trying to break.

GOOD HABIT



BAD HABIT



MY TRIGGERS FOR FEELING FAT

As we learned in Chapter 4, a trigger is simply the circumstance or event that prompted you to think or feel something. For example, if you happen to catch yourself in the mirror a certain way and notice the back of your thighs, which leads to feelings of fatness, then the glance in the mirror would be the trigger. If you sit down in a certain way and notice a roll of fat around your middle, which triggers “I feel fat,” then sitting down a certain way would be the trigger, and so on. The next three times you feel fat, make a note of the triggers, the context, and who you were with. Alternatively, you can think back to the last time you felt fat and record the same information.

1 I felt fat when . . .

The trigger:

Where I was:

Who I was with:

2 I felt fat when . . .

The trigger:

Where I was:

Who I was with:

3 I felt fat when . . .

The trigger:

Where I was:

Who I was with:

EXERCISE 2

NAME IT, DON'T SHAME IT! THE FAT FEELING FINDER

For each example in Exercise 1, use the Fat Feeling Finder to try and uncover what it is you are really feeling. First, identify the big emotion(s) on the top line that best correspond to the feeling. Next, circle up to five applicable words in the column below that explore this emotion in more detail. If you find it hard to think about what's behind your fat feelings, you can also use this grid to uncover the emotions behind your relationship with food. In this context, you would complete the exercise while thinking about food or your current eating habits.

MY SHITTY FEELINGS

Angry	Depressed	Confused	Helpless	Indifferent	Afraid	Hurt	Sad
irritated	lousy	upset	incapable	insensitive	fearful	crushed	tearful
enraged	disappointed	doubtful	alone	dull	terrified	tormented	sorrowful
hostile	discouraged	uncertain	paralyzed	nonchalant	suspicious	deprived	pained
insulting	ashamed	indecisive	fatigued	neutral	anxious	pained	grieving
sore	powerless	perplexed	useless	reserved	alarmed	tortured	anguished
annoyed	diminished	embarrassed	inferior	weary	panicky	dejected	desolate
upset	guilty	hesitant	vulnerable	bored	nervous	rejected	desperate
hateful	dissatisfied	shy	empty	preoccupied	scared	injured	pessimistic
unpleasant	miserable	stupefied	forced	cold	worried	offended	unhappy
offensive	detestable	disillusioned	hesitant	disinterested	frightened	afflicted	lonely
bitter	repugnant	disbelieving	despairing	lifeless	timid	aching	mournful
aggressive	despicable	skeptical	frustrated		shaky	victimized	dismayed
resentful	disgusting	distrustful	distressed		restless	heartbroken	
inflamed	abominable	misgiving	woeful		doubtful	agonized	
provoked	terrible	lost	pathetic		threatened	appalled	
incensed	in despair	unsure	tragic		cowardly	humiliated	
infuriated	sulky	uneasy	in a stew		quaking	wronged	
cross	bad	pessimistic	dominated		menaced	alienated	
worked up	sense of loss	tense			wary		
boiling							
fuming							
indignant							

Adapted from <http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/assess/feelings.html>.

FINDING PATTERNS AND EXPLANATIONS

Write down any patterns that you notice from the triggers you identified in Exercise 1 and the underlying emotions you have circled in the Fat Feeling Finder. Take some time to think about the reasons behind these feelings. For example, if you notice a pattern of feeling frustrated and resentful that you can't seem to lose belly fat despite all your training, you might reflect that you feel helpless because you're doing everything you can, or because you expect there to be a concrete relationship between training and fat loss. Perhaps it's something else entirely.

From my triggers and my Fat Feeling Finder, I notice the following patterns:

I think I feel this way because:

EXERCISE 3

WATCHING FAT FEELINGS FROM AFAR

First practice this exercise while sitting comfortably and in a quiet environment. Recall a recent experience in which you felt fat.

Recreate that experience in your head—the sights and sounds around you, everything that makes it come back to life. Pay attention to what triggered or prompted the feelings.

Once you've got the movie playing, leave your body and hover above it, as if you were a human drone. Just hang there for a moment and watch. You can see yourself, but you are not you in the moment.

While staying in your drone, try to pick out the thoughts and feelings the “you” down on the ground is experiencing. Try to be aware enough to label the experience but not actually have it. If it helps, see thought bubbles appear with the stuff that was going through your head. See each one evaporate or float into the distance so you can no longer read it. Notice, acknowledge, let it float by.

Now start describing and labeling what you see and the thoughts and feelings you remember yourself having: *Yup, that's when I sat down in that bean bag chair. See how it made my stomach roll up? Yes, that's the moment I noticed it. Watch, I put my hand over my stomach to inspect the rolls of fat. Urgh. Watch my expression. And there come the thoughts . . . F*ck, why am I so fat? Urgh, I hate these jeans too because they really pinch the fat and make it worse. I wonder if people can notice it. They must! I mean look at it. I knew I shouldn't have had dessert last night. . . .* And so on. If you find yourself wandering down into the body of the you below, get back up to your drone! You are observing, not experiencing. As you watch yourself, now see each thought or feeling float past as if it's a thought bubble.

-
- › What kinds of thoughts did you notice? › What was it like to just see your thoughts without having to follow or experience them? › What does it feel like to see thoughts and feelings but not be them? › How easy was it to let go of the thought or feeling after it evaporated or floated out of sight?
-

Once you have a good grasp on recreating your fat moments, try to repeat this exercise soon after you experience your next fat moment. With practice, you will be able to do it “live”—as soon as you notice a trigger.

NAME IT AND FAME IT!

On the word grid, circle one or more of the big emotions, attributes, characteristics, or tendencies on the top line that best correspond to how you see yourself generally or how you think other people would describe you. Yes, we know this isn't very scientific, but it also doesn't need to be. And no, of course you don't feel like this all the time. However, you probably do feel some of these things more than others, and other people might use some of these words to describe you. Next, circle up to three words in those categories that best describe you. These are your superpowers.

MY HAPPY FEELINGS

Open	Happy	Feisty	Good	Loving	Interested	Positive	Strong
understanding	joyous	playful	calm	considerate	concerned	eager	free
confident	lucky	courageous	peaceful	affectionate	fascinated	keen	sure
reliable	fortunate	energetic	at ease	sensitive	intrigued	earnest	certain
easy	delighted	liberated	comfortable	tender	absorbed	inspired	rebellious
amazed	overjoyed	optimistic	pleased	devoted	inquisitive	determined	unique
free	gleeful	provocative	encouraged	attracted	engrossed	excited	dynamic
sympathetic	thankful	impulsive	content	passionate	curious	enthusiastic	tenacious
interested	ecstatic	frisky	quiet	admiring		bold	hardy
satisfied	satisfied	animated	relaxed	warm		brave	secure
receptive	cheerful	spirited	serene	close		daring	
accepting	sunny	thrilled	free & easy			optimistic	
kind	merry		bright			reinforced	
	elated		reassured			confident	
	jubilant					hopeful	

Adapted from <http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/assess/feelings.html>.

