


# THE JOURNAL OF EXCELLENCE



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## Mission of the Journal of Excellence

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**Terry Orlick, PhD** – Founder and Editor in Chief, the Journal of Excellence.

My mission with the Journal of Excellence is to fill some important gaps in our knowledge, actions and our lives, that are essential to the successful pursuit of personal and professional excellence. The Journal of Excellence is devoted to nurturing excellence in all human endeavors and all worthy pursuits. Our focus is centered on the pursuit of excellence in the working and performing parts of our lives, as well as our lives outside the workplace or performance domain. Our goal is to inspire excellence, provide a forum to discuss the positive pursuit of excellence, and share practical strategies and perspectives for pursuing meaningful high-level goals.

The Journal of Excellence is committed to nurturing a positive vision of education and training for better people, better performers and a better world.

There is much value in pursuing excellence, in education, sport, health, the performing arts, parenting, teaching, coaching, health care, political, government and business leadership, and every workplace. There is also much value in the pursuing excellence in quality living, quality relationships and the development of a higher level of humanity. This is the first and only journal, which has **EXCELLENCE** in multiple domains as its sole focus. The ultimate mission of the Journal of Excellence is to provide insights and strategies that will help us to collectively become more successful in the pursuit of performance excellence and more fulfilled through excellence in living.

My vision is a journal that is applied in orientation, relevant in content and wide ranging in application. We are committed to:

- 1) Learning from and sharing the experiences of exceptional performers and inspiring people.
- 2) Developing a more thorough understanding of the mental links to excellence.
- 3) Promoting excellence in performance and excellence in living.
- 4) Initiating positive real world change.

**If you have experiences, applied research or meaningful insights that are relevant to the pursuit of excellence in any worthy human endeavor, for any age group, we encourage you to submit your material to the Journal of Excellence to be considered for publication.**

## Positive Living Skills for Teenagers: A Youth Intervention

Stefanie Partridge and Terry Orlick, Canada

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### Abstract

The Positive Living Skills (PLS) program for teens is a personal life enhancement intervention program centered on teaching focusing skills, positive perspectives, and relaxation skills. The purpose of this study was to introduce Orlick's PLS program to teenagers (in a classroom context) and to investigate whether the students enjoyed, applied, and found these skills effective in their daily lives. A secondary purpose of this study was to explore the best ways to deliver the program. Two grade 10 high school classes (15-16 year-old students) participated in a 10 session PLS intervention over a period of 16 weeks. These sessions included PLS audio CD activities, interactive and guided PLS activities, logbook exercises, discussions and practice using the PLS skills. The students who participated in the PLS program enjoyed the program skills, applied the skills effectively in daily life and planned to continue using the program skills. These findings support results from previous PLS research conducted with younger students between the ages of 4-12 years of age.

### Introduction

Learning to focus on the positives, connect fully with what one is doing, and cope effectively with ongoing challenges is advantageous for people of all ages. People, especially adolescents, are living in a world that be demanding, stressful and filled with distractions. One's focus directly impacts a person's ability to embrace life and fully experience the present moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Dyer, 2004; Orlick, 2001, 2008; Zukav & Francis, 2003).

Positive Living Skills (PLS) research with elementary school children has reinforced the importance of teaching focus, positive perspectives and relaxation skills in the school context, in the home, at day camps, and in hospital settings. (Cox & Orlick, 1996; Gilbert & Orlick, 1996; Gilbert & Orlick, 2002; Hester & Orlick, 2006; Julien, 2002; Klingenberg & Orlick, 2002; Koudys & Orlick, 2002; St. Denis & Orlick, 1996; Taylor & Orlick, 2004; Theberge, 2002). Orlick believes that teaching children and youth to find a sense of focus, harmony, and

balance in life should be at the forefront of parents, teachers and educators priorities (Orlick, 1995, 2002).

He recently adapted his children's PLS program for use with teens. Similar to the children's version, the teen program was designed to nurture "life enhancing activities that teach people to focus effectively, deal better with distractions, become more positive, control anger, relax more fully, and find more joy in life" (Orlick, 2005). Modifications integrated into the teen program included age-appropriate language, increased duration of recordings and more challenging activities.

### ***Positive Living Skills Interventions***

Past research on the PLS program has shown that positive living skills can be learned, enjoyed and applied effectively by children between the ages of 4-12 when taught within the public school setting, alternative school setting as well as with special populations (Hester & Orlick, 2006; Klingenberg & Orlick, 2002; Koudys & Orlick, 2002).

St. Denis and Orlick (1996) conducted a PLS intervention with fourth grade students that focused on developing positive perspectives, specifically by teaching children to increase highlights in their daily lives. Gilbert and Orlick (2002) introduced the PLS program with first, second, fifth, and sixth grade students and assessed how well the students were able to relax themselves, implement stress control strategies and increase the amount of positive experiences in their day. The findings of these two studies showed that the children enjoyed, learned from, and applied the program skills during the intervention and planned to continue to use the program in the future.

The PLS program was also implemented in an alternative school setting by Taylor and Orlick (2004). This study investigated whether the students improved their relaxation and stress control skills and how the teachers adapted the program for their students needs. Findings from this study demonstrated that the children learned to successfully implement the relaxation skills and positive coping strategies into their daily lives. The teachers shared some important considerations for the effective delivery of the program:

- 1) Concentrate on one element at a time,
- 2) let the children lead the discussions,
- 3) get to know the activities well,
- 4) repeat activities,
- 5) seize opportunities to show applicability of skills,
- 6) increase the duration and frequency of intervention if possible, and
- 7) remain flexible in the delivery of the program.

Koudys and Orlick (2002) conducted a case study with a five-year-old pediatric cancer patient and his primary care-giver. They examined the potential value of a five-year-old child learning and applying PLS skills while coping with cancer. During these sessions the child and primary caregiver learned basic PLS activities that focused on muscle relaxation, diaphragm breathing, focusing, refocusing, positive imagery, and finding highlights. The primary caregiver and her son both learned to successfully apply positive living skills in a stressful hospital experiences and outside the hospital setting. The primary caregiver found these skills were extremely helpful to her and her son.

Klingenberg and Orlick (2002) conducted a single case study examining the process of using PLS skills within a family with Spe-

cial needs. The family used a number of the positive PLS strategies to help them deal more effectively with stressful life situations.

Hester and Orlick's (2006) conducted a PLS intervention study with 3 children who had Attention Deficit and Hyper Activity Disorder (ADHD). The findings of this study demonstrated that the PLS program helped these children to cope more effectively with stress by relaxing, focusing more fully and developing more positive perspectives about themselves and life. This study demonstrated that we can teach children to improve their focusing skills, even children who have difficulties with maintaining focus.

### ***The Delivery of the Positive Living Skills Program for Teens***

This article presents the findings of the first systematic assessment of the PLS program implemented with a group of adolescents. This PLS teen program for adolescents had previously been introduced in different contexts, but at the time this study was conducted, there had not yet been a systematic analysis conducted on the effectiveness of this program.

The following three simple PLS activities provide examples of the kind of focusing skills that are taught in the program. "Tree it", introduces the concept of leaving worries or distractions behind and connecting back to the present moment. "Changing channels" introduces a related concept of changing moods by shifting focus or changing thoughts to something more positive or constructive. "Making good Choices" introduces the notion that one's thoughts and focus are within one's own control. You can choose to focus on the positives and opportunities of a situation or the negatives. You can choose to connect or disconnect.

Helping students to understand the rationale behind the content of the different PLS activities is an important part of effective delivery. They need to know why something is important and how it can help them in their personal challenges and daily life.

Based on past research with the PLS program, Orlick (2001) provided several teaching tips for the delivery and facilitation of the program:

1. Use simple, concrete strategies.
2. Use an individualized approach by drawing upon multiple options.
3. Use respected positive role models.
4. Remain positive and hopeful.
5. Ask students to prepare themselves to relax, focus and listen.
6. Give students time to settle in to the activities.
7. Remain consistent with a set time for the program.
8. Encourage and challenge participants to live what they are learning by applying the skills in their daily lives.
9. Create a respectful environment that reinforces positive interaction and positive collaborative learning.

Davies and Osguthorpe (2003) point out that students' intent of learning is very important in an effective learning process:

The level of learner intent in the PLS program was encouraged by:

Giving the students good reasons to learn,

- 1) making the learning relevant and fun, and
  - 2) providing opportunities for reflection during and after interventions.
- In the present study the researcher/facilitator (first author) encouraged students to actively engage in on-going reflection on the program's relevance to their daily lives.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants and Context***

The participants in this study consisted of 31 students and two teachers in two existing grade ten health and physical education classes, in an Ottawa region private school. The students included 19 boys and 12 girls ranging in age from 15-16 years. Most of the students were from the Ottawa area however a number of students came from Europe or Asia to attend this school and lived in the residence at the school. The academic expectations are high at this school and students have to perform an entrance exam to be considered for this school. Most of the students participated in extracurricular activities such as sport, music or dance. The PLS program was viewed as complimentary to the aims of the school's health and well-being curriculum.

### ***The Intervention***

The participants took part in a number of group PLS sessions. The researcher and her thesis supervisor (second author and creator of the PLS program) played a role in determining the main skills and appropriate activities to be used throughout the intervention program.

The researcher/facilitator conducted the intervention in either the regular classroom, gymnasium or outside on school playing fields. The original plan for the PLS program for teens was to deliver the program in 30 minute sessions, two times per week, over a 8-12-week period of time. Due to the realities of emerging situations and various extraneous demands upon the students and teacher the final PLS program intervention included 10 sessions over a 16 week period with each session lasting between 15-30 minutes in length (with one session of 50 minutes).

The primary skills selected for this intervention included focusing and refocusing, positive perspectives, and relaxation skills. A number of the intervention activities combined more than one of these skills and all the skills require the skill of focus. For example, in order to maintain a positive perspective, one must focus on the positives or try to see things from a more positive perspective. After each intervention activity the researcher initiated a short class discussion about the activities, the mental skill used and how the skill(s) could be applied in their real world challenges and experiences. The students were made aware of the fact that elite athletes and other top performers use these skills to improve their performance and lives. The students were encouraged to practice and apply the skills they were learning in their daily lives.

Most intervention sessions focused on teaching participants how to focus or what to focus on to improve their performance or their life. This included:

- 1) Focusing in the present moment,
- 2) focusing on one thing at a time,
- 3) changing thoughts and feelings by changing focus, and

- 4) teaching participants how to maintain their best focus through distractions (e.g. focusing on the present moment or the next step, breathing, something positive, or a specific thing they wanted to do or accomplish).

The major elements of positive perspectives' addressed were:

- 1) Finding highlights,
- 2) embracing the simple joys in all parts of life, and
- 3) keeping life situations in perspective.

The relaxation component centered on helping participants enter a more relaxed state where they were better able to relax, focus, listen, and learn (Orlick, 2008). The main strategies used to teach relaxation during the sessions were relaxed breathing, tuning into relaxing music, and guided muscle relaxation.

In addition to the audio CD activities, other activities were sometimes used such as focusing on an object, focusing music, watching an inspiring Olympic video clip, or other activities and games found in the book (Orlick, 2001). Group discussions were an integral part of all sessions. The discussions addressed what focusing strategies were currently working well for them, what could be better, what their peers were doing, what challenges the students were facing, and how they felt they could apply the skills they were learning in their daily lives to overcome those challenges. Logbook activities were used during certain intervention sessions, for example after trying to relax to assess the students' response to the activity. The aim of the logbook was to generate meaningful participant reflection, discussion, and future application of the skill in their daily lives.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

The logbooks served as both a learning tool for the students and an assessment tool for the researchers. It was designed to create a clearer understanding of the process of participant enjoyment, application, and program effectiveness throughout the intervention.

Formal interviews were conducted with twenty-seven out of thirty-one students, at the end of the study, to gain further information about the program and whether or not they felt it had had an influence on their daily lives. Teachers were also interviewed at the conclusion of the study to gain their insights on the intervention.

The researcher kept personal notes on enjoyment, application, and effectiveness, as well as what went on in each of the sessions, for example, what went well and what did not go well in the sessions, any problems or concerns of the participants, participants' reaction to the activities, and any other defining information.

The four key research elements assessed during this study included:

- 1) enjoyment,
- 2) application,
- 3) effectiveness, and
- 4) delivery of the program.

The methods used to collect data on the four key research elements included participant interviews, researcher notes, logbook entries and informal conversations with participants. Activity rating scales were also used to assess the enjoyment and effectiveness of the program.

### ***Enjoyment***

The logbook sheets contained an assessment scale for enjoyment and an assessment scale for engagement in the activity (focused con-



nection). In the individual interviews, students were asked whether or not they enjoyed the program and the question of why or why not was further explored. Teachers were also interviewed to gain their perceptions of the students' enjoyment of the program.

### ***Application***

Some logbook sheets asked students about whether they were using the skills and how they could apply the skills in their daily lives. In participant interviews, students were asked whether or not they were currently using the skills and whether they planned to use specific skills in the future. Teachers were asked whether or not they observed the students applying the program skills in their daily lives or heard the students talking about applying the skills.

### ***Effectiveness***

The logbook sheets encouraged the students to reflect on the strategies they were using to overcome challenges, and how effective each of these strategies was. This data was collected through students written responses and the effectiveness rating scale for activities. Students were interviewed to find out whether or not they found the program skills helpful or effective in their daily lives. Teachers were also asked whether they perceived any effective change in the class dynamics or behaviour throughout the intervention and whether they perceived that the students found the program effective.

## **Results**

Based on the post-intervention interviews, logbooks and researcher notes, it is clear that the teens participating in this PLS intervention enjoyed the program, applied the program activities, and found the program skills effective in the contexts in which they applied them.

### ***How the Program Unfolded***

Throughout the intervention process the first author recorded how she implemented the program, what worked well and what did not work so well, personal reflections, lessons learned about her interactions as researcher/facilitator and suggestions for future programs. Her perspective on the delivery of different part of the program is presented below.

### ***CD Recordings***

I personally found that listening to the audio CD activities before sessions helped my own preparation and my ability to present the different positive living skills. The audio activities concisely outline, explain and give the participant an opportunity to try out the different skills. During the sessions with the CD recordings I tried to first let the students listen to the recordings.

I also found that sharing the ideas in person was very well received by the students in this study.

The students said that hearing about other people's struggles and effective application of PLS skills was very helpful. Kristin shared the following example about how hearing about people's challenges motivated her to keep trying.

***“Tree it”***

At times during the intervention there were questions about PLS concepts that needed clarifying. For example questions surfaced in the discussion about when to apply the “tree it” concept. The following excerpt from my researcher notes demonstrates how I attempted to clarify how “tree it” could be used.

***Expectations, peer teaching and “mental training wheels”***

In a similar vein the students' expectations of their ability to use skills is another important area to address when conducting a PLS intervention:

Remaining patient when asking the group questions was another important lesson learned. In my researcher notes I explain how waiting for students to share and discuss with one another was beneficial:

It was evident that the students understood mental skills, like physical skills, take practice. One student came up with a clever way of looking at the process of applying mental training skills.

As a group we talked about ways to effectively change moods, help shift channels or use “mental training wheels”.

As a result of being patient in the sessions the students began teaching themselves:

### ***Experiential Learning***

One day, the class had a rock climbing session booked the same time I was booked to conduct a PLS session. There were two choices; either reschedule the session for another time or work with the classes' planned activity. My advisor and I decided it was a great opportunity for the students to try out skills within a challenging sport context. Being flexible and taking advantage of the classes' schedule was of great benefit as the students then had more time to try out skills in "real" challenges. During regular sessions, it was challenging for me as a researcher to discuss concepts thoroughly, answer questions and still have adequate time for students to try out skills. Normally the sessions only lasted for 15-30 minutes, but the rock climbing session lasted for the whole period (50 minutes). Flowing with the change in plans and practicing some of the skills in an experiential way through rock climbing turned out to be one of the best sessions during the intervention

It only took 5 minutes at the beginning to discuss using the climbing session as an opportunity to try out some focusing and refocusing skills. After that, the students, teachers, and I climbed for most of the session, and then students filled out a logbook sheet before leaving. Although this format worked very well, in retrospect I would suggest a discussion in small groups about what they used and how it went at the end of the activity.

Out of the 31 students, twenty-six were present for this rock climbing session. All 26 students experienced a real challenge during the session and focused on doing something related to the PLS program to overcome their challenge. Below are some examples of students constructively practicing PLS skills during their climbing session.

Steve overcame his fear of heights by thinking positively and thinking he could do it (Researcher notes, April 26<sup>th</sup>-boys).

Twenty studentseffectively overcame their challenges by taking a deep breath, concentrating, focusing on the task in front of them, relaxing, and shifting focus from a distraction (e.g. fear or a sore finger) to just climbing (Researcher notes, April 26<sup>th</sup>-boys and girls). Twenty students rated the PLS skills they had learned as being effective or very effective in this context.

