

**HOW TO BE A BETTER COMPETITOR:
TRAINING MODEL AND CONTEXTUAL ESSAY**

A Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Diploma Program
and Master's Degree in Process Work

by

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Abstract

This educational project aims to offer a training program for the athletes who wish to better support themselves in their competition endeavors. The emotional world of the athlete and their mental approach to competition is of key importance to their success and well-being. As a result, this project focuses on training them to work with disturbances that arise during competition, and teaches them how to access a more optimal competition mindset. Process Work and sports psychology are brought together in the form of an educational project, with the core goal of this training being that through the application of these Process Work inner work modules, the athlete is able to self-facilitate access to a more optimal competition mindset, real-time, during a match. The key innovation to sports psychology is the main Process Work concept of seeing obstacles and disturbances as a part of oneself, and working with the opportunities that these disturbances present to enhance performance.

I designed the training modules based on the findings in current sport psychology and Process Work, the interviews that I conducted with 6 professional athletes, and my own experiences as a professional athlete. The end goal of this training model is to conduct training workshops for athletes, teaching techniques that work with a range of issues and challenges which arise within the competition arena. While addressing a number of different areas under the performance psychology banner, the central focus of the training is on improving performance.

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Training Model: How to Be a Better Competitor

The emotional world of the athlete and their mental approach to competition is of key importance to their success and well-being. *How to be a Better Competitor* is my Final Project in MAPW which aims to work with the athletes' challenging emotions in order to better support them in their competition endeavors. Process Work and sports psychology come together to form an educational project, which is presented here in a curriculum format.

This course is designed specifically for athletes to attend 5 modules that will run 1 evening / week over a 5-week period, with an optional 6th module in week 6 specifically designed for female athletes. Each module will run for the duration of 2.5 hours / week. The core goal of this training is that through the application of these Process Work modules, the athlete will find an optimal competition mindset. Through teaching athletes inner work techniques, they will have the tools to be able to work with their mindset, and be armed with the ability to change their states within a game or match, real-time.

Process-oriented inner work is applied through each of the 6 modules. It allows the athlete to become a trained observer, while competing. As Arnold Mindell (2002) describes it, this trained observer will be, "capable of helping yourself with your own feelings, voices, visions, voices relationship movements and body problems" (p. 40). Becoming a trained observer will thus arm the athlete with the tools to be able to facilitate themselves through difficult or disturbing competition scenarios, empowering them to access an optimal competition mindset to improve performance.

Language throughout this paper is targeted toward an athletic audience, where performance and outcomes are highly valued. I also introduce the Process Work

paradigm and many of its concepts, but the marketing and language of the workshops will be framed toward the psychology of the target market—athletes. Following this curriculum is a contextual essay that provides background for the Process Work theory used, as well as a brief overview of the sports psychology field and how they relate, and then offers new applications.

The key innovation offered to sports psychology is the main Process Work concept of seeing obstacles and disturbances as a part of oneself. Typical sports psychology approaches attend to the athlete's ability to focus, by clearing their mind of disturbing thoughts. The innovation presented in this training is a contrasting thought: the teleology of disturbance. Teleology is the "study of design or purpose in natural phenomena" (Freedictionary, n.d.). Thus, the innovation of this project is to look at the purpose behind the natural phenomena of the disturbance. Through these inner work modules, athletes will learn to see the disturbance as a potential doorway to an optimal competition mindset. Some of the typical disturbances athletes encounter are other competitors, pressure, fear of losing, psychological rank experiences, coaches, parents, spectators, media, and many other distractions that can occur outside and transfer to inside experience for the athlete. Through learning to work with disturbances and not just see them as *other* aims to provide the athlete with a oneness or a wholeness approach to competition: the opponent as you. Oneness is a term from Gestalt theory (Gestalttheory, n.d.) which refers to field theory, where all parts have an immediate relationship with each other, or are part of a whole; parts are not seen separately. Athletes will learn to approach competition as doing battle with a part of themselves and view this challenge as an opportunity for growth. They will learn to look at

competition—winning and losing—through a learning lens, as gaining in identity, distinct from othering the opponent. My key contribution to Process Work is the creation and application of this training as an effective approach to working with mainstream athletes.

Specific Process Work techniques that are utilized throughout this inner work training are:

- Working with altered states
- Inner Work
 - Accessing Process Mind
 - Channel awareness
 - Integrating new energies into movement and the mind
- Ally work: Picking up the power of the other
- Amplification: Unfolding states or disturbing energies

These Process Work techniques will assist the athlete to focus during a match and manage some of the challenging emotions as well as maximize access to optimal states. This training specifically addresses issues of motivation, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotion that, according to performance psychologists Taylor and Wilson (2005), are the five areas that mostly affect athletic performance.

Modules Overview

Module 1: Play With Confidence: Using Pressure to Produce Peak Performance

Module 2: Motivation: Bringing the Outside In

Module 3: Tools for Working With Competition Nerves

Module 4: Working Your Weakness to Find Your Strength

Module 5: Bringing It All: The Competitive Woman

Module 6: Zone Access

Module 1: Play With Confidence: Using Pressure to Produce Peak Performance

Confidence is essential to athletic performance, as it is the most influential psychological contributor to success in sport (Taylor & Wilson, 2005, p. 22). However, pressure situations are a constant, and athletes can easily lose confidence under pressure. Learning how to maintain confidence in these situations can be challenging, and critical for optimal performance. This module teaches athletes how to maintain confidence under pressure through getting to know pressure triggers and utilizing the energy behind the pressure.

Module 2: Motivation: Bringing the Outside In

Outside help such as teachers, coaches, as well as inspiring and intimidating opponents are essential to an athlete's development in helping them rise to the competitive occasion. However, too much reliance on the outside can be destabilizing, as it moves the athlete's focus outside of themselves. This module introduces Process Work inner work as a way to bring outside motivators inside, and allow athletes to get to know

these as qualities that they possess. Transforming an extrinsic (outside) motivator to an intrinsic (internal) one, this module aims to empower the athlete and develop their motivation and sustainable drive. This will lead to not only greater results, but also greater enjoyment and satisfaction in the sport, and consequently less chance of psychological burn out, placing the athlete at the center of their experience.

Module 3: Tools for Working With Competition Nerves

Nerves can bring the necessary intensity needed to compete. Additionally, they can also threaten to derail the athlete. With the athlete's state of mind being vital to competition, this module will help the athlete view nerves as a natural and transformable part of competition and assist them to gain control over their challenging mental states. This module works with the debilitating nerves that impact performance. Through applying Process Work inner work techniques, athletes will learn how to facilitate themselves through their nervousness and learn to be more present and competitive within their sporting arena.

Module 4: Working Your Weakness

Known strengths and a sense of confidence are key ingredients in excelling in professional sport, as are acknowledging weakness or areas of development. This module uses the unique attunement that athletes have to their bodies to explore the relationship between confidence, weakness, and performance. Athletes will meet the opportunity to redefine themselves as a competitor through deepening the experience of

strength. In then transferring it to an area of weakness, they will discover a new potential strength to be added to their repertoire.

Module 5: Bringing It All: The Competitive Woman

Recurring feedback from coaches and within sports psychology literature is that women hold themselves back in competitive sport (Cohen, 2001). Cohen's (2001) research points to this holding back phenomenon as a gender specific issue that presents within female athletes, and suggests that women can have a tendency to not use their power to the fullest, to not use their full body weight transference, and have tentative movement patterns.

This module explores image, perceptions, and what is deemed acceptable for female athletes, and how this plays into performance. This is a permission process, where women allow themselves to discover and use their full potential through exploring what is over the edge of holding back for each woman. Through discovering and getting in touch with the energy behind the holding back phenomenon, athletes will learn to use oppressive and disturbing forces to their advantage, gaining permission to explore and bring it all to their sport.

Module 6: Zone Access

The Zone: Peak experience, altered states, flow experience, an unrelenting effortless focus, an experience of everything coming together for the athlete. The zone is described as "total absorption in a task where optimal functioning happens where the athlete feels totally involved in their sport or on automatic pilot" (Jackson, 2007, p. 144).

This module provides athletes with a new method to access their zone. Similar to the concept of visualization, wherein athletes are encouraged to see themselves winning and playing effectively, this Process Work inner work module works through accessing the body, where athletes will be able to feel their strength, winning state, or optimal competition state within their body, which can then be applied. This zone state will be a more readily accessible state that can be summoned during competition, resulting in the athlete's ability to be more present, focused, and bring optimal performance.

Participants

I anticipate that prospective participants will be able to use these modules to not only improve their competitive experience, but to also improve performance. The five key issues that most affect athletic performance are motivation, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotion (Taylor & Wilson, 2005). This training addresses those and subsequent issues that stem from them.

Experience of Typical Participants

Athletes who attend these modules may have experience of any of the following:

- Lack of motivation: Extrinsic to intrinsic
- Difficulty in performing under pressure
- Lack of confidence
- Nervousness and anxiety
- Intensity (Has negative impact on performance)
- Just wanting to be better and improve performance and results.

Participant #1

Stephanie M is a young up and coming athlete, highly ranked in her age group. She expresses a lot of angst toward her opponents, and finds it difficult to respect players who do not appear as strong as her. Although her style is better and she is naturally athletic, her potential does not match her results. This is a frustrating experience for Stephanie and she finds it hard to actualize her potential as she is too caught up with the result and the skill level of the opponent rather than staying present, point by point, moment by moment.

Participant #2

Jane is a highly ranked famous professional athlete. She has sponsorship and a huge support team, including her parents, coach trainer, and friends. She is currently struggling with motivation and feels apathetic toward her sport. She feels a lot of pressure to do well outside of herself and is searching for a way to re-engage.