FINDING YOUR AWESOME

After you have identified your emotional superpowers, we want you to think about how you can turn these positive emotions into an action. The important point is that you focus on doing something that is grounded in a personal strength—in this case, your emotional superpower. Here are some examples:

Emotional superpower: *FEISTY and Courageous.*

How I plan to act on this feeling today: *I will be feisty and courageous today by apologizing to someone I recently offended.*

Emotional superpower: *GOOD and Calm.*

How I plan to act on this feeling today: *I will be good and calm today by smiling as I sit in traffic on the way to work. The worse the traffic, the more I will smile and laugh.*

Emotional superpower: *STRONG and Rebellious.*

How I plan to act on this feeling today: *I will be strong and rebellious today by wearing my bright yellow pants to work.*

Okay, now it's your turn.

Emotional superpower:

How I plan to act on this feeling today:

Emotional superpower:

How I plan to act on this feeling today:

Emotional superpower:

How I plan to act on this feeling today:

PINPOINT THE PROBLEM

If you are already injured, a good primary appraisal depends on knowing exactly what's wrong. Try to answer the following.

Describe what's wrong with you as explained by your doctor, physical therapist, or someone qualified. Use only information from your medical diagnosis, not things that you "think" are going on.

EX. *Stress fracture in my 4th metatarsal, diagnosed by MRI.*

My injury:

Describe anything else you know that might have contributed to your injury or any complications or consequences that might have arisen from the injury itself (compensation patterns, secondary injuries, etc.).

EX. *Caused by increased mileage and probably exacerbated by using a negative drop shoe.*

Other things I know about my injury:

GO BACK TO THE SCENE TO FIND THE WARNING SIGNS

Describe the moment when you reached your cognitive and emotional tipping point—when you realized your niggle was more serious than you first thought. Try to describe what event led to this realization as well as the thoughts and feelings that came with it.

EX. *I got out of bed with heel pain three mornings in a row. I remember thinking, "Oh shit, this isn't good. It no longer feels like just stiffness or a heel bruise, it feels like plantar fasciitis." This realization hit me like a truck. I felt really down.*

The moment:

Retrace your steps and piece together the warning signs that you missed prior to your tipping point. Some of these might be physical (e.g., tightness in calf), but some could be cognitive or emotional.

EX. *On Tuesday, I remember debating whether I should run or not but decided to just try 30 minutes. I only had two more hard days before my rest week and felt pressure to make sure I got all the training in.*

The warning signs:

EXERCISE 3

CONFRONT THE BULLSHIT YOU TELL YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR INJURY

Things I Currently Say to Myself	Evidence to the Contrary (alternative ways of thinking)
That's it. My season is over.	It's way too early to know this. I'll focus on having a strong end to the season, and the added rest will help all my other niggles clear up. I'll be fresh and motivated when most other athletes are fatigued and getting burned out.

1

2

3

4

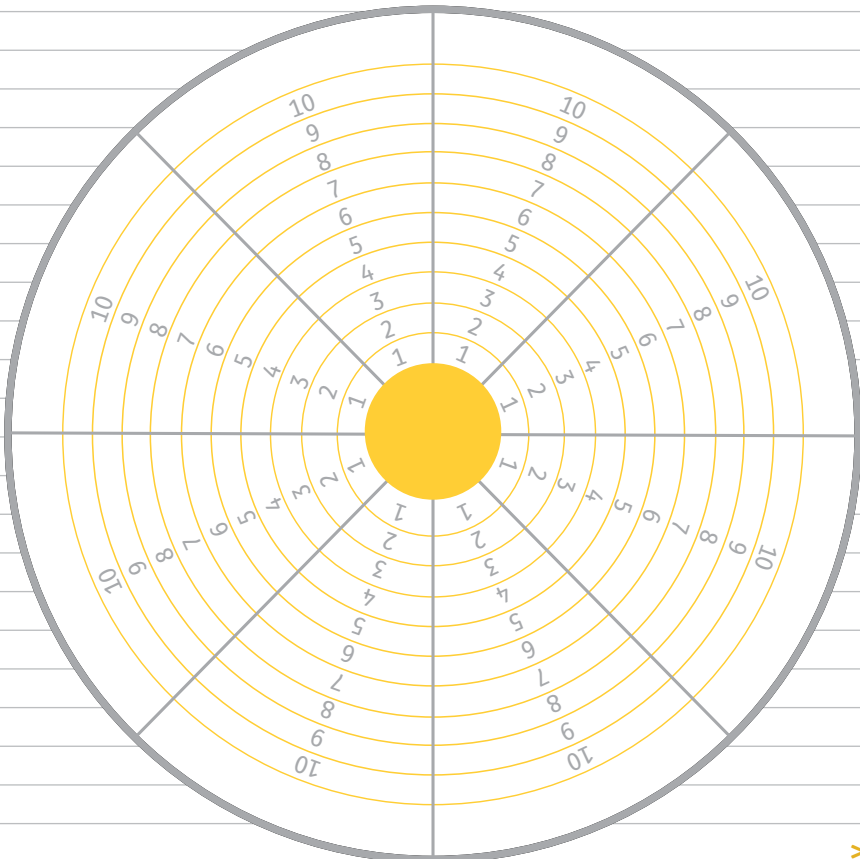
5

CREATE A PERFORMANCE PROFILE

A performance profile is simply a graphical display of the qualities or characteristics that are important to be successful in your sport. You can create separate or combined profiles for different aspects of your sport, such as technical skills, physical skills, psychological skills, and so on. For example, a triathlete might identify skills such as core strength, hip flexibility, swim technique, swim-specific muscular power, functional power threshold on the run, pain tolerance, mindfulness, and so on.

Come up with several attributes on which you can rank yourself from 1 to 10 (where 1 = *I'm terrible at it*, and 10 = *I'm awesome at it*).

Write each attribute in the outer ring on the segments below, and shade in your self-rating score.



LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

When you have finalized the key attributes, narrow down the list to those skills that you can still work on with your injury. Prioritize those skills that you have rated yourself the lowest on. Run this list by your coach or a fellow athlete to validate the list and your self-ratings (it’s triangulation, baby!), make the necessary adjustments, and then prioritize one or two of your lowest-rated skills.

Now it’s time to develop aggressive or ambitious goals to improve these skills during the course of your rehabilitation and recovery.

Goal	Time Frame
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

ARE YOU PRONE TO SYMPTOM HYPERVIGILANCE?

