

# GAME ON!

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*“Trying to achieve goals in life shouldn't prevent you from enjoying life.”*

~Max Papis

*Master your mental game & take control of your performance*

## PREVENTING BURNOUT

At a recent workshop for a group of triathletes I had them raise their hand if they had ever felt like the last thing they wanted to do was to go out and train – can you guess how many people raised their hand?

Even the most passionate athletes go through times when they are feeling burned out on their sport. Length of season, monotonous training, congested schedules, lack of support, and lack of success, can all be factors

leading to burnout. The key to dealing with burnout is prevention.



### Burnout Prevention

*The fun factor:* Reconnect with what makes it fun and GO DO MORE OF THAT. You're not going to feel burned out if you are enjoying yourself. Your

sport should add to the quality of your life, not take away from it. That's not to say training and competing will always be “fun”; sacrifices and pain are also a part of the package. However, it has to be a *little* fun; otherwise, what's the point? Sometimes what you need to do is not go out and train, but go out and *play*.

*Change it up:* In cooking, spices make all the difference. Add one little

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## BUSTING THROUGH A PLATEAU

At some point during your athletic career, chances are you will hit a plateau. You're working hard and motivated to improve, but feel like you're moving nowhere. How you deal with this situation will either send you down the road to retirement or bring your athletic performance to the next level. Hitting a plateau can make you start to question your confidence and doubt your ability. It's time to get your mojo back.

1. Don't let your plateau snowball out of control. *Make the decision today*

*to turn it around.* That doesn't mean everything will magically get better over night, but it does mean that you are committing to changing your attitude and taking back control.

2. It's important to diagnose whether your plateau is attributed to *something physical or something mental.* Are you fighting off a virus? Has there been a change in the weather or your level of intensity? Are you utilizing optimal nutrition and hydration for athletic performance? Are you

playing with an overuse injury? Peak performance is a combination of optimal body and optimal mind. Make sure that both are working to their potential.

3. Grab a piece of paper and list out *20 things you need to do in order to be at the top of you game.* Pick one item off the list and set a goal with a timeline for when you will achieve that goal. As you accomplish things off of your list, use that momentum to keep moving you forward.

## Raising the Red Flag

Knowing the signs of burnout can help you diagnose and treat it before it develops into a full blown disease! Here are some telltale signs that you may be on the road to burnout:

### Physical Signs

Overly exhausted

Trouble sleeping

Lack of appetite

Weight loss

Overuse injuries

Illness

### Mental Signs

Apathy

Boredom

Depressed

Anxious

Angry

Irritable

Confused

Not feeling challenged

Not having fun

Just like diagnosing the cause of a plateau, it's important to rule out the physical first. Things like overtraining and illness can contribute to the list of symptoms above as well. Once that's ruled out, use the PROactive tools here to help get back on track again.

## PREVENTING BURNOUT, CON'T

spice and you've changed the entire dish. If you feel like you're just going through the motions in practice, training, or competition, it's time to spice things up. If you're always doing the same thing you're going to get bored and boredom leads to burnout. Changing things up introduces your brain to new stimulus which might be exactly what you need to wake up out of your fog. If you're always going on the same training ride – change the scenery and find a new route. If you're always going out with the same training partner – add a new training buddy to the mix. If all you do is ride your bike – add in some cross-training. Change it up; variety is the spice of life.

*It takes two:* If you don't have a training partner, it's time to get one. A training buddy adds some accountability and can also act as that extra incentive to get you out the door when you just want to be sucked into the vortex of your living room couch. You're much less likely to hit the snooze button on your alarm clock when you know you're

meeting someone out at the track. You're much more likely to head out and train after a long day at work when you have a friend to hit the gym with. Not only can a training buddy help get you out the door, but they can also help push your performance to the next level. When you train with a buddy, you push yourself harder than if you train alone.



*Take time off:* Nothing rekindles the spirit like playing hooky! It's important to take vacations from your sport. When you don't want to train, sometimes the best thing you can do is not train. In order for an athlete to have optimal performance, they have to give themselves time to recover both mentally and physically. Humans are built to seek out equilibrium and if you

don't proactively seek it out, your body and mind have a way of doing it for you. You don't need an excuse to take time off from your sport. Physics have taught us that if you continue to pile on stress, the load will eventually reach a breaking point. If you don't take time off from your sport, you run the risk of illness, injury, overtraining, and burnout. In order to prevent these things, you need to take a break before you reach your breaking point.

If you find that your sport is causing you more stress than enjoyment take the time to sit down and write out the answer to this question: *What do you love about your sport?* When you're feeling a little low on motivation, sometimes you need to remind yourself what you love about participating in your sport and remember that you have control over your choice to participate.

When dealing with burnout, it's better to be PROactive versus REactive. Know the signs and make burnout prevention a part of your game plan at the outset of your season.

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