Participant #3

Kathy is a 15-year-old tennis player and finds it difficult maintain a lead or close out a match. She presents a tendency to choke and becomes tentative in her game at the first signs of winning against higher seeded players. Too much respect or awe for the opponent / intimidation seems to be the central issue.

Course Length

This course will be 5 x 2.5hr classes (or 6 classes for women) that will run 1 night per week, over 5-6 weeks. This format allows for the application of module exercises in the week in between, and will include feedback and revision at the beginning of each module from the previous week.

Module 1: Play With Confidence: Using Pressure to Produce Peak Performance

It is no secret that professional athletes experience pressure in competition. Pressure can have both a positive and a negative effect on the athlete, and can both improve performance, and hinder performance. The big question is, what amount of pressure is needed to help you bring out your best, and what is too much pressure? As competitive athletes, how do we feel the pressure and find our confidence when our backs are to the wall with a result on the line, and no second chances? Too much pressure can cause a myriad of meltdowns whether physical, mental, emotional, and not enough pressure can impact motivation and intensity levels. How do we manage these situations as we see glimpses of the game slipping away from our grasp?

Understanding your own triggers and responses to pressure and getting to know yourself in this pressure arena is essential in learning to work with it successfully. So what is the right amount of pressure for you? How can it turn from negatively impacting your performance to that same pressure being not only useful, but lifting your game? This is the core exploration of this module.

There are a number of things that can happen to us under pressure during competition. Your body can respond to the pressure with changes to your muscle tension resulting in inefficient activity. There are mental symptoms that can be experienced such

as an inability to concentrate, and then there are your behavioral responses—how you react. Do you withdraw? Do you radically change your plan of action? All of these somewhat involuntary responses can potentially perpetuate a downward spiral that the pressure induces.

The field of sports psychology commonly works with the pressure experienced by athletes in competition through working with mental imagery and self-talk techniques. The focus is placed on changing the athlete's thinking and offering a more supportive internal voice in an attempt to create new neural pathways that are more optimal for competition.

This module takes a new direction in focusing within the body, and working with the pressure maker—the thing that creates the pressure in any given moment. Focusing within the body allows the athlete to drop out of their everyday mindset and access a new and more effective state for competition, outside of being victim to the pressure. You will learn inner work skills to enable you to facilitate yourself through problematic pressure situations. This approach involves tuning into your body experience and using the power of this pressure to your advantage. Working with the pressure that is happening in any moment of the competition, you will be armed with the potential to turn a match or game around, real time.

Central Ideas, Skills, and Abilities

1. Welcome pressure: Open up to a disturbance.
2. Recognize the signs of being under pressure and know how you react to it.
3. Be able to transform pressure into an ally, and stay competitive.

Goal

The athlete will get to know their reactions under pressure, and gain an ability to facilitate themselves under pressure.

Outcome

Athletes will be able to identify pressure in the various ways that it happens to them, and have methods for using it as an energy or force that can be used to focus and embrace high-pressure situations.

Inner Work Exercise: The Pressure Maker

1. Sometimes pressure brings out the best in us, and other times it does not.

Take a moment and reflect on a time when you experienced pressure in a way that it significantly diminished your performance.

2. Say a little bit about that specific moment where the pressure rises. Is it match point, game point, the last 5 minutes of a game, play offs, finals, 1st round, or on a specific shot? Choose one. Do you remember what in the situation triggered the pressure?
3. Note what physically happens to your body in this scenario? Do you tense, rush, freeze, do you feel tight, does your heart race . . . ? Do you get sloppy, aggressive, go for it? What is your tendency?
4. What is your typical way of dealing with such a reaction? Does it usually work?

5. Now imagine there is a pressure maker, who creates such physical reactions in you. Close your eyes and meditate on this figure, take your time and slowly make a hand movement that represents the energy of that pressure maker.
6. Now amplify this energy. Feel it in your legs, now your arms and take it right throughout your body. Fully embody the energy and allow it to express itself. Make a face that goes along with this energy. Let the energy move you, walk around as that energy. Own it. Be it. What is his or her new mindset?
7. Once you feel like you can own that energy, or have a strong sense of it in your body, go back to the original pressure moment and approach it with this new found ally / energy. Stand up, close your eyes, see your sporting domain in your mind's eye. Now in slow motion apply this new energy your pressure moment.
8. Continue to apply this new energy (IN MOVEMENT) with intent.
 - Close your eyes
 - Play the stroke, or go through the motion in SLOW MOTION
 - See yourself on the court, field, track, or sporting arena
 - Notice and believe in the new feeling
 - Envisage your desired outcome with this new energy.....Then slowly bring the motion up to real speed.
9. If you can, grab a piece of equipment from your sport (trying to anchor it). Continue to apply this new energy in movement. Go through the motions of your sporting pressure moment with this new energy.

10. As you finish, consciously thank the pressure for arriving and for its gift. It is your Namaste to the pressure maker, or more simply, your thank you to your opponent.

- What did you notice?
- Did this experience offer you some insights or help with your experience of pressure?
- If you were to bring this power more into your game, what things might you have to change in your routine, training, game?

Module 2: Motivation: Bringing the Outside In

How we engage and relate to ourselves, and our sport, holds the potential for more enjoyment, longevity, satisfaction, endurance, and even better results. Without question, motivation is the key to your success as a professional athlete, and where this motivation stems from is even more pertinent!

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are the core drivers within each of us. Does your performance improve when a coach or parent is watching, or does it diminish? What happens to your performance when there is prize money or a championship title at stake? What drives you to turn up for training, day in day out? Underlying these questions is the secret to what motivates and drives us as athletes.

Extrinsic motivation means being motivated by things that exist outside of ourselves. Rewards, prize money, status, sponsorship, idealization, fear, and criticism are all examples of extrinsic or outside motivators that can drive us to perform in our sports. Playing for the pure enjoyment of the game, for the love and challenge of it, describes an intrinsically motivated athlete. So why is it that HOW we are motivated is important? Isn't it just enough that we ARE motivated? Whilst both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational styles are a natural and necessary part of being a competitive athlete, a balance between the two is optimal. Too much reliance on one can impact self-worth, lead to burnout, injury, and an inability to close out pressure situations. Yet too little of another can negatively impact competitive drive. In the current era of professional sport, there is a growing tendency for athletes to be more focused on the outside. This has led to a greater need for work that helps athletes to get in touch with their intrinsic motivations, placing them back at the center of their competitive spirit.

Outside help such as teachers, coaches, and inspirational opponents are essential to our development as athletes and can often help us rise to the competition occasion, however, too much reliance on the outside can be destabilizing. This module introduces Process Work inner work as a way to bring your outside motivators inside and to get to know them as energies and qualities that you possess. Your ability to admire a quality in another, places it within your reach. This module will help you to discover how you gain access to this, and discover your own level of mastery.

Central Ideas, Skills, and Abilities

1. Know your motivational system and core drivers.
2. Identify external motivators and their qualities, and recognize these as parts of one's own psychology to be leveraged in competition.
3. Gain access to an additional approach to training or competition, and identify where this new mindset or skill could be useful.

Goal

Identify and integrate external motivators, and apply this new mindset to a competition scenario.

Outcome

Athletes will be able to demonstrate increased knowledge and awareness of their motivational system and be able to integrate external roles as part of themselves.

Athletes will experience reduced antagonism, more ownership, and more choice within their sporting domain.

Inner Work Exercise

Part 1: Getting to Know Your Motivational System

1. What do you love about your sport?
What do you love about competing?
What do you love about training?
2. What don't you like about each of the above or is harder (or what do you struggle with)?

Part 2: Bringing the Outside In

3. Now think of a figure involved in your sport who motivates or inspires you, someone whom you admire. It could be a competitor, a coach, a trainer, a parent, a teammate, but choose one person that you find yourself either somewhat in awe of, or lifting your performance when they are around.
4. Go ahead and gossip about them. What is it that that person has or does that impacts you? What is it that you're admiring of? Describe it in detail
Write down every juicy detail about that quality.
5. Now close your eyes, and imagine throwing all that gossip into a pot, and imagine it has stewed for several hours until it has boiled down to one central quality. What is that one central quality, the one central / dominant flavor that remains . . . and without thinking too much, make a hand movement, a gesture or find a posture that most captures that quality.
6. Now, like a good stew . . . take your time with your gesture. Take your time to express the essence of this quality without words. Feel into that body part and allow it to express itself . . . SLOWLY.

7. Once you feel you have that movement or gesture, it is now time to taste the stew. Take a spoonful of the stew / the central quality, and as you do so, feel that quality move throughout your veins and take over your entire body. Take your time to feel that right throughout your body and make posture that represents that quality. Fully allow yourself to become it
8. Now as you feel that quality, slowly let the essence of it move you . . . and begin to walk around as that quality . . . continuing to feel into it. You are that quality Take a few moments for this new way of being to emerge.
9. Once you feel you have a sense of it, make a few movements from your sport with this new found quality. A swing, a kick a running motion . . . whatever it is . . . do it in SLOW motionand as you do so, notice how this is different to your everyday competitor in you. How is it different and what does this bring? Where could it be useful in your sporting life? In competition, training, relaxation? Is it a new temperament that could be useful in your sport?
10. From this new state look back at yourself as a competitor. How is this state different from your everyday competitive self? What is it like to own that quality for yourself?
 - Are there other insights that you had doing this?
 - Are there other places in your life where this new approach could be useful?
 - What does this new approach show you about yourself as a competitor that you didn't already know?