During training sessions, how often do you think about your injury or try to detect symptoms of pain, soreness, or tightness returning?



If you scored 8 or 9, you're probably engaging in symptom hypervigilance. We consider "normal" vigilance to be a rating of 3–7, and a complete psychological recovery from injury a rating of 1 or 2.*

* This is not a scientifically validated measure, but a heuristic tool we use to help gauge psychological adaptiveness to injury.

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR INJURED ATHLETE

Help me understand what it feels like to . . .	[have to deal with this] [be in your shoes] [put all that hard work in] [not feel motivated]
You must be feeling . . .	[pretty overwhelmed] [frustrated] [sad] [at a loss] [exhausted at having to deal with all this] [anxious]
How can I help you . . .	[get through this] [focus on the positive] [cope with today]
It sounds like you're . . .	[nervous about . . .] [really pissed at . . .] [worried that . . .] [frustrated by . . .] [confused about . . .]
You seem to get really [emotion] when . . .	[your treatment session doesn't go as well as you'd hoped] [we talk about . . .] [I mention that . . .]

THE EXERCISE DEPENDENCE SCALE

Using the scale provided below, please rate the following statements as honestly as possible. The statements refer to current exercise beliefs and behaviors that have occurred in the past 3 months.

	NEVER	ALWAYS
1. I exercise to avoid feeling irritable	1 2 3 4 5 6	
2. I exercise despite recurring physical problems	1 2 3 4 5 6	
3. I continually increase my exercise intensity to achieve the desired effects/benefits	1 2 3 4 5 6	
4. I am unable to reduce how long I exercise	1 2 3 4 5 6	
5. I would rather exercise than spend time with family/friends	1 2 3 4 5 6	
6. I spend a lot of time exercising	1 2 3 4 5 6	
7. I exercise longer than I intend to	1 2 3 4 5 6	
8. I exercise to avoid feeling anxious	1 2 3 4 5 6	
9. I exercise when injured	1 2 3 4 5 6	
10. I continually increase my exercise frequency to achieve the desired effects/benefits	1 2 3 4 5 6	
11. I am unable to reduce how often I exercise	1 2 3 4 5 6	
12. I think about exercise when I should be concentrating on work or school	1 2 3 4 5 6	
13. I spend most of my free time exercising	1 2 3 4 5 6	
14. I exercise longer than I expect I will	1 2 3 4 5 6	
15. I exercise to avoid feeling tense	1 2 3 4 5 6	
16. I exercise despite persistent physical problems	1 2 3 4 5 6	
17. I continually increase my exercise duration to achieve the desired effects/benefits	1 2 3 4 5 6	
18. I am unable to reduce how intensely I exercise	1 2 3 4 5 6	
19. I choose to exercise so that I can get out of spending time with family/friends	1 2 3 4 5 6	
20. I spend considerable time finding opportunities for and planning exercise for when I'm going to be away*	1 2 3 4 5 6	
21. I exercise longer than I plan to	1 2 3 4 5 6	

Phew. Now that's over with, let's do some basic math. In the table below, add up your scores for the questions in each criterion and enter them in the column "Score." Next, for each criterion, circle the level of dependency corresponding to your score on that criterion. Finally, tally up the number of circled criteria for each level of dependency.

Diagnostic Criteria of Dependency	Add Score for Statements . . .	Score	Level of Dependency, by Criterion (circle the level based on your score)		
			Nondependent, Asymptomatic (i.e., NA, you're good)	Nondependent, Symptomatic (i.e., a few warning signs are there)	At Risk for Dependence (i.e., you might need some help)
Withdrawal effects	1, 8, 15		<7	7–14	15+
Continuance	2, 9, 16		<7	7–14	15+
Tolerance	3, 10, 17		<7	7–14	15+
Lack of control	4, 11, 18		<7	7–14	15+
Reduction in other activities	5, 12, 19		<7	7–14	15+
Time	6, 13, 20		<7	7–14	15+
Intention effects	7, 14, 21		<7	7–14	15+
Total Score (Range 21–126):			Count up the number of circled responses in each column		
Number of criteria in each category:					

The higher your total score, the more exercise-dependent you are. However, psychologists look beyond your total score and instead focus on the total number of *DSM-5* criteria that you meet. If you have three or more in the "At Risk for Dependence" column, you would be considered to have exercise dependence. Congratulations. It's official. Well, pending validation by a clinical interview with a trained professional. Ahem.

Reproduced by permission from H. A. Hausenblas and D. Symons-Downs, "How Much Is Too Much? The Development and Validation of the Exercise Dependence Scale," *Psychology and Health* 17 (2000): 387–404.

* This statement differs slightly from the original to better reflect exercising when away.

EXERCISE 2

CONFRONTING YOUR AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS

Write down five automatic or instinctive thoughts you have about your urge, compulsion, or drive to exercise. Avoid trying to rationalize them or trying to filter them for judgmental humans (which are Professor brain filters). Just blurt them out.

My automatic thoughts about exercise:

1

2

3

4

5

Now, read back over these statements and check to make sure they have not been contaminated by your Professor brain. This list is likely to be very personal, probably a bit embarrassing, and may even give you some anxiety just writing or reading it (after all, it's your Professor brain that has to write it and read it). If this is the case, practice the exercise of detachment, "Watching the Suck," in Chapter 2 for getting used to *seeing* rather than *feeling* your crazy. Now just sit with these statements for a while. Stare at them. Look at the words on the page. If it helps, repeat them back to yourself in a funny accent or as song. Yes, we know this sounds ludicrous, but it's a remarkably effective tool to help increase the detachment from your thoughts from feelings.

COUNTERING

For each automatic thought you listed, develop a factually accurate counter-statement of what your Professor brain wants you to think instead. Your Chimp probably doesn't want to do these things, but go through the motions of thinking about it anyway and writing it down. Try to specifically address the faulty logic of the automatic thought, but make sure your counter statements are accurate and plausible. For example, if your automatic thought is "I feel anxious and irritable when I don't work out," you might counter it with "Exercise isn't the only thing that helps me feel less anxious and irritable."

