



**Parent Session - Psychological Characteristics of
Developing Excellence (PCDEs)**

Tom Evans

Introduction



- Tom Evans – Performance Sport Psychologist
- Background
 - BSc
 - MSc
 - BASES/Accredited Scientist
- Experience
 - Over 10 years working in Elite Sport
 - Previously an assessor on DiSE



Sport Psychology



- Any factor that is not physical, which is linked with participation and performance in sport.





Aim and Purpose of the Unit:

- Identifying and agreeing a programme to improve psychological skills
- Implementing a programme to improve psychological skills
- Applying and evaluating psychological skills in competition



Athlete Mindset 1-1 Structure



Review 1

- Discuss and explore mental and emotional demands
- Assess strengths and areas of development
- Develop goals aimed at improving your mental skills

Review 2

- Monitor development
- Review and modify goals
- Look at how you can embed your strategies during competitions

Follow up

- Review progress
- Reassess mental and emotional skills
- Create goals for after the programme

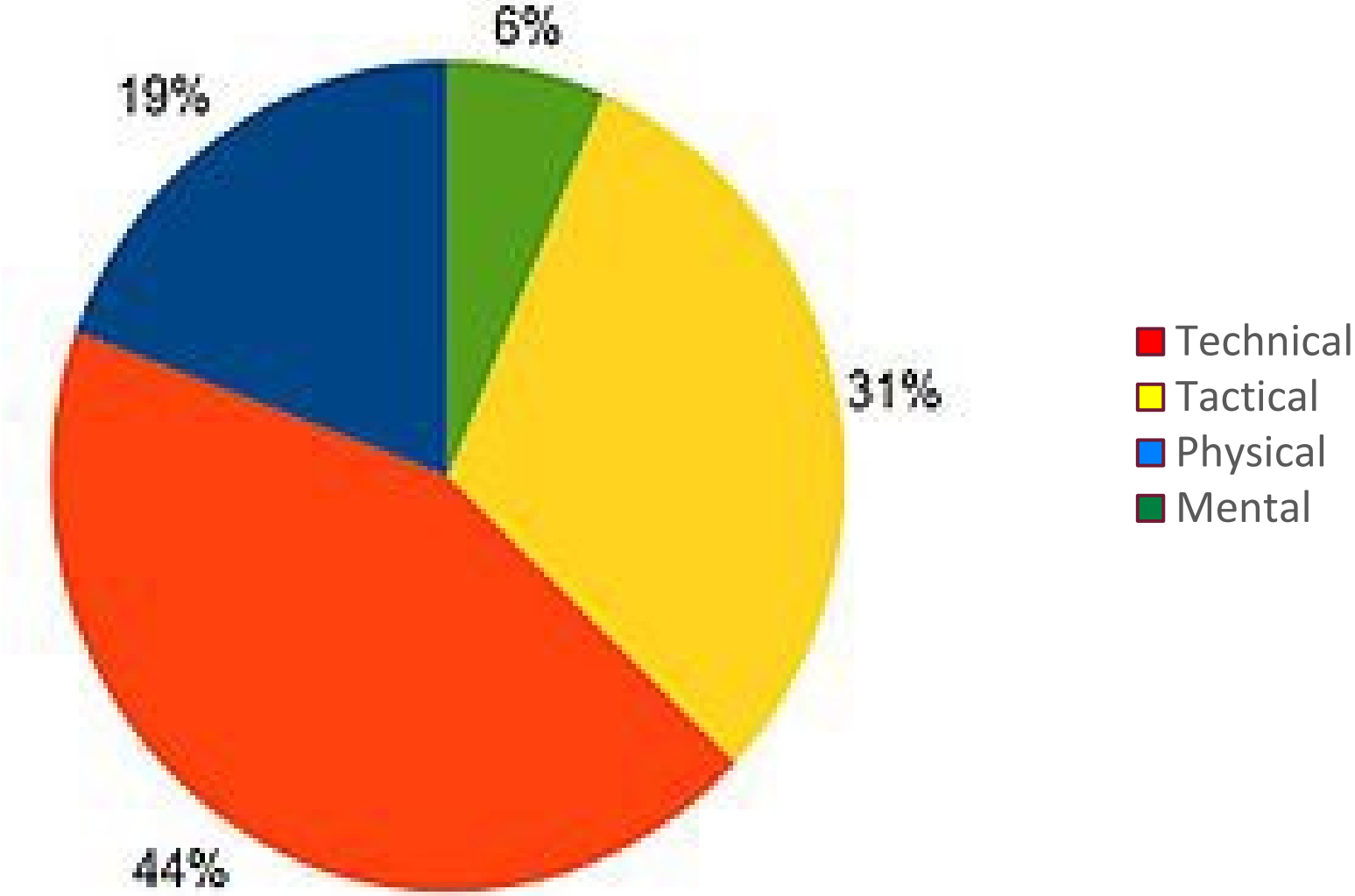
Psychological Characteristics of Developing Excellence (PCDE)