Module 3: Tools for Working With Competition Nerves

Nerves! Really, they are the last thing you want your opponent to see! You want to appear confident, unstoppable, even potentially threatening, but your body has other ideas. Through no choice of your own, there is a whole other world going on inside of you; muscle tension appears, your focus leaves you, your confidence is shot, and nothing in your game is coming together. It is like you are playing in a bowl of jello, and there is nothing fun or mildly competitive about it! Not only are you faced with managing your nerves, but in addition, the embarrassment of what is taking place before you. You know you have so much more to give, but where is it? The potential of the slippery slope threatens

So how do we embrace our nervousness and make it useful for our performance? How do we admit how much we care and want something AND play at our peak? The balance of bringing these together is the art of sport and competition that cannot just be thought through or rationalized into creation.

Nervousness within the competitive environment can be an asset or debilitating, it can both lift and hinder performance. The field of sports psychology commonly works with the anxiety produced in athletes through applying mental imagery and self-talk techniques; the goal here being to change one's thinking and help the athlete to see themselves being successful. This module works with the types of nerves that are debilitating, that negatively impact performance. It builds on the new approach used in module 1 of focusing within the body and outside of the ordinary mind. Through applying Process Work inner work techniques, you will learn how to facilitate anxiety to become more present competitive arena.

Central Ideas, Skills, and Abilities

1. Appreciate and understand one's belief system around competition nerves and their function in sport; when they serve performance and when they do not.
2. Athletes will be able to identify when nerves occur within competition and be able to assess how these negatively impact their performance.
3. Develop a metaposition, or an ability to zoom out, or gain distance from competition nerves.
4. Through the integration and application of a new energy, develop access to a new competition approach (or new assemblage point).

Goal

Athletes will get to know their nervousness and develop their ability to work with it.

Outcome

The athlete will have methods for consciously dropping out of anxious or nervous states and gain access to a more detached zone from which to compete.

Inner Work Exercise

1. Identify a time in competition where anxiety or nerves negatively impacted you.
2. Can you identify what made you anxious? What is it that negatively impacts you, or disturbs your focus? An opponent, parent, coach, strong serve, pressure?

3. Focus on that one disturbing element, and see if you can make a hand movement that represents its energy: how **it** disturbs you. Call that energy X.
4. Now think about what **in you (u)** is disturbed by this x energy? What part **of you** (u) did this anxiety disturb? Is it the one who is calm, together, focused, tough? Take your time to think about who in you is disturbed. Call that energy u.
5. Now focus on that one disturbing element, and see if you can make a hand movement that represents its energy: the **you (u)** that is disturbed.
6. Now scan your body and sense where the deepest self is in your body right now. Take your time to feel this.
7. Once you have that deepest part, breathe into that spot, and notice any movements, visions, or sounds that come from that deepest place.
8. When you are in contact with that energy, link that body experience to a place on earth. Ask yourself what place on earth could represent that body experience. It could be somewhere in nature, or even a fairy tale spot.
9. Go to that place on earth now. Take your time to feel that spot . . . slow down . . . take it in . . . feel and breathe the air of that spot. Let that place work itself on you (breathe you) until you feel a bit altered.
10. From that altered state earth spot, think back to the x and u energies. Stay deeply connected to your earth spot and from there, notice those 2 energies as pieces of nature. Use that altered state to see those 2 energies, the x & u as elements of your earth spot. The x is what part of nature? And the u is what part? Name those

11. Stay deeply in your earth spot altered state, and now move between these 2 energies—the x and the u. Take your time to feel that energy of each, and slowly flow back and forth between these two energies until you notice an organic shift or birth of a new combined energy that has its own unique quality.
12. How might this new energy help you with your competition scenario?
13. Take some time to ground this new approach so that you can call on this in a future game or match Imagine yourself back in your competition scene with this new energy. Make a few movements from your sport with this new mindset.
 - Did this experience offer you some insights or help with your experience of nervousness?
 - If you were to bring this dropped out altered state earth spot more to your competition or training, is there anywhere else it may help you?

Module 4: Working Your Weakness

As athletes, we have all been guilty of over compensating or trying to cover up a weaknesses in our game. Relying on strengths in other parts of our game is one way of managing this. Whilst having strengths and a sense of confidence are key ingredients in excelling in professional sport, so is acknowledging what needs more work in your game. Placing too much focus on a weakness can perpetuate the issue, but acknowledging weaknesses as a changeable and workable part of your game is the beginning of transforming your areas of development.

The field of sports psychology talks about choosing confidence as an effective mindset that an athlete can adopt. Whilst this has proven to be effective, simply choosing to be confident can also require more than will to actually change. There are a variety of techniques that are currently used in building confidence including recognizing strengths, having confident role models, and developing social support using positive self-talk to respond to adversity. Importantly, having successful experiences is key to developing confidence, which forms the basis of this module. This module teaches the athlete to access that confident mindset and apply it to other weaker or less confident areas of their game.

This module uses Process Work inner work techniques to access these self-assured and confident feeling experiences and works with applying them to your identified weaknesses through accessing your body's experience. Exploring the relationship between confidence, weakness, and performance, this module uses the unique attunement to your body that you've developed as an athlete, to be the leader of

this change. Exploring this sense of strength, confidence, and assuredness in all parts of your game, you will be redefining who you are as a competitor and an athlete.

Central Ideas, Skills, and Abilities

1. Become aware of one's weaknesses or area/s of development.
2. Be able to change your mindset and approach to working with a weakness.
3. Be able access strengths and transfer this approach across to other aspects of your game (to undo compartmentalization)

Goal

Athletes will get to know their weakness and strengths, and explore their ability to transfer strength.

Outcome

Athletes will gain awareness of their weaknesses and will learn methods to access a confidence mindset during competition.

Inner Work Exercise: Working Your Weakness

1. Name a weakness that you have as a competitive athlete, a weakness being an area within your game that you doubt or lack confidence in at times? It could be a serve, a kick, a specific play, shot, throw, or action of some sort.
2. Was it always a weakness? If not, how did it become a weakness? Did you stop working on it? Do you continually work on it with little to no improvement? Is there a flaw in your technique?
3. How does this weakness show up?
 - a. What happens to your body? Do you freeze, push, tense, rush?

- b. How do you talk to yourself about this weakness? What is your self-talk when this weakness or development area impacts your performance?
4. Now, put that aside for a moment and focus on the strongest part of your body. Where is that located? Is it your quad, shoulder, core?
 5. Close your eyes and take a moment feel that strength there right now.
 6. Breathe into that spot and then slowly allow that feeling to spread right throughout your body, until you are only that body part. Notice your stance and posture . . . notice any movements, visions, or sounds that come from that place.
 7. Walk around as only that body part, and as you do this, notice the mindset that goes along with this state. . . . Take your time to embody it fully.
 8. Now holding that strength state, look back to your identified weakness, and approach it from this new state (e.g., quad state).
 9. From this state, is there some advice that wants to come forward about this weakness, is there something that needs changing?
 10. Additionally, go through the motion of your weaker sporting movement with this new strength state
 11. From Question 3b, if you had negative self-talk that came up, how would this new state respond to the negative self-talk?
 - When, or where else would this state be useful within your sport?
 - Did this experience offer you some insights or help with your experience of your strengths or weaknesses?

- If you were to bring approach more into your game, what mindsets or behaviors might you have to lose or change?
- Was there anything else you noticed?

Module 5: Bringing It All: The Competitive Woman

“She’s too muscly!” “She plays like a man.” “She plays like a girl.” “She’s too intense!” “Smile, you’re too serious!” “She’s not tough enough.” “She’s too tough, it doesn’t look good.” “She’s not bad . . . for a girl.” These are mixed messages for female athletes around toughness, and approach. Some messages say women are too tough, others say, not tough enough. Pamela Creedon (1994), editor of *Women in Mass Communication*, refers to recent statistics of television coverage for women sports sitting at 5% coverage compared with 90% coverage of men’s sport. The lack of coverage clearly shows the marginalization of women’s sport and the clear preference to watching men compete over women.

Sexism in women’s sport is rife. Much has been done to date, but it is still omnipresent. So, how do these mixed messages and blatant lack of coverage and spectator interest of women’s sports impact us as athletes? What message does this send to us as women, and how does it shape and support us in what we can bring to our sports? The internalization of these outside forces and criticisms can result in holding back. Holding back is both a conscious and unconscious result of these mixed messages, where women do hold back competitively, psychologically, and physically, all of which can impact the effectiveness of the female athlete.

How welcome do you feel in the sporting arena? Are you bringing it all? With sexism and the mixed messages in the background, how can we know for sure whether we are bringing all we have to our game, or not? One thing for sure is that going all out in competition is less supported in female athletes. Pressure, being results focused, fear of losing, are all core factors that can hold us back, and gender is the trump card that

women have to contend with. Research points to this holding back phenomenon as a gender specific issue that presents within female athletes. David Whitson (1994) states that “girls learn that femininity and power are incompatible” and that they “learn to only use partial force in swinging or hitting” (as cited in Cohen, 2001, p. 8). Women not using their power to the fullest represents a troubling tendency in women in sport, for them to not use their full body weight transference, and have tentative movement patterns (Cohen, 2001). Hesitancy within these areas can consequently impact performance. Aggressiveness, intensity, power, passion, emotions all have challenging places within the sporting arena for women. Holding back is a common experience that has happened to all of us at some point. Something feels like it is stopping us and results in our more tentative approach.

Finesse, follow through, trusting your timing, using your body weight transference, commitment to a play, not forcing, trusting your technique and going for it, is the art of sport and competition. Even a slight holding back in any of these areas can be the difference in making a shot, a play, or winning the match. The purpose of this module is to explore this holding back phenomenon, and the parts of you, as an athlete that may have been disavowed.