Counter-thought to number 1:

Counter-thought to number 2:

Counter-thought to number 3:

Counter-thought to number 4:

Counter-thought to number 5:

HOW TO TALK ABOUT EXERCISE DEPENDENCE

THINGS TO SAY OR DO	THINGS <i>NOT</i> TO SAY OR DO
Use “I” statements when sharing your concerns. “I care about you” or “I’m worried about you.”	Don’t focus on the exercise itself. Don’t say “You train too hard” or “You don’t need to run that long.” You might talk about the behaviors you notice, but then try to focus on the feelings.
Let them know that it’s safe to talk to you and that you won’t judge or criticize them. “As your friend, I really care about you. I won’t judge or criticize you, I just want to know how I can help.”	Don’t use language that implies that the person is doing something wrong. We know that they probably are doing something wrong, but pointing out the obvious forces them to be defensive.
Encourage them to express how they feel; remember, it is important to understand how they feel, rather than just state how you feel. “I know this stuff is really hard to talk about, but can you help me understand what it feels like for you?”	Don’t assume the role of a therapist or try to fix things. You don’t need to have all the answers; it’s more important that you listen and help them feel comfortable opening up to you.
If the person isn’t very talkative, try to let silences linger longer than normal to give them more opportunity to speak. People don’t like awkward silences. They will usually fill them if you can fight your urge to talk.	Don’t use manipulative statements or phrases that focus on the impact it’s having on other people. This can make things worse or increase the person’s level of denial. “If you wanted this to work, you’d stop training as much.”
Encourage them to seek help and explain that you will be there with them if they need you. “If you want, we can go and see someone together. Just to chat through some of this stuff.”	Don’t use threats, especially if you have some control or authority over the person as a parent or coach. Threats heighten an already stressful experience for the person and can make the behavior worse. “Unless you cut down your training, you can’t [join in], [attend], [use x] anymore.”

IDENTIFYING THE **GOBLINS**

Three comfort zones I secretly wish I could break free from:

1

2

3

Now circle one of the three that you think is having the most impact on your happiness, enjoyment, or potential as an athlete.

GET TO KNOW THE FEAR EXPERIENCE

It's time to target the comfort zone you identified as the biggest threat to your happiness, enjoyment, or potential as an athlete in Exercise 1. When you have completed this exercise, you can repeat it for the other two comfort zones, but we strongly recommend that you tackle only one at a time.

In a quiet and comfortable position, close your eyes and visualize the intimidating scenario. Imagine all the aspects of the situation that you worry about the most. Really try to recreate them—the sounds, the smells, the sights, the people present, the thoughts, and emotions. Watch events unfold that match your fears. See it happening. Perhaps it's walking on the pool deck to your first masters swim session with no idea what the hell is going on, clueless about which lane you should swim in. You hear the splashing and smell the chlorine. You see the people staring at you. Secretly, you wish for your own lane. Perhaps your fear is getting dropped in your first Category I/II bike race, or finishing last in your first race as a pro.

Now repeat the visualization but this time picture yourself as an experienced outsider, as though you're watching someone else go through the exact same experience. Focus on the thoughts and feelings you have about them as you watch them do the same thing you did. How do your thoughts and feelings change as you witness someone else making the same "mistakes"? Do you find that you are more compassionate and supportive? Indifferent? You've now learned what actually goes through the minds of the people you were so worried about.

Use this knowledge to make your playbook for surviving the experience in Exercise 3 (p. 47).

EXERCISE 3

MAKE YOUR COMFORT-BUSTER PLAYBOOK

Now it's time to develop a plan to combat a few worst-case scenarios. In the left column, write down all the things that you are worried might happen. In response to each of these scenarios, write down two positive things to say and one positive thing you can do if this does happen.

Your comfort buster:

[illegible]

Now go back to seeing yourself in the same situation that you visualized in Exercise 2, but this time focus on controlling your thoughts and actions using the strategies you mapped out in your playbook.

After seeing yourself survive the ordeal, take 30 seconds to focus on the feeling of accomplishment that comes with facing your fears and surviving.

Each time you find yourself worrying about the intimidating situation, re-run the mental image of yourself in the situation but this time coping with it using your positive thoughts and actions.

ANNA'S COMFORT-BUSTER PLAYBOOK

Your comfort buster: *Joining a masters swim class*

Think	Talk	Act
Things I'm secretly worried about happening	Two positive things I will say to myself if it does happen	One positive thing I will do if it does happen
Not being quick enough for circle swim	This is what I need! It's good to be pushed. I am developing mental toughness.	Slip to the back of the rotation. If lane swimmers are still going too fast, switch to a slower lane.
Feeling self-conscious in my swimsuit	No one cares what I look like. Everyone else probably feels the same!	Fake confidence by pretending I don't give a shit! Shoulders back, head up. Own it!
Swimming into people	Split the black line. Sight the lane rope, sight the lane rope!	Apologize and ask for tips to swim straight from my lane mates.
Not understanding what the coach is saying	Don't sweat it—just follow everyone else! I'll get better at this!	Ask my lane mate.
Not knowing what lane to swim in	Calculate my base and add 10 seconds to be sure. I can always move lanes.	I will ask the coach for the base pace of the slowest lane and count up from there.
Other swimmers getting frustrated with me for being too slow	Most swimmers remember how this feels. Focus on catch and pull. Smooth is fast.	Sit on the wall for a rep or move to slower lane.
Not being able to get up at 5:30 a.m.!	Count to 30 as soon as I wake up.	At count of 30, get straight out of bed.
Feeling awkward or like a loser in the locker room	Everyone is there to swim. I've done this a million times before.	Strike up a conversation with another gal getting ready.
Not having the right equipment with me (should I bring fins? A pull buoy?)	I can borrow most things from the box on the pool deck.	Ask the coach what I need.

AUDIT YOUR *QUITTING*

How the Quit Went Down: Recall up to four examples in which you stopped or eased up on a task prematurely. You could consider only your athletic world or life in general. Try to use examples that are important to you or particularly memorable. Because human memory is wonderfully biased, really take the time to think before you write. It might even take a few days to stew on this question before committing pen to paper. If you have trouble recalling previous quits, then use this worksheet to document your quits as you experience them.

Discomfort Ratings: Rate the reason for the quit based on your physical and mental discomfort at the time of the quit. The 0–5 scale for physical discomfort refers to the severity of bodily sensations you felt just prior to quitting (e.g., heart rate, breathing, discomfort in muscles), with 0 = no/minimal discomfort and 5 = worst possible discomfort. The 0–5 scale for mental discomfort refers to the severity of the psychological or emotional discomfort you were experiencing at the time. For example, if you recall feeling extremely angry, frustrated, or bored with the task, you might rate your mental discomfort as 4 or 5 out of 5. Alternatively, if you recall feeling unmotivated to cope with the physical discomfort or just “not up for it,” you might rate the mental discomfort as a 3 out of 5.

Official Reason for Quit: Write down what you would say to people if they asked why you quit. And be honest, you lying turd. You don’t actually need to have told people this; it’s simply to get at your surface-level, dissonance-reducing strategies.

My Dark Thoughts: Write in a few things that only you will ever know or think about the quit. This is where you would list things that you might not be comfortable sharing with others.

