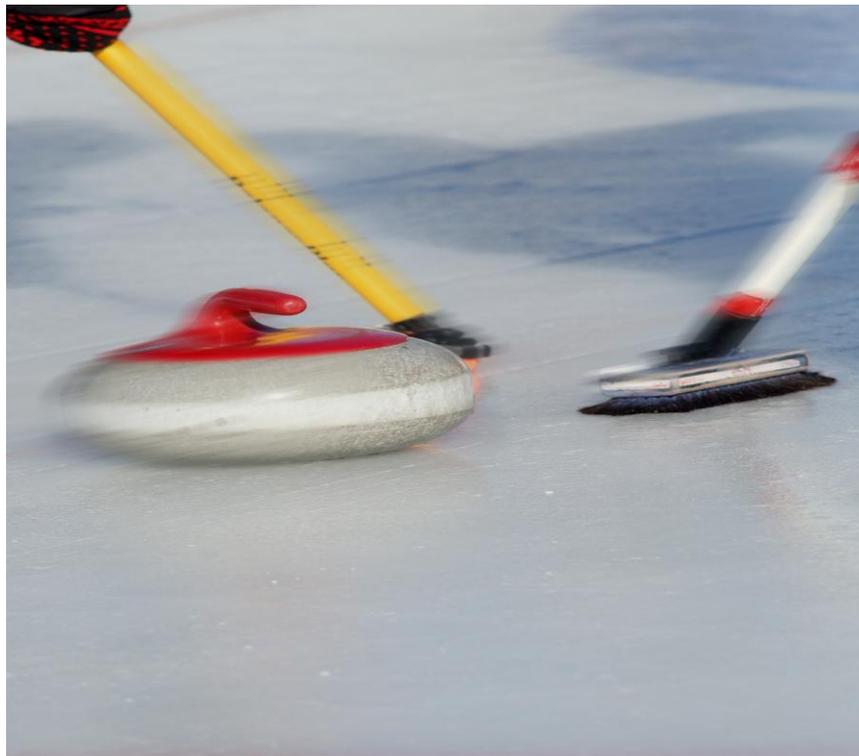


“Shoot Lights Out”

How to Make Your Shots Under Pressure Using the Mental Toughness Secrets of Superstars



By Lisa Lane Brown

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In this Guide, you are going to discover how to build your confidence and mental toughness so you can shoot lights out consistently in curling.

Before we go any further, let me say that you already have the skills to shoot lights out any time you want.

I'm sure you've done it at least once before, if not many times.

Therefore, I'm not going to give you tips in this Guide about your delivery, your leg drive, or achieving draw weight or anything else like that. There are many excellent curling coaches out there who can do that for you in a few minutes.

I'm going to give you something far more valuable: the mindset of a superstar.

Superstar Athletes Think Differently

This may sound obvious, but superstar athletes think differently.

These 'best of the best' superstars have amazing mental toughness.

If you've ever watched athletes like Michael Jordan, Sidney Crosby, Tiger Woods, or curling stars Jennifer Jones and Kevin Martin put on a display of mental toughness, you know this to be true.

But while they chat in interviews about the importance of the mental strength, they rarely disclose their actual methods.

Because of this, the vast majority of athletes have no idea how to be mentally tough and deliver peak performance under pressure.

Why Athletes Under-Perform and Lose

To truly reach your potential in curling and shine under pressure, the first thing you must do is understand why athletes under-perform, make mistakes, and lose.

The reason this happens to athletes is because they are afraid. Tim Gallwey said it best in his book *Inner Tennis*:

"A tennis player first confronts the Inner Game when he discovers there is an opponent inside his own head more formidable than the one across the net.

He then realizes that the greatest difficulty in returning a deep backhand lies not in the speed and placement of the ball itself, but in his mind's reaction to that ball: his own thinking makes the shot more difficult than it really is.

...if, for example, your mind is screaming, "You're probably going to miss this one...You'd better get your racket back earlier and make sure to meet the ball out front...If I miss...I'll be down 5-3 on his serve..."

If thoughts like this are occupying the mind, the ball will appear to approach much faster than it is and will not be seen clearly, and your stroke will be too tight and too contrived to be either effective or fun."

It's the classic dilemma.

You want to perform well and win so much that you crush your body's ability to let go and lead.

You over-think, over-analyze, and even try to make decisions in advance.

You forget to let the game come to you.

Consider your own experience for a moment. Think back to the last time you competed in an event that really mattered to you in which you did NOT perform well.

