

GAME ON!

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"A life of unbroken success is not only impossible, it's probably not even good for you."

- Lance Armstrong

Master your mental game & take control of your performance

INJURED, PART II

In the last newsletter *Injured, Part I* focused on the initial stages of injury. *Part II* focuses on building confidence and returning to your sport. Building your confidence back up is just as essential to your rehabilitation as strengthening your body. It is important to make sure that you are both physically and mentally ready to get back into training and competition.

Return to Training

Your initial return to sport is often the most difficult both physically and mentally. This is when you get to test yourself out; take your newly rehabilitated body out for a trial run.



Different issues can arise with your initial return to sport. One issue is not yet trusting the injured body part. You need to be confident that you are physically ready to return to sport. If you are feeling some hesitation, talk to your physician or physical therapist and express your concerns. Have them explain why they feel you're physically ready to return.

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STRESSFUL TIMES

Whether it comes from work, family, or the news; stress is stress. If you take it on as a stressor, it's going to affect your health and your performance. When we're under stress, the first sacrifices we make are things we do to take care of ourselves. We miss workouts, eat junk food, cut out massages, cut back on going out with friends, etc. Ultimately, we end up causing ourselves more stress by taking out the factors that help us unwind. Here are some de-stressing tips for these stressful times:

Make a **Not-To-Do** list:

We are a culture of action. We write goals, make resolutions, and create action plans. For some folks there is nothing more satisfying than crossing something of their to-do list. Try your hand at creating a not-to-do list. Pick 5 things that you will commit to not doing anymore in 2009.

Unbook yourself: If your calendar is cluttered with commitments, it's time to do some unbooking. Unbooking guarantees you some free time. If you're addicted to your

organizer or Outlook calendar, schedule in blocks of unbooked time.

Do something just for fun: When is the last time you did something with no other motivation in mind other than to enjoy it? If it's been sometime in the last month – good for you!! You realize that creativity in work and energy in sport come from balance in life. Pick a new hobby or rekindle an old one. Use up that unbooked time and do something just for the enjoyment of it.

Take Your Medicine

So is laughter really the best medicine? It turns out laughter is good for the body and the brain. Laughter increases endorphins and cools off your stress response. It also boosts your immune system and just makes life more fun! So if you want to do something good for your health, make a resolution increase your laughter quota in 2009!

Stand-up Comedy

Check out your local comedy club and get in some belly laughs. Or if money is tight, check out Comedy Central on Friday nights.

Laughter on the Web

The newscast got you down? Try this instead.

www.theonion.com

Get your funnies online.

www.gocomics.com

Videos featuring your favorite comedians.

www.funnyordie.com

INJURED PART II, CON'T

During injury your confidence atrophies right along with your muscles. Sometimes your body is ready to get back into sport before your brain is. While you're building your muscles for the return, build your confidence by creating a list of sport affirmations. Before practice or any time you feel frustrated or experience a dip in your confidence, pull out and read your list of affirmations. Here are some examples:

My body is getting stronger everyday.

I am relaxed and confident.

My body is ready for this.

I'm excited to get back into my sport.

Another issue that is common during the initial stages is pushing too hard too soon. An athlete might return to sport before they're ready because they feel like they are falling behind on their training, feel they should

be recovering faster, or are pushing to be fully recovered by a particular event. It's easy for your confidence to spiral down when you are focused on where you think you should be compared to where you are. One important thing to do during this phase is to celebrate your milestones- from increasing your weight for strength training, to your first time being able to run for 20 minutes, to your first full practice-recognizing your progress helps build your confidence.



Return to Competition

Fear of re-injury is a common issue when returning to competition. When you trigger your stress response you experience attentional and

physiological changes that make you more likely to be injured. Your muscles will be more tense which causes you to be less flexible, less coordinated, and fatigue more quickly. Attentional changes include a loss of peripheral vision, slower reaction time, and you can become more easily distracted.

You can help build confidence using imagery. Imagery can help because it uses the same neural pathways of preparation for executing an action. By using imagery you can practice feeling confident and performing successfully through different scenarios. Imagine not only how you will perform, but how you want to feel as well. Start with scenarios that cause you the least anxiety about re-injury and work your way up from there. Before you move to the next scenario, make sure you can visualize yourself feeling strong and confident and performing well. Remember to stay positive, focus on what is in your control, and you'll come back even stronger than you were before you were injured!

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