Legit-Shit Rating: Finally, for each quit, rate it on the Legit-or-Shit scale, with 10 being absolute certainty of a Shit Quit, and 0 being absolute certainty it was a Legit Quit. Make sure you rate each quit after completing the other columns. ➤

SELF-AUDIT

How It Went Down	Official Reason	My Dark Thoughts
<div>DISCOMFORT</div> <div>Physical 0 1 2 3 4 5</div> <div>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 5</div>		<div>LEGIT-SHIT RATING</div> <div></div>
<div>DISCOMFORT</div> <div>Physical 0 1 2 3 4 5</div> <div>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 5</div>		<div>LEGIT-SHIT RATING</div> <div></div>
<div>DISCOMFORT</div> <div>Physical 0 1 2 3 4 5</div> <div>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 5</div>		<div>LEGIT-SHIT RATING</div> <div></div>
<div>DISCOMFORT</div> <div>Physical 0 1 2 3 4 5</div> <div>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 5</div>		<div>LEGIT-SHIT RATING</div> <div></div>

DAPHNE'S QUIT SELF-AUDIT

How It Went Down	Official Reason	My Dark Thoughts
<p>Supposed to do 6 × 400 repeats on track. Only did 4.</p> <p>DISCOMFORT</p> <p>Physical 0 1 2 3 <u>4</u> 5</p> <p>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 <u>5</u></p>	<p>Needed to get to work by 8:30 a.m. and couldn't find a parking space so started later than normal.</p>	<p>I just got down on myself. My times were crap but instead of pushing on, I ended up discouraged and stopped at 4. No one around to know. Urgh, dreaded the questions from my coach. I feel like such a failure.</p> <p>LEGIT-SHIT RATING <u>8</u></p>
<p>Easy 90 min. run on schedule. Did 60 min. Like pulling teeth to get me that far!</p> <p>DISCOMFORT</p> <p>Physical 0 1 2 <u>3</u> 4 5</p> <p>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 <u>5</u></p>	<p>Still feeling tired from last week, plus a crap load to do for work tomorrow.</p>	<p>Simply couldn't be bothered. Part boredom, part worry about work stuff. Legs were feeling a bit heavy but certainly could have done an extra 30 min.</p> <p>LEGIT-SHIT RATING <u>5</u></p>
<p>Bailed on 6 a.m. swim twice. Woke up but just groaned when alarm went off. Told myself I would do lunch swim instead. Never happened.</p> <p>DISCOMFORT</p> <p>Physical <u>0</u> 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>Mental 0 1 <u>2</u> 3 4 5</p>	<p>Needed the extra sleep and pool is less busy at lunchtime.</p>	<p>I'm lazy. A real athlete would have sucked it up. FAIL!</p> <p>LEGIT-SHIT RATING <u>9</u></p>
<p>Did Olympic distance tri last weekend. Good swim, decent bike, but just let two gals run away from me. I just sort of gave up.</p> <p>DISCOMFORT</p> <p>Physical 0 1 2 3 <u>4</u> 5</p> <p>Mental 0 1 2 3 4 <u>5</u></p>	<p>Ran at my own pace. They were going too quick for me. Would have blown up if I followed.</p>	<p>I'm so mad because I can usually run with them. I'm the only athlete who's actually getting slower. Heart rate seemed OK, but didn't want to hurt any more.</p> <p>LEGIT-SHIT RATING <u>5</u></p>

YOUR SUFFER SHEET

Take a moment to recall up to three examples of when you last suffered and why. When you have completed your list, describe a training session that would force you to encounter it more often, an “Engineered Suffer Session.” Try to make the training session match the type of suffering listed. For example, you might schedule a long brick to force you to cope with general fatigue, or you could deliberately schedule a hard session when you know motivation is low. You might do an interval session in which you attempt to hold PR-level splits or meet wattage goals to increase the likelihood of failure. We call these mental toughness sessions because the goal is simply to cope. Nothing else matters except getting through the session.

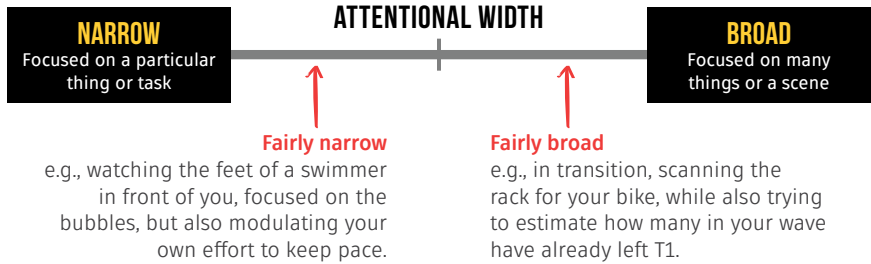
How It Went Down	Engineered Suffer Session
1	
2	
3	

EXERCISE 2

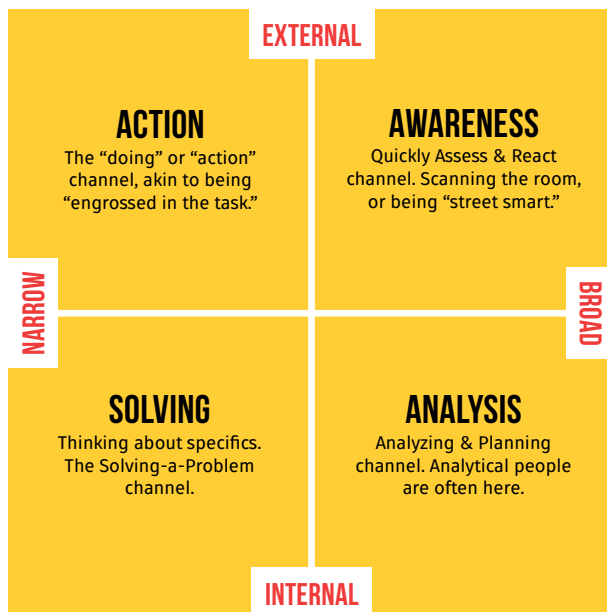
YOUR 5-MINUTE FEEDFORWARD AND **SUFFER PLEDGE**

Before a sufferfest, take 5 minutes to sit or lie quietly with your eyes closed and think only about the pain and suffering. You might have an upcoming 10K race or an Ironman, and you really want to do well. In your mind's eye, create the exact moments of the suffering. Immerse yourself in what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch as it gets harder and harder. Pay attention to what the suffering actually feels like, and then imagine it ratcheting up and culminating in the worst possible pain and suffering—more than you have ever experienced. Really take time to imagine what this feels like, what's going through your head, and what you can see and hear. Even though you are sitting or lying comfortably, you will notice your heart rate and breathing rate start to increase.