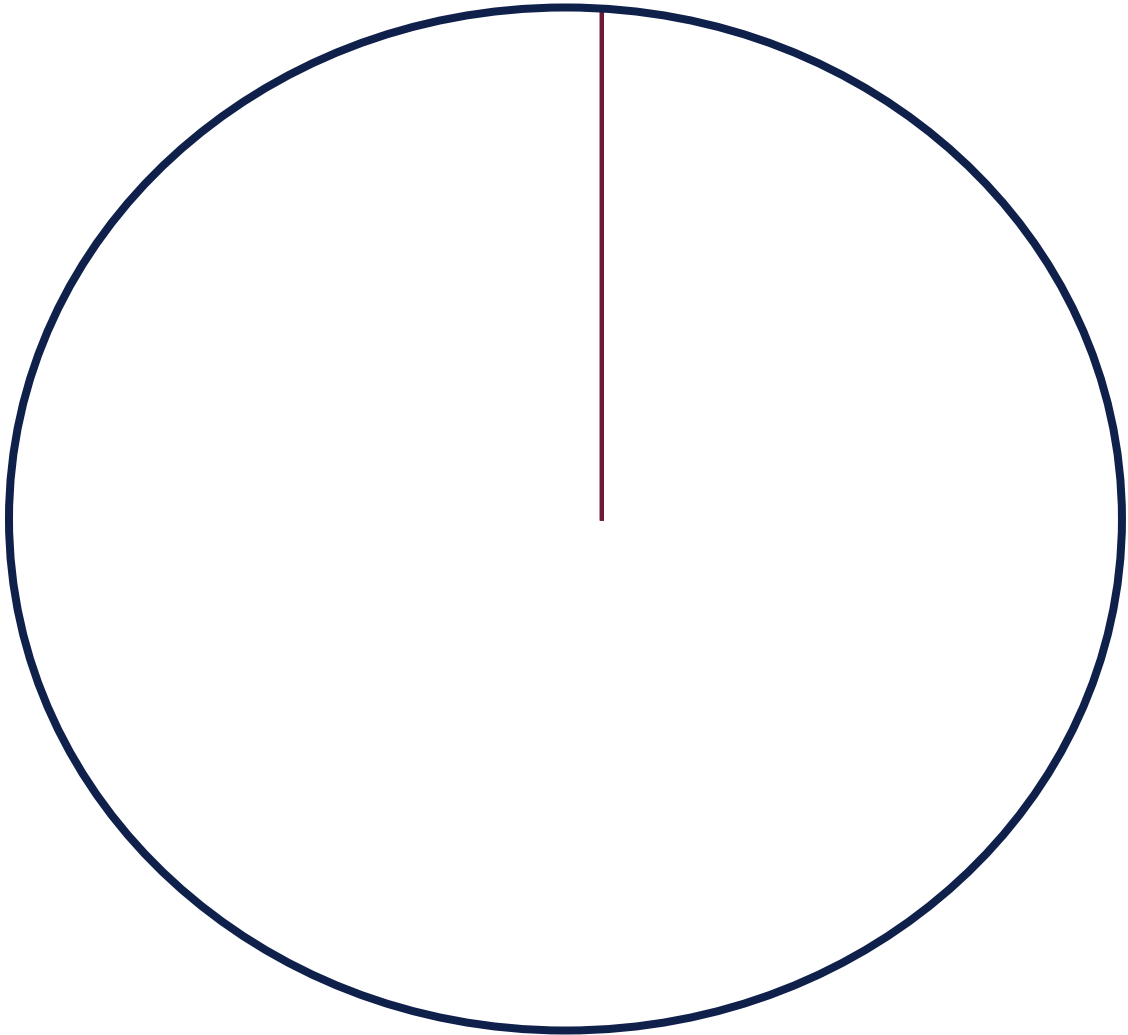
- Research suggests that those who use psychological skills (e.g., goal-setting, imagery, focus) as part of their development and training have been found to be more successful than those who do not incorporate such skills (Orlick & Partington, 1988).
- Research evidence also supports the notion that athletes are more successful when they use an array of psychological skills during competition but also when in training in comparison with athletes of a lower standard (Thomas & Thomas, 1999)



How important are these things to you?



How much time do you spend training these things?



- Technical
- Tactical
- Physical
- Mental



- Commitment
- Coping with Pressure
- Focus and Distraction Control
- Goal-Setting
- Imagery
- Planning and Organisational Skills
- Quality Practice
- Realistic Performance Evaluations





- PCDEs can aid the learning of new skills (e.g., focus, distraction control) but also enable athletes to gain the most out of each training session (e.g., goal-setting, realistic performance evaluations).
- PCDEs also enable athletes to remain on their pathway to excellence by investing the necessary time for training in addition to staying committed to the learning process, particularly when their peers may be engaging in perceivably more joyful activities.