This Process Work module is designed for those women who are curious to explore the possibility of more, and what it would mean to bring it all. We explore how this holding back manifests for us as female athletes. We will explore this as a permission process, welcoming the different styles that may exist outside of the typical gender roles and this holding back phenomenon. In getting to know the experience that exists underneath the blocks and belief systems, and utilizing the energy behind the

holding back, we will practice trying out new and different competitive approaches that you can apply to your sport—competition as an art!

Central Ideas, Skills, and Abilities

1. Become aware of your competitive identity, and identify belief systems that hold you back.
2. Gain awareness of negative self-talk and the mindset that holds the athlete back.
3. Be able to change your mindset and approach through introducing a new power that exists behind the holding back.

Goal

For athletes to gain awareness of where they hold themselves back and why, and to explore a new and more desired way of stepping into their sport, and apply this new mindset to a competition scenario.

Outcome

Athletes will gain awareness of their self-talk, and be able to identify areas where they hold themselves back. They will learn to access a different mindset that can be utilized during competition, as needed.

Inner Work Exercise: The Competitive Woman

1. Describe somewhere in your sport that you have experienced yourself holding back . . . maybe you were a little tentative or choking?
2. What is that holding back like? Describe it, how did it happen?

3. Now imagine that there was a figure doing this that was intentionally holding you back? Its job was purely to hold you back.
4. Dream into that figure, bring out it out fully. Is there a voice, sound, or movement that goes with that? Does it lecture? Does it have words? Is it bossy, is it an expert? Go for it. Bring out all of its opinions and personality! (Amplify it).
5. Now boil it down to it essence. Before it became this fully blown figure it was . . . make a hand movement that represents the essential energy of that figure.
6. Close your eyes and take a moment feel that energy and slowly allow it to take over your entire body. Notice your stance and posture . . . notice any movements, visions, or sounds that come from that place.
7. Notice the mindset that goes along with this state
8. Feel it in your body, and imagine making the movements of your sport in this new figure, feel what it is like to move, play, stand, in the body and mind set of this figure.
9. Now from this new state, speak to the old held back athlete. Notice if this new figure has some advice. Go back and forth with any dialogue that comes up between the two until you feel a shift or satisfied.
10. What did you notice about the experience of this new figure? How was the dialogue useful?
 - Did this experience offer you some insights with how you can bring it more?

- If you were to bring this new way of being into your game, where is another area where this might support you?

Module 6: Zone Access

Access to the zone is the holy grail of the competition experience. Also known as a peak experience or flow state, the zone is where optimal functioning occurs for you as an athlete. Becoming one with your sport and completely absorbed in the competition, this positive mind and body experience that takes over, delivers to your potential. Paradoxically, it is a sense of being totally in control and not in control of anything . . . but everything is being executed perfectly without doubt or questioning. Your ability to access this state promises reduced anxiety and the opportunity to bring you into the present moment of competition. This highly sought after state, which we have all had glimpses of, holds the key to pleasure and performance. So how do you access this state of flow and get into the zone to give yourself the opportunity to bring out your best? How do you get through the nerves, the outcomes, and results to be present and in the moment enough, to allow this state of flow to occur?

Whilst there are known qualities and factors that need to be present to access the zone, it still remains somewhat of a mystery within the field of sports psychology as to how this zone can be induced and optimized. Process Work, however, offers methods to access this altered state, and trains the athlete accordingly, empowering them to be able to access this state at will.

This module provides you with a new method to access your zone. Just as you practice your specific skills within your sport, this inner work will become part of your skills training where you will learn to practice building your ability to access your zone. Similar to the concept of visualization that is used with athletes, this Process Work inner work module works to access via your body experience, as a way to drop out of your

ordinary mindset. You will learn to experience, and anchor this state, so that the zone can become a more known and readily accessible state that can be summoned during competition.

Central Ideas, Skills, and Abilities

1. To stay focused on the moment
2. An ability to drop the mindset that focuses on the outcome of a match
3. Experience a state of openness and non-attachment
4. To be able to extend the zone duration.

Goal

To re-access the zone state and access this peak experience, altered state, or flow at will.

Outcome

Athletes will get to know aspects of their zone and be able to access and ground this in a body experience. They learn methods to re-access this state as a competition mindset that can be used to shift problematic moods or interrupt a losing streak.

Inner Work Exercise

1. Think of a time when you were in the zone. Everything was flowing, and / or coming together . . . describe that experience. What was happening, and what was it like, describe your mindset, what the atmosphere was like . . . go ahead and recall all that comes up about that zone
2. Now, reflect on how this felt in your body, close your eyes, and as you recall it begin to feel into that experience

3. Feel it in your body right now. Where do you feel this zone in your body?
 4. Now amplify this energy. Feel it and take it right throughout your body. Fully embody the energy and allow it to express itself. Make a movement or sound that goes along with it.
 5. Now make that movement bigger or sound louder. Let it encapsulate you, and allow it to become all of you for a moment.
 6. Amplify it further now through recreating movements from your sport. As you do that, feel that zone experience guiding your movements.
 7. Now imagine a difficult point in your game or match and as you do so, hang on to this zone experience, feel it guiding you
- Did this experience offer you some insights or help with your experience of the zone?
 - If you were to bring this zone more into your game, what things might you have to change in yourself to bring it?
 - How does this zone state change you as a competitor? How are you different?

Contextual Essay

Your opponent has no more power than anyone else, you only have the power that is given to you in any one moment.—Arnold Mindell (2000, p. 34)

Motivation, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotion are the five areas that mostly affect athletic performance (Taylor & Wilson, 2005). The emotional world of the athlete and their mental approach to competition is of key importance to their success and well-being. Simply pushing through these emotions offers limited results. The world of competitive sport demands a more emotionally aware athlete than ever before. *How To Be a Better Competitor* is my Final Project in the MAPW, which aims to work with the athlete's challenging emotions in order to better support them in their competitive endeavors. The broader topic area is sports psychology with a specific focus on the application of Process Work inner work methods, made available to athletes via the training model found in the earlier portion of this paper. The curriculum design of the training model is inspired by my interviews with 6 professional female athletes (Fennell, 2012). It brings together professional competition experience, Process Work concepts, sports psychology research, and is combined with an outcome-based learning model to form this educational project. The end goal of this training model is to conduct training workshops for athletes, teaching techniques that work with a range of issues and challenges which arise within the competition arena. While addressing a number of different areas under the performance psychology banner, the central focus of the training is on improving performance.

In designing this training, my hope is that my contribution is to the field of sports psychology and to Process Work, putting Process Work on the sports psychology map as an effective method and approach that improves athletic performance and overall sport enjoyment. As a past professional athlete, my own motivations sit behind this journey fueling my passion, empathy, and admiration for the athlete. Awareness of my own struggles and issues within the competitive arena has inspired my curiosity toward this work, and moved me to look more closely at what is currently available and needed to support athletes.

This contextual essay presents the theories, approaches, and research findings that helped me to design the training—*How To Be a Better Competitor*. I first discuss emotions in the world of the competitive athlete and their role and impact on performance. The aims and objectives of this project are presented along with the intended audience that I desire to reach with this training. I present the current issues that athletes experience in competitive sport, and look at the methods that are utilized to work with athletes within the sports psychology arena. Further, and central to this project, I discuss where Process Work intersects with sports psychology and vice versa, and place a specific focus on the innovation that Process Work brings to the traditional field of sports psychology. I outline the Process Work tools and concepts that are utilized within the training and explain why Process Work applied to athletes will be effective in improving performance.

I briefly introduce you to the athletes that I interviewed and give insight into the issues that were raised which inspired this project. I give a brief shout out and place

special attention on women in sport in order to give the context of the module that has been specifically designed for women and explain why such attention is needed.

Additionally, I discuss my intention behind choosing an outcome-based learning model and what this model means for the attendees, and cover how the quality and effectiveness of the training is addressed. My personal motivations behind the work are included, coupled with the ongoing research and developments that this training design has inspired.

Finally, I conclude with the contribution that I see this paper and training can provide to sports psychology along with the contribution that it can have to Process Work. This is closely followed by the limitations that arose from this project and the possibilities for future research that I foresee.

Emotions in the World of the Competitive Athlete

The pressure of competition can be an extremely emotional situation for an athlete. Fear, anger, despair, panic, guilt, sadness, pride, embarrassment, and frustration are just some of the emotions that can be experienced by athletes throughout a competition. Executing strategy, tactics, and techniques are only part of the competitive equation. How the athlete responds emotionally to the things that happen to them within a competition, and how they orient themselves can make or break them as a competitor. So, how does an athlete work with the difficult feelings that threaten to take them “off center”? How can they work with them in a way that makes a difference to their performance?

These Process Work training modules address the five key performance areas for athletes—motivation, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotions—and are designed to work with the disturbing states that impact performance. Maximizing access to optimal competition states, the modules aim to teach the athlete how to access their body, as a way to “drop out” from their disturbed mind and find a new place to compete from. These short, sharp inner work exercises allow the athlete to shift their state during a match, and empower the athlete to alter how they respond to difficult emotions, offering a way to refocus.

Aims and Objectives

5-0 up in the tie-break against the number 2 seed. Only 2 more points and I had the match in the bag. And then, 5-1, 5-2, 5-3, . . . and the rest went exactly how it sounds. I lost the tie-break, the set and the match! From what was looking like a huge upset, my opportunity was lost! I knew I could do this, I had this . . . and then everything froze. The moment that I realized I might win, I lost my concentration, confidence, and skills. Whilst this is my personal story, this is also a well-known phenomenon that exists in the sporting world, and for athletes in general—choking—thinking into the future, seeing your success, feeling the pressure of expectations, external or internal, and freezing and / or losing momentum and your ability to perform.