### ***Participation in Discussions***

The size of the groups and the people within them made a noticeable difference in the extent to which students participated in discussions. Small discussion groups worked best. Girls also tended to be less vocal around the boys and afraid to share opinions with peers. Although students appreciated hearing about how other people worked through challenges, they often seemed reluctant to make helpful suggestions for peers

to try. It was not easy to get other students to make suggestions for their peers. These teenagers seemed somewhat afraid of this type of sharing. Yet learning from peers is such a valuable experience for participants. When reflecting on how to better facilitate this type of learning I wrote the following.

Being aware of the fine balance between guiding students and letting students guide themselves is imperative.

By listening and observing I learned that my perception of participants was not always as clear as I originally thought. During the discussions, sharing personal examples or special moments with the students helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the impact the program. In one-on-one discussions with students I learned how they were more engaged in the sessions than I had originally thought:

At first I thought that Andrea was not interested in the sessions at all, but I learned as the program progressed that my perception was wrong. Through the interviews, I learned that some girls were afraid to share too much because they did not want to stand out. Andrea was one girl who had a great deal to offer but was afraid to say too much.

When I suggested that people could learn from her, Andrea expressed her concern of looking “stuck up”.

In a moment of reflection about sharing with others, after one session, I wrote:

I did not specifically discuss this beneficial aspect of sharing within the sessions as a group. For future PLS program delivery, I would suggest clearly defining the benefits of sharing perspectives, early on in the sessions and being patient with students as they begin to open up at their own pace.

### ***Rational for Activities***

The importance of taking the time to explain the reasoning or potential value of activities or skills for the students (as each activity is being introduced) was another program delivery lesson learned.

Learning this lesson early during the intervention allowed me to apply it during a focusing exercises. In order to give the students a clearer understanding of the purpose of the activity, I explained that we were going to practice being in the present moment using a point of reference or dot. I then gave the students a chance to explore the concept through discussion by asking if anyone had heard of the idea of Zen. Lucie shared that it was about oneness, and Sydnie shared that being in the moment was about being so connected that everything else fades. Before the group practiced the focus on the dot exercise, I read this excerpt from the book

to ensure the purpose of the activity was clear.

***Experience what you are Doing***

living what you are presenting or talking about with the group was appreciated by most of the students.

When I used the term Zen, students were very interested in the topic. It was evident that they found the concept of Zen to be ‘cool’ because their focus seemed to be intensified when we discussed this Zen idea. Overall, this passage was a good way to introduce and explain the focus on the dot activity.

If we had more time it would have been great to let the group go on a nature walk paying attention to simple joys or highlights along the way or focusing on a stream or tree instead of a dot when practicing focused-connection.

***Take Time to Listen***

Even with the changes in plans throughout the intervention sessions, taking time to listen to what the students were sharing or questioning remained a priority. Even if the discussion was not necessarily on topic there were meaningful lessons learned as a group that came out of these “off topic” moments.

**Students’ Perspective: Enjoyment, Application and Effectiveness**

The following section presents the students’ perceptions on the four elements of

- 1) enjoyment,
- 2) application,
- 3) effectiveness, and
- 4) delivery of the program.

Emergent themes are presented for each of these four elements. 1 outlines the first three elements and their concurrent emergent themes.

**Enjoyment**

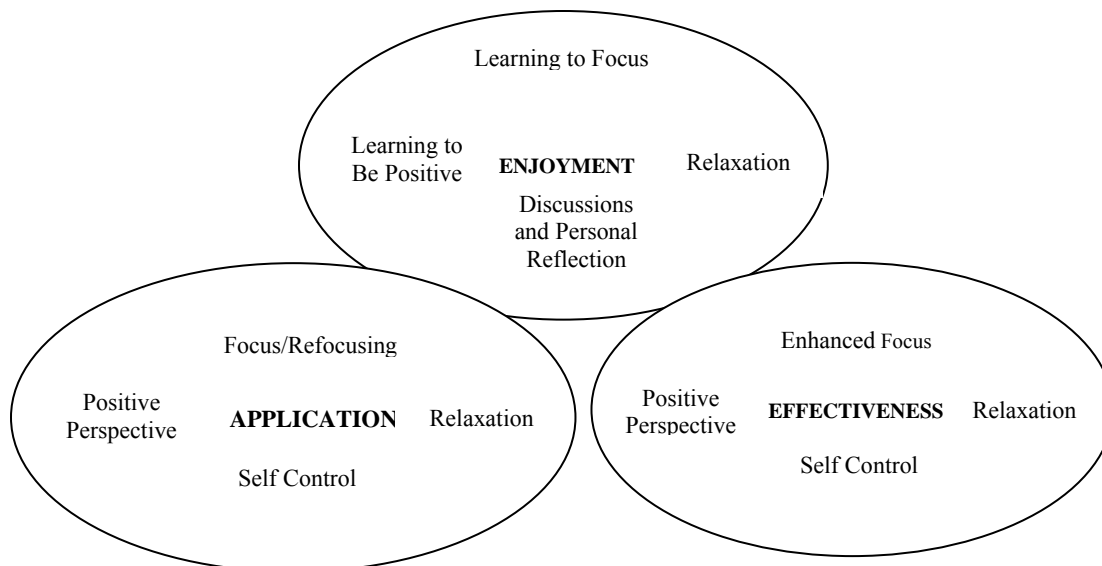
Every participant interviewed in this study (27 students) said that they enjoyed some part of the PLS program. When a student said they liked the program, they were asked, “what did you like about it?” The themes that emerged for the element of enjoyment included: a) learning to focus, b) learning to be more positive and appreciate life more, c) relaxing and learning to take

time to relax and d) participating in discussions and personal reflection.

**Enjoyment-Relaxation**

Relaxation was the most often mentioned theme to emerge from the students comments on enjoyment. The elements of relaxation that students enjoyed most included having a break in their day (e.g. during the PLS sessions), letting go of everything else that was going on, and learning that implementing relaxation into their daily lives was important and beneficial not only to their health but also for their ability to work and perform well. Students’ comments below reflect how they felt relaxation made the program enjoyable.

**Figure 1: Elements of Enjoyment, Application and Effectiveness**





When Kevin was asked what he specifically liked about the relaxing he said:

***Enjoyment-Positive Perspective***

Positive perspective was the second most often mentioned theme by the students under the element of enjoyment. The students enjoyed learning to carry a more positive perspective, becoming more aware of positive parts of their daily life, learning to appreciate the simple things in life, and seeing how paying attention to these highlights and simple joys made them feel better.

***Enjoyment-Discussion and Reflection***

The elements of discussion and reflection that the students enjoyed most were voicing their concerns or struggles, learning from other students, becoming more aware of what was going on within themselves, and learning better ways to deal with or resolve problems.

***Enjoyment-Focus***

Focus was the fourth emergent theme under the element of enjoyment. Students mentioned that they enjoyed the program because it helped them learn to focus, refocus or improve their focus. Students specifically enjoyed learning to intentionally choose their focus, and enjoyed learning to “zone in” to the present moment.

**Application**

Every student interviewed said they planned to apply some of the skills they learned in the future. Twenty-one of the 27 students said they were presently applying program skills and would continue to apply them in the future in these four areas:

- 1) focusing,
- 2) relaxation,
- 3) positive perspectives and
- 4) self-control.

***Application-Focus***

Students were applying PLS skills to improve their focus, to be more in the moment, to refocus and to clear the mind. The ‘tree it’ concept was used in a variety of ways to let go of distractions (like thoughts that were not helpful at that moment). Students said they used these skills inside and outside the intervention/school setting, for example, to relax, to clear their mind, to focus on homework, to focus on one thing and to get “in the zone”, for example, during sport.

Laura commented on the application of the program skills to focus in sport:

from focusing on what she was currently trying to play. She explained it as follows.

***Application-Relaxation***

Specific to relaxation, students applied various skills to relax such as listening to relaxing music, breathing to clear their mind, taking a break, going for a walk, playing sports or reading a book. Several students said they used music to help calm themselves during their day.

Lisa said that she applied the skill of ‘treeing it’ to refocus when she was playing the piano. She explained that continuing to think about a mistake in the past, prevented her

One student said that it was helpful to go outside and do something physical when she was having trouble concentrating.

***Application-Positive Perspective***

Many students who applied the PLS activities, focused on thinking more positively, embracing simple joys, sharing highlights and thinking about positive memories to feel better.

Andrea made a comment that she feels she is the ‘boss’ of herself when she says that a bad mark is not her.

Andrea (a dancer) explained that when life is more stressful she knows her simple joys are always present for her to enjoy.

included focusing on the moment-staying connected to whatever they are doing, breathing, shifting focus through ‘treeing it’, relaxing with music, visualization, and simple joys. The vast majority of the students planned to use focusing skills such as “tree it” (Umbalakiki) to let go of distractions in the future. Students said they would apply focusing skills in:

- 1) School – to help themselves and others with school, because they could learn more,
- 2) Sport – to apply focusing skills to perform better e.g. focusing on the ball or being in the present moment),
- 3) Tests – to prepare for a test and perform well in the test,
- 4) People - to connect more fully and try to really take in what someone is telling them.

Students’ comments on their future application of program skills resulted in four emergent themes that included:

- 1) focus,
- 2) positive perspective,
- 3) relaxation, and
- 4) self-control.

#### ***Future Application-Focus***

Students planned to use focus or refocusing to be more in the moment, to be more in the zone, to refocus during distractions, and to clear their mind.

#### ***Future Application***

The areas most often mentioned for future application by the 27 students in this study

***Future Application-Relaxation***

Students mentioned using the relaxation skills in the future by scheduling breaks into the day, using music or breathing to relax and calm down, dealing with stress as it arises (rather than letting it linger on), and not being in such a hurry. The following students' comments reflect plans to use the program skills to relax.



***Future Application- Positive Perspectives***

Students shared how they planned to use concepts such as positive thinking, finding simple joys and looking for highlights in the future.

***Future Application-Self-control***

Self control or choosing emotions was another skill students planned to apply in the future. Some students mentioned planning to control emotions in situations with friends, family and in daily life transitions.

**Effectiveness**

Effectiveness was determined by whether or not students said the program skills helped them in their daily lives. Applying the PLS program skills was felt to be effective in some area of lives for 25 of the 27 of the students. Four emergent themes of effectiveness include: a) Focus, b) relaxation, c)

***Effectiveness-Relaxation***

Most of the students commented that the relaxation skills were effective in their daily lives. The students learned the importance of relaxation and in particular learned to:

- 1) take time to relax and reflect on the good and the lessons of the day,
- 2) take relaxation breaks during school work to refresh the mind,
- 3) take time out to relax, and
- 4) make time to relax throughout the day.

***Effectiveness-Self-control***

Students said they learned to be more effective with self-control and as a result were less likely to overreact to situations. Hearing classmates discuss how they were dealing with real life challenges helped students to refine their own perspective. Most of the students mentioned how the PLS program positively influenced their self-control.

. (Jeremy)

(Andrea)

***Effectiveness-Positive perspective***

Some students commented on how they found the program skills effective in helping them create a more positive perspective by:

- 1) focusing on what they can do or control,
- 2) paying attention to simple joys and highlights which make them feel better and
- 3) enjoying life more by focusing on the good things:

,

***Student Program Delivery Suggestions***

The students shared some key suggestions for improving the delivery and effectiveness of the program:

- 1) more active activities,
- 2) real life examples,
- 3) consistent location and
- 4) longer and more consecutive sessions. Some of their specific comments are presented below.

***More active-activities***

should be longer so there would be more time to do the activity and discuss it. More time would also allow for repetition of audio CD activities and other key components of the program.

### *Real life examples*

#### ***Location***

Most students felt that a time and location that is consistent would work best and perhaps changing the location for certain events – like going to gym or outside for certain activities where the focusing skills can be applied in different contexts.

#### ***Longer-consecutive session***

Continuity in the timing of delivering the program is a definite advantage for learning, remembering, and applying program activities. Students also felt that the sessions

### **Discussion**

Overall, the teenage students who participated in the PLS program enjoyed the program, applied the program skills, found the program skills to be effective, and planned to apply the program skills in the future. This supports the findings of earlier research by Cox and Orlick (1996), Gilbert and Orlick, (2002), and Taylor and Orlick (2004) with children 4-12 years of age.

When teaching positive living skills, Orlick (2001) suggests using simple, concrete strategies, an individualized approach, positive role models, multiple approaches, creating a respectful environment that reinforces positive interaction and positive learning, and encouraging or challenging participants to live what they are learning by applying the skills in their daily lives. This study strongly reinforces the importance of acting on these suggestions. Equally important for teenagers is ensuring that students understand why a skill is important and how it can help them through their personal challenges and daily lives.

Excellent contexts for future delivery of PLS programs with teenagers include a classroom or small group setting, a sport, performing arts, physical activity or outdoor setting. Teachers/leaders/coaches should aim to provide a good mix of activity, focusing practice and relaxation.

Creating a positive environment for this program and presenting the activities at regular times will help to reinforce the positive concepts being taught (Orlick, 2002). Ideally sessions should take place several times per week over a period of at least 12 consecutive weeks (Taylor & Orlick, 2002).

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## Positive Living Skills: Skating through Adversity

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Stephanie **McMahon**, Stefanie **Partridge** & Terry **Orlick**, Canada

Stephanie **McMahon** is exceptional 14 year old who has chosen to not let an absence of eyesight interfere with her participation in figure skating, downhill skiing, or teaching others, skills for positive living.

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Stefanie **Partridge** completed her Masters Degree in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. She is a former international level competitive figure skater and figure skating coach who also teaches positive living skills to children and teenagers. She coached Stephanie, the blind skater who was interviewed in this article.

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### Abstract

Stephanie McMahon is a 14 year old figure skater who happens to be totally blind. She has been figure skating for almost 10 years and has been an inspiration for many children, coaches, teachers and parents. When Stephanie was introduced to Dr Orlick's Positive Living Skills Program at her skating club, she embraced it fully and later began teaching these activities to other children and youth. Stephanie wanted to meet Dr Orlick so he invited her to attend one of his graduate level classes on Sport and Performance Psychology and Quality Living. She was excited about coming to his class and agreed to allow him to interview her during that class. This article outlines what transpired during that interview and how the graduate students in attendance responded to Stephanie and to the interaction between Terry and Stephanie. Her contagious-positive spirit and openness has brought joy and freshness to not only the Gloucester Skating Club where she trains, but also to her school and yoga classes and Terry's graduate students.

### Introduction

Stephanie was first introduced to Terry Orlick's Positive Living Skills (PLS) CD's in the fall of 2005. Since that time she has

been consistently listening to the audio tracks at home and in the car and successfully applying PLS skills in her daily life. As a result of her personal use and benefit from

the program Stephanie began to share the program activities with others. She has captivated children, teens, special needs students, and adults as she guides them through Dr. Orlick's Positive Living Skills activities such as Spaghetti toes, Changing channels, and Calm lake. The following interview below captured one of Stephanie's 'magical moments' with Terry Orlick in his 2006 Masters class.

### **An interview between Stephanie McMahon (Steph) and Terry Orlick - November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

As Steph walked into the room with her parents, Terry went directly over to her, held her hand and said, Hi Stephanie, I'm Terry – Thank you for coming to our class. He then walked with her over to a chair that was in the front of the room, helped her sit down and sat down directly across from her so that he was close to her in another chair. She folded up her white cane and placed it next to her chair. As soon as they sat down in their chairs together, Steph said to Terry out loud, "I like this class, it has a good feel". Terry responded, "yes this is a great class, lots of good energy." Terry picked up on her comment about "having a good feel" to lead into his first question.

**Terry:** Has your skating coach, Stefanie (one of Terry's graduate students) done anything with you to try to help use those good feelings to try to learn your skating skills and get better?

**Stephanie:** Yeah she holds my hand, Katie (another coach) usually holds my hand when I am on the ice, but when I am off the ice Stefanie normally holds my hand and helps me to do it (the skills) the proper way and get the proper feel in my body.

**Terry:** That's good. Do you feel free out there skating?

**Stephanie:** Yes, I feel free and safe.

**Terry:** Are there any other places that you feel free and safe?

**Stephanie:** Um ...

**Terry:** Or other places that give you that kind of feeling?

**Stephanie:** Ummm, not really.

**Terry:** Tough questions I am asking you, aren't they?

**Stephanie:** No, you are not asking me tough questions.

**Terry:** So how did you know it was me when you walked into this room? Did you recognize my voice, from listening to my CD's?

**Stephanie:** Yes, yes

**Terry:** When I say, "Get yourself in to a comfortable position....." (Note - this is how I start my CD tracks)

**Stephanie:** (Steph jumps in) I also say that part when I do relaxation with people.

**Terry:** Great. I am hoping you can maybe do one or two for us...

**Stephanie:** Yes, I will I will do one for you.

**Terry:** OK, which one do you want to do?

**Stephanie:** I think I will do the Quiet Lake.

**Terry:** Oh, I like that one.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, that one makes me feel really calm.

**Terry:** Do you want to do that one right now?

**Stephanie:** Oh sure.

**Terry:** These bigger people (in the class) are pretty stressed so they probably need it.

**Stephanie:** Sure I can do that now.

**Terry:** I will follow what you tell us to do too. You just take us through it.

**Stephanie:** (Slowly and calmly Steph guides the whole class through the entire script from the Positive Living Skills CD track, Quiet Lake, with no notes, no CD and no prompts from anyone).

