

Sport Psychology and the Average Joe

By Dr. Natascha Wesch, PhD



I often get asked if what I do with elite athletes can be used by the 'average Joe'. The short answer is "Yes ... IF the average Joe puts in the work."

The mind and the body work in a similar fashion. If you want to get faster, there are certain exercises you will need to do (ex. weight training, speed work). Ultimately, it will come down to whether you do the work or not. Changing your body takes time. Do you go from couch potato to marathon runner in 3-4 days? Not likely.

Given that the brain is part of the body, changes in mindset and mental approach follow a similar process. You can improve your confidence, mental toughness, and positive self-talk if you want to, but it takes time, a sound training plan, and intentional practice.

Here are 3 basic tips you can try:

1. **Set a goal.** This sounds simple, but it's the important first step. What do you want to achieve? Write it down. Be clear and specific, and give yourself a target deadline. Use words that explain what you want to do, not what you don't want to do. This is important. Example: My goal is to run a marathon by May of next year.

2. **See, feel and hear success.** What you think about is what you become. Tell yourself that you will run that marathon. You will do your daily training, you will eat well, sleep well, and think positive thoughts. Then, see and feel yourself doing these things. Mentally create the image of success. Do this daily.

3. **Focus on what you control and get into a routine.** You can't control the weather, but you can control your attire. Put as many things within your control as possible. Creating new habits takes time,

repetition, and the right mindset. Make the choices that will form your habits and lead you to success.

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There are exercises anyone can do to improve their mental focus and create better thinking habits. But you have to do the work.