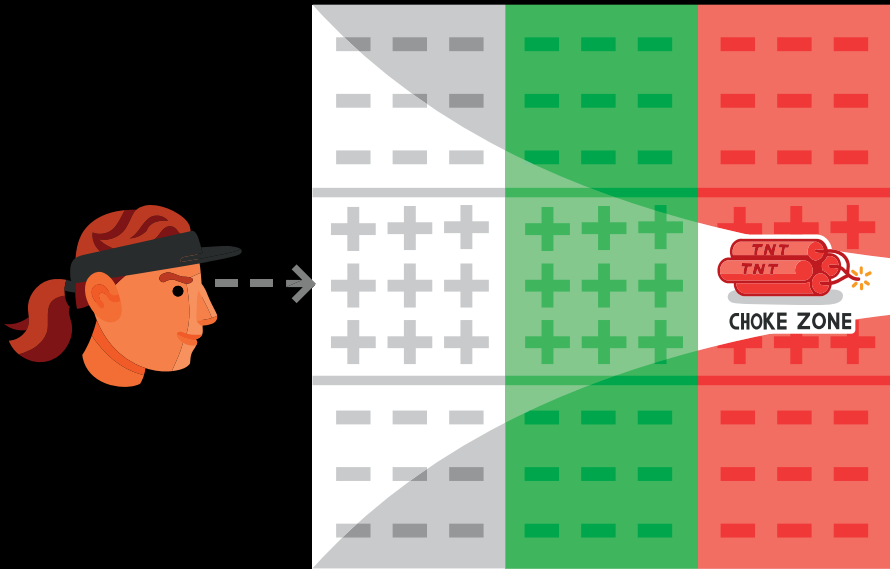
After 5 minutes, open your eyes and think logically about whether you are prepared to take this on—to suffer more than you have ever suffered before. If you are, make a personal pledge (or a pain prayer, if that helps) to the suffering. Some athletes even find it helps to ask their body and brain's permission to let them experience the worst possible suffering. The important point here is that we are creating an expectation. And remember, expectation drives anticipatory regulation—the brain's ability to brace itself for what lies ahead. It's science, folks.



THE FOUR ATTENTIONAL “TV” CHANNELS



LEVEL OF “AROUSAL” OR NERVOUSNESS ON RACE DAY



- **RACE-IRRELEVANT INFO** (e.g., how strong and fit everybody else looks)
- + **RACE-RELEVANT INFO** (e.g., where you've racked your bike, your nutritional strategy, etc.)
- At **LOW LEVELS** of arousal, the width of your attentional field is broad and includes plenty of irrelevant information.
- At **OPTIMAL LEVELS** of arousal, you are able to block out all irrelevant information while staying focused on all the things that matter.
- At **HIGH LEVELS** of arousal you fail to pay attention to the things that are very relevant to racing well (e.g., your nutrition strategy).

PROS AND CONS OF ATTENTIONAL CHANNELS

EXTERNAL

When It's Helpful

Reacting to an external cue. You can stay on someone's feet in the swim, chase down a runner in the final mile, and avoid road hazards. Great for one-on-one competition.

Embracing the suck. You know how to turn difficult situations around or control pain.

Singular external focus. You are totally immersed in the task at hand, or in the zone.

When It's Unhelpful or Detrimental

If your strategy needs to change.

If you are unable to see the bigger picture you might stick to the same strategy even when it's not working. You might not even notice it's not working!

Falling short. You get annoyed if you can't meet your target pace/wattage for a session, even though your heart rate and perceived exertion are telling you that you're just tired.

Injury risk. You might run through injury pain and cause more damage.

NARROW

When It's Helpful

Kinesthetic awareness. You are able to implement a change to your technique after getting feedback from a coach. You are able to make minor adjustments to body position to reduce localized muscle fatigue.

Mindfulness training. You can focus on a single internal cue (e.g., breath) to calm nerves and slow things down.

Good for self-discipline.

When It's Unhelpful or Detrimental

You can't let things go. You keep playing that one event, scenario, or thought over and over again. Perhaps you overheard a comment that annoyed you and have trouble letting it go.

Focused to a fault. You don't take on board new information and can be oblivious to things going on around you. (This is an "internal attention" problem generally.)

INTERNAL

EXTERNAL

When It's Unhelpful or Detrimental

Reacting too quickly. A competitor passes you early and you try to stay with them despite going over your target pace or wattage.

Compromising too often. You continually compromise your own training by going along with what others in the group want to do instead.

When It's Helpful

Reading complex situations.

You probably know where on the course your closest rivals are at any one time. You can tell how fatigued other athletes are based on how you see them respond to surges.

BROAD

When It's Unhelpful or Detrimental

Paralysis by analysis. You get caught up in an overanalysis of body mechanics. You try to make too many corrections all at once. You overthink things and thus don't react when you need to. You miss moves.

Follow-through. You can have trouble sticking to one coaching plan because you're thinking about all the other things that seem important but that you aren't doing.

When It's Helpful

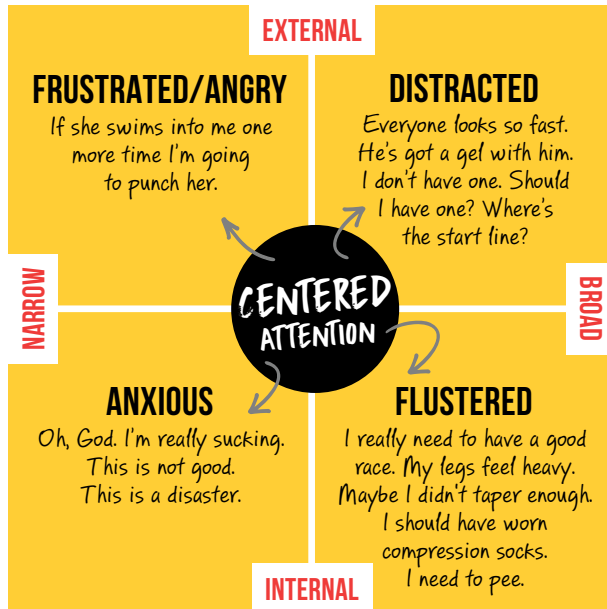
Executing race strategy or tactics.

As a rival in your age group passes, you are able to quickly figure out whether you need to keep them in sight based on each of your strengths.

Planning. You know your optimal swim start position, your proposed line to the first buoy based on the current, and which feet to jump on.

INTERNAL

HOW STRESS IMPACTS ATTENTION



Nerves and stress can pull your attention out of center and get stuck in one attentional channel.