Commitment



Commitment is defined as *“the state or quality of being dedicated to your sport. It is important to note that it is something you choose to do.”*

Commitment is shown three different ways:

- **Body Language** – being strong, confident, and getting back up when things go wrong
- **Effort** – attempts are sustained and working hard all the time
- **On and off the field** – commitment is being worked on by the decisions in both places



Commitment behaviours



- Arriving early
- Training hard in practice
- Training independently
- Consistent effort and preparation
- Working hard at their own level
- Managing training and rest
- Resilience during setbacks



Developing Commitment



- Autonomous, ownership = Increased commitment
- Taking responsibility (Routines/Setting goals)
- Supporting them in gradually taking more responsibility of their sport



Coping with Pressure



“The ability to perform successfully under pressure is a crucial aspect of sport performance.” (Mesagno, 2010, p. 343)

The ability to show confident behaviour and thrive under pressure is characteristic of those athletes who can cope with the pressure of competition.



Coping with Pressure behaviours



- **Responding positively to training and competition** means they interpret pressure as a challenge they can meet, not a threat. They stay engaged rather than withdrawing or becoming tense.
- **Showing confidence under pressure** reflects trust in their preparation and skills, even when the environment is demanding or unpredictable.
- **Being confident enough to perform well in competition** shows they can access their abilities when it matters, rather than letting nerves reduce their performance.
- **Reacting appropriately to mistakes and criticism** means they recover quickly, stay composed, and use feedback constructively instead of spiraling or shutting down.

Developing ability to Coping with Pressure



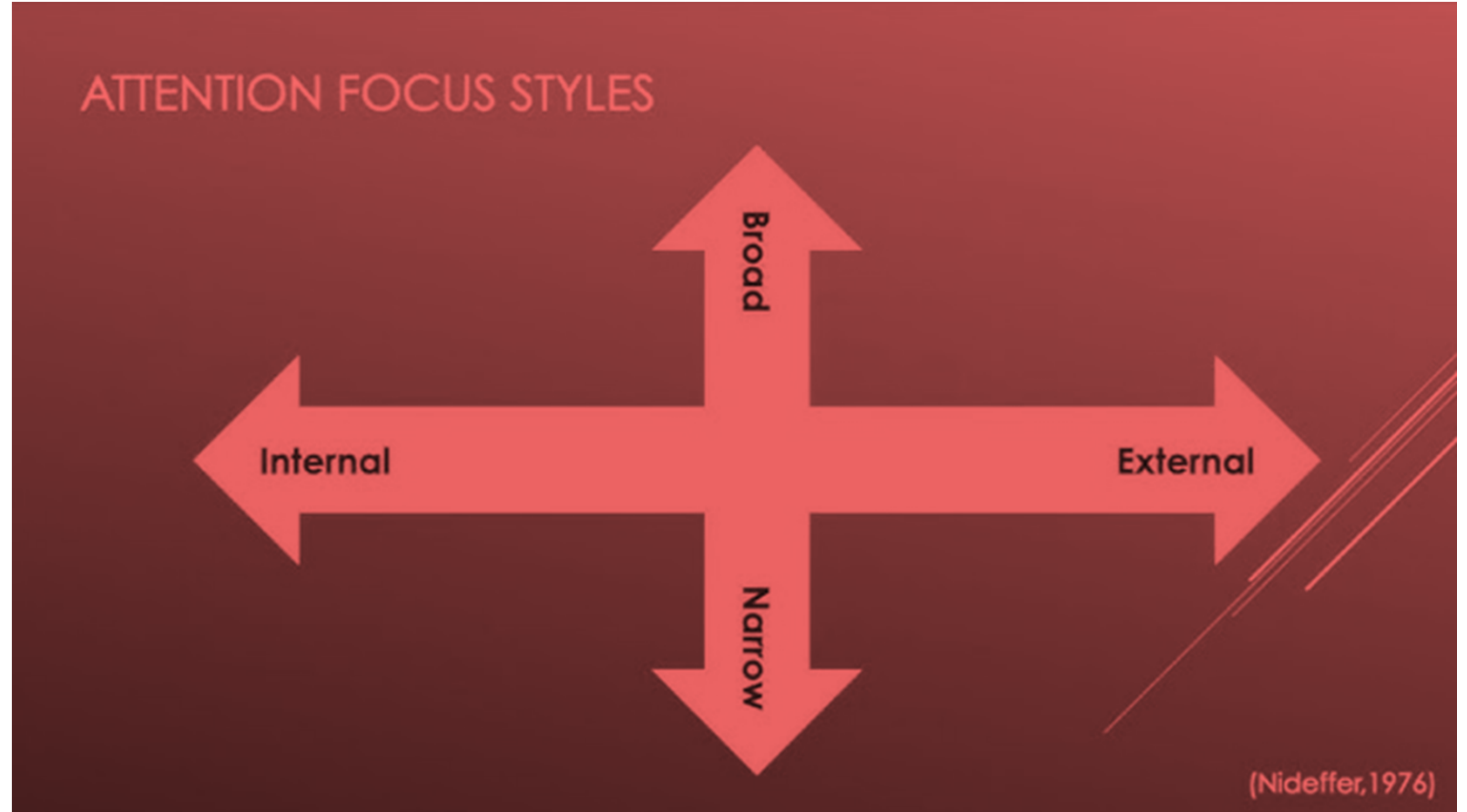
- **Use pre-competition routines** to create familiarity and reduce anxiety.
- **Practice pressure drills** in training (e.g., timed tasks, consequences for errors).
- **Reflect** on mistakes using a neutral, factual tone rather than self-criticism.
- **Use breathing or grounding techniques** to reset after errors.