OK, get yourself into a comfortable position, close your eyes, be very quiet and just listen to my voice. Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly, let yourself relax. Feel the relaxation run through your body. Today we are going to visit a calm, peaceful lake. The water is very still, the sky is big and blue, the air smells really nice. You can feel the warmth of the sun, shining upon your face, making you feel warm and excellent all over. You are so quiet and so still. The mist is rising slowly and gently off the lake and you feel quiet, calm, and very, very happy. A loon swims by and greets you with its special sound. It makes tiny waves across the lake and everything goes completely quiet. If you are scared or angry, or something hurts, imagine the lake. Go there to find peace and tranquility. When you open your open you will feel calm and safe.

**Terry:** Steph, I think you do it better than I do!

**Stephanie:** No, you do a good job too.

**Terry:** Thanks. I am going to have to get you to come into a recording studio with me.

**Stephanie:** I was wishing to do a relaxation CD with you.

**Terry:** Yeah that would be good, let's see what we can do about that. Maybe we can figure out a way to do that.

**Stephanie:** Oh WOW!

**Terry:** When have YOU used Quiet Lake ... the script that you were taking us through just now?

**Stephanie:** Well, sometimes I use it, usually when I am at my cottage, when I am relaxing in my chair at the cottage. And sometimes I relax to it at my house. When I listen to it, and your music is just so beautiful, it is just so relaxing before going to bed.

**Terry:** I like that music too.

**Stephanie:** Um yeah, where did you get all your music?

**Terry:** I listened to a bunch of CD's that have different types of music at the recording studio and said, I like that one or I like this one.

**Stephanie:** Thank you.

**Terry:** What else have you used (from my audio CD's)?

**Stephanie:** I did the Spaghetti Toes and I also heard about the Highlights.

**Terry:** Do you do that one, that Highlight script with anybody, tell them about highlights?

**Stephanie:** Um, mostly just the relaxation ones.

**Terry:** Did you think more about highlights after using the CD?

**Stephanie:** Yes I did, I had some happy highlights this year and last year.

**Terry:** What kind of happy highlights?

**Stephanie:** Well last year I got to go in my Grandmothers golf cart at a golf course where my sister does golfing, and my highlights were during summer vacation. This year I am going to have many happy highlights because I am going to go figure skating with my school with lots of friends.

**Terry:** Oh that is great, when is that going to be?

**Stephanie:** Next Tuesday.

**Terry:** Tuesday? How are you going to wait that long?

**Stephanie:** I am pretty sure I can do it.

**Terry:** I know you talked to your coach Stefanie Partridge about Spaghetti Toes and you talked about Changing Channels. Do you want to take use through one of those (scripts)? Are you comfortable doing that?

**Stephanie:** I will take you through Changing Channels!

**Terry:** OK, let's do that one.

**Stephanie:** OK. Get yourself into a comfortable position, close your eyes, be

very quiet and just listen to my voice. Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly, breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly. Let yourself relax. Today I am going to tell you a story about Changing Channels. You know on a T.V. or a computer that are all kinds of channels? Well in your mind you have all different kinds of channels inside your head, happy channels, sad channels, angry channels, scary channels, laughy channels, fun channels, funky channels, good channels, bad channels, jumping up and down channels, and goofy channels. All of those channels are inside your head. The good thing about being a person and not a T.V. or a computer is that you can change channels anytime you want! All you have to do is to think of that channel you want right now, every day. The bestest way to change channels is to push your thumb against your finger and to change channels in your mind. Let's play a little changing channel game. During the game I want you to think of a worry or an anger that you have or once had. Have you thought of one? Now imagine that you are changing yourself into a happy channel. Push your thumb hard against your finger.

Good job. And that is all you have to do every time you are scared, change channels.

Thank you.

Clapping throughout class.

**Terry:** When have you used Changing Channels? Do you have an example of where you have actually used it?

**Stephanie:** Sometimes I use it when I am scared.

**Terry:** Like what would be an example?

**Stephanie:** Usually when I am trying something new and I feel a little bit nervous, I usually just think of something happy I like to do, or something funny that I have seen on T.V. or watched or heard of..

**Terry:** Then after that what do you do, try to focus on doing something good?

**Stephanie:** Yeah and then I try the new activity, and then after that I feel much more comfortable doing it, and I am ready to do it no problem without being scared.

**Terry:** Do you have an example of activity where you felt scared recently?

**Stephanie:** Well this year I had to get a needle in September and I was very scared.

**Terry:** So what did you do?

**Stephanie:** I just took a couple of breaths, and when I got it all done I took some more breaths and then was ready to go on with my day.

**Terry:** Did you push your thumb onto your finger or just think of something else?

**Stephanie:** Um, I just thought of something relaxing, I just imagined something that I found very relaxing. Or sometimes I just think of a funny show or told a joke in my head.

**Terry:** Good. Do you have any examples where you used changing channels to change your mood, or are you always in a good mood?

**Stephanie:** I am pretty much always in a good mood.

**Terry:** Good plan. I like that one! Did you ever use Changing Channels in school?

**Stephanie:** Sometimes I'm focusing on other tasks, other than my work, so sometimes I just change myself onto a concentrate channel.

**Terry:** Do you do that right in the classroom when you realize you are thinking of something else or .....

**Stephanie:** Well if I am thinking about swimming when I am trying to get my work done, or something else I like to do besides my work, sometimes I will just change myself into a happy channel, into a focusing channel, and then I will just do whatever my teacher is asking me to do.

**Terry:** Does that work well for you?

**Stephanie:** Yeah, yeah it does.

**Terry:** Do you just think, do your work, do your work, or something like that?

**Stephanie:** I just say to myself "Steph do your work" (in a whisper)

**Terry:** And then you focus on doing that?

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Terry:** Good. How about in skating, do you do it there?

**Stephanie:** I pretty much focus when I am skating actually.

**Terry:** That 's good. Does it feel natural to focus there?

**Stephanie:** Um hmm, yes.

**Terry:** Were there other things that you have listened to on the CD that you like or use?

**Stephanie:** Oh I really like, love, the Special Place Relaxation. I love that one, it has to be my favorite.

**Terry:** Special Place Relaxation?

**Stephanie:** Special Place Relaxation and Your Own Special Place - yeah.

**Terry:** You like that one.

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Terry:** So where do you go (for your special place)?

**Stephanie:** I go to an outdoor place where it is always warm and it is an imaginary place. I make it up in my mind and I imagine it before I go to sleep at night.

**Terry:** Can you describe it to me?

**Stephanie:** Well, its got a really calm big, big beautiful lake. And the water is like really fun for swimming and there is a huge boat. And when you are done you can get massaged before you go to sleep at night and it has an outdoor bed that you can sleep on.

**Terry:** Wow. I think I am going to come there with you sometime.

**Stephanie:** You should!

**Terry:** Can you hear that lake?

**Stephanie:** Yes, I can hear the waves laughing on the lake and the loons and all different kinds of stuff.

**Terry:** And can you feel the sun on your face?

**Stephanie:** I can feel it all over me.

**Terry:** And are there noises around?

**Stephanie:** Probably, insects buzzing around me.

Cell phone rings....

Heather (Steph's mom): Oh Sorry.

**Stephanie:** Don't worry mommy.

**Terry:** Just change channels.

**Terry:** So Steph, when your coach Stefanie introduced these activities to you, what did she do?

**Stephanie:** She introduced them to me in the beginning of last year. She introduced me to Spaghetti Toes, and Special Place Relaxation, Relaxing to the Music, and the Laughing one.

**Terry:** Did you like that one?

**Stephanie:** I love it! The children kind of make me laugh too (Steph starts laughing).

**Terry:** You have a nice laugh.

**Stephanie:** Thank you (giggling)

**Terry:** Thank you.

**Terry:** Did you like the CD activities right away or did it take a while?

**Stephanie:** As soon as I heard them I liked them. My most favorite are the Calm Lake and the imaginary Special Place.

**Terry:** Did you listen to Flowing Stream?

**Stephanie:** Yes I heard flowing stream.

**Terry:** And that wasn't your favorite?

**Stephanie:** It is my favorite, but it is not my most favorite, it's like middle favorite.

**Terry:** What about the Great Little Listener?

**Stephanie:** Yes I heard the great the great little listener.

**Terry:** Are you a good listener?

**Stephanie:** Yes I am a good listener.

**Terry:** I can see that.

**Stephanie:** And I am always nice on friend's feelings.

**Terry:** I was wondering about that, so you did listen to Nice on My Feelings?

**Stephanie:** Yes, and I was nice on everyone's feelings, and no one was not nice on my feelings.

**Terry:** Are people usually nice on your feelings?

**Stephanie:** They are very nice on my feelings and I am always nice on their feelings, then you can feel good and so should you.

**Terry:** We need to do more of that nice on my feeling stuff, right?

**Stephanie:** [Laughs].

**Terry:** We have to get that message out to more people.

**Stephanie:** Um hmm.

**Stephanie:** I have all 3 of the CD's you have made so...

**Terry:** I actually have another one.

**Stephanie:** What is it called?

**Terry:** Focusing through distractions. I will give you one.

**Stephanie:** Thank you.

**Terry:** You're welcome. That one talk about how to really focus.

**Stephanie:** I am pretty sure I can do it. I want to do it. I am able to do it.

**Terry:** I am sure you can. Did you listen to the one on positive thinking?

**Stephanie:** Yes, and I have done lots of positive thinking.

**Terry:** What types of positive thinking do you use or say?

**Stephanie:** I say I am going to do this, I am capable of doing this, I am going to try this, I know this is fun.

**Terry:** Great.

**Stephanie:** And I practice doing it a lot, just like on my waltz jumps (skating move) and stuff, I thought positive about my stuff... and I can now land a waltz jump on one foot all by myself without even holding Katie. That happened once in a competition, last year at Morrisburg. I landed a waltz jump on one foot.

**Terry:** How did it feel when you landed it?



**Stephanie:** I felt pretty proud of myself. I got a blizzard from my coach Debbie from Dairy Queen.

**Terry:** What felt better landing on one foot or getting a blizzard?

**Stephanie:** Landing on one foot.

**Terry:** Good, we've got to keep the priorities in line.

**Stephanie:** I can even do a loop jump by myself, I can do a toe-loop. I can do all kinds of stuff all by myself.

**Terry:** When you started figure skating, did you think you would be able to do those things?

**Stephanie:** Yes I did actually.

**Terry:** When you do most things, are you going in thinking "I can do this no matter what it is"?

**Stephanie:** Yes, I think I can do this, I know I can do this, I want to do this, I am capable of doing this.

**Stephanie:** I thought it by myself, but (in skating) Katie would tell me if I did it right or not.

**Terry:** And if it wasn't right what would she say?

**Stephanie:** She would say, Steph the only thing you need to focus on is landing on one foot, and jumping a bit higher and pushing a bit harder, and I finally did it.

**Terry:** Great, maybe you can coach me sometime because I can't do any waltz jumps – yet.

**Stephanie:** [laughing] maybe I will one day during the winter.

**Terry:** Yeah, I could probably do it, if I think I can do it, I am capable of doing this, I want to do this, I know I can do this!

**Stephanie:** Well that is good.

**Terry:** There are some people in my class here today who are going to be working on teaching kids how to do these activities that you have been talking about so those kids can be more positive, more focused and relax better.

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Terry:** Do you have any advice for them on how they might do that?

**Stephanie:** Well if you guys are scared about teaching them relaxation, just take a couple big breaths or just imagine the calm lake or something like that ,or just put yourself on a calmer channel

**Terry:** Great, I think they will remember that because I feel they are listening.

**Stephanie:** Oh they are great listeners!

[whole class laughs]

**Terry:** You are right. I am lucky to have all these great listeners in this class.

**Stephanie:** You've got a really nice class Mr. Orlick, I really appreciate it.

**Terry:** You can feel that, can you?

**Stephanie:** I can feel it through my body.

**Terry:** That is amazing, and you are absolutely right. This is a great class. I can feel it in my body as well.

**Stephanie:** This class is so nice, [sigh]

**Terry:** Thank you. Did hear that class? One of my best classes I have had is this one in this room.

**Stephanie:** I absolutely believe that.

**Terry:** They are going to go out there and do a good job helping people. Can I ask them if they have any questions for you?

**Stephanie:** Go ahead.

**Terry:** Does anybody have any questions?

**Student # 1:** Why did you choose figure skating?

**Stephanie:** I don't think it was really me that chose it. I started figure skating when I was about 5.

I think it was my mom that chose it because my mom coaches it.

**Stefanie Partridge (coach):** What did you do on Tuesday with the off-ice skating class?

**Stephanie:** I did spaghetti toes for you Stef.

Stefanie (coach): I needed it that day.

**Stephanie:** I also explained it to Stefanie's off-ice class.

**Terry:** How old were they?

Stefanie (coach): They were 8-13 years old.

**Terry:** How did that go?

**Stephanie:** I think they liked it.

**Terry:** I am sure they did, because you do a great job.

**Stephanie:** Thank you.

**Terry:** Because you make a lot of people feel really good.

**Stephanie:** Thank you very much.

**Terry:** It comes from my heart.

**Stephanie:** Uhhh (a very positive sound ).

**Terry:** Can I ask your parents a question?

**Stephanie:** Sure go ahead.

**Terry:** Thank you, so what have you seen in terms of Steph using these CD's?

**Heather** (Steph's mom): Well she first started by listening to them and she would go in her room with the CD and I have seen her do some of the activities like this [pushing her thumb into index finger].

**Terry:** Oh yeah, for changing channels.

**Stephanie:** And I can now ski all by myself down the hill and I didn't even hold onto the poles The only thing my instructor has to tell me is to turn left or right or when there was bumps.

**Terry:** Do you remember using the changing channels with your fingers before skiing down the hill?

**Stephanie:** Yes.

**Terry:** Do you remember what you shifted focus to?

**Stephanie:** I was feeling a little scared about going down the hill all by myself, so I put myself on a fun channel.

**Heather:** What about going on the chair lift?

**Stephanie:** The chair lift, I got a little used to it, but the year before I didn't know about relaxation, and when I got on the chair lift I felt a little more comfortable.

**Terry:** Now are you ok on the chair lift?

**Stephanie:** Yes I am fine on the lift. I was even a little bit scared when I skied down the hill, but I was just nervous that I was going to fall down the hill, when I skied down the hill by myself.

**Terry:** So you did the changing channels to try and get into a happy, more relaxed channel.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, I just put myself on a more calm or happier channel.

**Terry:** Then did you just go?

**Stephanie:** Yeah, I just said to myself just go, you can do it.

**Terry:** That's great. How did that make you feel?

**Stephanie:** I feel very proud of myself, the fact that I can now do it.

**Stephanie:** Now I have a question for you Mr. Orlick.

**Terry:** Yes, go for it.

**Stephanie:** How did you come up with Spaghetti Toes? How did it come up in your head?

**Terry:** Good question. Well, I was thinking, what would be something that children, younger than you, could understand that would help them learn to relax. What would help them to get an image or feeling of relaxing, that they might be able to relate to? And I thought about hard spaghetti and I would actually take the hard spaghetti and ask what does it feel like?...

**Terry:** What does hard spaghetti feel like?

**Stephanie:** Sort of stiff and breakable sometimes.

**Terry:** Yeah, and then I would take a piece of cooked spaghetti out of the pot and put it in their hand and ask them what it feels like.

**Stephanie:** That feel soft and relaxed, it feels good.

**Terry:** Yes, I thought that would be a good thing to imagine or feel. So I made up the story of Spaghetti Toes to help people move from feeling like stiff harder spaghetti to being very relaxed. I started by asking them to try to do that with their toes. You can think into your body to tell it to go soft and relaxed like cooked spaghetti. When I start thinking about how I can do things like that, the answers often just seem to jump into my head – and then I try them.

**Stephanie:** What about Changing Channels, how did that come up to your mind?

**Terry:** Well I asked myself, what is the simplest way I can explain how to change your thinking from something that is not helping to something that will help you. Changing Channels was the simplest thing I could of think of in terms of going from one channel or place in your mind to some place else, to a better place. So if you are scared or afraid, it means you are focused on

something scary, or if you are thinking you can't do something you are focusing on why you can't instead of why you can. The idea of a TV channel changer popped into my mind when I started thinking about how to help kids to understand how they can change their own channels. Did it work for you?

**Stephanie:** Yes it did, you are really talented.

**Terry:** Thank you very much

**Stephanie:** You're welcome

**Terry:** What would you have thought of?

**Stephanie:** Umm I might come up with a relaxation.

**Terry:** You can still do that. You don't have to do it right now, but you can come up with a good one on your own.

**Stephanie:** I know, I will do some of yours and I will make up some of my own too

**Terry:** That is a good idea.

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Terry:** Steph, our class time is almost over. We feel very privileged that you came into our class today. You are the first young person that has come into our class to share your thoughts and experiences. We have all learned from the great things that you are doing and are capable of doing. You have done an excellent job of expressing yourself and I wish you all the best in whatever you choose to do. Remember that anything is possible when you believe it is possible.