How did fear, anxiety, or nerves interfere with your performance? Take a moment to mentally note how this fear affected you in a negative way.

This is what's known as bad nerves in sport.

I've lived this experience myself.

My name is Lisa Lane Brown and I'm an athlete, just like you.

I love my sport, but for the first 14 years of competing I was what you'd call a 'mental marshmallow.'

I had wild confidence swings from one game to the next. I never knew why, and it hurt me all the time.

Even when I practiced and prepared with 100% intensity, I'd often find a way to choke in big events.

My insecurity reached its zenith at the 1991 Nationals, where we lost with one second left on the clock.

It's hard to express my despair over this game in words.

Losing hurt, but my deepest anguish came from the fact that I had choked in the biggest game of the year.

Worse, a friend of mine scored all 5 of our goals...but I wasn't happy for her.

Outwardly, I pretended to be happy. "*Well done, Shauna. Way to go.*"

Inwardly, I was eating my heart out.

I wanted to be a leader, but I had no idea how.

Exhausted and depressed on the plane home, I broke, letting in the fear and shame I had been shutting out for years.

That's when I made a promise to find out what superstars knew that I didn't.

I wanted REAL answers...

Not something a guy with a PhD wrote in a book.

Fortunately I was a very stubborn athlete...obsessed with finding "The Answer."

After years of choking too often, I decided to do something about it and embarked on a mission to find answers.

These answers didn't come overnight.

I did all the traditional sports psychology stuff (some of it was great, but some of wasn't...and actually made me WORSE).

I threw out the ideas that didn't work and spent several years carefully researching and testing new (even radical) mental toughness strategies on myself and other National Team and Olympic athletes in Canada.

My stubbornness paid off.

Through trial and error, I discovered mental toughness secrets I never would have thought about winning under pressure – and I'm going to share several of them with you here.

The first thing I figured out is WHY most athletes are afraid.

Why Athletes Are Afraid

To shoot lights out in curling under pressure, you start by understanding what's making you afraid in the first place.

I believe most athletes are afraid because they do not feel IN CONTROL.

Most athletes have been programmed by parents, coaches, and teammates to be obsessed with three things:

1. Performing well
2. Winning
3. Being confident

Now, let me be clear. There is nothing wrong with wanting these three things.

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They are nice. They are very nice, and wanting them will help you become be the very best athlete you can be.

The problem is that you cannot control any of them.

And let me emphasize this point, because it's REALLY important.

You cannot control any of these things.

If you could control whether you'd perform well, you'd always give a peak performance and shoot lights out.

If you could control winning, you'd always win.

If you could control how you feel, you'd always feel confident out there.

And if you are obsessed with something you cannot control, you will feel scared and anxious all the time.

Of course, fear (bad nerves) does not make for great performance, because when it's strong, it interferes with our ability to trust ourselves.

In *Do Less, Achieve More*, author Chin-ning Chu describes this phenomenon beautifully:

"All my life I want to be a great singer. I have spent more money on voice lessons than anything else.

Eventually, I realized the main reason I was not the singer I wanted to be was that my desire to sing well was so strong that it had caused my mind to hold my voice hostage.

When I sang, instead of just letting my voice go and simply singing, my mind would try and help my voice to sing. I recognized that, in fact, my voice always knew within itself how to sing. It was my mind that did not know how to sing.

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As I released my mind from the effort of trying to sing, my voice was freed instantly."

It's a vicious cycle. The more you try and control performing well, winning, and being confident, the worse you perform, and the more afraid you become.

Example: Before I did mental toughness training, I was obsessed with scoring goals. Since I could not control scoring goals, if I hadn't scored in the first few shifts of the game, I'd go berserk and try to score even harder. This did NOT bring out my best, because I got a really narrow focus.

I'd shoot whether I had a good scoring opportunity or not; I'd wouldn't notice when my line-mates were open; and I wouldn't read the defense or goalie properly. I was very predictable and therefore, easy to defend against.

Consider your own experience for a moment. Can you relate? Do you sometimes "over-try" because you are scared? How does this affect your shots performance?

What about the opposite? Do you sometimes give up too easily because you fear failing? How does this affect your shots and performance?

How Champions Master Fear

You are now in an exciting position because you now know where most of your fear is coming from: the fact that you really want to shoot lights out and win consistently – yet you cannot control it directly. You can certainly influence it, but you cannot *control* it.

To build your confidence and perform flawlessly, you'll need to learn exactly how to master fear by triggering your Courageous Self in competition.

Your Courageous Self

To be supremely confident and shoot lights out in big competitions, I suggest you trigger your Courageous Self.