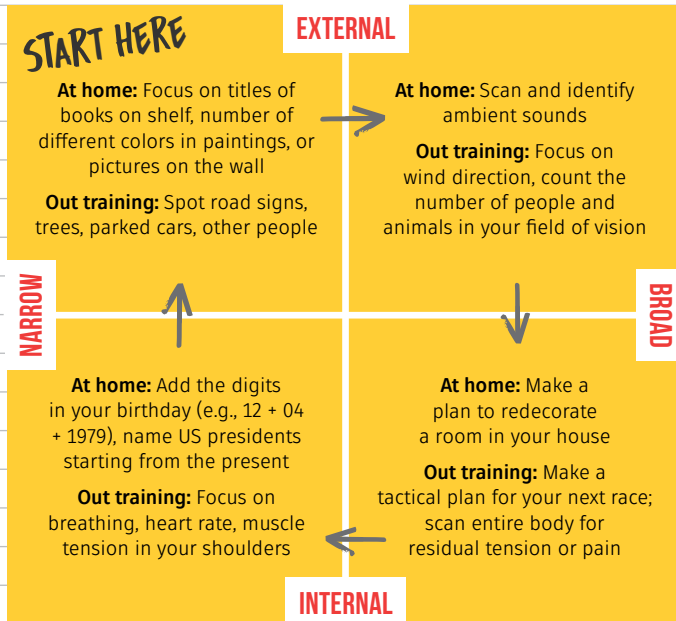
YOUR PRE-RACE ROUTINE

To help you plan your pre-race routine, use the template provided here. In the case study at the end of the chapter, you can see how we developed one for Mark, a top age-group triathlete.

[illegible][illegible]

ATTENTIONAL SHIFT TRAINING

Develop your channel cues. Before we can start, it helps to list what you plan to attend to in each channel. Until you become skilled at this exercise, do not rely on “Oh, I’ll think of something” because you’ll spend the entire time thinking about what to think about, or your mind will just start wandering. We need preprogrammed content to help develop your own content. Here are some examples.



Set a timer to beep every 15 seconds.

For each 15-second period, focus only on a single channel cue from your grid. When the timer sounds, move to the next channel cue, and so on, until you have completed 2–3 minutes (or an entire commercial break on TV). Try to build up to 5 minutes. Don’t worry if you find this really difficult—it is. It’s mentally exhausting, but you will get better at it and your attentional skills will improve.

Once you are able to do this for 5 minutes, start to add distractions that try to pull you into another channel. For example, keep the TV volume turned up during the exercise or begin to do it while out training (providing it’s safe to do so).

MARK'S KIT CHECKLIST

Swim

- ☐ Trisuit
- ☐ 2 sets of goggles
- ☐ 2 swim caps
(race cap + my own)
- ☐ Bright-colored towel
- ☐ Wetsuit

Bike

- ☐ Bike
- ☐ Helmet with number
already attached
- ☐ Bike shoes
- ☐ Spare socks
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Water bottle + spare
- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Tools: spare tube, 2 CO₂ cartridges,
tire levers, multi-tool, scissors,
zip ties, Stanley knife, electrical tape
- ☐ Floor pump

Run

- ☐ Number belt
- ☐ Race shoes
- ☐ Warm-up shoes
- ☐ Visor

Other

- ☐ \$40 cash
- ☐ Garmin + heart rate strap
- ☐ Transition foot towel
- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Body Glide
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Vaseline, band aids,
baby powder, ibuprofen
- ☐ Post-race change of clothes
- ☐ Food, post-race recovery
drink/snacks

MARK'S RACE ROUTINE

The Day Before

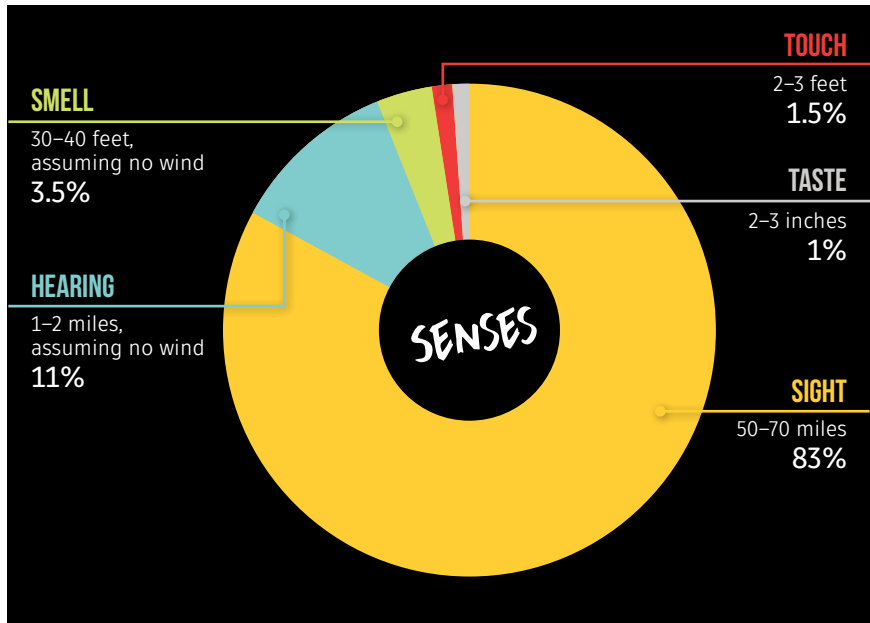
- 1:00 p.m.** *Pick up race packet.*
- 3:00 p.m.** *Clean bike, check tires for cuts, check key bolts. Put on numbers. Tape on 2 gels.*
- 4:00 p.m.** *Pack race bag and run through kit checklist. Pack car.*
- 6:00 p.m.** *Prepare post-race food and lay out breakfast items.*
- 6:30 p.m.** *Call Bill and/or Andy if carpooling or meeting up before race.*
- 7:00 p.m.** *Watch motivational movie (usually Ali, Hoosiers, or Warrior).*
- 9:00 p.m.** *Go to bed.*

>

Race Morning

- 4:30 a.m. Wake up.
- 4:45 a.m. Eat breakfast: oatmeal, fresh fruit, yogurt, coffee, 12–16 ounces water.
- 5:15 a.m. Do final food bag pack. Take race bottles out of fridge. Pack post-race meal.
- 5:30 a.m. Put on race kit, relax, listen to music, visualize the perfect race.
- 5:40 a.m. Do final run-through of kit checklist. Leave for race site.
- 6:00 a.m. Arrive at race site. Wear hoodie and headphones (with pre-race playlist) to avoid distractions and control anxiety levels.
- 6:30 a.m. Set up transition. Identify two external cues to help find rack position coming into T1 and T2. Visualize the order and the flow of each transition, seeing myself going through each transition smoothly, calmly, and efficiently.
- 6:45 a.m. Get body marked and do “walk through” from rack to T1 and T2 exit.
- 7:00 a.m. Drink 8 ounces water + gel and start run warm-up (drills and short intervals). Set watch for exact length of warm-up.
- 7:20 a.m. Remove outer sweats and put on wetsuit. Apply lubricant on neck, ankles, and wrists. Final check of transition area.
- 7:25 a.m. At water’s edge, review buoys and optimal line. Ask lifeguards about currents if applicable.
- 7:25 a.m. Swim warm-up.
- 7:40 a.m. Go to swim start. Stand on start line, eyes closed. Do diaphragmatic breathing exercise, short visualization of perfect start, and reminder of swim cues: “Start Easy,” “Reach and Roll,” “Find Feet.”
- 7:45 a.m. Go time!