**Stephanie:** Well thank you guys for letting me come to your interview and thank you

very much Mr. Orlick, and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Terry:** Thank YOU Stephanie.

### **Graduate Student Reflections on Steph's visit**

Terry asked each student in this class to email him their personal reflections on Steph's visit to the class. The reflections presented below are direct quotes from each student's submission.

*Jenny Dalton*

*Hilary Foster*

*Vant Erve*

*Anne*

*Andrew Friesen*

*Mélanie G.M. Perras)*

.

*Hoffman*

*Jamie*

*Marie-Josée Dion*

*Allison Tovell*

*Laura McEwen*

*Jamie Smith*

*Francois Cholette*

*Aman Hussain)*



## Moments of excellence in a speed sport - Interview with a formula one motor car racing driver.

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Gustav **Weder**, Switzerland

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### Abstract

This article presents an interview was conducted with a highly respected and successful formula one driver. It explores the drivers views about speed, risk, optimal regulation of movement, and mental links to excellence. Due to an agreement between interviewer and interviewee the name of the well known formula one driver is not mentioned.

Speed seems to an increasingly prevalent influence in many domains of our lives and most people link speed with feelings of stress. The perception of increased speed in the change and further development of society and especially in the competitive corporate world is often discussed. Social scientists and economists alike argue that this development is driven by an ongoing process of shortening the time windows in product and service development as well as in delivery cycles.

Competing forces in the global business world – considered good or bad, constantly increase. The demand for higher quality products in close to no time for delivery are fundamental cornerstones of business growth. And business growth is needed for

securing financial welfare. Decision makers face the challenge of keeping up with these developments. In the world of work, handling increased speed of development has become a fact of live. And there is no end to this speeded up development in sight. Effective coping strategies to respond accordingly to these increased demands are discussed in leader's circles around the globe.

This big picture about the world of work is why I invite you to zoom in and shift your attention onto a micro-world of Formula one racing, where speed and stress is a dominant performance related variable. By doing so I hope that you can pull out some lessons about how individuals can better function under other stressful high speed conditions.

The following interview with a very successful Formula one driver is interesting with regards to speed and stress. This highly experienced and successful formula one driver talks about his approach on how to excel in a sport where performing under stress while travelling at high speed is a top priority.

In this sport, elite performers continually take more risks to keep up with the best and progress beyond their present level of comfort. Key elements of performing successfully in motor car racing, at the very edge of possibilities include; mental planning, and being able to regulate and control focus and movement in an optimal way. The mental strategies that these individuals master seem to become critical not only in regard to keeping their performance at a very high level but ultimately as a key factor for their health and survival.

The following interview will help to shed light on the planning, regulation, and controlling of optimal movement used by elite formula one car drivers. Perhaps the moments of excellence discussed are not only of value for people involved in sport but as well for individuals in many arenas where speed is considered to cause stress.

The interviewee elaborates on some of the specific elements of “Peak Moments in Sport” that are reported broadly in Sport Psychology literature by numerous authors namely;

- 1) High level of joy and fulfilment.
- 2) Feeling of unity, connection & fusion with environment.
- 3) Altered perception of time; active transformation of time and slow-motion.
- 4) Reduced ego and harmony.
- 5) Total absorption.

#### 6) High level of performance.

The interviewee considers the active achievement of these feelings in situations where it counts, to be an important and permanent goal in his pursuit for ongoing excellence in his discipline.

Furthermore the interviewee also believes that good physical fitness and optimal nutrition are prerequisite for the optimal mental functioning of the brain.

The special added value of this interview is that an experienced expert talks about the process of reaching and regularly experiencing top performances. Enjoy these unparalleled practical insights emerging from a speed sport!

**Gustav:** What is your view or impression of speed in your sport?

**F1 driver:** The most important thing about speed in my sport is, we probably go three hundred and forty kilometers per hour. You have to try to make it one hundred and fifty kilometers. You have to try to slow everything down as much as you can. If you slow it down in your mind, you have more time to do what you have to do. That’s very important. And I think that is how the good drivers come to the formula one. Because they are able to slow it down.

**Gustav:** What is your definition of speed?

**F1 driver:** It’s not three hundred and forty five kilometers per hour. It is the speed of the best possible time for a lap. Because you get a time, the quickest time you can which means to be as quick around every corner, down the straightaway, everywhere. And it is not just to be fast in the fast sections. It is trying to make it the maximum in every situation, breaking, and acceleration, every-

thing in one lap. Trying to do everything in one lap, and doing the same thing over and over.

**Gustav:** Do you remember how and why you got involved in your particular sport?

**F1 driver:** I was five or six. My uncle used to run a go-cart track. I used to just drive the go-carts. Basically, I went from there. These go-carts, they were very, very slow, if you compare them to a racing car. But if you compare it to something different, they weren't. It was something that I enjoyed very much. And that was the main thing, because I enjoyed it so much.

**Gustav:** How did you become effective at handling speed?

**F1 driver:** I think that was a progression, because you ... go through different cars. You probably do ... one hundred and fifty kilometers, and then you go into a formula ford, which is the next car in motor sport. Then you probably do around one hundred and eighty kilometers and then you go to the next step. Then it is just a gradual build up of speed, when you've got more speed; you also have more grip. So actually, the speed in the corner is much higher; you have a higher speed in the corner.

**Gustav:** Could you help me feel what you experience in a lap? What is the feeling?

**F1 driver:** If I compare the feeling to the St. Moritz bobsled run, it's not so much the corner. The earlier corners are similar, but when you come to the fast ones, when the pressure is that way (vertical) and we have another direction (horizontal). The feeling, even the bouncing and jumping around, that is probably similar, but when you get to the higher speeds, it will happen much, much quicker. It is similar to what you experience

in a bob race. The feeling of side turn, that is very difficult ... It is the impression of pressure, you've got ... even a road car doesn't give you that impression, because they are much softer

**Gustav:** Could you now focus on a situation of very high speed - like in Hockenheim, Germany - where you reach the very edge of what is possible with these cars? Can you share a situation where you felt comfortable and really confident, and one of the best situations that you had at very high speeds and describe it?

**F1 driver:** Yeah, I can only describe being at the limit and that normally is when we are breaking and changing gears. We are trying to stay on the right line into the corner where the car is feeling loose ... It is a little bit like a road car on ice, when it really starts to spin. It is just that beginning and it is just that looseness that you get. When you get to that stage, you are basically at the limit of the speed of your car. You are facing the limit of the road, of the car and as soon as you get that ... and then the corner itself. But then it is the next one, it is trying to be at the ultimate power without spinning the wheels too much at the exit when you get the most acceleration out of the car. The feeling at the edge is more like driving on ice, driving on ice at the very beginning is almost similar. Then you try to get to the edge and then you go way over the edge and then you spin and slip off the track.

**Gustav:** Can you describe the edge? What it is and what do you feel at the edge?

**F1 driver:** The edge is basically spinning a car. And you go one percent more and you are spinning off the track. Just one percent below, not one percent above. To get to that, it takes a lot of concentration ... and it is

very important and you get a heavy edge ... concentration is very, very high.

**Gustav:** What do you focus on when you are in such a high-speed situation?

**F1 driver:** Again, I think it is just a feeling ... at the end of the day. Because concentration is not on the speed. Breaking consequently at the same points ... at the quickest points that you have probably practiced and you have got to know where the limit is, because you have sort of practiced to try to break a little bit later or earlier or to get over the edge. You find the ideal or most comfortable place and the quickest place for the car in every corner and it is really just a feeling once you've done it probably a couple of times. It is more of a natural thing to get that feeling instead of concentration: it is here (points to his stomach). It is more like it becomes automatic. At the beginning it is probably a visual point because you have to define the place where you are, but once you get comfortable at the place it is more a feeling. And you probably actually do it visually. You look at the corner and you know the distance, the visual distance.

**Gustav:** How do you feel in these situations when you are under such conditions? What do you feel in your body?

**F1 driver:** Yeah, I'm very relaxed, my body is quite relaxed and I think my heart rate is not too high on the racetrack. My heart rate is not very high anyway. And I am feeling very relaxed with what I am doing. I am not someone that is very stressed, very tight. I am very loose, the body is very loose. It is just concentrating on what is around me. It's not so much what's in front of me, because you are trying to be at the next corner ahead. Again, I think this is probably where that thing comes naturally where you brake.

**Gustav:** You talked about a relaxed state. What is the energy level you are in? Can you describe it?

**F1 driver:** Oh no, please. If I talk about my relaxed state, it is not relaxed like sitting in front of a TV, for sure. It is more ... I don't know how to explain.

**Gustav:** Do you have an example?

**F1 driver:** Again, well, the energy level is very high, because you have to use all your strength, just to turn the steering wheel. It tenses the muscles somewhere because when you push the brake, the pressure is at eight hundred pounds and that is pushing only with one foot. The pressure is very high through the one leg. I am sure that goes all the way up the back and everywhere else, but you don't feel that, you don't feel as if you are pushing eight hundred pounds. You feel very, light, very easy. And I think that is where the whole body is in harmony, just sort of all together. Not where your mind is working with the eye and then the foot. It all works together, it is a very smooth feeling.

**Gustav:** And what do you perceive from the outside? What do you see, what do you focus on?

**F1 driver:** It is more like focusing on feeling. I mean you see everything, but it is more like taking it in. It is almost like an image that you have of the circuit the whole way around and that image sticks to your mind. You know exactly where you are. Yes, you can see everything if you want to look. You can see everything and sometimes down a straightaway, as in Hockenheim, you can look because it is so long, and you have time. But when it comes to the point where it is probably five hundred feet before the corner, then in some way you are back ...

**Gustav:** If you think of a qualifying round where you have to really concentrate, where is your focus then? What do you perceive then?

**F1 driver:** It is more in a group of people when your concentration has to go up. When you look in your mirror and you know someone is behind you and even when you are not looking in your mirrors, you know they are behind you, you can feel them. They are there and everything is focused in front and you are trying to fix yourself compared to what they are doing. Because if you concentrate on the guy behind you, your thinking goes away. So you try to keep the people in front, not the guys behind.

**Gustav:** So it is more secure behind you?

**F1 driver:** Yeah, in some ways. You use that security from behind, if you can. You have to concentrate on what he is doing and try to put enough pressure on him, so he might make a mistake. That is fixing your mind on what he is doing in front.

**Gustav:** You talked about a feeling, feeling the guy behind you. Could you explain this a little bit more?

**F1 driver:** It is just a feeling of what is around you. Sometimes you see him in the mirror, but sometimes you don't. Even if you don't see him in the mirrors, you know he is there. You have that sort of feeling and you are aware that they are just behind you. And when you are aware that they are behind you then you concentrate more on what's upfront, because if you are looking on the guy in front, you probably won't make as many mistakes. If you concentrate on the guy behind you, you make more mistakes, you try to hold him back. You know that guy is there. You just know what is around.

**Gustav:** Can we talk about limits? I mean about the speed, the car. What limits you from becoming faster?

**F1 driver:** I think the guy who can slow down the speed of the car in his mind is much better off for driving the fastest. If you can slow it down, you actually have more time to do the particular job.

**Gustav:** You talk about slowing it down. How do you see that? What is the feeling?

**F1 driver:** The feeling is an accurate feeling. If someone goes down the highway at two hundred kilometers an hour and then they slow down to sixty, it looks like you are stopped. In formula 1, it is the same. When you do it in the morning, you do sixty and you go to one hundred, you say: Oh it is going quicker. And when you get a much quicker speed and then you come back it is much easier to take everything in around, because your mind is going quicker, your brain is going quicker, because the speed is quicker. When you now go slower and your brain is still going two hundred, everything looks slower; you have much more time.

**Gustav:** What is it that makes it slow down?

**F1 driver:** It is the brain. The brain tries to speed up to the speed you are going. When you go five hundred miles an hour and then you break to two hundred miles an hour. Two hundred is normally fast but the brain has adapted to the five hundred, so the two hundred seem like nothing. We have to do it the same way,

. We have to do it the same way. I think that is where the good guys are probably different. They can do it.

**Gustav:** Do you train this?

**F1 driver:** I would not say train. It is just a matter of concentration. It comes with practice. The more you do it, the better you get at it. I think you have to drive to do it. To do it outside is not so easy. You can't really do it. There are some games such as computer games, that are quite quick, but it is not really the same. It is easy in the end, but it is difficult at the beginning. But the effect is not the same. When it is easy at the end it appears slow. The brain and the fast part of the track have adapted and it seems easy. The brain goes with it.

**Gustav:** You talked about speed and concentration. You talked about a certain challenge and that you liked it. What brings about this feeling of satisfaction in speed?

**F1 driver:** I think it is the challenge. It is the hard focus and driving at the limit. Speed is one thing but getting a challenge is also important, nearly the same. When I was sitting in the go-cart, I said I wanted to become a formula 1 driver. But even at that early age, I probably knew what I enjoyed and what I wanted to do. I want to work to that and try to get there, and when you get there, you still have to go higher and higher.

**Gustav:** Let's talk about perception of time in speed situations. What is time then?

**F1 driver:** Nothing. Time is nothing. Especially in a race that takes about one to two hours. You are just not aware of how time passes. It goes much quicker, normally. It goes much, much quicker. One reason is probably that you enjoy it and the other side is that your concentration is so high, that you are unaware of the time around you. You don't really focus on time at all.

**Gustav:** How would you define time as a car racer?

**F1 driver:** As a car racer, time is only speed. Or for one lap the fastest time.

**Gustav:** Could we talk about risk or perception of risk in your particular sport? What do you think about security and risk in high-speed situations?

**F1 driver:** I think risk is just a fact of life. Risk is always present when we talk about life. You can play darts, and you can be shot down by a dart, or get run down by a car in traffic. And in motorcar racing, it is the same thing. It is not only formula one. It is tobogganing; skiing, motor biking ... the risk is probably outside. There is risk in anything you do. Going on holiday, going shopping, driving a car, isn't there? In anything you do. But in my sport, risk is high and I know that. I am willing to take that risk. I know what could happen to me, I could be killed or badly injured. But I am willing to take that risk. I am not thinking about risk when I am going around a track or walking down the street, or if I am going to hurt myself. You just do not think about it. Because you accepted it and that is it.

**Gustav:** And that is your mental strategy concerning risk?

**F1 driver:** I mean if I would think about hurting myself, I would make mistakes. It is not an issue, . Thinking about getting hurt is dangerous you lose the necessary concentration. If you are thinking of being hurt when you are driving, you have a serious problem. Thinking about it is probably worse.

Can we talk about your mental preparation before, during and after a race? What do you do and what do you need?

**F1 driver:** Just before a race. I get up in the morning and have breakfast at eight and get

to the track by nine. At nine-thirty you are in the box. Ten is the warm up, for just half an hour. Then it is team meeting in the car, just half an hour. Then we have another talk, have a driver meeting, and then we have the parade of the drivers. When the parade is finished, you probably come back in the car and discuss. You may be tired or whatever. And then you have about an hour, I guess. Then you have time to prepare. I take the fluid and I am trying to listen to some soothing music like Enigma It is music that I like ...it is so soothing. I go away from everything. It's just relaxing. In the preparation, you don't think of the start, the race. You don't plan to do this and this and pass there or there, because it is not possible to plan anyway. It doesn't work. The preparation is just to be as relaxed as I can. My stomach is feeling good. That makes me sure to have the right feeling I need for the race and that takes everything else away from me. You can't plan.

**Gustav:** And two minutes before the start?

**F1 driver:** Well, one of the highest times in the race is the start, when everyone is standing in the line one after the other. And then the lights come on and it is just a very high focus on these lights. That is where the highest stress is in the race, because it is also very early. You want a good race, and when it is going, it is almost calming to get into that rhythm.

**Gustav:** What is the concentration like during these one and a half hours in the race and how do you keep it? Is it easy?

**F1 driver:** Yeah it is easy. If you take the right food and the right fluid, then the concentration stays high, and it is not a problem. If you do not have the right food or fluid, you lose all your concentration. You stop inside.

**Gustav:** Do you focus on nutrition a lot?

**F1 driver:** Yeah, to get the body in the right condition for the race. Because if the body is not fit, it is not good, it is a bad thing. If you eat chocolate, it may be good for one lap, then you are completely finished, wasted. A lot of sports people do that in formula 1. I know that from other formulas. Again it is very important to prepare the body. The body needs a lot.

**Gustav:** Could you tell me about the best and the worst situation in training or in a race? In your career or in one race, or two different races where you were very satisfied with what happened and one situation where you were dissatisfied.