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Let me explain. You are not just one person. There are several people inside you.

For example, you are one person when you are at home alone and a different person out with your friends. You are also a different person at work than you are at home.

The same is true in curling. In curling, you have two selves: a Courageous, warrior self and a Coward self.

Your **Courageous Self** is an aggressive, take-no-prisoners athlete with the Will to Win.

When your Courageous self is in charge, you are steeled for competition. You know that bad stuff is going to happen, and you're willing to face it.

You will try risky and even bold moves. If winning requires that you go outside your comfort zone, you'll take a chance and do it, even if it means looking foolish in the moment.

When your Courageous Self is in charge, you are highly aware (in tune with) everything that is going on around you (including the ice) and you adjust in a fraction of a second to what's going on.

Your **Coward Self** is timid and likes to play it safe.

He or she fears mistakes and is plays not to lose or fail. Your Coward self will only complete shots inside her comfort zone.

Sometimes your Coward self even tries to "hide" and "disappear" in the middle of competition, hoping no one will notice!

EXERCISE – YOUR COURAGEOUS SELF

The first step to shooting lights out is to get to know your Courageous Self really well. Please answer the following questions honestly:

1. Name the last competition that mattered to you in which you performed really well:

-
-
2. Write down three things you did that were Courageous (you had to do something difficult and you did it). Example: Did you agree to a shot that was outside your comfort zone? Did you push yourself through the wall physically? Were you aggressive in your strategy?

- a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

How to Trigger Your Courageous Self

To shoot lights out consistently, you'll want to become very skilled at triggering your Courageous Self in competition. The very best method is to create a sense of CONTROL.

Since most of your fear stems from wanting something you cannot control (such as making your shots) when you put yourself back in control, your Courageous Self comes out without you having to coax it. Note: if you think you can control whether you make your shots, I ask, "Have you ever missed one?" If the answer is Yes, then obviously you cannot control this, because you'd never miss a shot on purpose.

Here are 7 mental toughness secrets you can use to get back in control and bringing out your Courageous Self under pressure and shoot lights out.

Mental Toughness Secret #1 Stop PRESSING

Earlier I said that most athletes are obsessed with performing well and winning.

They're thinking about how to perform well and look good. Maybe you've been there yourself.

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I know I have.

Many, many times.

Problem is, when you get obsessed with shooting lights out or winning, you try to control it.

And that leads to PRESSING.

For example...

If you're skipping, you might call a very aggressive or overly complicated game (when another one would be a smarter option).

Rather than aiming your hips or getting out to the broom, you try to guide and steer the rock instead, which messes up your accuracy.

You "get the rock started" by flip your wrist out.

You fall into "panic sweeping" by jumping the rock early and under-communicating with the person in the house because you don't trust him or her.

PRESSING is the opposite of trusting yourself. When you press, you're trying to force an outcome.

You interfere with your technique instead of letting your body lead.

THE SECRET

Here is a secret that only 3% of athletes know:

Stop trying to control the outcome by PRESSING.

PRESSING does NOT work.

Here's what to do instead to get a sense of control and bring out your Courageous Self.

Instead of PRESSING, get into the "Want, Not Need" mindset.

You *want* to win, but you do not *need* to win to accept yourself.

Why Not Me?

Mark Tewksbury, one of the finest swimmers in the history of the sport, used the “Want, Not Need” mindset to win an Olympic gold medal.

Mark says: *"The world had become more competitive. The medals, which used to be shared by 8 countries, were now finding their way to over 25 countries. Even swimmers like Matt Biondi, the world record holder, were leaving the pool without going to the podium.*

I thought, "Even silver would be good. I was not giving up, but there were no guarantees."

The first thing Mark did was refuse to PRESS.

He set his sights on winning and being aggressive in the pool, but he did not try and control it.

Before the race, he said to himself, *"Someone has to win this race. Why not me?"*

"Why not me?" is a beautiful thought.

It is optimistic, confident, and relaxed.

There is no PRESSING in this thought.

When you stop pressing, you relax and have fun, and let your body lead.

This puts you back in control because your goal is NOT to control something (winning) that cannot be controlled.

Your goal is to come up several reasons to believe in yourself using the question, “Why Not Me?”

EXERCISE – WHY NOT ME?

a. Write down the name of your next competition:

b. Write down your performance goal for this competition, such as a shooting percentage:

c. List at least FIVE believable reasons that answer the question “Why Not Me?” For example, you might write, “I have an incredible sense for draw weight.”