Focus and Distraction Control



The optimal focus is when you only attend to what's relevant to performing a skill



Focus and Distraction Control behaviours



- Remains focused under distraction
- Stays calm under pressure
- Blocks out distractions
- Displays a consistent **pre-performance routine**
- Maintains **focus on appropriate cues** during competition
- Understands when distraction is likely (**Self Awareness**)

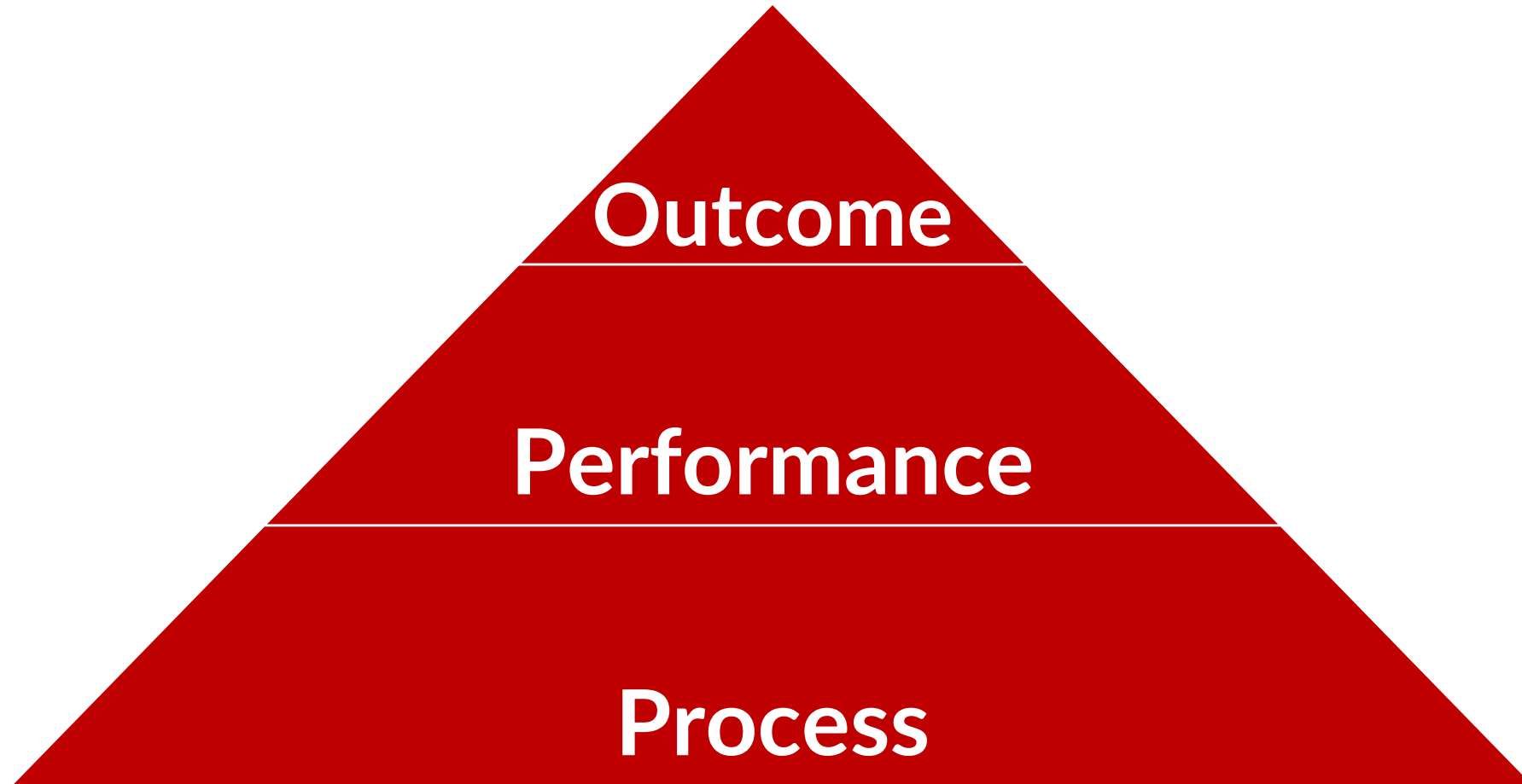


Goal Setting



- Goal Setting - The practice of goal setting, where participants and coaches determine their objectives and current priorities to plan their actions.
- Setting Process Goals will encourage the athlete to focus on themselves in the here and now, on factors they have total control over.



