

Growth from Adversity: Mental training model developed through working with elite Chinese Taipei athletes

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Athletes are subjected to high physical and mental stress during long-term training and competition. Stress is an essential element for athletes to improve performance, as it strengthens their body and resistance to pressure more than non-athletes of the same age. However, when stress is not managed properly, it can cause physical and psychological harm. Athlete burnout and performance slump are usually related to long-term excessive physical and mental stress. The main task for sports psychologist is to help athletes develop their ability to relax and focus under pressure either in training or in competition. In addition to teaching sports psychology skills to regulate competitive stress, sport psychologists also help athletes who are burnout or in performance slump to reignite their passion and direct the energy towards self-realization. Through long-term working with elite Chinese Taipei athletes, I witnessed the ups and downs of their athletic careers and realized how adversity played an important role for personal growth. Combined sport psychology research, Satir therapy model and learnings from elite Chinese Taipei athletes, I have developed a mental training model grounded by supportive self-relationship. The model includes four main elements: 1) Genuine contacts with deep desires; 2) Finding inner resources and strengthening grounded ability; 3) Facing fears at his/her own pace and improving the ability to contain fears; 4) Deliberately practicing effective stress-responses under stress till it becomes automation. Through the process, athletes not only learn to know themselves better but they could enjoy the process of self-realization more without destructive self-judgement.