The next time you are tempted to try and exert CONTROL by pressing (or you spot yourself doing one of the example pressing tactics such as guiding or steering the rock), resist the temptation. Instead, lay back a bit mentally and ask yourself, “Why Not Me?”

Mental Toughness Secret #2

How To Calm Your Nerves Before You Play

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If you're like most athletes, games make you nervous. They can be ESPECIALLY nerve-racking if you have a new coach or team to "impress."

Remember, the method for mastering fear and triggering your Courageous Self is to create a sense of CONTROL over what you are doing.

The next technique to calm your nerves and get a sense of control is a simple and easy one.

It's called setting a GOAL under your control for your game.

I know what you're thinking. "*Ew. That's lame. It's too simple to actually work.*"

Stay with me here. The reason most athletes get overly nervous is they don't decide exactly what they want to accomplish BEFORE competing.

Just last week I talked to a goalie who was disappointed by his latest try-out.

GOALIE: "I really struggled in try outs - there were 12 goalies and 6 made it. I should have been able to get noticed more."

LISA: "What do you mean?"

GOALIE: "I could have covered my angles more. People have told me that all season - to make sure I'm always following the puck and not the player."

LISA: "If you DON'T follow the puck and you follow the player, what happens?"

GOALIE: "When I follow the player I'm too far back into my net - I'm almost on top of the goal line. When I follow the puck I push out and challenge."

At this point I asked him the obvious question: "Did you have a GOAL to follow the puck?"

I'm sure you can guess the answer: No.

Of course, to trigger your Courageous Self, your goal has to be under your direct and immediate control – otherwise it will backfire and make you MORE nervous.

This works like a charm because you're not trying to accomplish something that is outside your control. You're simply executing on a goal that you know you can accomplish. This brings out your Courageous Self because you know you can do it as long as you really want the goal.

EXAMPLES

"I want to be able to call the hog to hog times to the second so I've got draw weight."

"I want to look at the broom for at least one second before I start to come out of the hack."

"I want to visualize every shot before I throw it."

"I want to commit to the shot in my mind before throwing it."

"I want to communicate while sweeping."

"I want to execute my pre-shot routine and then trust my delivery."

EXERCISE – SET A GOAL FOR YOUR NEXT GAME

a. Write down the name of your game:

b. Write down a goal for this game that is under your control.

The next time you feel anxious and out of control, resolve to bring yourself back to your goal and execute it. Since it's under your control, you can always do a good job of this.

Mental Toughness Secret #3

Thinking About Winning Is NOT Jinxing Yourself

"This is the only race of my life where I just felt I was going to win. I used to think it was bad to think about winning, that I was going to jinx it."

--Ashleigh McIvor, Olympic Gold Medalist, Ski Cross

The next way to give yourself a sense of CONTROL under pressure so can shoot lights out is to get clear on how you think about winning. To start, I want to clear up the confusion out there about how you can JINX yourself.

...and please listen up, because this is important.

You will never jinx yourself by thinking about winning BEFORE an event. Thinking about winning is only a problem if you focus on it DURING your event.

That's because you cannot control winning.

If you could, you'd always win.

Again, in classic sport psychology terms, if you think "outcome" during an event - about winning or performing well, you'll probably tighten up.

You've already learned that this is called PRESSING, and we've all done it.

When you're PRESSING - thinking outcome - you stop focusing on what you need to do to win, such as pay attention to the ice and trust your delivery.

When you focus on outcome, you lose awareness of what's actually happening in your game, and make tiny mistakes that cause you to lose.

So when do you think about winning?

You think about it every day leading up to your game. In training, in practice, even as you're falling asleep at night.

In fact, visualizing yourself winning is exactly what you should do.

But once your game starts, you get into the Now.

You're busy.

You're concentrating.

You're focused.

You're completely absorbed in what you're doing.

Winning -- and performing well - takes care of itself.

Besides, you've already programmed your mind for success with your visualization, so it's handled.

I personally used this method to help my team win the 1996 World Championships in my sport, ringette. We were in Sweden and I spent at least an hour or two every day during the week before the final visualization the game and us winning it.

The day before the game, a teammate of mine asked me how I was doing. "I'm so sick of visualizing the game I wish we could play it right now!" I told her.

During the game, we were down 5-3 with just over five minutes to go. My line went out on the ice, popped two goals, and then we won in overtime.

After the game, I realized that when the score was 5-3, I was the only person on the team who still believed we were going to win.

I smiled to myself because I had programmed myself so thoroughly that nobody anyone around me could shake my faith.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of stories just like mine, and it proves that you can trigger your **Courageous Self** simply by imagining yourself winning in the weeks leading up to your event – as long as you don't focus on winning DURING the event.