**F1 driver:** I was very satisfied with my performance in Hungary last year when we finished third. It was very satisfying because for me it was a top race. It was very hot, certainly the track was difficult, you can't relax and in formula one you have to drive one hundred percent. I think I drove a hundred and twenty in that race the whole way through, the concentration was always very high. When the race was finished, I had the good result. I had races similar to that, and halfway similar to that. The car in those situations was probably not third, it was about seventh. I was so happy with the performance because I had the ultimate performance that day in that car in that race. You don't necessarily have to win just to make it satisfying. And when you have a bad day and you make a mistake. If you think about why you made the mistake, the next one comes and so on and you do it every time. I learned very early about that. Whenever I did that, the best thing was to get out of the car, relax for five minutes, not think about anything, get back in and then usually it was fine. But when you are in a race, it is obviously not practical, you cannot

get out. After the race, you evaluate how this could happen. You try to analyze what and why you did. Sometimes you find things, but most of the time not that much. The only thing that I found is that you have to be relaxed. If I am relaxed I am usually a little bit more focused than most other drivers. That is important for me.

**Gustav:** What is your style of analyzing?

**F1 driver:** What I did in case of a bad day was I compared it to what I did on a good day. I try and see what the difference was. And you might find, on a good day I relaxed for an hour and then I got in the car, I had the right food. On the bad day, maybe I relaxed only ten minutes and had bad food. So you try to go back to the other one. You do what you felt successful with. You use that all the time.

**Gustav:** Are there things that I did not mention so far that have to do with speed or are important for speed in your sport?

**F1 driver:** Speed, I say speed is not the important thing, the ultimate, maximum speed. The speed for one lap, this means to break, the changing of the gears, the power, it is more trying to get in harmony with the car, trying to be one with the car. It's the car and me as one. If there are two it gets worse.

**Gustav:** So it is your job to be in harmony with the car to get that feeling?

**F1 driver:** Yeah, that is your task. It is mostly or almost as if you are floating in the car and when the car moves you are moving with the car. The best feeling you have is to be part of the car.

**Gustav:** That was very interesting. Thank you very much for your time and your openness. I am sure that some of your insights will help others to get closer to their personal best.



## Being the Best - One Man's Experience with Steroids: An Interview with Josh

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Canada

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### Abstract

This article describes one man's experience with weight lifting and steroid use. Men may engage in heavy weight lifting and steroid use in order to change their bodies, possibly developing behaviours associated with eating disorders and muscle dysmorphia. Previous research has examined the risks associated with steroid use and exercise abuse, however, very little research has used qualitative methodologies to investigate men's actual lived experience with this phenomenon. The purpose of this article is to present the transcript of an interview with a man who is currently weight lifting and using steroids to gain an insiders perspective into his lived experience, and demonstrate how a qualitative methodology may add depth and richness to our understanding of this phenomenon

Research is beginning to reveal that more and more men may attempt to achieve greater muscle mass and lower body fat through lifting weights, dieting, and the use of anabolic steroids (Anderson, 1999; Klein, 1993; Marzano-Parisoli, 2001; Monaghan, 2001; Phillips & Kastle, 2001; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000). These practices may lead to the adaptation of maladaptive beliefs and obsessive-compulsive behaviors that consume excessive amounts of time, money, and energy (Pope et al., 2000), and contribute to disruptions in one's social and occupational functioning. Men's pursuit of an ideal masculine body may be considered "reverse anorexia" (Andersen, p. 73). Despite the research touting the risks of

steroid use (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Sports Medicine and Fitness, 1997; Copeland, Peters, & Dillon, 2000 ) and risks of exercise addiction (Davis, 2000; Pope et al., 2000), very little research has used qualitative methods to inquire into men's personal stories of their experiences with weight lifting and steroid use. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine men's personal experiences with weight lifting and steroid use by using a qualitative methodology.

This study was based on a qualitative research design which utilized a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology (for a complete description of the study, see Bardick,

2003). Phenomenology is the study of individuals' lived experience (Jardine, 1990; Van Manen, 1990). Obtaining descriptive accounts of actual lived experiences through phenomenology allows us to more fully and deeply comprehend human behavior and experience (Von Eckartsberg, 1998; Jardine; Van Manen). Examining the lived world experience allows us to become conscious of and reflect on a phenomenon, in this case, the phenomenon of weight lifting and steroid use in men. Hermeneutic analysis may be considered a natural extension of phenomenology. Hermeneutic analysis involves describing, interpreting, and understanding the individuals' lived experiences (Nixon, 1992).

This paper will illustrate how the use of hermeneutic-phenomenology reveals the richness and complexity of the phenomenon of weight lifting and steroid use in men by providing excerpts from an interview with Josh [pseudonym], a 23 year old man who has used steroids since the age of 16. Josh started using steroids to be the best at hockey, however, he was caught using steroids, and subsequently banned from playing hockey. After a suicide attempt, Josh turned to weight lifting and steroids in an attempt to "be the best." The transcript presented is from a two and a half hour interview Angela conducted with Josh regarding his experience with heavy weight lifting and steroid use. The transcript is presented in chronological order, however, due to the length of the interview, excerpts were specifically selected and organized into topics for ease of reading. Although Josh's story cannot be representative of all men who use steroids, it may provide some insight into the phenomenon, and illustrate the depth to which qualitative methodology may be used to enhance our understanding of an individual's lived experience. In this interview, Josh goes to great length to describe the validation and

attention he receives from other people for his body building, yet at the same time describes how weight lifting and steroid use has been helpful in working through his depression. The transcript of the interview with Josh elaborates on his perceptions of motivation, identity, image, the importance of mirrors and magazines, feeling small, looking good, being a "freak", taking risks, and a reflection of the interview.

## Transcription

### *Motivation*

**Josh:** I was 16 when I did my first lift. And the reason? I just want to be the best. I was playing hockey and had the scouts looking at me so I just wanted to be the best. I had to be the fastest. I was the golden boy in my family so I couldn't let anyone down. That was the biggest thing. So just be the best. Take the needles, get big, get strong, get fast, be the best. That was the bottom line. I was willing to do it.

**Angela:** Why were you willing to do it?

**Josh:** Well, because I was the golden boy and everyone looked at me like 'you're doing so good in hockey and the junior scouts are looking and you and, maybe, pros,' and it was almost tangible. So it was so close so I thought that this little prick, this little needle, it's so close that this won't hurt me. This will just help me. I didn't look at the long runs of getting busted. I got banned from ever playing any juniors; no Junior B, no juniors all across Canada, because I was caught in the lower levels. Like my last year of Midget AAA I got piss tested and it was cool because I had a janitor at the hockey rink pissing for me. He did it for me twice. But I got busted. And my whole family just freaked right out. But now it's different. The reason I do it now is because I still want to be the best but it's not my job, and it's still

such a physical job. We work on a coil tubing rig and so it's all about speed sometimes when you can do three holes in a day in a 12-hour shift. It's insane. So if you're running faster and pushing harder, and pulling harder, you're going to do your job so much better than the next guy. And I don't want to let my driller down. He's almost like the big brother I never had, and he's a juicer [steroid user] too so he picks me up, takes me to the gym, and he's a big influence and I want to be just like him. I do. Because he's got everything going for him and the bigger you are the more you get looked at, the more things seem to just go like that.

**Angela:** Can you tell me more about that?

**Josh:** When I walk into a room or into a bar everyone just, the attention just comes to a bigger set guy. Always.

**Angela:** From girls or guys?

**Josh:** From girls or guys. Either one. People just notice you more. And I like being noticed. Some of the reason I go to the gym now is because I'm more into myself. When I was younger I used to look to girls for happiness. If they weren't there I wasn't happy and there was something wrong with me. But now it's kind of switched. I don't look for them to make me happy, I want to make myself happy, so that why I go to the gym and that's why I want to be big. Because it makes me happy. I supposed to actually be on Zoloft, and I've tried Paxil and I've tried Prozac, and I'm a hard core depressed. Either I could get a hard on or I couldn't even perform. Or then I couldn't sleep and I was also agitated, and then I couldn't eat and like these antidepressants are junk, junk. I feel inner strength is what a person needs. He's got to just get rid of all the shit and find out what makes him happy and then just make yourself happy. Now

going to the gym is making me happy so I don't need this. I don't need those drugs. I don't need my head all mixed up where I can't sleep. That was the biggest thing was being depressed all the time. And now I'm not depressed anymore. I'm always smiling. Maybe it is the steroids. Maybe it is the gym. But they go hand in hand. I'm not going to go halfway. I'm not going to work so damn hard and then plateau my body so it doesn't even grow. You're looking at yourself after two years unnatural. That's two years I've wasted. In two years I'd better be bigger. You know. So I'm not going to waste my time on something that I enjoy doing so much.

**Angela:** How often do you spend time at the gym?

**Josh:** One and a half hours a day. Two hours sometimes. It all depends on what we're doing and how bad we hurt ourselves the day before.

**Angela:** In the gym or at work?

**Josh:** At work or the gym. I was putting on this chain tongue one time and hurt my back and I didn't want to tell [my boss], so I just kept on going to the gym, with a sore back and everything.

**Angela:** Just pushed through it?

**Josh:** Yup. And you're taking the steroids so you think well, "Maybe it will fix it." Even if I didn't rip something or tear it you're building yourself that much faster....And that's another reason I do steroids right now. I just don't want to ever not be the best. Just can't happen. And if I'm not the best I'm always going to try to be the best. So if I don't know something I'll study leestmawe're doing r1

goes hand in hand with being strong. Just because you're strong, you see I'm big and I'm strong and I'm running all over the rig and I don't know what the hell is going on and I'm a big ogre falling in the mud, slipping and falling. Well, you're not a good hand. So just because you can lift 300 lbs. and push this around you're not a good hand. You still have to be agile in your mind. That's like these kids who go to high school. They get so wide and fat from the steroids because they think this is the easiest. Once you take this needle everything happens. Wrong. Dedication and read. They do not read on their supplements and they do not read on how to take the steroids and why they are taking certain steroids at certain periods of their cycle. And they get so fat and so bloated. I get a little jealous of them because of them push way more than me. You know he's like 17 and the gym's like "Holy shit kid" and they're just all huge. But, whatever, some people want different things. But I'm big now and I'm going to get bigger. That's all the way I just look at it.

**Angela:** How big do you want to get?

**Josh:** I want to weigh at least 260 lbs. by the time I'm 26 years old. I want to do a cycle every five months until I'm 30.

**Angela:** Where did you come up with that goal?

**Josh:** Just by magazines.

**Angela:** Yeah?

**Josh:** Because you look at these guys, these professionals, and it takes them 15 – 20 years to reach that professional level and I look at some of these magazines and I look at some of my frame and my genetics and I know that I can look a certain way in 10 years and I can look a certain way in 5 years

and by Christmas I'll look a certain way. Education is looking how your body works and how people's bodies work and how mine is building and what I need to work on.

**Angela:** So what is building and what do you need to work on?

**Josh:** I need to work on arms....They won't grow. My shoulders will grow retarded but I still have little arms. I can grow a massive chest and massive back but my legs are a little small too. I can get big calves, just not big quads. I pay more attention to those things. Like I've never had triceps growth and they are started to grow now but I'm over-training them, I know that. And that's wrong too.

**Angela:** How do you know you're over-training?

**Josh:** When you're way too sore and you're not growing at all. You're super hard but you're not growing. You know you need to sleep and you need to rest. A lot of it has to do with your diet too....I try to do everything by the book but then I try to figure out what I need. Basically I'm only supposed to have 20 mg of glutamine a day. I think that's wrong. I think you should take 20 in the morning and 20 by 3:00 in the afternoon when it's depleted in your body and you're body's used it up. Because glutamine is used for muscle sparing.

**Angela:** How did you figure that out?

**Josh:** Two years. It took me about 9 or 10 months to figure out how things work in my body. I'm just training in the future in every day for years on end. Or not even that. Say you take like 2-3 months off and then go hard for six months and educate yourself and read and look at your body and touch and feel. "This isn't growing". If you figure

how stuff is working and even just your movements in the gym. Like bad form. It is not going to help your muscle grow; it's going to inhibit your movement. It's going to actually hurt your muscles. It's using proper form; knowing how your body moves. Always watching. People think that's vanity. No. I want to be the best so I got to watch how the best works.

**Angela:** So, what you mean is always watching in the mirror?

**Josh:** Yes. Watching in the mirror. Even [my training partner], when we go back into the change room we always pose and show each other shit. You just got to see how the body works.

### ***Being Misunderstood***

**Angela:** Tell me, like just circle back about a little bit about your parents didn't understand you anymore.

**Josh:** Well they didn't understand. I had a lot of pressure on me to perform in hockey and I tried to talk to my dad about that but my dad used to drink and he would always put in on me "You do it for yourself, you do it for yourself." At that time, with my depression, I didn't know how to do it for myself. I was doing it for him so when he was happy, then I was happy, right. When they were happy things were going good between us then I was happy. I didn't know how to make me happy. That was the biggest thing. So I was like, "No dad, I'm really actually playing hockey for you. When I crush that guy, I knock him out or assist that goal, you freak out and go wild, that's when I go wild." Oh hell, yeah, that's how I feel good about myself. And they didn't get it at all.

**Angela:** By making other people happy you feel happy?

**Josh:** Yeah.

**Angela:** And they didn't get that?

**Josh:** No. Because I really wasn't playing hockey for me cause I started looking at girls and there was partying going on and so I really didn't want to play hockey anymore. But I tried to stick it out and I tried to pull it through for dad. There was so many things going on in my life as far as social life and what I wanted to do and, I don't know, I was getting pulled everywhere and the arena wasn't my center of attention anymore. And my dad didn't get that either.

**Angela:** What about your mom?

**Josh:** Mom. I don't know. My mother, when I was growing up, she was a great mom. She used to pack the hugest lunch. Me and my brother growing up I had 3 sandwiches cut in half, that's like 6 sandwiches. And I was only like 10 years old and that's a lot of sandwiches. I don't know how they supported me and my brother. And mom was like all into that so whatever dad said that's how it just went. Mom put her foot down but dad made the calls. But my dad wasn't a very loud person....My mom used to discipline us. She broke a lot of spoons over my ass. And dad didn't talk a lot but dad called the shots. You know what I mean? My dad wouldn't come downstairs and give a licking to me if he didn't have to. So, it was weird. Mom always listened to dad, always did whatever he said. That's just how it was because family rides on my dad. That's just how it worked. Find your pecking order I guess. I don't know. I almost freaked. I was an emotional kid and I'm still an emotional person. You know it's either up or it's down, you know, dealing with the pressure. And you know when I get excited I'm always loud, very hyperactive. I was diagnosed with ADD as a child. I wasn't allowed to have

Tang at my grandmother's because I was a right out of control retard. So, mom had to deal with that. And I'm so glad that she didn't turn to like Ritalin. Great thing, eh. Let's drug the kids up when they're young and then when they're really still depressed or really depressed because they're brought down by Ritalin, let's say, "Oh yeah, you're depressed so we'll give you more drugs." I love this society. Just lazy friggin' parents is all it is. Lazy parents. So like hockey, being such hyperactive kid parents threw me into hockey. Hockey was going good. Like I'm hyperactive now. You can see me fidgeting and not sitting still and so the gym helps me sleep. I could focus that hyperactivity. And that's the same as the rig....So if I just keep on going with the flow here, try to get big...you know, things will work out for the better. I'll be able to own a house and I will be able to give my kids the best things. Cause I'll never settle for second best. If I'm always trying to be the best they won't get nothing but the best. And that's what I want. I'll never have second best. I'll never be second best. And if I am, damn. It won't be too long before I'm first.

### **Identity**

**Josh:** I was a preppy hockey player who was totally into himself. There's a lot of us out there. But I got past that and found out that the skating rink isn't all it's cracked up to be. But in high school when you're growing up and you're a hockey player and you're a good hockey player, you're going places with women and the social life of the school. And our school sat up high because I grew up in [name of city], so the high schools down here and you walked up two flights of huge stairs on this big terraced hill and there was the arena right there. So that's great. Hockey, hockey, hockey non-stop. If I wasn't in the gym working out or playing floor hockey I was doing public skating, hanging out with the little kids, learning to

drive Zamboni, run the boilers, so I was getting paid to be at the arena, then I'd go practice at the arena, and go play at the arena. It was all about hockey.

**Angela:** So then you were a preppy hockey player?

**Josh:** Yeah.

**Angela:** And now what are you?

**Josh:** Me. I'm me. I'm, what can you say about me? I never fit a category. That's what I love about me.... I don't need a psychologist and why I am who I am, why I do what I do. I don't need a psychologist to know why I'm angry at the world and violent. It's because my biological father was abusive and an asshole. So we got that past. The fact that I'm addictive disorder, they say I'm addictive disorder, I don't know. I think everyone's addicted to something. That's just floating in the air bullshit. Those doctors aren't gonna tell me something about myself that I don't already know.

### **Image**

**Josh:** I like having a six-pack. The chicks like it too.

**Angela:** How do they know? I mean you're wearing a shirt.

**Josh:** Well see cause I'm all into the water, and I own a jet ski and I own a sea-doo and I always have my shirt off and I wear, they're called rash guards, to the water. Rash guards for a surfer it's like a spandex shirt, you pretty much have to peel on, but I look like Superman with it on. It's cool. Like you just peel it right off. You know big Quicksilver or O'Neal or Bear, they're just for surfing and I wear them in the bar. So that everyone knows.