Destined to be a top professional tennis player, my world was fraught with expectations in this results driven world. Being a professional athlete presented many issues to contend with: wanting to win, wanting to be liked, wanting recognition, feeling intimidated or better than opponents, plus the pressure to meet my potential and ranking. Differing styles of support and motivation from parents and coaches dominated in a complicated psychology around winning as a priority over my enjoyment of the game. Managing my emotionality both inside and outside of the competition resulted in an inability to support myself. What did I need to be able to bring my best to the competition? My personal experiences as an athlete led my curiosity in this project, and brought me to my central question: How do professional athletes better support themselves in competition, and what is in that experience?

From my interviews with 6 professional female athletes and research of the sports psychology literature, the need for emotional support to athletes became evident. Six

professional athletes were interviewed from six different sports, hailing from three different countries, all having competed at an international level. All of the participants were professional athletes, with sport being considered their core job / career or focus. All participants had either earned prize money from their sport or been sponsored. The athletes' ages ranged from 19-54 years of age, with only 1 athlete still currently competing, and the remaining 5 retired.

The insights I gained around the athletes' experiences (discussed later in this paper), coupled with sports psychology literature, reiterated the importance of emotional support as a necessity behind improving athletic performance. This support came in numerous forms: outside coaches, sponsors, sports psychologists, and parents. The core function of this support was cultivation of an ability to work with pressure and anxiety and ensure a sense of wellness and confidence in the athlete in order to enable peak performance. It was clear that emotional support was needed for athletes, and it sparked my curiosity as to how can athletes better support themselves and facilitate their own emotions. I wondered, what can Process Work offer?

As a student of the MAPW, my Final Project, *How to Be a Better Competitor* presented me with the opportunity to bring together my two biggest life commitments, Process Work and tennis. My goal: To develop a training model that would support athletes in their competitive endeavors.

My experience as a professional tennis player, combined with my Process Work training and learning from current sports psychology literature formed the foundation for developing inner work tools that aimed to support athletes within the competition arena.

Not yet fully understanding my own motivations around competition, the opportunity to focus in this area offered the chance to venture more deeply into my own path of learning and self-discovery, whilst also learning about the diversity and similarity of issues that existed for other athletes. Interviewing a small sample of current and past professional female athletes on their experience gave me further insight about motivation, pressure, and some of these key challenges that athletes face.

My main objective was to create inner work training designed to help facilitate athletes through their emotional states and negative competition mindsets, as well as to provide a method of access to optimal states for peak performance. Through working with the emotions that take the athlete off center during a competition, I have created inner work exercises that aim to facilitate these difficult states, and provide a doorway to a more optimal competition mindset.

Intended Audience

The intended audience for this final project is first and foremost the athlete, and following that, many of the assisting roles in an athlete's career, including coaches, parents, or anyone who would like to be able to learn to work with the states that support and hinder the athlete within their chosen competitive arena. Additionally, the Process Work Institute is another central intended audience in the hope that this training might give insight into ways to work with athletes, which has had minimal research or application to date. Ultimately, this training is designed to assist any athlete to focus inside themselves during a match, and manage some of the challenging emotions that arise, as well as maximize access to and duration of optimal states.

Sports Psychology Methods

History of Sports Psychology

Sports psychology originated with Norman Triplett, who was famous for his work at Indiana University in the late 1800s where he did an experiment on the effects of social facilitation. He was known for his research wherein he discovered that people became more competitive and performance improved in group situations. This was considered one of the first works that contributed to creating the specialized field of sports psychology (Strube, 2005). Triplett ran an experiment with cyclists and looked at the effects that others (i.e., competitors or colleagues) had on performance. His findings were that the majority of people improved.

This is still a key issue today, the effect of others on performance, and speaks to extrinsic motivation. How is an athlete motivated, and how do the outside forces play into performance? Others such as coaches, competitors, spectators can help to lift a match performance and/or conversely diminish performance. How much confidence the athlete has over these outside forces, and the confidence that they possess in their ability to self-facilitate these difficulties, can make or break both their results and enjoyment of the sport, as “confidence is considered the single most influential psychological contributor to a success in sports” (Wilson & Taylor, 2005, p. 22).

Current Methods Used in Sports Psychology

Current psychological modalities in use include:

- **The Psychodynamic model** has been used mostly with injury prone athletes.

It looks more at “after the fact explanations” (Hill, 2001, p. 13) and works

with reconstructing basic personality and self-understanding as a means for development. This model is best used over time, and therefore does not support the quick problem solving of a specific performance problem.

- **The Behavioral model** dominates in the field of sports psychology. It aims to deliver performance enhancement for the athlete through “goal setting, arousal management, relaxation training, behavior modification, operant conditioning, self-monitoring and self-assessment techniques” (Hill, 2001, p. 42).
- **The Cognitive model** has a central focus on the present and education of the client. Combined with behavioral techniques, this is a popular approach often used within the field of sports psychology. It works with restructuring the athlete’s interpretation of outside stressors through thought control, self-talk, and imagery methods (Hill, 2001, p. 80).
- **The Humanistic model** places the value of person and self-actualization at the centre of the work. This includes exploring the meaning that sport has for the athlete.
- **Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)** is a composite model that works with the five senses. There is minimal use and literature of this modality within the field of sports psychology to date, yet according to Hill (2001), NLP is often referred to as a modality that could be applied to athletes. It is spoken of as having the potential to be a good fit to work with athletes due to its “physiological grounding, short term duration and pragmatic approach to the athlete’s problem” (Hill, 2001, p.173). With NLP living closely alongside Process Work, with its channel awareness and ability to work physiologically

through focus within the proprioceptive and kinesthetic channels, this suggests that Process Work may also be a potentially effective and successful model for working with athletes.

Although behavioral and cognitive are the more commonly used models to date (Hill, 2001), positive psychology is an approach that research supports as being effective in improving performance, as it does not focus on what is wrong, but rather takes what an athlete has at their disposal and attempts to add to it (Taylor & Wilson, 2004).

Current Issues for Athletes in Competition

Five areas most affect athletic performance. They are motivation, confidence, intensity, focus, and emotion (Taylor & Wilson, 2004).

Motivation is a key area for athletes and looks at how and why they are driven to compete. The main questions are: What are the outside in factors driving the athlete (extrinsic motivation), what is the athlete's internal world and drive like (intrinsic motivation), and what is the balance that exists between these two? Motivation can affect self-confidence, and is linked to emotions as well as to an athlete's energy, direction, persistence, and intention. It is key to an athlete's effectiveness in training and competition.

Confidence is named by Taylor and Wilson (2004) as the "single most influential contributor to success in sports" (p. 22). A lasting belief allows the athlete to use their ability to the fullest under difficult situations. Taylor and Wilson (2004) frame confidence as the "essence of self" (p. 22) that allows one to come back for more, take on more risk, and increase one's threshold of adventure.

Intensity refers to a level of arousal within the athlete. Different levels of arousal

are effective for an athlete's performance, dependent on the specific athlete. However, there is an optimal intensity level that is important in maximizing an athlete's performance. Too much can impact performance as can too little. "Intensity is considered to be affected by physical, psychological and emotional factors" (Taylor & Wilson, 2004, p. 34).

Focus has been also referred to as attention, concentration, and cognitive effort (Taylor & Wilson, 2004, p. 52). An ability to focus is considered essential for athletes as without it, distractions can interfere with optimal performance. Taylor and Wilson (2004) state that focus "acts as the director for athletes' competitive efforts" (p. 53). It contributes to the athlete's ability to evaluate, plan strategies and make sound decisions, and be present.

Emotions are present in a wide range during competition, both positive and negative: frustration, disappointment, excitement, satisfaction, fear, elation, and many more. Emotions are defined as a reaction to a stimulus or event (Taylor & Wilson, 2004, p. 67). Emotions can consume an athlete and impact how an athlete thinks, feels, and behaves during competition, and consequently impact performance. There are also instances where these emotions can enhance performance. Understanding how these events and emotions affect athletes is essential to helping an athlete achieve optimal performance.

Women in Sport

Within the curriculum design, there is one module that has been tailored specifically to women, based on my interviews with women on their experience of

competition in professional sport. The module “Bringing It All” is based on the holding back phenomenon that appeared consistently with female athletes and their experiences of competition. What became evident through my interviews for this project and the research is that holding back is a gender specific issue that presents within female athletes (Cohen, 2010). Whilst it may also be prevalent for male athletes, research suggests that women can have a tendency to not use their power to the fullest, to not use their full body weight transference, and have tentative movement patterns (Cohen, 2010). Both the research and my interviews inspired the need for a stand-alone module designed specifically to help women address this.

What Is Missing in Sports Psychology?

With much of the work within sports psychology stemming from a cognitive behavioral model, there is minimal attention given to channels as used within both NLP and Process Work modalities. “A channel is a sensory, motor or relational mode of perceiving or communicating experience” (Diamond & Jones, 2005, p. 25). This can include: visual, auditory, proprioceptive, kinesthetic, relationship, and world channel, The lack of adequate attention to various channels in sport psychology means that the athlete is working outside of the channel where the disturbance is occurring, which can consequently lead to insufficient change, as change is not something that can happen just through will, or changing one’s thinking. On the other hand, Process Work presents an opportunity for more focus upon channels and working outside the athlete’s ordinary psychology through exploring both proprioceptive and kinesthetic channels. Working directly in the channel of the disturbance offers a more direct path to change. For

example, working with pressure in the proprioceptive channel and integrating the essence of that pressure at a proprioceptive level can not only shift the pressure, but also bring greater performance and potentially more intensity, focus, or whatever it is that may exist at the essence of the pressure maker for each athlete. I propose that channel work is more beneficial to the athlete than just thinking through the change or trying to force it to happen. Working within the channel offers a more organic way to shift these problematic states. Channel work is further explained in the Process Work section of this paper.