EXERCISE

Take a moment now and think about your next big game. In your mind's eye, imagine it unfolding exactly the way you would like. Now repeat this for 2-3 minutes every day while falling asleep at night. You will be shocked how powerful it is.

Mental Toughness Secret #4 How to Bounce Back After A Bad Shot or Game

To be a truly confident, mentally tough athlete who can shoot lights out under pressure, you need to know how to get back in control and bounce back after a bad shot or game.

It's probably the opposite of what you think.

Whenever I would choke, my coach, Dad, or sport psych used to tell me that all I needed to do was believe in myself.

They would say things like, *"You're a great athlete, why are you second-guessing yourself like this? Just go out there and play the way you KNOW you can."*

Sound familiar?

If so, you know how ridiculously UNHELPFUL this advice is.

What I soon realized is that you should never ignore the fact that you choked.

Instead you need to ask yourself WHY you choked.

Take Branden, a badminton player I worked with: "*Lisa I won the first match and was up 18-12 in the second. I just needed three points to lose it out. But I got anxious. I hit the bird into the net and then out. He got momentum, I got frustrated, I ending up losing the tournament. Lisa I need more mental strength.*"
--Branden, badminton player

Can you see Branden's MAJOR problem?

What he's missing?

He's doing what 97% of athletes do. He's thinking about the fact that he got nervous and choked.

And he's putting himself down for choking.

He forgot to ask WHY he got so nervous.

If you try to trigger your Courageous Self without answering this question first, you'll spin your wheels forever.

So I asked my badminton player the one question he WASN'T asking: "*What was happening in this match that made you so nervous?*"

Turns out his opponent was a long time rival. Branden beat him five months ago by moving him around the court.

See, Branden's a smart player. He's quick. He specializes in exhausting the other player so he can't get shots back.

That's how he won five months ago.

But then the inevitable happened.

After he got beat, Branden's rival got mad.

Then he got better.

When he saw Branden again, he was returning Branden's shots.

This unnerved Branden, who counts on his opponent not being able to get the bird back.

And here's the truth:

There's a story behind every match, every game, and every race.

There are physical, technical, and tactical REASONS why one side wins.

There aren't many flukes in sport.

That's why it's so sweet when you win.

But Branden forgot to dig up the story.

My guess?

He didn't want to face the story.

But that's how you prevent choking, my friend.

When you get scared, you need to figure out WHY you're so scared.

There's usually a very good reason, and it's often technical, strategic, or physical.

Something is happening out there that's making you scared.

Once you know what it is, your power is back. You're now in a position to solve the problem. This mentality brings out your Courageous Self because now you are in control: your job is to solve the technical, strategic, or physical problem that's keeping you from shooting lights out and winning. This is actually some you can do, so you're officially back in control.

EXERCISE

Write down the last time you “choked” in a game that mattered to you.

Write down the technical reason WHY you were losing, making mistakes, or just not performing. Examples: “The ice was really hard to read, I didn’t have the hog to hog times, and I couldn’t find draw weight,” or “The other team kept setting up hits for me and it’s my least favourite shot” or something like that:

The next time you choke, step back and figure out why you were getting so worked up. You’ll know, and simply knowing this will help you get back in CONTROL.

Mental Toughness Secret #4

How To Turn A Slump Around

The next key to getting in CONTROL, bringing out your Courageous Self and shooting lights out is to know how to turn a slump around.

For years I was messed up because I thought the way out of a slump was to think positively.

Everyone told me this - my coach, my friends, and even a couple of sports psychologists.

There I'd be, in the middle of a scoring slump, frustrated to the max, desperately trying to think of something positive to say to myself.

You know what I'm talking about...that fake, artificial, sterile positive self-talk that just can't sink in?

Good thing I woke up.

I finally realized that trying to get yourself to feel good in the middle of a slump is a DEADLY inner game mistake.

It's a deadly mistake because you are going against your nature.

You are a competitive athlete - so when you slump, you are going to get mad.

This is perfectly natural.

So stop trying to force yourself to be positive and feel good --and ask yourself to be OPTIMISTIC instead.

What's the difference between thinking positively and thinking optimistically?

Positive thinking is looking for something good in the slump, such as: *'It's great I lost because I need a day off.'*

The problem with positive thinking is there might NOT be anything good about your slump.

Optimism is different.

Optimism is finding a reason to believe your slump is TEMPORARY.