**Angela:** And you like it that everyone knows?

**Josh:** Yeah.

**Angela:** What comments do they make to you?

**Josh:** Well cause one time I got really huge, I was 275 lbs. and I was really fat and watered up but I just wanted to see how big I could actually get from as many steroids as I was taking at the time. And so it was really hard to shake that fat. It took me almost a year because I was a really massive guy but there was no definition. And then the last time that I fell apart with a girl she broke my heart and completely wrecked me emotionally. Like my head, I actually turned a lot to the narcotics, lots of them like, “You got it, I will do it, whatever it is let’s just messed up so that I don’t have to think about her.” And after I sobered up and turned to the gym again I started taking the fat burners and re-educating myself on how to look. You know just re-educating myself and then it just started shredding then. I don’t know. The weight came off and I felt so good about myself, started going back to the bars....when I show up I always look better and bigger...

**Angela:** What’s it like for you not to have a girlfriend?

**Josh:** It doesn’t happen. Going to gym and making myself look good, sweating my balls off to look this way better have results with women. And it does. I don’t put a lot of value into it because I’m not one of those muscle heads who will go into a bar, hit on a girl for a little while and then say, “Well I’m leaving now”. I expect her to be right there because of my frame. I just act like a moron. Then if you take it or leave it that’s great. And this body comes with a package. So

you’re really getting it all baby. Like that’s just how I look at it. I don’t know. Chicks are always there. I never have a problem with women. I don’t. Right now there’s too many.

### *Mirrors and Magazines*

**Josh:** Well, I read this once in a magazine. Like you got to look at yourself, you got to think you’re growing because when you’re doing that exercise and that mirrors in front of you, you’re pushing and posing and pumping. If you’re looking at yourself it’s supposed to help you grow. I put a lot of faith in that, I do. So I watch myself all the time while I’m doing the exercise, with all weights doing slow movements just so I can watch my muscle, just think grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, grow. Because I have small arms. I want my arms to grow so I’ll really look at them and pay attention, visualizing the growth. And just knowing how your body moves is absolutely formatic, because if you’ve got bad form you’re hurting yourself in the gym or you’re pushing all that big weight and having bad form you’re going to hurt yourself. And then sometimes you can tell if they’re [??] exercises, so, like what is it called, the Arnold press? Yeah, Arnold press comes up, and it’s a shoulder press and a chest press to top your chest so it works all in here. Like Arnold designed that just by watching how his body his working and thinking, “Oh yeah, well my arms are already going up with one press, why can’t I just twist it, down nose and come in another way?”

**Angela:** How much time you spend looking at yourself in the mirror? Is it primarily during a workout or after?

**Josh:** After. If your muscles are pumped up with blood and they’re ripping, you’re hurting, you might as well pose them. And Ar-

nold said in his book that posing is a big part of bodybuilding. It is.

**Angela:** Have you ever competed?

**Josh:** No. I want to be big enough to compete and then laugh at those guys who do. Because I like my tattoos, and I do have a really big scar from barbed wire across my chest, and so right then and there...they want a perfect body. They want, you know, a silhouette of a perfect image of muscle. And I'm not that. I'm tattoos and scarred. I've got this beauty here [pointed to scar on forehead]. That's a nice one.

**Angela:** What's that from?

**Josh:** Fighting

**Angela:** A long time ago or recent?

**Josh:** In the summer. I don't know when, June, July, or August. Just they want a perfect body and I just want to be a freak. That says in the magazines, you're a freak. If your legs are double the size of mine, you're a freak. If your neck is popping out with veins and you can't even get rid of the veins in your shoulders, you're a freak. There is no other definition that you could be put under. And I want to be one of those freaks. I want to have my veins popping out but have sleeve tattoos and a huge back piece on a massive back.

**Angela:** Why?

**Josh:** I don't know. I don't know why I like tattoos so much. I have a lot of them and I'm going to get more. That one, I don't know. They're addicting. But I want to be a freak, I don't know why. I want to be big enough to be in everybody's face. You can't miss me. I don't know. Maybe I should have been a rock star.

**Angela:** Can you tell me what magazines you read and where you got your education from?

**Josh:** I bought the Arnold. That's my bible, the Arnold Encyclopedia, or whatever. I read that all the time. That is my bible. And then Muscle and Fitness all the time, and I like Muscle Mag....Muscle Mag has right in there it gives pros and cons and doesn't let anything up about steroids. Full out. It gives you the steroids on the market....And there's, Muscle & Fitness sometimes does that, I just read a research article about a product called Trenbol, they call it the King of Steroids. It's supposed to be a secret within the professional ranks. I just found out about that, got my hands on that, so that's going for me good. And I know it works. But it says in there too that aggression is commonplace with steroids but with Trenbol it's inevitable, so again I don't want to go to the bars. I don't want to start drinking, wrecking my physique, getting angry, beating people, getting arresting...My life is going too good to get thrown in the clink for something dumb like a guy taking my drink.

### *Feeling Small*

**Angela:** Here's a question for you. You want to be really, really big. Was there a time in your life when you felt really, really small?

**Josh:** Only when I was in the hospital cause then you were super weak, right, cause that's why you're there man. That's why you're in that place. They lock you up in [the psychiatric ward] with all the other suicide attempts and all the other freak shows and people who, you know, mentally can't function in society, and that made me feel really fucking like weak. You are not a person. I was looking at myself as I wasn't a



person cause I was in there. And that's when I was like, this is not for me, man, what was I thinking with these fucking pills? That was the only time I ever felt, just...that was bad seeing my dad cry, seeing my mom cry, I was supposed to actually die...that was an eye opener. Show stopper.

### ***Looking Good***

**Josh:** If you can love yourself, man, and you can pose and think “Holy fuck, do you look good!” you know, that's the inner high right there. That's what I love now.

**Angela:** So you think you look good.

**Josh:** I do. I think I look great. I could look better, and I'm always going to have to be objective, because if I want to be a freak I have to train like one. And I have to be very objective. If my shoulders lack, you gotta put more time into your shoulders and you can't just like “you're the shit”, you're not that shit, put your time in and then maybe you will be the shit. Try and be the best, always want to be the best.

**Angela:** Do you think you're the best?

**Josh:** No way. I seen this guy the other day, throwing four plates a side. There's no way I can do that, so how can I be the best? In the gym I'm not, at work, damn right. I'm the best motor-hand on the rigs for being 23 years old I take that with honour. And I never want to let my driller down either, cause I do love him like a big brother. We were friends before that, and now we work together. So at work I am the best.

**Angela:** So you're the best at work and you're not the best in the gym.

**Josh:** No. That helps a guy in the gym though. If you see a bigger guy putting out some crazy weight, well, you gotta just, you

know, use his energy sometimes when he's pushing or look at him and push. Or say I guy comes into the gym that I've fought earlier in life, I'll see him in the gym so I'll want to intimidate him again. So I'll try extra hard on the exercise I'm doing now, or let's throw on another plate right now, and use that aggression, that anger inside to push that weight so it's more of an intimidation to him. It's all “hey, remember me?”

### ***Being a “Freak”***

**Josh:** My body is naturally supposed to be a certain way and grow a certain way, and I want to grow faster and bigger. I am trying to cheat genetics. And be a freak.

**Angela:** What does it mean to you to be a freak?

**Josh:** I don't know. To be a freak...

**Angela:** Does it mean to be so unique from everybody else that they can't help but admire you?

**Josh:** I think so. A freak can be many things, like those people who pierce their ears, wear crazy hairdos, pierce their nose. I don't know, that's one way of saying that you are a freak deep down inside. I just want to show it off in different ways. Instead of getting my neck tattooed I want my neck to be so friggin' huge that you can't miss it. Just like a big gaudy, cause I don't ever want to have gaudy tattoos that just stick in your face and are insulting, they're always pieces of work, like sleeves, I want.

**Angela:** Is it more to be an individual?

**Josh:** Maybe, but I want to be a personality that gets noticed. I don't want to be a sheep. Cause there's a lot of sheep out there. When you go to high school and shit there's a lot of guys who dress the same, wear the same

shit, and look alike, I'm not ever going to be a sheep. They're carbon copies of each other. They're Tommy Hillfiger clones. I think that's why the different style of clothing I do. Just because I'm myself. Like I'll wear big baggy khakis with my Ropers just because this is me. Know why? The mud doesn't stick to these. I want to be an individual but I want to be, stand out.

**Angela:** You want to stand out.

**Josh:** That's a good question though. What does it mean to be a freak? Cause there's a lot of people out there who say they're freaks. No, if you're cheating genetics and you're shits popping, you're a freak. Definitely. A freak would be anything that's not normal, not that status quo.

### *Man size*

**Angela:** You said you're young and you're yelling at men. Are you a man?

**Josh:** I don't think I am. I don't think I'm man size yet. I'm waiting for that to happen. You know how bodies are working, you know how men are growing. You're going to the gym all the time and you see that man, that 40 year old man, with the little t-shirt, and he takes that t-shirt off and just b-bam, b-bam, shit's popping all over. There's a certain age you reach you become a man, man size.

**Angela:** But you said some of these men are smaller than you and you're still calling them men.

**Josh:** Well, cause genetics. When you're thirty you should be about a man, man size then. Technically in society I'm a man, I pay my own rent, I feed my two dogs which I treat like my kids. Technically I'm a man, but I'm not. Cause I love my fruit loops, and I eat sometimes out of the garbage, and I

love my cartoons. I don't think I'm a man. I am not mature enough to be called a man.

**Angela:** You said something before, man size is about 30, and you were going to do steroids until you're 30, until you're man size.

**Josh:** Then once you get bigger, you might as well keep training and trying to keep all that you have. But when you do become older and your testosterone levels become depleted in your body you should do a touch-up cycle every couple years. I don't know what that's going to do for my living. At one point a guy has to decide, okay, this has got to stop, I want to do something else with my life. I think I'll still always be physically active and always wanting to do something and maybe be a coach or something later on in life so I'm involved in sports or involved in something...

**Angela:** So you're helping others and training others.

**Josh:** Doing something like that but I don't think I'll put so much into my muscles later on in life. But I want to get to that point. I want to see how big I can get. But later in life, maybe my dogs will become more important, maybe my kids probably will become more important so I'll be spending less time in the gym. But even, I don't think I could ever go away from the gym. Even a half hour a day just to get in some kind of muscle building. I think cardio's junk, I really do. If you are training hard enough and super-setting a couple muscle groups, you don't need cardio, you should be jamming good. And be all about business. Don't go to the gym and chat with people and hang out and read, go there to work out. Be all about business. Get down to business. That's my motto. My shirt's usually soaked by about 45 minutes, and at that point I take my

shirt off, sweating all over the gym, shirt off, I don't care whose face I'm in about me having my shirt off. I look good, I'm sweating, I can't have my shirt on, forget it. I hate those people that go there to hang out. That's why I like guys who train by themselves too. Put your music on, focus into yourself, start thinking about yourself, don't even think about how many reps you're on right now. I used to work with really low weights and just think about stuff. Just go until muscle failure and then snap out of it. Ok, now we're getting down to business because I can barely move my arm with this 10lb dumbbell, it's only 10 lbs.

### **Food**

**Josh:** I'm supposed to eat 200g of protein a day...

**Angela:** Who told you you're supposed to eat that?

**Josh:** It's common knowledge that if you want to grow you have to take in so much. Cause protein will flush you, you'll get diarrhea a lot of times, but it also, your body doesn't use it, you don't need that much, so your body's only using like 15 to 20 percent of the protein you're taking in but then you're flushing it all so you're also dehydrating yourself. So that's bad so you've just got to keep on the consumption of the water and the protein, and I mix all my protein with water and not milk because dairy's a lot of fat, so I cut all the dairy out. Just choices in my life.

**Angela:** Do you get this from magazines?

**Josh:** Magazines and just, you know what your body needs. So if my body's hungry and I want to stay lean I'll pound back a bunch of yogurt, drink some water and eat some fruit. It's just educating yourself. You know what's fattening and what's not. And

what's good and what's not. And now it's a part of my lifestyle. I don't even second guess, French fries, they're not on the menu, they don't exist. Not saying I won't eat them, but if you want to look a certain way and, I don't want to do anything half assed. I don't want to go to the gym and beat the shit out of myself and not know how to repair myself.

**Angela:** So how many meals a day do you eat then?

**Josh:** I only eat 5 and I should be eating more. And I supplement my, well, I think, well, I don't think this, I'm noticing that I might be developing an eating disorder. Because I like my 6 pack and I like to be lean, instead of eating a full meal I'll do what I said, eat yogurt, fruit, and then water because you're hydrating yourself, and then protein, building yourself, and the fruit is fructose and sugars so you can run. Those are the three things. Honest to god, that will make you run, I believe. No pastas, no carbs, nothing that will retain water. Carbs is great for putting mass on but crappy for being ripped and having a six pack.

**Angela:** What did you mean you think you're developing an eating disorder?

**Josh:** Drinking more drinks than eating now. And taking meal replacements now instead of eating a meal and that's not right, that's not good for growth. Cause I want to stay ripped. I believe you have to bulk up and then rip down, but I want to try to keep ripped and grow, and I'm struggling with it right now. I've only grown 5 pounds in the past three weeks. I'm really chapped.

**Angela:** Do you weigh yourself every day?

**Josh:** Every day.

**Angela:** How many times a day?

**Josh:** Twice.

**Angela:** Morning and night?

**Josh:** Morning and just after I work out. Because people weigh themselves all the time before they workout, and I don't think that's right. I think you should weigh yourself after because you're burning off all that extra water, all that extra fat, all that extra whatever, toxins, whatever, so I usually weigh myself after. And also your muscles are swelled with blood, everything's swelled so they're pumped up as much as they can get so you're going to get the most growth you're going to see, so if you weigh yourself in the morning when you just woke up after rest, you're say like 220, and then weigh yourself after you work out you're 223, you'll fluctuate 2-3 pounds, that's good, that's good.

### ***Taking Risks***

**Angela:** At any point in time were you worried about yourself doing all this?

**Josh:** Oh yeah. Your heart's a muscle, right? So I'm addicted to ephedrine because I use it as an extension of a fat burner so if I'm pumping my heart out like a son of a bitch with ephedrine and then taking steroids that might enlarge my heart, I'm a stroke victim waiting to happen for sure. I know this.

**Angela:** And you're willing to take those risks [**Josh:** yeah] to get big [**Josh:** yeah].

**Josh:** It's a risk I'm willing to weigh because I've educated myself on how not to abuse. And I have toned down my ephedrine. They used to be in 25 mg those pills, and I used to take 10 a day. That's 250 mg, that's retarded! Now I take 4 in the morning

but they're only 8 mg. You know, so they almost equal 1 of those old ones I used to take. So I have toned it down. Not taking as much ephedrine 'cause I'm worried about my heart. Having a stroke. But I take aspirin as well, the ECA stack— aspirin, caffeine, ephedrine. And so I take the aspirin which thins my blood.

**Angela:** What do you take for pain after working out?

**Josh:** Advil.

**Angela:** How much?

**Josh:** One or two, depending. I don't get a lot of pain anymore. Get home, take your protein, relax. You don't really have anything else to do that strenuous. Why should you be hurting yourself after the gym? And just resting. If you fucking hurt yourself, take two days off from the gym. Don't be a hardcore and try to over-train because you're not doing your body any justice. Dorian Yates once said, and he was Mr. Universe, he used to do one set per exercise and work on one body part every seven days. That is so fucking dumb, I wouldn't even know how to do that. That was when he was massive and super huge. But Dorian Yates knew the value of rest. So you just worked on your biceps, and went so crazy on your biceps one day a week putting out all you can, now you rest your whole body. You don't do any exercise on any other body part, no fucking squats, no shrugs, no nothing. You just worked on your bicep, you just worked your body, shut down, you rest. And he was Mr. Olympia. How can Dorian Yates be wrong? So he knew all about rest, rest and recovery. I guess your diet has a lot to do with that too. Take more protein in if you just ripped and tore all them muscle cells to shit you're using that protein to help repair that, let it work. Relax. Have a protein

and relax. You gotta relax more. Cause they'll work out in the mornings, then they go to their stressful freak show jobs where they're running all over the office and their head's not right. And they're not relaxed even if they think they're relaxed sitting in their chair, you're not relaxed, that is not relaxed. People who work out in the morning before work, man, they're my heroes, cause I can never do it. After work, after the day's gone retarded and I'm already pissed off at the world, I can take my aggression out on [name of employer] and just want to pound his head in at work, I go to the gym and use that aggression and that steam and that fucking hate-work-and-hate-life, and I'll go to the gym and I'll come out smiling. Now I can go home and relax. People who work out in the mornings are my heroes.

### ***Reflecting on the Interview***

**Angela:** Is there anything else you can think of that I've missed?

**Josh:** No, it's been a pretty good interview.

**Angela:** You enjoyed it? What sticks out at you most?

**Josh:** I don't know. I think the fact that I don't know you from a hole in the ground and I just opened up so easily to you. I thought that was pretty cool.

**Angela:** Especially after being worried that I was a cop.

**Josh:** Yeah, I was a little stressed out 'cause a couple guys at the gym "You'd better ask her if she's a cop or not."