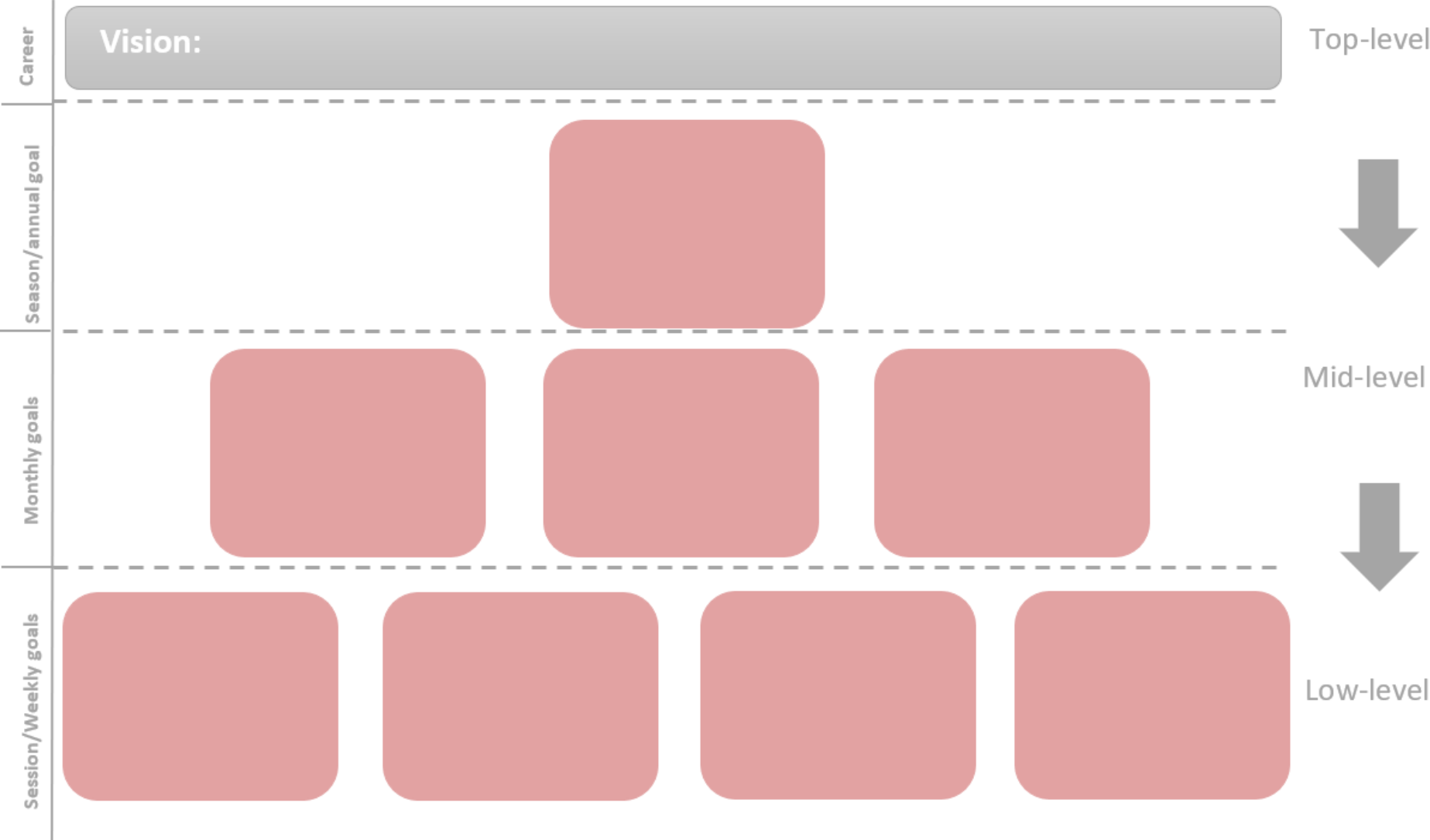


Goal Setting

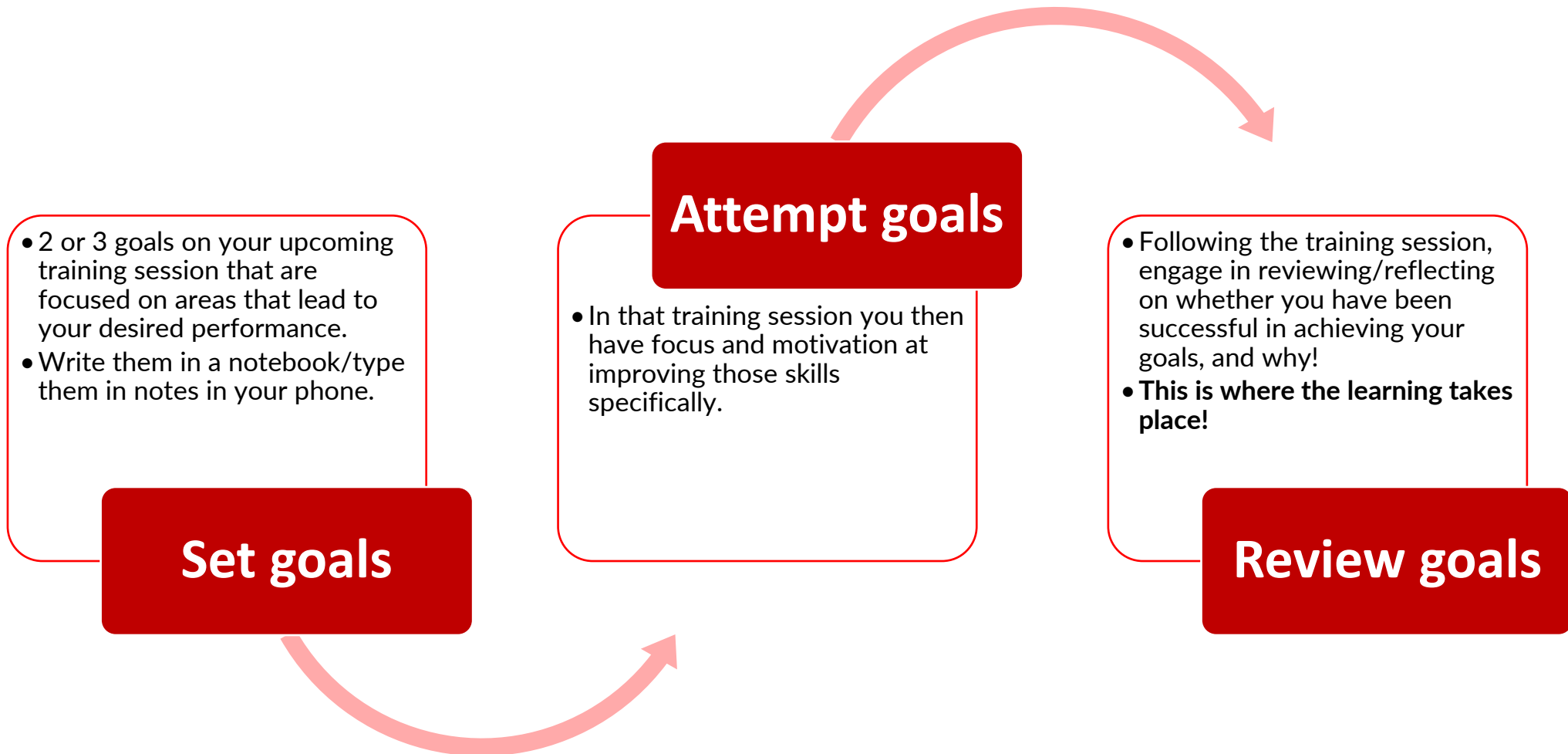


	PROCESS GOALS	PERFORMANCE GOALS	OUTCOME GOALS
TIME	<p>In the moment What can be done right now A daily habit Becomes the norm</p>	<p>In the near future Weeks or months</p>	<p>The Dream Way in the Future Non specific</p>
FOCUS	<p>The here and NOW What you or your people can do every day Becomes a habit or a ritual</p>	<p>Just a stepping stone A checkpoint Must support or underpin our Outcome Goal</p>	<p>Focus is on the achievement or objective 'to be the best'</p>
CONTROL	<p>Total control over this Nothing can get in the way of this Initially a Conscious choice that then becomes Sub-conscious activity</p>	<p>More control over this Could be a SMART target</p>	<p>Little or no actual control Many other factors Wide parameters</p>

Goal Setting Tree - Resource



Goal Setting



Imagery



Imagery (a.k.a. Mental rehearsal) is a psychological technique that has demonstrated its effectiveness in sport through positively affecting psychological states.