One time I came off a playoff series pretty discouraged. I had been shut out for three straight games. No goals...zero, zip, zilch.

My Mom is usually pretty quiet. But when she saw how down I was, she said, *"Dear, I do not want to criticize but it is pretty obvious why you are not scoring - you stopped driving to the net. You took maybe two shots and the defense was already set up."*

Moms are the best.

She handed me, on a silver platter, THE reason my slump could be temporary.

I actually had not noticed how passive I was being on offense.

The bottom line?

Find a REASON why your slump could be temporary, and then channel your frustration into doing a better job.

Finding the reason why your slump is happening triggers your Courageous Self because now you're like a detective, looking for clues. You're not sitting around feeling sorry for yourself, or giving up. You're problem-solving, which the Courageous Self loves.

EXERCISE

1. Write down anything you're going through right now that could be considered a slump in curling such as struggling to find draw weight, consistently missing an inturn, or repeatedly over-sweeping the rock:

2. Write down THREE reasons why your "slump" might be happening and how you can cure it, especially with help:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

The next time you find yourself in a personal 'slump', instead of trying to be positive, find a genuine reason to be optimistic about it being temporary, and then spare no time or expense to get back in CONTROL by fixing it.

Mental Toughness Secret #5

Accept Yourself Unconditionally

This next gem is probably the best-kept secret in sport.

Most people believe (mistakenly) that superstars are very self-critical and “hard on themselves.”

While this is the case for ‘average’ athletes, the truth is that superstars are extremely self-supportive. They may be hard on themselves when it comes to behaviours under their control (such as training hard), but when it comes to their fears, they are quite self-accepting.

This came as quite a shock to me.

For a while I thought that being “mentally tough” meant I was not supposed to have any fears or frustrations about competing.

This idea was drilled into me by coaches and sport psychs.

The books I read told me to "change the channel" of my mind any time I got scared or frustrated.

They kind of implied that the reason I felt nervous was because my mind was weak.

I even had a sport psychologist who told me to put my frustrations into a mental Black Box and never think about them.

What a boneheaded idea.

Fear and frustration are part of competing.

The faster you learn how to deal with them, the more mentally tough you will be.

Of course, the easiest way to deal with fear and frustration is to experience them without resistance.

Experiencing your fears and frustrations is the essence of self-acceptance.

Most athletes are quite dismal at this.

We judge and condemn ourselves any time we are not 100% confident, positive, and happy.

Tremendous relief comes from accepting yourself, because you do not have to pretend, cover up, or suppress your fears about competing.

You enjoy an inner relaxation that is heavenly.

And there is even more good news.

When you accept yourself, you can easily figure out WHY you are feeling anxious, stressed, or frustrated about any aspect of sport.

Such self-awareness is powerful.

It allows you to DIAGNOSE the root cause of your performance anxiety so you can PRESCRIBE a solution for it.

The idea DIAGNOSE before you PRESCRIBE is as old as time itself.

For example...

Your motivation to practice is low.

You think you are being lazy, but when you truly listen to your feelings of blah, you correctly DIAGNOSE that you have no idea why you lost -- and can't face competing again until you do.

You're terrified of choking under pressure.

You think it's because a big tournament is coming up, but when listen to your performance anxiety, you DIAGNOSE that you've never competed on the national stage before, and you're totally unsure about what to expect.

You get annoyed when your Dad criticizes you after important games.

You think it's because he's right in his criticisms, but when you listen to your fear, you DIAGNOSE that what you really need is unconditional support -- and he's not getting the memo.

You're doubting yourself.

You think it's because your coach is being harsh, but when you listen to your stress, you DIAGNOSE that you secretly agree with his criticisms and want to change your delivery...but have no idea how.

The Barrier to Self-Acceptance

Of course, the reason we find it so hard to accept ourselves is that sometimes, we are not the athlete we would like to be.

When we dislike something, we resist it--and the fears that come with it.

Consider element of your skills, conditioning, or mental game.

Is your attitude towards it one of acceptance or resistance?

You may be wondering, "What if I despise something about myself? How can I accept it?"

And IF I accept it, am I stuck with my bad serve, poor agility, or limited defensive instincts?

The answer is No. I am not asking you to accept an unsatisfactory situation.

I am merely asking you to accept your fears about it so you can DIAGNOSE the root cause of them.

Accepting your fears--and yourself--always paves the way for change and peak performance.