**Angela:** What's the most important thing for me to know about you?

**Josh:** I just don't do my job, I do it better than the next guy.

### **Summary**

This interview provides valuable insight into one man's experience with weight lifting and steroid use. These detailed insights would have been difficult to obtain through quantitative research methods. This interview with Josh outlined a number of motivations for engaging in weight lifting and steroid use, such as perfectionism, involvement in competitive sports, family issues, physical abuse, drug addiction, mental health issues (e.g., depression, ADHD, eating disorders), appearance, and media influence (e.g., professional bodybuilders, body building magazines). This list is by no means exhaustive of the many possible motivations for lifting weights or using steroids. However, Josh's example is meant to alert the reader to the complexity of this issue and the helpfulness of a qualitative methodology in obtaining a rich and impassioned life story

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# The Effects of a Psychological Intervention Program in Swimming

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## Abstract

The purpose of the investigation was to examine the effects of a Psychological Intervention Program (PIP) in swimming performance. The program included several psychological skills such as, relaxation, imagery, goal setting, concentration, and self-talk. The program was evaluated through the Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (CSAI-2) and the swimming performance of each participant. Participants were 14 young swimmers (10 male and 4 female) in the experimental group and 29 participants (15 male and 14 female) in the control group who completed the CSAI-2 before the simulated race. The experimental group followed a psychological intervention program for nine weeks and then both teams were retested after completing the CSAI-2 again. The results showed that there was a significant increase in performance and confidence in the experimental group after the nine-week intervention but no significant change in the cognitive and somatic anxiety when compared to the control group

## Introduction

“Choking” has been described, by many athletes like Pete Sampras and Greg Norman, as one of the most embarrassing and humiliating experience they have ever felt (Sampras, 2000, p.68). However, there is still confusion among athletes, coaches, and media as to what exactly choking is. Most researchers have trouble defining choking but they all agree it hurts performance (Weinberg & Gould, 2000). Choking can be defined as the inability of the athlete to perform up to certain

standards, something, which is due to fear of not performing according to one's abilities (Masters, 1992). Choking produces an impaired performance due to extensive pressure and stress (Wang, 2002).

Some athletes tend to overanalyze during a match so they become anxious, which takes their focus off their main goal. Such behavior generates choking because the concentration level decreases, the athlete focuses only on negative points, and the athlete appears confused (Nideffer, 1992).

Choking is directly related to impaired performance, but impaired performance is not necessarily related to choking according to Weinberg and Gould (2000).

Possible causes of choking are included in the arousal-performance theories (Easterbrook, 1959), the inverted U hypothesis (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908), the catastrophe model (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, 1996), the distraction model (Nideffer, 1992), and the automatic execution model (Baumeister, 1984).

The arousal-performance theories suggest that when high levels of arousal appear, the range of things that the athlete can attend to decreases. In addition, the increase in arousal causes further reduction in attention resulting in important cues to be ignored and performance to decline. Some of the consequences of too much arousal include, muscle tension, coordination difficulties, and changes in attention and concentration (Easterbrook, 1959).

The inverted-U hypothesis supports that low levels of arousal also lead to impaired performance. As arousal increases so does performance, up to a certain level, after which an increase in arousal causes a decrease in performance (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). So, the relationship between arousal and performance is not linear and the best performances occur when the athlete is ideally aroused, where impaired performances correlate with low or high arousal (Wann, 1997).

Choking appears when there is an increase in anxiety and pressure and as a result the athlete is unable to face the game's demands. The subject of choking needs further research in order to better understand and prepare athletes to deal with it effectively.

The implementation of a psychological program in the athlete's daily routine may result in the successful handling of pressure and anxiety. Before starting a psychological program the sport psychologist should meet with the athlete to understand the athlete's needs, to explain what sports psychology is and what it may be able to contribute to the athlete and his or her performance. Our basic mental training program includes four psychological techniques, which are relaxation, imagery, goal setting and thought control. All these techniques have as a goal to reduce anxiety and worry, to increase self-esteem, confidence and concentration, and prepare the athlete to deal with stressful situations (Theodorakis, Goudas, & Papaioannou, 2002).

In our opinion, the best time for an athlete to start mental practice is during off-season because that provides enough time to learn and practice the new skills. Our program varies in time but it can last from 3 to 6 months or even up to a year. The daily mental practice lasts from 10 to 15 minutes before or after practice, 3 to 5 days a week. In addition, the athlete and the sport psychologist ideally meet on a weekly basis in order to discuss upcoming issues or problems. Mental training, like physical, needs extensive practice before it starts blossoming (Theodorakis et al., 2002).

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of a Psychological Intervention Program (PIP) in swimming performance and to assess whether the swimmers who participated reported improved performance, an increase in their confidence, and reduced the levels of anxiety.

### **Participants**

The total number of participants in the Psychological Intervention Program (PIP) was 14 young swimmers (10 male and 4



female) aged between 11 and 16 years (mean age = 14.17, SD = 1.51) from the northern part of Greece who were members of the same swimming club. Their swimming experience ranged from 2 to 7 years (mean = 4.85, SD = 1.40) and their weekly practice ranged from 12 to 20 hours (mean = 14.71, SD = 2.09). The control group had 29 participants (15 male and 14 female) aged between 12 and 16.50 years (mean age = 13.79, SD = 1.40) from the northern part of Greece who were members of another swimming club. Their swimming experience ranged from 2 to 12 years (mean = 5.96, SD = 2.51) and their weekly practice ranged from 12 to 20 hours (mean = 14.71, SD = 2.09).

### Instruments

Competitive State Anxiety Inventory. The Competitive State Anxiety Inventory-2 (Martens, Vealey, & Burton, 1990) was administered twice, once before each swimming performance measurement. The CSAI-2 is a 27-item self-report is designed to measure cognitive and somatic anxiety, as well as confidence. For this study the Greek version of the inventory was used (Stavrou, Kakkos, & Psychountaki, 1998), which contains 15 items to assess the above-mentioned three dimensions of state anxiety. Previous studies seem to support its validity and reliability (Jones & Swain, 1992; Kakkos & Zervas, 1996).

### Performance Measures

The athletes' swimming performance was measured twice. Once before the beginning of the PIP and once after the end of the PIP which was nine weeks. Each athlete and their coach were informed of the purpose of the study and their role in the study. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Ioannina.

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The intervention program addressed individual goals.

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concentration exercise, relaxation techniques, and the imagery scripts were changed. The athletes also kept a performance diary, which was collected once a week by the first author of the study. She also met with the athletes once a week, in order to discuss any issues that had come up and also to keep track of the intervention.

The goals sheets were given to the athletes so that they would write down their individual goals, the strategy that they planned to use in order to reach these goals, and the date by which they would accomplish them. The swimmers were advised to focus on performance and technical goals and not on outcome goals.

Concentration was practiced by constantly looking at their goggles for five minutes daily and trying to think nothing at all. They were also asked to listen to their relaxation and imagery scripts twice a day, once in the morning and once just before practice.

The control group continued their daily practice without any intervention and without any contact with the author.

At the end of the nine-week intervention period the athletes in both groups participated in a second set of measurements. The day of their second timed 50 meter race the author explained that each athlete's race would be timed, video recorded and watched by a number of spectators and teammates. The second race was videotaped and included spectators in order to increase the pressure on the athletes and heighten the possibility of choking. According to Butler & Baumeister (1998) and Heaton & Sigall (1991) pressure is increased by the presence of an audience and video camera. Five minutes before the start the athletes completed, once again, the CSAI-2.

## Results

A two-way analysis of variance (group X measurement) with repeated measurements on the second factor was used to examine the effect of the intervention program on the performance, anxiety and confidence levels of the swimming athletes. Results regarding the performance revealed a significant interaction effect between the two factors (Wilks'  $\lambda = .843$ ,  $(1, 41) = 7.65$ ,  $< .008$ ,  $\eta^2 = .16$ ). Simple main effect analysis was employed to interpret the interaction effect. Results showed that performance levels of the experimental group improved ( $p = .003$ ) and the control's group performance levels remained constant ( $p = .82$ ).

A two-way analysis of variance for confidence revealed significant main effects on the groups, ( $F(1, 41) = 6.53$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $\eta^2 = .14$ ), and measurements factors (Wilks'  $\lambda = .089$ ,  $(1, 41) = 421.44$ ,  $< .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .91$ ). Both groups increased their confidence levels, but the experimental group increased their confidence more than the control group.

Finally, only the measurement main effect for the somatic anxiety and cognitive anxiety reached statistical significance, (Wilks'  $\lambda = .175$ ,  $(1, 41) = 192.69$ ,  $< .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .82$ ) and (Wilks'  $\lambda = .116$ ,  $(1, 41) = 311.10$ ,  $< .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .88$ ). Mean values shows that both groups showed an increase in both somatic and cognitive anxiety. The experimental group showed a greater increase in somatic anxiety compared to the control group.

## Discussion

The aim of the study was to examine the effects of a Psychological Intervention Program (PIP) in swimming performance. Choking is considered the decline in performance under pressure (Baumeister, 1984). Pressure was created by recording

each athlete's race by a camera and by the presence of audience. The results showed that the participants in the experimental group experienced an increase in their performance under the higher-pressure condition after the completion of the psychological training program. The fact that the experimental group's performance showed an increase provides support for the success of the mental training program supports the findings of several other studies (Edwards & Hardy, 1996; Thomas, Mayland, & Hanton, 2004; Theodorakis et al., 2002). It also supports the notion that relevant psychological training equips athletes to better handle and perform within stressful situations (Wang, 2002).

In addition, a significant improvement in confidence in the experimental group over the course of the intervention shows that athletes increased their beliefs. Confidence helps the athletes remain focused on their task no matter what the outcome might be

and it minimizes the chances of choking. The levels of cognitive anxiety remained constant across the two measurements between the two groups. However somatic anxiety increased to higher levels for the experimental group compared to the control group. This finding combined with the fact their performance improved, possibly, shows that athletes in the experimental group were able to handle the increased anxiety successfully in the second measurement, after they had been exposed to certain relaxation techniques (Theodorakis et al., 2002).

Future studies should aim at replicating this type of applied intervention or incorporate other well established intervention programs, using a larger number of participants from different sports and include assessments of how the athletes in the experimental and control group react in real race or real performance situations.

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## **Embracing the Challenges and Gifts of Big Mountain Free Skiing: An Interview with Jonny Law - World Tour Champion**

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### **Abstract:**

Big-Mountain (BM) freeskiing is a high-speed, high-risk, alternative sport. BM freeskiing takes place in alpine regions of mountains, where the terrain for a “normal” run includes severe exposure due to the steepness of th

**John:** How did you get into BM freeskiing?

**Jonny:** I was actually a racer, and the racing in Halifax brought me further west. I skied in New Brunswick and then in Quebec, Ontario, and I actually went to school in Banff for a year. And that would have probably been my introduction to it. I remember between runs on powder days just having some fun. But I never really knew it was something that people are passionate about, I just thought it was something that people did. I came to Whistler from Halifax and met with other skiers, they just kind of introduced me to it. They weren't "hey we are going big mountain freeskiing", they were just like we are going skiing, it was something to do.

**John:** What do you love about BM freeskiing?

**Jonny:** That's where I might differ from other people; some people are into going to different places, or just being out in the mountains. But for me it has been about the physical and mental challenges. I want to find something that is more difficult for me to do. It may be a steep cliff or a steep face or something like that. I would rather go hit a cliff than ski a powder line. It has always been about experiencing that thrill, that adrenaline rush. When I am going skiing, when I am in the gondola and there has been some snow, or even when there hasn't, almost everyday I almost feel sick going up the mountain. It is really almost vexing because you are doing something and you are excited to do it but you are scared and sick about it right?

**John:** So when you step onto the gondola and you have that sick feeling, what do you do?

**Jonny:** It leaves once I get on snow, almost immediately. I'll be on the gondola with

some guys and I'll be quiet just focusing on my breathing, trying to calm down, I take it very seriously. It is by no means a leisure sport, even if it is a day that I am skiing with friends.

That feeling of sickness is definitely gone once I am in the skis, I have my goggles down. I am getting ready to rip. It must be anticipation, more than anything, just to get the day started, to get on the skis. I think about the things I want to do and I can't believe that I want to do it, and it is hard to believe that I am capable of doing it. And then once I get on the skis I remember that this is what I do and I can do it.

**John:** When you are about to do something big how do you prepare?

**Jonny:** Usually when I am looking for something big, I break it down to if I fall it is not going to hurt that much. I honestly believe that I can, sometimes I have to think to myself you can do it, you won't fall and that's when I might have trees in my fall zone or something like that. And if that is the case, it is a little more difficult, it is crucial that you make it happen. And I do think in my head "you can do it" and "just do it because you can".

**John:** What is it about BM freeskiing that makes you want to do it again?

**Jonny:** I think it is the challenge. I find it to be enlightening. When you are on top of something ... Even cliffs I have hit before like a fifty footer or something, it can be done, but it's still, I am going to jump off of a fifty footer here. And you know you have had buddies hurt themselves and you have been hurt doing stuff like this, and yet you are like, no problem. I find that before you do it you are very anxious, you are kind of fighting common sense. Because your com-

mon sense tells you no, just ski around and have some fun. But you have to fight that and I think it is that, that is exciting when you can finally decide that I am doing it and then you actually do it. That is what I think it is all about, that split second where you're mentally strong enough. Maybe you are ignoring common sense and doing what you want to do, what you think you can do. There is a quote by T.S. Elliot that I like, it goes "only he that will risk going too far, can possibly find out how far one can go" and I think about that a lot.

**John:** How do you go from that mind game between common sense and the challenge, and then actually doing it?

**Jonny:** It comes down to a lot of things, but by being in the best physical shape I can be is really important. Being well prepared, being on top of something saying I have done everything I can to be able to do this. You have to come up with pros and cons for everything, and if you can create a stronger argument for doing it, then you are going to be able to do it, as well as acknowledge what is wrong with it. With thorough preparation I would be able to say stuff like "you are strong, you have done stuff like this before." And a lot of the time I will repeat to myself "you got it, you got it". At times I say it out loud, other times I just think it. It depends on how stressed I am. On a normal day it is usually not that intense even if you are doing big cliffs. I think you get good at big mountain freeskiing through trial and error, and as you experience more things like big crashes and big cliffs you are able to apply that to what you are doing. A lot of things that you end up doing you have probably done something like it before. You just kind of process all of that. A lot of it is

really thinking it over, so a lot of it becomes subconscious, it is almost instinctual.

**John:** Do you think that those instincts come from experiences?

**Jonny:** Yeah, no doubt. Yeah it is like, you can ski onto the face and in my particular example I am not formally educated in snow pack, but I can be skiing something and just by the feel of it and by the terrain, I can know that it is going to crack [avalanche] and when it is going to break. I can pretty much pin point when with my weight I am going to make it happen. For example, I was skiing in Revelstoke this year, at a heli ski operation, and I was skiing onto this face and it was flat and as I was skiing towards it, it began to become convexed and I knew there was new snow and I also knew that there was cliffs. I knew it was going to crack and it did. It is pretty neat because it is all in a split second, I turned quickly to look at the crack to see if it was going to have enough weight to take me down. And I realized in an instant that it would take me down. I made the decision that if I am going to fall onto rocks then I am going to hit it with my skis and my boots. So I immediately went straight and it all worked out really well. But all that happens in a moment, like in a split second.

**John:** When you say hit it with your skis and your boots, do you mean just ski straight at it?

**Jonny:** Yeah you just go off, you can't see anything, you are within an avalanche, and you just have to make a less than ideal situation good.

**John:** So at that moment that you decide that you are going to pin it, were you thinking anything in particular?



**Jonny:** I was thinking that I can't fall because then I would hit rocks and then I would be fucked. But if I am able to land and hit the snow, then I can't fall because all the snow is coming on me, and that was pretty much what I was thinking. You can't fall so you are concentrating on positioning yourself for landing.

**John:** And in that instance you landed and then?

**Jonny:** And then just keep going. Another example, actually on the same day it was the same sort of situation where I am skiing down and I knew it was going to crack. One guy went crack, another guy went crack, and now it is my turn. You take things into account. You think, ok it is new snow, it is light. This is the type of things you think about. Sure we are in some unstable conditions but as a professional you can deal with it. It is light enough that it is not really going to get you down or break your bones while you are in it. I had to ski down the fall line, and it all broke around me and I knew the cliffs fall line had rocks below. So I stuck with my initial plan, which was to point it [ski straight down], so immediately I knew I had to get out of there quickly. I took it a little bit skier's right and again I was like, I can't fall I can't fall. Because I was landing side hill and the snow was coming fall line... I fell, and you are in the snow and you are scared to death and then it clears and no problems.

**John:** When you fall in those types of situations what are you thinking?

**Jonny:** You are thinking, am I going to be buried. You are also thinking you have eight or ten sets of eyes on you so you think that the chances are that they are going to get to me before it is too late. You are just waiting for it to end because it is all moving and

kind of imbalanced. You are scared but it is something that you have accepted. And mostly I am pissed because I have fallen. I was thinking I should have stuck it, it would have been a sick shot if I stuck it. That and now I am in a compromised situation.