THE RANGE OF YOUR SENSORY RADAR



Note: Scientific estimates of the relative contribution of sensory data to perceptual processing are destined to be imprecise and flawed. However, these estimates are consistent with the science we do have.

HOW YOUR BODY RESPONDS TO STRESS

HOW IT FEELS: Your heart rate increases. It can feel like your heart wants to jump out of your chest.

What's happening: A surge in epinephrine and norepinephrine increases cardiac output by increasing heart rate and stroke volume (the amount of blood pumped per beat).

Why it works: When there's more blood available, there's more oxygen and more glucose at the ready. Phew.

HOW IT FEELS: Your breathing becomes deeper or more rapid. You may be accused of heavy breathing if you spend time on the phone.

What's happening: Respiratory centers in the brain cause an involuntary increase in respiration rate, which may lead to "feeling stressed."

Why it works: Breathing faster and deeper increases oxygen availability and, to some extent, oxygen utilization. Stress can also cause you to "over-breathe" or hyperventilate. When you take shallow rapid breaths, you expire more carbon dioxide than your body is producing. This lowers CO₂ levels in the blood and consequently the pH, which constricts blood vessels and reduces blood flow. It creates a false sense of not getting enough oxygen.*

HOW IT FEELS: You have butterflies in your stomach, or you feel nauseous.

What's happening: Release of epinephrine disrupts the acids and enzymes in your stomach, reduces stomach and gut blood flow, and increases abdominal muscle tension.

Why it works: Your stomach is going on lockdown because it's not needed to fight or run. Anything still in there is only going to slow you down.

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* This is why breathing into a paper bag works to calm you down. You're restoring the pH of the blood; there was enough oxygen in the blood all along.

Continued

HOW IT FEELS: You get sweaty palms . . . and feet. Your face doesn't look great, either.

What's happening: The sympathetic nervous system activates apocrine sweat glands in your hands to trigger sweat response in palms, soles of the feet, face, and armpits. Also known as emotional sweating, this is unrelated to body cooling.

Why it works: Reasons are still unknown, but are most likely designed to increase the humidity of the outer layer of skin in order to improve skin friction, which could be important for fighting, climbing, clambering, or manipulating objects. Also creates body odor, which activates neural fear network in opponents.

HOW IT FEELS: You want to pee and poop. A lot.

What's happening: Stretch receptors in the wall of the rectum become more sensitive and trigger reflex contractions, creating the urge to poop. Urethral sphincter muscles also contract, creating the urge to pee.

Why it works: Light is fast. If you need to cover lots of ground quickly or hurl yourself at an attacker, it pays to drop weight quickly. Every ounce counts.

HOW IT FEELS: You are jittery and fidgety. May startle easily.

What's happening: Your sympathetic nervous system becomes hyperstimulated. Reaction time speeds up.

Why it works: Like a coiled spring, a primed nervous system is ready to act with speed and force at a moment's notice.

THE PRESSURE TEST

The pressure test is designed to help you figure out if you're actually under real pressure or if you've just convinced yourself that you are. For an upcoming race or event that is stressing you out, answer the following questions and sum the responses.

CRITERIA / DESCRIPTION	DEFINITELY NO		WELL, KIND OF		DEFINITELY YES
Judgment. I'm responsible for the performance, and I will be judged by specific others. (Give examples of who will be judging you.)	1	2	3	4	5
Uncertainty. I have no idea how I will perform.	1	2	3	4	5
Importance. This race or event is very important.	1	2	3	4	5
Competition. I will be competing against others, and our performances will be ranked.	1	2	3	4	5
Expectation. I have a clear idea of what I want the outcome to be.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring the pressure test

Sum the responses to each question to create a pressure score.

- 5–10: Oh, please. That ain't pressure.
- 11–19: Calm the f*ck down. It's only stress.
- 20–25: Yup, you're under pressure. Bet you can feel it squeezing your eyeballs.

JEDI PROFESSOR SKILLS (problem-focused coping strategies)	CHIMP-WRANGLING STRATEGIES (emotion-focused coping strategies)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sensory management 2. Goal setting 3. Time management 4. Skills development 5. Process training 6. Practicing under pressure 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chimp purging 2. Chimp confrontation 3. Chimp reward and distraction 4. Physically calming the f*ck down 5. Mentally calming the f*ck down 6. Finding your “F*ck It” moment

SHAPING BETTER GOALS

SPECIFIC: Be precise. Think what and where.

First attempt at writing a goal: Get in at least two long runs before the race.

A much smarter goal: Run 13.1 miles @ 9:45-mile pace around Mission Bay.

MEASURABLE: Think ruler, stopwatch, scales, GPS watch. Stuff that measures things.

First attempt at writing a goal: Complete one long run at target half-marathon pace.

A much smarter goal: Run 13.1 miles in under 2:10 on a course with less than 500 ft. elevation gain.

ACHIEVABLE: The sweet spot lies between too easy and too hard. Aim for 70–80 percent chance of success.

First attempt at writing a goal: Just finish 13.1 miles (too easy). Run the distance at PR goal time (too hard).

A much smarter goal: Race goal time is sub 2 hr., but I want to run a sub 2:10 in training first.

RELEVANT: Achieving the goal has to reduce the stress, anxiety, or worry.

First attempt at writing a goal: Make sure big week has total run volume over 20 miles.

A much smarter goal: Run 13.1 miles without stopping.

TIME-DEPENDENT: If you can't put a calendar date to it, it ain't time-dependent.

First attempt at writing a goal: Fit in a 13.1-mile run at target pace at least 4 weeks before event.

A much smarter goal: Run 13.1 miles in under 2 hr., 4 min. on February 23.

ENERGIZING: The thought of reaching the goal has to be motivating and exciting.

First attempt at writing a goal: Run 13.1 miles on the treadmill.

A much smarter goal: Run the exact racecourse 4 weeks before the event.

REEVALUATED: If things start to go tits up, be flexible and redesign the goal.

First attempt at writing a goal: In 9-mile run, calf got really sore. Fingers crossed it holds.

A much smarter goal: Run 7 miles in morning, and 6.1 miles in evening.