EXERCISE

Every day for the next 7 days, write down 5-7 different endings for the following sentence:

If I were 5% more self-accepting--

- “I’d try more hits, even though they are hard for me.”
- “I’d pay closer attention to the ice after I miss a shot.”
- “I’d watch my competition with a sharper eye.”
- “I wouldn’t care so much what Dad thinks.”
- “I’d stop sucking up to the teammate who is rude to me.”

The next time you are worried or feeling stressed out about an upcoming game, take a few minutes to realize that you’ve probably been criticizing yourself for some reason. To get back in CONTROL, decide to accept yourself “warts and all”, and do your sentence completions. This will have a potent impact on your mood, which is the most important thing to control anyway.

Mental Toughness Secret #6 Steel Yourself To Be A Tough Competitor

To transform yourself into a star athlete who can shoot lights out even under the

most difficult conditions, you'll want to manage your expectations for each game very carefully.

I've noticed that some athletes kill their mental toughness and ability to stay in CONTROL under pressure by having positive expectations all the time.

They've been told by coaches, parents, and their sport psychologist that champions always expect to win because they are "positive people."

So they go into a game expecting it to unfold well.

This is a BIG mistake.

Huge.

TOUGH competitors expect to win, but they also expect major bumps along the way.

That's because sport is a war, complete with an enemy: your opponent.

Wayne Gretzky, one of the greatest hockey players ever, understood that sport is a war.

After Wayne was traded from Edmonton to Los Angeles, he had to go back and play against his old friends. He recalls:

'Sooner or later I had to go to the one place I dreaded. Glen Sather didn't say a word to me because I was on the other team now....I thought Mess [Edmonton centre Mark Messier] would check me, but I was wrong. He steamrolled me, backed up and steamrolled me again.

Mark is a competitor and this was a game he wanted to win.'

Even a very sportsmanlike sport like curling is a war...a war of control, because you are trying to control something that can't be controlled directly (the rock).

You can be an extremely tough competitor by STEELING yourself for the worst on

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the path to winning.

In the Tournament Players Golf Championship several years ago, Tom Kite and Chip Beck were the final twosome. Chip started out horribly, making four bogeys on the front side shooting 40.

But then Tom did something interesting.

He EXPECTED Chip to improve. He assumed Chip would be as hot on the back side as he had been cold on the front.

Chip did get hot, shooting 31.

Tom stuck to his mental game plan. At the final hole, Tom teed off with a two-stroke lead.

Chip had a tricky, downhill putt of 25 feet. Tom immediately assumed Chip would make that putt.

Sure enough, Chip did.

If Chip's putt had surprised Tom, his next putt would have suddenly become much harder. But Tom was perfectly PATIENT. His emotional state did not change when Chip's ball disappeared into the hole.

Tom holed his par putt and won the tournament.

The simple act of steeling yourself for the worst and being patient -- about circumstances, opponents, even your performance -- will keep your focus on track.

EXERCISE

1. Write down the name of an upcoming competition you are preparing for:

2. List everything that could go wrong in this competition so you can steel yourself for the worst:

3. Take three minutes and imagine yourself shooting lights out and winning the competition despite everything that could go wrong.

The next time you find yourself expecting a smooth ride for the next game, take a moment to alter your expectations so that you are optimistic about the outcome, but pessimistic about the journey. You believe you can do it, but you expect your opponent to be flawless, annoying, and downright fierce.

Mental Toughness Secret #7

A Deadly Mindset That Will Crush Opponents

The most deadly mindset in sport – one that will make you virtually invincible and able to crush opponents - is to focus completely in the Now.

I'm talking about total focus in the present moment...the kind where you drive across town, get there, and suddenly realize you don't remember the drive.

This impenetrable focus is very punishing to opponents, because you get such a deep connection to what you're doing that difficult shots become effortless.

You are so connected to the ice conditions, the rocks, the feel of draw weight, and the location of the broom that become perfectly consistent.

Getting into the Now heightens your athletic genius because you become aware of tiny nuances that give you the edge.

You make subtle decisions, like what weight you need, so easily that you can really get in the zone.

Helen Wills Moody, the American tennis legend of the 1930s, had a simple mantra that brought her focus into the Now.

After every ball, she would recover her focus by repeating, '*Every point, every point, every point.*'

Bringing your focus into the Now brings out your Courageous Self because the only way your mind can create fear is to think about the future.

In fact, the mind cannot cope with the future. It can only cope with the Now.

By focusing in the NOW, you eliminate fear entirely and trigger your Courageous Self. This is the very essence of CONTROL.

Simple, yet devastatingly effective.

Remember, you don't want to make mental training more difficult than it needs to be.

Every point, every point, every point.