Unfolding states within these channels to help the athlete get out of their ordinary fixed mindset or state offers a new avenue to be explored within sports psychology that is outside of simply working with changing an athlete's thinking or positive self talk. The ability for the athlete to self-facilitate their state empowers them, because they do not have to rely on external help to shift their mental state. This approach offers something new to current sports psychology, which commonly relies primarily upon external helpers such as coaches or sports psychologists to facilitate athletes' difficult states.

Process Work

Developed by psychologist and physicist Arnold Mindell, Process Work is an inquiry into one's awareness and experience that works with body symptoms, dreams, and things outside of our known identity, with the underlying view that these bring gifts that can offer meaning and purpose to an individual or group. It introduces a method of working with people (individually and in groups) that focuses on working with the changes that disturb our usual identity as holding wisdom and providing access to lesser known parts of one's self that may be essential in the moment. Conversely, it also works with the changes that draw us out of our usual identity in the same fashion. Process Work is founded on the premise that there is something exciting, needed, or useful in the disturbances that happen to us. Bringing together Jungian concepts and modern physics, along with Buddhism, Taoism, and shamanism, Mindell introduces a learning-centered approach in exploring the new and unknown, and has developed comprehensive methods that help individuals discover meaning in what is happening in any given moment.

Process Work works with the range of unexpected occurrence or disturbances in two ways: working with the extremes of the range though exploring the polarizing energies and finding how these dance together or coexist, or through directly exploring the energy of a disturbance, and unfolding it to find the unique essence or quality that can be needed. Each approach offers a useful way to find distance or detachment, a new perspective or mindset that is more effective in the moment.

Why Process Work Applied to Athletes?

Turning a losing streak around or shifting a defeatist mindset to a winning one are attributes that all athletes can benefit from. The ability to access confidence when the chips are down, and to find something more when mental and physical fatigue threaten, are all workable situations through the application of Process Work methods. These are disturbances that offer the opportunity for a new competitive mindset.

Applying Process Work with athletes opens up the opportunity for the athlete to change their mindset as needed within a competition. This is not just a matter of changing your thinking or being positive, but through accessing body experiences. How? Process Work offers the athlete the opportunity to access new mindsets through embracing disturbances and using them to their advantage. Not being stuck in a fixed psychological state or mindset, Process Work presents the athlete with choice and fluidity in the ability to shift their state to bring whatever may be needed in any moment within the competition.

In the world of the athlete, the ability to assess the situation and cocreate with these outside disturbing factors, with immediacy, in a way that maintains a sense of power for the athlete, can make the difference between winning and losing. Opponents, coaches, parents, spectators, weather conditions, historic defeats, and pressure are all potential disturbers that sit outside of the athlete's identity, that hold the potential power for necessary change. Process Work offers a way for the athlete to work with these potentially threatening states.

Central Process Work Concepts and Tools Utilized in the Training

The Process Work concepts and tools that I use to help the athlete work with disturbances are the following: the ally, process-oriented inner work, channels, and Process Mind or altered states. These Process Work concepts and tools allow for access to aspects of oneself outside of this ordinary / everyday identity, which is often much needed to compete. They work with the concepts of the connection of inner and outer experience, and that agency can be gained over either as they are realized as accessible parts of oneself and are further explained in detail below.

The Ally

The core Process Work perspective that is drawn upon is seeing disturbance as your ally. Process Work understands identity as having various parts, some of which are closer to, and others which are further from our awareness. These lesser known parts of identity often manifest as disturbances, such as a difficult emotional state, a challenging opponent, or an accident, and we refer to these lesser known parts as secondary processes. One of the central goals of Process Work is to incorporate parts of our identity that have been rendered marginal or other, and bring in their energy and qualities as parts of ourselves that we have disavowed. As a result, Process Work sometimes refers to a secondary process as an ally.

One of the earliest writings by Mindell (1993) was a manuscript which later became the *Shaman's Body*. He drew heavily upon the work of Carlos Casteneda who spoke about the Yaqui Shaman Don Juan, and within that body of knowledge he introduced the concept of the ally. The ally refers to an energy or force that is

frightening, that is outside of ourselves, but is really a teacher or a bringer of meaning or an important message. The concept of the ally for an athlete is important because these disturbances or secondary processes loom quite large, with any of these disturbances or experiences that seem out of your grasp threatening to throw you off center. The ally brings you into contact with missing or unknown parts of yourself and communicates a sense of power (Mindell, 1993) which can be very important for the athlete. Allies are known to show up in difficult crises, conflicts, irritations, and struggles.

To the athlete, an ally could be an aggressor, a certain intensity, or sense of flow. Anything that threatens to throw you off center or that feels out of your grasp, can be potentially an ally to the athlete and be integrated and used effectively. For example, the opponent, coaches, parents, spectators, weather conditions, historic defeats, and pressure can be the athlete's allies. In Process Work terms, picking up the power of the other, the disturber, and psychologically taking that power back can work with helping the athlete to find access to their own power rather than only out-source it or be defeated by it. For example, an athlete may find the fierceness of her rival very disturbing and threatening. Instead of getting intimidated by such energy, she can take the rival's fierceness as part of herself, and apply it in competition.

This battle with and integration of the ally is important, as Mindell (1993) suggests in the *Shaman's Body* to "gather all of your courage and grab the ally before it demolishes you, to go after it before it hunts you" (p. 114). Wrestle with it and hold it there until it gives you power. In other words, for the athlete to not move away from the disturbing things or the things that challenge them or threaten to throw them off center, but rather to notice and then wrestle with them, take their power, and use it to the

athlete's advantage. Each encounter with your ally "demands not only momentary change, but total reappraisal of your personal identity and worldview" (Mindell, 1993, p. 119).

In my training, the athlete learns to pick up the disturbing quality and integrate it, so that it can be utilized as power with the competition. They will be equipped with inner work tools that empower them to shift their mindset when needed, and that will enhance their competition experience.

Inner Work

The main tool used throughout my training program is inner work. Developed by Arnold Mindell, process-oriented inner work is a set of methods with which an individual can self-facilitate their problematic states. Inner work is "a means of resolving conflicts and increasing awareness within" (Mindell, 2002, p. 7). Athletes are often left to their own devices within a competition. Battling in isolation, it is just you and the competition with help and support only available after the event. Inner work presents the athlete a way to work with the difficult emotions that arise within competition, and offers the potential to shift moods, and access mindsets that can induce peak performance. Nerves, anxiety, and pressure can all disrupt the athlete's mindset during a match, and inner work is a tool that can readily facilitate shifting these states. For example, had I had the ability as an athlete to use inner work when I lost my concentration, I could have noticed the first sign of my mind wandering and the tension that was arising around winning. Had I been able to be aware of this and instead pick up the power of the number 2 seed and

integrate that essence in the moment, which may have been a confidence or focus of sorts, I may have been able to close out the match.

The inner work approach within the training modules aims to ensure that the athlete is working with their inner goals, intrinsic motivations, problematic states, and mindsets. This delivers a process-oriented approach, ensuring the athlete is staying close to their process as much as possible, leading to a more sustainable and meaningful change. The measure of success of the inner work can be anywhere from awareness (i.e., the athlete noticing the first sign of being in a problematic mindset) to applying inner work methods to shift the mindset. Being able to work with one's own difficult states that arise within the competition offers the athlete a level of autonomy. Additionally, it also supports intrinsic motivation through offering the athlete a sense of agency over their states and moods that can otherwise happen to them throughout competition. In essence it brings the coach, sports psychologist, and / or mentor onto the court or the field through adopting that mindset for themselves in the necessary moments.

This training helps the athlete to focus on their inner experiences and inner parts and conflicts through focusing on their own inner voices and body experiences. All of this inner work is facilitated by accessing the body or through accessing their Process Mind, and additionally through learning work within the channel where the disturbing thing is occurring.

Channels

Process Work methods, including inner work, function by tracking experiences through different channels, and bring forth the idea of working directly within the

channel of the disturbing experience or the unoccupied channel. “Channels are signal vehicles which convey intended and unintended communication” (Diamond & Jones, 2005, p. 64). There are six channels that are used within Process Work including: visual, auditory, proprioceptive, kinesthetic, relationship, and world channel. Based upon how an individual presents their issues, a Process Worker determines which channel is the unoccupied channel, because important and useful information that is marginalized by the person’s everyday mindset (Diamond & Jones, 2005) is believed to be hidden in the experience in the unoccupied channel. For example, pressure on nerves can produce an experience with the body such as tension, tightness, aggression, or shaking, all of which can occur in the often unoccupied kinesthetic and proprioceptive channels. An athlete with channel awareness might notice tightness in her arms and try to find the root of the nerves by unfolding the tightness. Instead of trying to relax her arms, she focuses on the tightness and unfolds the sensation, which in the end, for example the athlete may find a very precise, determined, or self-assured figure. Ultimately the athlete picks up the power of this precision maker instead of being victim to the precision maker that says “you have to make this shot and get it as close to the line as possible,” you instead become the precision maker which is in fact not about a hesitancy, tightness, or relaxing, but rather an assuredness and determination that is a felt sensation led from the body that also translates into a mindset. It is then a fully integrated power that can be expressed within the competition to the athlete’s benefit. Working within the unoccupied channel helps people go outside their usual way of being or familiar approach to certain competition scenarios. Working within the unoccupied channels thus allows a new approach or perspective to emerge.