Imagery involves the athlete imagining themselves in an environment performing a specific activity successfully and feeling satisfied with their performance.



Functions of Imagery



- Increase confidence** > **Being successful**
- Control anxiety** > **Navigating thing making you anxious**
- Improve motivation** > **Achieving a goal**
- Skill development** > **Performing skill**
- Help injury rehab?** > **Injured body part**

Imagery – PETTLEP Resource



PETTLEP	Definition	Example of how to apply this
Physical -	Image the relevant physical characteristics. This would include you picturing yourself in the same kit and using your equipment.	
Environment -	If possible, image in the environment where the performance takes place, for example athletics track, hockey pitch.	
Task -	Try to image details relevant to the task (e.g. attentional demands) and image at the appropriate level of expertise for the performer, so not mentally rehearsing skills too complex or simple for you.	
Timing -	The most functionally equivalent approach is to image in 'real time', but 'slow motion' imagery can be used to emphasise and perfect more difficult aspects of a skill (O & Hall, 2009).	
Learning -	The imagery should be continually adapted and reviewed over time to match changing task demands and the experience level of the athlete.	
Emotion -	Include the same images that would be felt in the physical situation. However, try to avoid debilitating emotions (e.g. fear, panic). For example, a player imaging taking a penalty would include feelings of confidence and adrenaline rushes.	
Perspective -	The imagery perspective can be first person (through your own eyes) or third person (like watching yourself on video).	

Planning and Organisational Skills



Scheduling – School/Work/Training commitments

Encouraging them to schedule important tasks

- Solo training
- Rolling and Stretching
- S+C
- Rehab exercises

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
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Planning and Organisational Skills - Resource



“A pre-competition routine is a systematic step-by-step approach that helps you stay focused, feel prepared and in control. It is a routine that you have learned during training and are very familiar with. No matter where you are you can always duplicate it and use it to help you prepare to compete as best you can.”

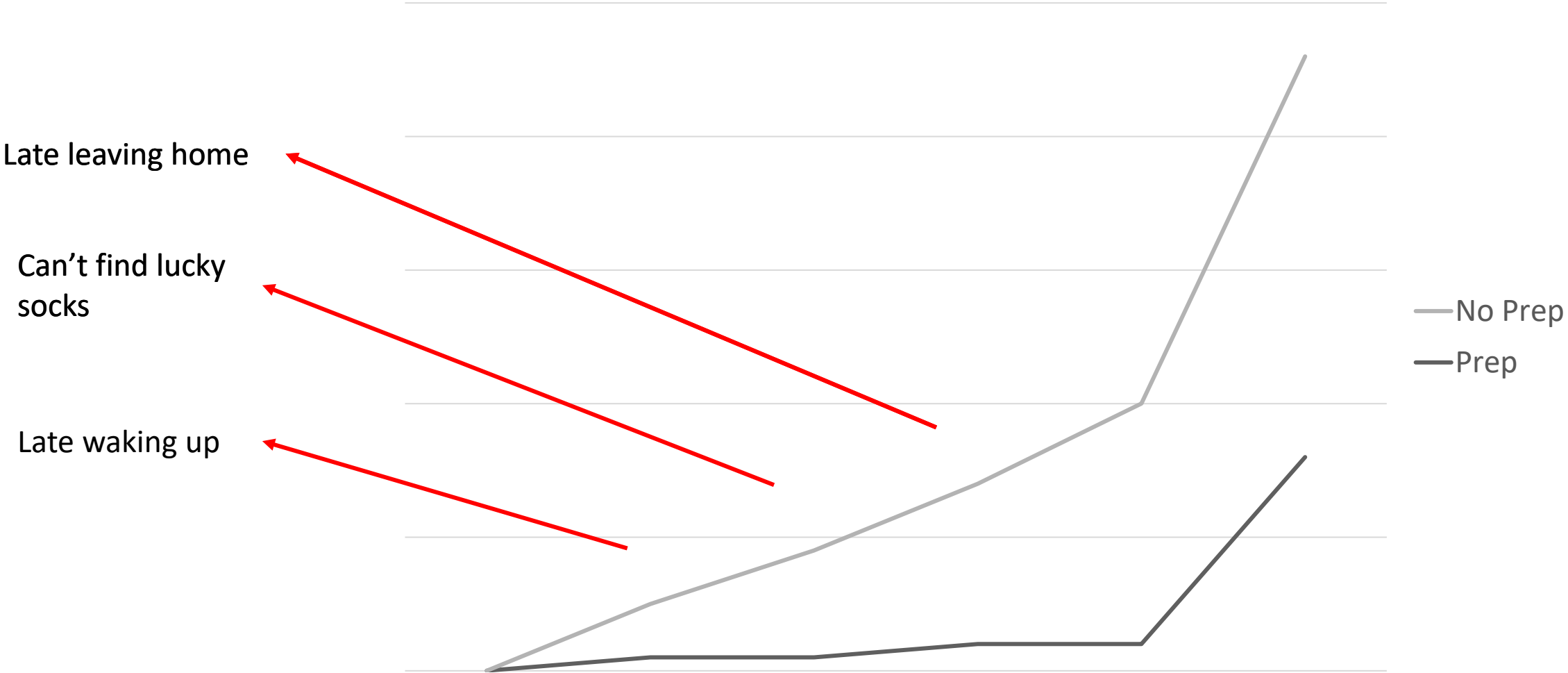
Pre event schedule	
Evening before	Sort my kit: Sort my food: Phone off at: Bed by:
Morning of	Alarm: Breakfast: Leave home by:
Pre event	Example: Imagery Playlist
Event time:	