EXERCISE

During every practice for the next seven days, bring your mind into the NOW and concentrate completely on what you are doing. If your mind drifts off, gently bring it back to the NOW. Improving your concentration will give a surprising sense of CONTROL over your mindset and shots.

BONUS

Mental Toughness Secret #8

How To Get Over A Devastating Loss And Triumph

To transform yourself into a fearless superstar who can shoot lights out consistently, you'll want to eliminate the fear of losing from your emotional life.

The bottom line is that if you're not afraid of performing poorly or losing, it will rarely happen to you, because you'll be relaxed and confident (not shaking in your boots). You know this because of all the times you had a good start, relaxed, and got into the zone. Once your fear was gone, you were able to really focus.

The easiest way to remove the fear of under-performing and losing is realizing that you can heal yourself of any disappointment (and fast) – if you know how.

From 2000 to 2004 (late in my athletic career), my team had to play the same powerhouse team in the finals.

And for four years straight, we LOST.

In 2005, we entered the finals optimistically: "*It's going to be our year!*" we proclaimed.

But our hopes were dashed AGAIN when we lost two games straight.

There was, however, an important wrinkle to this competition: if we won our next game--against a different team--we could still earn a birth into the National Championships.

We had exactly 45 minutes to re-group for this all-important game.

It was at this moment that my body took over and instinctively prepared me for this next challenge.

Upon entering our dressing room, all the wretched disappointment inside me over losing for four years came bursting forth.

I sobbed bitterly, and couldn't stop.

Images of old losses flashed before my eyes, and I sobbed some more. At one point, I went to the bathroom and put my head under the dryer so my teammates didn't have to hear me.

Three minutes before our next game, our goaltender (who knows me really well), calmly handed me my helmet.

She looked me squarely in the eye. "*You have three minutes,*" she said.

I put my helmet on. Suddenly, I was completely focused, and filled with energy.

We won, and to this day, my team insists it was one of the best games of my career.

How To Heal Yourself When You Lose

Healing yourself means letting yourself experience your disappointment when you lose.

It's the same thing you did when you were nine years old.

Your body knows how to heal itself, and it will if you let it.

It's one of those secrets nobody tells you. Instead, your Dad, your coach, and your teammates will try to cheer you up.

They'll say things like, "*Don't worry, it wasn't your fault.*"

Or, they'll try to get you to focus on the next competition right away.

The problem with this approach is that you end up suppressing your disappointment. You try not to think about it...but it eats away at you.

You start to doubt yourself, and you lose your motivation.

"*Why bother?*" you think to yourself.

Of course, you'll want to draw the lesson out of the loss.

But you can't even think about that until you're over the disappointment.

Oh, and another thing: if you suppress your disappointment too many times, you'll end up choking.

Your body will CREATE a loss just so you can cry a little.

If you're too cool for school, and you think you're above feeling disappointed, I beg you to consider that you may be wrong.

Losing hurts.

So do yourself a favour and let yourself heal. You don't need to do it in public the way I did.

In fact, it's better if you do it alone. Then you'll feel free to let go.

Once you're done, figure out what you did wrong in your competition...and resolve to do a better job next time. 😊

The Next Important Piece of the Puzzle For Becoming More Mentally Tough So You Can Build Your Confidence, Shoot Lights Out, and Win Consistently...

The simple truth is that challenges and frustration in competition happen ALL THE TIME...and all too often athletes end up losing because they don't know how to handle their 'inner game.'

I've discovered that the key to preventing failure is having a specific, effective mental toughness strategy for each of these situations.

Whether it's intense performance anxiety, an opponent who is shocking you with great results...feeling flat or fatigued on the big day...and anything else that may arise.

When you have GUARANTEED, proven methods for conquering every situation you find yourself in competitively, you can literally predict your performance in big competitions.

One of the most important elements of becoming a champion is taking control of your destiny.

It's crucial that you take charge of your destiny as an athlete NOW, even if you don't have Olympic aspirations.

This is your golden opportunity to learn more of my finest concepts so you can enjoy unparalleled mental toughness and breakthrough confidence today.

My program is called, "**The Courage to Win® in Sport: Perform Your Best Under Pressure.**"

It is very likely the most effective program on the planet for winning consistently under pressure and reaching your potential as an athlete.

This audio and written program lays out many of my most prized ADVANCED tutorials, secrets, strategies, methods, concepts and techniques that took 16 years to piece together.

You get the advantage of learning all my best ideas from the comfort of your own home. Check it out here:

<http://www.thecouragetowin.com/sportebok/>

Light it up out there,
Lisa B.