This process allows the athlete to work outside of their usual thinking and responses and make more sustainable change by not engaging their primary process or ordinary way of thinking and approaching disturbance differently to how the rational mind ordinarily would. Thus, the Process Work approach of working within the unoccupied channel offers training that works outside of the athlete's ordinary identity through accessing the body's wisdom as the doorway to change. This bypasses the primary process (ordinary or more fixed identity) and may also bypass potential blocks and edge figures or restrictive belief systems that can exist within an athlete's thinking.

Within the field of sports psychology, the visual channel is most frequently used. Often in a form of visualization, the athlete is guided to see themselves winning or holding up the trophy. Process Work offers a way to work with different channels in addition to visualization. I compliment the visual emphasis that has predominated in sports psychology through my strong focus on using kinesthetic and proprioceptive channels.

One of the reasons that working with the body has been specifically chosen here, is to help the athlete focus their awareness within the body in order to help them recapture their embodied experiences and anchor them there. Then, when in competition, they have the tools to be able to draw upon them.

In many ways, an athlete is highly developed within proprioceptive and kinesthetic channels due to the sheer physical nature of sport. My hypothesis is that these should be considered as unoccupied channels, because within a competitive situation, these channels are developed to the point of having to be second nature, as a highly trained athlete is not consciously focused within these channels. My idea, however, is to

be able to introduce the ability for the athlete to bring their attention in and out of these channels. Training an athlete's agency and fluidity along this spectrum thus arms the athlete with the ability to be able to change their state and / or mindset. This is a substantial contribution that Process Work brings to sports psychology.

Whilst athletes are taught to push through pain, they are also trained to be extremely proprioceptive and kinesthetic. To have touch, feel, and finesse in what they do, requires a trained hyper-sensitivity. To move between this sensitivity and then to push through pain and exert force, requires fluidity across a broad continuum, attuned sensitivity and feel, through to the absolute marginalization of proprioception. Access to the range within this channel is a core skill to be developed by the athlete, and is therefore a central channel that should be utilized to make sustainable change due to this highly trained proprioceptive and kinesthetic awareness. Using Process Work as a tool for developing excellence here offers a significant opportunity which is often overlooked in traditional sports psychology.

Process Mind / Altered States

My training introduces Process Mind as a concept that provides the athlete with access to a more detached, focused, and balanced state of mind that can improve performance. Inner work utilizing Process Mind offers access to new states and psychological perspectives. As Process Work evolved and developed, Mindell became increasingly interested in not just the different parts, but also in a state of mind that could encompass and flow with the different states and experiences that arise—and so the Process Mind concept was born. Mindell (2010) defines Process Mind as “a somatic

experience of wellness and least action” (LOC 282). Further, it is a meditation practice that facilitates access to your deepest self, an experience of being moved by an altered state, a state that is outside of your ordinary identity (Mindell, 2010). Process Mind offers a more balanced or centered state that can see the different parts closer to, and further from a disturbance. This mindset is useful for the athlete, as this is a balanced and centered state of mind that is conducive to competitive performance.

Process Mind is a special kind of altered state that exists outside of the primary or ordinary identity, and is one that has a metacommunicator present. Altered states are referred to by Diamond and Jones (2004) as existing on a continuum from where there is a metacommunicator present to where there is none (p. 31). For the athlete, the continuum ranges from where the states or emotions are held in awareness and in control by the athlete, to where they can completely consume the athlete, dependent on the intensity of their experience as well as their capacity to remain centered. So, whilst Process Mind offers an altered state method to shift a more problematic altered state, the point of difference here is the agency, metacommunicator, and detachment that the athlete can bring to these states. Simply, Process Mind offers a more detached and heightened state of awareness that is conducive to competitive success. One example of where and how an athlete would use Process Mind is working with pressure. Finding the energy of the thing that creates the pressure, as well as the athlete’s experience of the pressure. The combination of these two energies allows for a new perspective that can be applied to the competition. It may be more detached or centered, or offer clarity such as “it’s only a game.” Whatever it is, it allows the athlete a new perspective and ability to perform outside of their pressure experience.

Similar concepts to Process Mind actually appear within sports psychology, for example, The Zone, Flow, or Peak Experience. The zone state is described as having a certain detachment coupled with a focus, where everything is coming together (Wilson, 2004, p. 25). Made famous by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, flow is a state which encapsulates an altered state, or zone state, described as “complete absorption in a task that brings optimal functioning and therefore optimal experience” (Jackson, 2007, p. 144). Susan Jackson’s research into flow points toward the factors which can induce the state of flow. Some of these key factors are a positive mental attitude, positive precompetitive and competitive affect, maintaining appropriate focus, physical readiness, and partner unity. Process Work offers a different doorway to accessing these states through the body, distinct from focusing only on cognitive mindsets and preparedness.

As competition heightens momentary experience and there is an outcome at stake, immediate action or change to a psychological state may be needed. Choosing access to optimal competitive states, rather than having them occasionally happen to you, allows for a competitive edge. These inner work Process Mind tools train the athlete in their ability to work with and access these states real-time and change them as needed.

Interviews With 6 Professional Female Athletes

Another influence upon my project is the interviews that I conducted with 6 professional athletes (Fennell, 2012). They were willing participants who were interviewed about their experience of competition in professional sport. Setting the foundation for the curriculum design, these athletes presented a similarity of issues.

- **Pushing through.** Pushing through emotions, pain, nerves, negative thinking. A tactic often referred to by the athletes as a way to address unwanted negative, mental, or physical states that is effective, and also not always effective, dependent on the athlete's relationship to the experience of pushing through.
- **Gender socialization.** Holding back . . . the impact of being a female athlete. Their relationship to competition, intensity, appearance, with the underlying question, what IS considered acceptable for a female athlete within the competitive domain?
- **Impact of relationship.** The importance of support roles and the impact of an absence of support, and how this influenced intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
- **Altered states.** The buzz, the thrill, the zone, the accessing of optimal competitive states as a much sought after state.

Each issue has a designated inner work module to help the athlete to be able to work with these problematic areas. Additionally there is crossover, as each module addresses more than one of the issues at a time. For example, "Play With Confidence" addresses pushing through and gender socialization issues, as does the Motivation

module which primarily addresses relationship support, and secondarily also works with pushing through and gender socialization.

“Tools for Working With Competition Nerves” primarily addresses altered states but also addresses all other aspects that came up in the interviews. “Working Your Weakness” addresses pushing through, and just as “Zone Access” addresses altered states, both indirectly work with or can override the other issues that are presented.

Whilst the issues that came forward from interviews echoed across genders within the sports psychology research literature, there was an exception—“Holding Back.” The 5th module designed around this holding back phenomenon points to a core need for further training that is specifically designed for female athletes, away from the one-size-fits-all approach that has predominated across genders in sports psychology. Working with women’s differing needs is an exciting avenue that I intend to explore in further research and within this training design.

These inner work modules are designed to avoid a one-size-fits-all generic approach, and instead present an individual and personalized approach that aims to work with the issue as it is specific to each athlete. This is accomplished through the inner work design, which steers the athlete to work with their specific issues and disturbances that directly impact upon their own performance. Consequently as outlined above, each module aims to shift a state or mindset, and can indirectly work with more than one issue at a time.

Outcome-Based Learning

My approach to my Final Project was to create a curriculum based around inner work techniques, with the end goal of delivering this training to athletes via an outcome-based learning model. Outcome-based learning is described as “teaching with the end in mind” (Diamond, 2012), and focuses on the questions: What students will be able to do after the course has been taught, what will they learn, *why* do I want them to learn it, how can I help them to learn it, and how will I know they have learnt it? (Diamond, 2012).

The outcome-based learning model (OBL) has been chosen for a number of reasons, the central reason being its outcome orientation which is key to the athlete’s results driven world. It puts the student’s learning first above the theory, and ensures clarity of goals and involves practical application. This OBL model combined with a Process Work approach presents the opportunity for honoring the process of the athlete whilst still holding the end goal in mind. The OBL model ensures effectiveness in that the athlete’s learning is placed at the forefront as a key measure of success, although minimal outcomes other than the athlete’s subjective experience are measured within the module itself.

Measurement of whether an outcome has been attained or not has not been included, as it is too experimental to know what the measurement will be at this stage. However, each module is designed to achieve a specific goal. My future goal would be to test the modules with a number of athletes within the competitive environment and develop exactly what the measurements are, which I envisage will vary sport by sport. Outcome measurements plan to include the athlete’s subjective experience and would be based on competition results and improved performance.

Contribution to Sport Psychology

The main contribution of my training to the field of sports psychology is the creation and application of this inner work training as an effective approach to working with athletes. The key innovation to sports psychology is the main Process Work concept of seeing obstacles and disturbances as a part of oneself. Typical sports psychology approaches work with an athlete's ability to focus by clearing their mind of disturbing thoughts. The innovation presented in this training is a contrasting thought: a disturbance considered as a potential doorway to an optimal competition mindset.

Using Process Work theory and methods, these inner work exercises differ from the more typical sports psychology approaches of visualization. In these exercises, the core facilitation is done via accessing the body to lead the way to drop out of the everyday mindset and into the body's experience, which can then offer a new mindset from which to compete, diminishing the initial affect that was impacting the athlete's competitive experience. Using access to the proprioceptive and kinesthetic channels as the key method to facilitate these states offers more direct, unique, and tangible opportunities for immediate change for the athlete. The application of Process Work channel theory thus both addresses the disturber and provides the solution via the same channels—proprioception and kinesthetic.