Individual preparation	
Technical:	Tactical:
Physical:	Mental:

Planning and Organisational Skills



Pre-Event stress levels



Quality Practice



It takes 10 years of deliberate practice to progress from novice to elite in any domain (Ericsson et al, 1993)

Deliberate practice is difficult, effortful and not inherently enjoyable, but is necessary to develop the requisite skills that effectively aid an athlete's development. However, it is quality and not necessarily the quantity of practice that is most salient (Cote et al, 2007)



Quality Practice behaviours



- **Maximizing understanding in training** – The athlete focuses fully during practice to learn skills and techniques properly.
- **Understanding why they are doing drills** – They know the purpose of each exercise (e.g., improving speed, technique, or endurance).
- **Evaluating their progress** – They think about how well they performed in training and identify what needs improvement.
- **Asking questions** – They ask their coach for feedback or clarification to improve their understanding.



Realistic Performance Evaluations



- *A benefit to reflecting is the enhancement of self-awareness*
- *By documenting activities, individuals can gain a better understanding of their own methods and techniques*
- *Reflection provides an opportunity to address any internal conflicts or discomforts that may arise from practice or performance*
- **Setting realistic yet challenging performance expectations**



Realistic Performance Evaluations - Resource



Performance reflection

What was my focus for the event?

-

What did I do well in my event?

-
-
-

What is one thing I want to improve on for the next event?

-



Additional Resources



- Infographics
- Podcast
- Videos

Benefits of Sports Psychology

What it is?
Sports psychology is a field that studies the impact of psychological factors on sports, athletic performance, exercise, and physical activity.
Sports Psychologists employ various methods such as setting goals, visualization, positive self-talk, and managing arousal levels to help individuals reach their peak performance. Additionally, they address issues like motivation, stress, anxiety, injury recovery, and team dynamics.

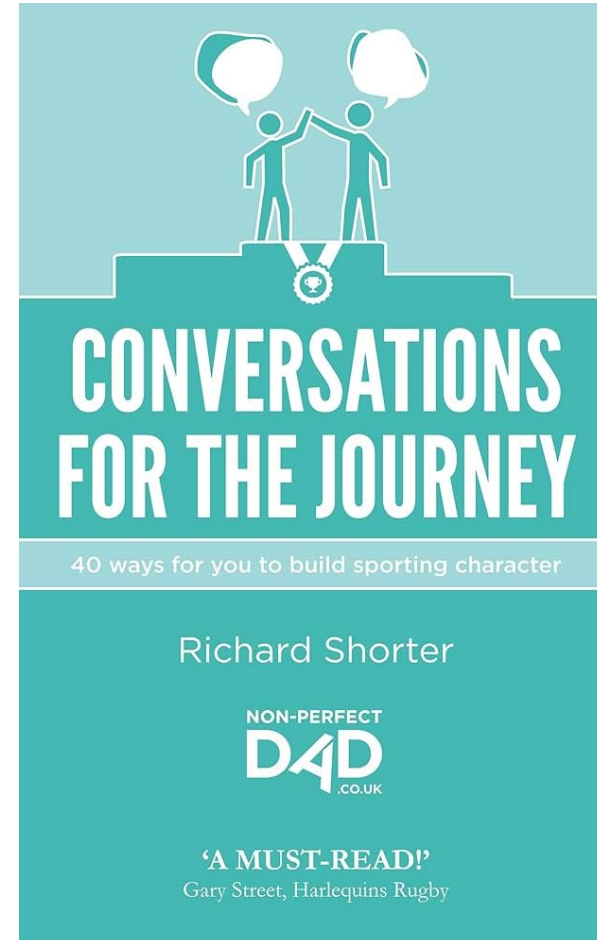
Benefits of Sports Psychology

- Improves Athlete wellbeing
- Develops team cohesion
- Enhances self awareness
- Builds resilience
- Supports athletes through transitions
- Improves motivation
- Equips athletes with coping strategies
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Develops leadership
- Improves concentration and focus





[Sport Parent](#)





Thank you!