Contribution to Process Work

My key contribution to Process Work is in applying Process Work to working with athletes in order to enhance their performance. My training offers something fresh to Process Work in presenting new material that works with the professional athlete's disturbances, and especially in working with specific disturbances that many athletes encounter in order to enhance performance within their athletic arena. My work contributes to Process Work in applying the idea of picking up disturbance to cultivate excellence. It focuses on process, with an end goal or outcome in mind.

Prior Process Work research has been conducted and papers written on performance enhancement in the fields of sport, music, and organizational development through working with disturbances. These include Lane Arye (2001) working with disturbances within music and Heike Hamann (2007) and her working with fear in paragliders. Additionally there have been a number of organizational development projects written where enhancing performance has also been the core focus. However, mine is the first approach that attempts to use Process Work across all sports.

An additional contribution of my work is in the concept of pushing through, which is more familiar within the athletic arena than within Process Work. It is important for athletes to be able to push through both psychological and physical thresholds to achieve excellence. Going against things, pushing through, not giving in, is essential for athletes, whether it be going against an opponent, pushing through certain levels of pain or fatigue, or adopting a mindset to defeat the other. Process Work has a more Taoist approach of following with and not going against things. This paper introduces the concept of working with an audience where pushing through obstacles can be needed to

perform. Pushing through can also be the Tao and be nature's way of following an athlete's process, but it also can be against nature and the wholeness of the athlete. My core approach embraces pushing as part of the Tao, and also embraces it if it is not part of the Tao. Where it is not part of the Tao, conscious pushing through is embraced, in other words a conscious choice and exploration from the athlete to become aware of what they are pushing through, and why they are choosing to do so. The point of difference here is the awareness and choice that is presented to the athlete. Pushing through is a process that is unique and specific to each athlete, their dreaming, personal history, and choice. A contribution to Process Work is to work with this pushing through and the one-sidedness of the athlete, at times not following the process of the whole person, but rather following the process of the professional athlete, the one that has an outcome and result in mind.

In Process Work language, there is a need for and value of conscious marginalization—for the athlete to be able to consciously choose to marginalize a part that does not support the desired result—winning. Thus, not just using Process Work as an awareness tool but also implementing a new state in an attempt to consciously marginalize another. The contribution to Process Work is potentially discovering more about how to support people in this pushing through process. Looking at how to work with people who have to push through obstacles in order to function and be successful, and working with the awareness of when to push and when not to push, could offer an interesting contribution to Process Work when working with people who have to perform.

Quality Criteria and Results of Initial Trials

There are three domains of expertise that this paper touches upon: Process Work, outcome-based learning (an educational tool), and sports psychology. Ideally, feedback from all of these groups will be valuable. The effectiveness of the inner work has been reviewed by my study committee, and it meets the quality criteria of Process Work inner work design and ensures effective application of the theory. I plan to satisfy validity concerns across both the educational and sports psychology fields post submission of this paper, and have the inner work viewed, trialed, and further feedback given.

I have personally self-trialed the inner work within a competitive environment where performance enhancement was achieved and resulted in a personal best time. This was done on the bike leg of my triathlon via picking up a disturbing energy and integrating it. I was disturbed by a sharp ruthless pressure, an energy that was disturbing me in really being able to dig in to the difficult and physically painful points of training and competition. During the bike leg of my triathlon, I became this sharp energy and integrated it as me, accessing it proprioceptively as an experience happening within my body. It took me out of my ordinary mind and helped me access the more proprioceptive and kinesthetic channels, that allowed them to lead instead of my old mindset that felt victim to this energy. Through picking up the secondary thing that usually has disturbed me, it brought an altered state as I applied this energy and achieved my personal best.

Limitations

The inner work is designed to work with a snapshot in time, what is happening for the athlete in the moment, or a specific pressure issue that affects performance. It is not designed to work with the totality of the athlete's experience or work with their personal history or more significant issues that may require additional time and help or where in-depth therapy may be needed. One question is: Can short, sharp inner work exercises real time within the heat of the moment turn around a competition experience? In theory and within Process Work inner work trials, a mindset can be changed, even if only momentarily. However, can an athlete apply this effectively without the support of a coach or sports psychologist? My own self-trial was positive, and further investigation is needed, clearly presenting a potential limitation to the training.

The inner work also requires that the athlete have an ability to focus internally and work within their body. It is an assumption that the physical nature of an athlete equates to their ability to focus internally or within their body. For various athletes, including the fact that part of their training is to push through and marginalize body awareness, there can be a limited ability to access body experiences, especially with issues where trauma may have been present. This therefore brings up the potential limitation of a lack of edge work that exists within the inner work modules.

An edge is referred to as the place that exists "between the everyday identity and unknown experience" (Diamond & Jones, 2005, p. 124). Working at the edge would involve working with the athlete's belief systems that keep them from accessing this new or more unknown part, working with what keeps them attached to their primary identity and way of being in the world. Therefore, it must be noted that some of these inner work

exercises will bring up different edges for different athletes, that the inner work modules have been structured to take the athlete past the edge, and there is not a lot of support within these modules to work with the athlete actually being *at* the edge. Thus, if someone gets to a major edge, where there is fear, doubt, or resistance to the secondary experience, this could present a limitation possibly requiring revision of the inner work.

The inner work is also yet to be tested directly within the competitive environment, or at a professional level. At this stage it is effective for those trained in Process Work although it has not been applied to athletic competition other than personally. The inner work steps do provide access to another state, for a trained Process Worker, and they are yet to be trialed specifically within the professional competition environment by non-Process Work trained athletes.

Conclusions and Possibilities for Further Research

This training was born out of my own experience as an athlete, my passion for sports, and knowing intimately the intense range of emotions that can occur during competition. Not having my own ability to facilitate these states as an athlete, I saw an opportunity to apply Process Work inner work techniques as a way to empower the athlete to be able to manage and shift their problematic states.

The core goal of creating this curriculum was to create a training that supported athletes to work with the difficult states and emotions that impaired their competitive performance. My overall objective in designing these inner work modules is to help athletes to facilitate their emotional states, negative competition mindsets, and to provide a method to access optimal states for peak performance. My desire was that through the athletes' learning and applying these inner work methods, they would gain the autonomy to be able to facilitate themselves within or outside of match conditions. Additionally, introducing Process Work to the world of sports psychology and vice versa, and providing tools that help athletes outside of their ordinary identity and into their body (using muscle memory) were core goals.

In theory, this project has met the goal of bringing the worlds of sports psychology and Process Work together and offers exciting possibilities for the athlete and their competition experience. My goals were met in theory and through my personal application success, as well as through minimal trial applications by Process Workers.

Future research and trials within the athletic arena will confirm the effectiveness of the tools and the practical application for this audience, verifying how useable it is

without the guidance of a therapist. Possibly, it is more suited as a match preparation tool and requires a facilitator for optimal impact.

This paper has opened up many passions for me in my desire to work with athletes, and pointed to numerous possibilities for further research including: women and their needs within the competition experience; peak states and the ability for athletes to access these at will; and conscious and unconscious marginalization.

Women

One core passion and focus of mine is ongoing work with female athletic competitors. It was evident through the interviews and literature that women need something different in competition, and what presented convincingly was the phenomenon of women holding back: holding back intensity, emotionality, and physicality in their sport, including a lack of body weight transference and follow through, such as leaning into a shot in order to produce power which is essential for performing in sport. I have many more questions in regard to women in sport and what are the real differences that emerge between male and female athletes.

Questions that arise: are there differences because of sexism or are these differences due to gender and temperament? What is possible for women in competition around picking up intensity, follow through, and commitment? Is there a different more ideal state and mindset needed for women that better supports their competition experience? Does more intensity and focus really satisfy what is required for women to compete more effectively, and does that lead to more or less satisfaction within their sport? All of these beg to be further explored.

Peak States

The notion of peak states using Process Mind and how durable it is under stress opens an opportunity of interest for future research. Can an athlete develop the ability to have dual state awareness, and be able to work with themselves whilst experiencing heightened or altered states? This dual state awareness involves the athlete being able to carry two states of awareness and to not only be consumed by one state, but to also be able to notice the state they are impacted by, and at the same time self-facilitate that state. Ideally, the athlete will be able to be their own therapist and client within the same moment. The question of the durability of Process Mind under stress is important because does Process Mind for one athlete reduce intensity that is necessary for optimal performance, where for another athlete this reduced intensity, stress level, and more detached state could actually improve performance? So, the Process Mind concept may be only as effective as the athlete knowing their process and what states optimize peak performance within themselves, as it does hold the potential to improve or diminish performance. Future research and testing is for sure needed here to clarify.

Conscious Marginalization to Improve Performance

Training the athlete to consciously marginalize pain, fatigue, distractions, and negative mindsets, and to instead have a one-sided focus that ignores these things, brings forward the need for further research around when should the athlete pick up the disturbance and when should they marginalize it, and / or give it no attention? Consciously pushing through psychological and physical thresholds to achieve excellence through using Process Work to support the marginalization of parts that are not

conducive to the competition experience is only one part of a larger whole. The idea I am presenting is the importance to know when the athlete should marginalize such disturbing experiences (e.g., pain, fatigue, negative internal talk) and when bring awareness to what is them and integrate them. This may allow the athlete to increase their focus and consequently improve performance. My goal would be to conduct further research with athletes around this pushing through phenomenon, and the effectiveness of consciously choosing to marginalize (i.e., having awareness of what is being marginalized, and also being able to honor that part).

Many exciting opportunities for future research exist within the fields of Process Work, sports psychology, education, as well as training for excellence and performance. Personally, this paper has provided me with a solid yet flexible foundation of learning and growth within these domains.

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