**John:** In terms of preparation you accept the challenge of doing it and then you use your positive self-talk?

**Jonny:** Yeah basically it is nothing new. You keep in mind that there is a crew around watching, it is not like you are alone in the backcountry. You know you are going to be saved if you get buried, and you know you are not working in an area that all funnels into a crevasse. You keep all this positive stuff in mind, sure it is going to avalanche and you might fall on rocks, you might get buried. But there are a lot of positive things you can think of. Don't get me wrong I turn away from stuff a lot. I say out loud to myself, it is not worth it. I will say it out loud and turn around and get out of there.

**John:** Do you have an example of that?

**Jonny:** A specific one no, it actually happens quite often, it happens more often than not. Where I will maybe get to a cliff that I want to hit but other people have hit it already and there are bomb holes. I could do it but it is not worth it right now.

**John:** Without a specific example what do you think generally deters you from doing something? What is the thought process?

**Jonny:** Just look at the consequences, people call it calculated risk management. You know there is risk and you are calculating it. There is probably a mathematic equation, like you are figuring out this plus that and the weight of one thing compared to another.

And you know, you just calculate that risk and there is always going to be some level of it and if it is too high then it is not worth it. Things are a little bit different for me now. When I wasn't pro I maybe would do them [riskier things]. But now it is like I can do this I have done this but I have a career to think about now. So it changes as you grow, like maybe you love a girl. Things change and that is going to influence how you add up the risk. That is when I am by myself or with buddies. Even when there are cameras, they will be like Jonny, I want you to do this. I have skied into lines and it is fractured and Todd Jones from TGR is filming me, and there are two cameras and stuff. And I just put up the two poles, no! The shots over man. Yeah there is not a lot of pressure other than on yourself. They are pretty good for that. They come up with suggestions and stuff and sometimes they try to be persuasive but by the end of it they are not upset if you say no.

**John:** Do you feel that pressure of the cameras has changed your preparation for skiing?

**Jonny:** Um, yes, as far as the filming goes that is very new to me. And that is a whole different game than competing. Like really not as much pressure, you can fall all day. Like if you fall all the time you are not going to have a good segment but you can film all day. Or you can try to do that line the next snow day and get it. It is not like you have three comps and that is it. I'm trying to cope with that actually, because I find that I am still bringing a lot of my competition stuff into the filming realm and I find that it is kind of compromising my filming. Style wise, because big mountain comps seems to be a lot about survival. It doesn't matter if your arms are rolling down the windows as long as you are stomping stuff, and it is good and clean, it doesn't matter. But in

filming it seems like it is all about style, like you can butt drop as long as you are tight, that is what they want to see. So I am trying to create two different styles.

**John:** What is your process for that?

**Jonny:** The filming stuff I am concentrating on technique and style. Like that is what your focus is, like ok leave your hands here, your tips are going to be there. In big mountain freeskiing competitions you are more thinking about where is your next cliff. You're looking for things that you need to remember for the line. And then in the air you are just concentrating on having good position for landing. So I think the difference is focusing on different things.

**John:** In terms of success elements what allows you to be a successful BM freeskiier at the elite level?

**Jonny:** It comes down to focus and preparation. The season that I was successful in competitions I remember training and running. I pretty much sacrificed everything. I remember working on mental focus while running all the time.

**John:** How would you do that?

**Jonny:** A lot of positive affirmations, I know a little bit about sports psychology because when I went to that school in Banff we had some sports psychology courses and I now feel it's all about having the right attitude. Like I was running and I was thinking I want to be the best skier that I can be. I think that is what it comes down to. What messed me up last year, was having success and wanting to build on that, I think I messed with that focus a bit. Being more concentrated on results rather than my own personal challenge. In comps I usually stay by myself. I am not there to make friends, it

is nothing like that. I think that

. You are just concentrating on staying relaxed. Like I wasn't thinking about stomping an air or what I am going to do when I am on the podium (Laughs). I am just trying to keep a level of composure really. I would get up a little bit earlier and stretch. And during the day I would be by myself and inspect by myself. It really comes down to visualization. I remember going through it in my head before hand. Visualizing the run and then I did it, I did the run I am talking about the finals where I moved up from seventh into first and ended up winning the day and won the sick bird at the same time. I remember getting to the bottom after skiing it and it felt like I had skied it a bunch of times. It almost felt too easy, and that is really how it is. With BM freeskiing, you need to know that you can do it one hundred percent. You almost have to bring it down a notch, ski it at like 95% rather than one hundred and that's another skill in itself. You have to know I want to be competitive I don't want to fall all the time so I need to step it down and I think that is another thing that you have to get good at. If you allow the buildup process to begin too early you might end up getting too anxious before your run, maybe thinking about things that could go wrong. You have to be able to stay really calm even though what you are doing is very important. So you need to break it down and try not to worry about anybody else.

**John:** How do you stay calm and not worry about any body else?

**Jonny:** I just try to separate myself from the situation. I am not there to try to beat Hugo [one of the world's best BM freeskiers] I am there to ski my best. And if I ski my best then who knows what will happen. That is really what it is all about in any sport. I

think if you are thinking about what will happen, then you are going to lose your focus. You have to keep your focus centered really. Actually the year that I did really well (performed the best in the world) I don't think I watched anybody else, it was a total separation. I would hear this and that but I wouldn't think about it. Ah, someone did this someone did that, I wouldn't allow it to get in. I would hear it and then just keep concentrating on what I wanted to do. I would walk away for a little while and visualize my runs. I would just get away from all the excitement for a bit. And a lot of times if someone else isn't as calm as you and they are getting all pumped, that can influence you. It can happen while you are waiting. You have to be strong enough to stay with your plan of action. Whatever you do, I think it is good to pull away, do your own thing, just don't get influenced by the energy that is out there. So I never buddy up with anyone up there. The year after I had done well, people wanted to inspect with me and they were asking me about this and that. And there is more pressure. You hear people talk...Jonny Law this and you know "man I wasn't going to do this comp and then I heard you were going to be here", stuff like that. It is just a bit different now that I have been in magazines and stuff, people expect stuff from you.

Before I had nothing to lose and therefore very little pressure. Last year (the year after his best and most consistent performances) though I wasn't as well prepared, I wasn't prepared for that I guess. And that is tough to do. I am trying to get back, and I figure I can get back to it this year because I don't have anything to lose really. All I can do is go into it and try to do my best. The sponsors would of course like to see good results.

I mean if you go out and you blow up [crash]

and people are like, dude you would have won if that didn't happen. That doesn't mean much at the end of the day, but twentieth place or something like that means nothing to me. This year if I compete I think it will be nothing to lose. I will just have to keep it cool.

**John:** When you visualize your run do you see it through your own eyes or as if someone is filming you?

**Jonny:** Through my own eyes, I can see my ski tips and I can almost time my airs in my mind, I can know how long I will be in the air. A lot of the times it will come down to inspection, you need to be able to trust your inspection. That's what it comes down to with this focus and this visualization, you need to trust your inspection and trust yourself. You need to know that you inspected well, otherwise how you are going to be confident up top and ski well and feel good about it. You are going to be worried and because you are worried you are not going to be skiing strong.

And sometimes there will be for example a cliff band, and you are skiing into the cliff band. Where is your take off? And sometimes it needs to be very specific, where you take off. I have done things where I have lined up something that could be across the valley, where I have to point my skis at, and I have to trust that not only did I inspect that well, but in the split second that I have while I am skiing up to it that I have it lined up well, and that is the actual take off. That's what it comes down to, being confident with your own abilities.

**John:** How have you learned to inspect well?

**Jonny:** I think ski racing helped, like ski through every gate and do the hand movement through the gate. You will see me up there doing like prere, siddi, poo [skiing sounds] like you will even hear sound effects. You just take your time, you line stuff up. If I was to just focus on the cliff drops that wouldn't be enough, you have to almost imagine how many turns are going to be in-between each cliff drop and you concentrate on certain landmarks and you've just got to be confident about it.

You will probably like this story. This was after Snowbird, the same season and I go to France for the final competition of the year ranked fourth on the world tour. And we get to the venue and it was awesome. We had a ton of snow, there were cliff bands, there were some steep zones, it was just awesome. And then we were told that we couldn't inspect. We had to inspect from afar with binoculars. The tram kind of went up on top so you could kind of see stuff. But it was still a long distance away, the French skiers had all skied it of course. It is hard to say why they didn't let us inspect, but I am really glad they did it. I think it really separates the weak from the strong and the good from the great. And it was intense.

**John:** So what did you do?

**Jonny:** Inspection, I did it with binoculars, and actually I took a picture of a picture with a digital camera, I was able to zoom in on stuff. But still what if there was shrapnel on the take off? I couldn't see that with the means of inspection that was available. I came up with a game plan. My last cliff was probably a good forty or forty-five footer, but it was like a big band with outcropping rocks on either side, and a tranny that built up into it with wind. If I didn't have that angle right I would have landed on rocks which would have gone really wrong. So because

the face was fall line with a cat track, I was able to sit on the cat track with the cliff I wanted to hit and my landing lined up. I turned around, looked past myself to find a landmark that would work with that take off. So I used the same technique as I would have if I was on top of it, but from below. It was very stressful because I was in France for the first time. First time competing there, first time skiing there, and the upper management of Dynastar was there. Who at the time were my sponsors. I was going fourth, the three guys in front of me were not considered high profile. So they went and then it was my turn and I was doing my focus thing where I keep it calm and keep it chill. But it was really difficult this time because it was more difficult to become confident with what I wanted to do, not being able to inspect basically. I just relaxed and the three people had gone, and they were like “ok Jonny, are you ready?”

, not like aggressive or anything. I just allow myself to really allow myself to become ready, to do what I want to do. And so I was like “yeah, I’m ready.” And they were like “ok you have twenty minutes.” “Dude what are you talking about?” And they were like “we need to wait for the helicopter.” Again I am like “what are you talking about?” And they wanted to film some of the dudes, so they put a helicopter above my head. So vvvvvv,vvvv,vvvv [helicopter noises] yeah the wind was intense, and my heart is now going fast, I am trying to focus and keep chill. Like I am about to kill myself with this line. But I felt good about it, I felt that I had really spent a lot of time looking at the pictures and riding the tram trying to get a good look at it, but still it was really challenging.

The first day I remember skiing down and there was no tracks. I was coming into one of my features that I wanted to jump off of, I wasn’t completely sure if I had it right and

luckily I didn’t have to stop because I had an exit strategy if it didn’t look right. Basically I had everything going, I had exit strategies that if I was skiing up to something that I wanted to do and found out that I couldn’t or I wasn’t sure of it, I would have a way to keep it fluid and to get out. So I am skiing up to it and I was trying to gauge my level of just confidence really confidence. How you are feeling physically, as well as mentally. This is during the run, and I was skiing and it was wicked powder and I ski up to it and it was all split second that we are talking about.

I have made mistakes like that in previous comps. Again you have to relax and it is not worth it to kill yourself with this stuff. And yeah I remember coming up to that last hit. And I just saw my landmark in the distance, and who knows if somebody moved it or not.

**John:** It was something that could be moved?

**Jonny:** Yeah it was a flag. We’re talking like hundreds of feet away. And it was just like a sponsor flag in the background. It was awesome, I ended up second in that comp.

**John:** How was that feeling if you didn’t know whether the flag had been moved?

**Jonny:** Its freaky man, you can’t even believe it. Like the second before you hit it... And then it drops away from you and hopefully it is good. I have had times when I’ve taken pictures or something, and hitting cliffs and all of a sudden there are rocks coming at you. And you have to, like don’t just freak out, you have to deal with that too.

**John:** So you have had times that you just landed on rocks?

**Jonny:** Yeah I had this one cliff last year, it was like it was probably the biggest cliff I had ever hit. It was probably eighty, eighty-five feet. This was a really good learning experience. My take off was kind of angled and I think an angled take off actually makes you drop away, it is like hitting a golf ball on a slope. I pointed it off and ended up drifting left. I was eighty feet up and there was a big rock that I am going to hit. I am going to land on a big frickin rock. You are falling off a cliff so you have some time, and I thought this is going to break me badly. But you do what you can to make a bad situation dealable, and I just kept it really tight. At the very last second I leaned over and I kicked off the rock. I was somehow able to measure the angle of the rock and I kicked off of it with both skis at the same time with the same amount of pressure on each foot and my pole. I blew both my skis apart in exactly the same way. I think that if I'd taken more of that hit with one leg instead of the other I probably would have broken that leg. I broke my pole within the handle and my wrist was sore from that. I was fine, because I was able to deal with the situation. I have always said about big mountain skiing, that as good of a skier you have to be, you have to be just as good if not better at falling. Because it is just as big a part of the sport as skiing is. I just mean tumbling, being able to fall. There have been times where I was rag dolling, like I will be skiing along and I will notice that there are rocks in the fall line and then I fall. And I am rag dolling and I know that if I don't stop then I am going to hit the rocks and instead of letting the rag doll take control I try to time it so that everytime I hit the snow I dig something into the snow to slow me down. Because you are aware of what is going on, you are able to control the situa-

tion even though you are very much not in control.

**John:** You said that when you are skiing down and you notice rocks and then you fall. Do you think that is because your focus shifts to the rocks?

**Jonny:** I don't think so, not at the level that I am now. At the time that I was skiing, I wasn't thinking rocks and then fall but I know that I am creating "sluff" (snow released from the mountain by the skis of the skier as he turns) and I know that there is a mogul field below me. I know I have to control my speed. It is just a bunch of things and I think as the situation is created you come up with different things to think about. So as I am skiing I am creating sluff so I am thinking about managing my sluff. If I am trying to get some speed from the line but I know there are moguls, then I am going to try to judge my speed coming out of the line, or if I am falling I then notice that there is something that I have to deal with like rocks and stuff.

**John:** So if there was nothing to deal with would you just let yourself rag doll?

**Jonny:** I would try to stop myself but a lot of the time I know rag dolling can be better for you rather than being tense and fighting it, a lot of time the rag doll can prevent injuries. I used to fall a lot on stuff that I don't even think about now. Being able to fall and get up and hurt yourself and get better, it is just one big learning process. But I guess you get to the point where falling is now unacceptable, for example skiing lines in Alaska. But when you are learning and trying to progress, falling is very important. If you are on top of a forty footer and you have crashed off of a forty footer and it didn't hurt, you can be on top of another forty footer and say, I can do this. I could fall and

it probably won't hurt. You know that it is possible to not get hurt on something like that. I am actually curious to see how I am affected by the crash I had three months ago, that is a whole different level man.

**John:** Do you want to talk about that?

**Jonny:** Sure (laughing). I was skiing a line in Alaska, and Alaska is very different from anywhere else. It is just so big and the features are so large and you are taking what you know about skiing and you are applying it to a much different sport. I was taking my scale that I have created with “regular” mountains in North America and applying that scale to the mountains in Alaska. The line that I skied it was really big and it was probably a couple thousand feet long. I wasn't going to hit any cliffs or anything, but I skied fall line and I was hoping to get onto this turtle back spine which just kind of came out of the snow out of the pitch. I was hoping to be able to ski up onto the spine in the middle of this line and the sluff would be going around me and I realized that this spine just came out super steep and it was probably thirty feet high. It was like nothing I had ever seen before, I mean you see a turtle back spine you just don't think like that they could get that big. I am skiing towards it and I realized that I can't get on it. Then I realized that I have a couple tons of snow coming at me from the sluff. I had a second to think about it, another split second moment, and within that split second moment I thought I either try to get onto that spine and I get nailed by my sluff, or I point it and destroy myself because it wasn't really ideal for straight lining. I decided within that split second to try to crank a turn hoping the sluff was far enough away from me that I could get away under and around it. However I had no idea what was going to happen. And I think I decided to turn right instead of left because the slope was sort of funneling left,

heading towards the spine. I thought that the snow might be going in that direction and the second I initiated my turn I saw a trickle of snow, and

and I was like oh no! Oh no! My sluff hit me like a freaking bus, like nothing I had ever experienced. I had been in some sluffs around Whistler, and it is like a little bit around your boot, maybe and you kind of lose your balance a little bit. But this was a bus! This was just boom, it hit me like nothing I had never felt, and immediately I was going twice as fast as I was before, and the violence of it was like nothing else. Stuff yanking on you and you don't know if you are up or down. Immediately my full faced helmet got packed with snow, so I wasn't breathing and I just kept falling and falling and falling and I couldn't believe that it was this rough. I started to get worried about the breathing and then it kind of started to slow down and I started to get my hands to my face, and then boom I got hit again, I just got fucking smacked down the mountain. I managed to work myself to the end of one of the sluffs but it was building up, it was pretty rough, and I continued to get beat down and beat down.

**John:** Could you breathe at that point?

**Jonny:** No and I really got to a point beyond. We talked about earlier about that eighty footer onto rocks, that time I was in the air, and I was like this is going to wreck me, but I didn't think that I was dying.

. Because it just seemed too rough. I didn't know when it was going to stop. And I realized if it didn't stop soon then I was going to pass out and people were too far away, and I knew all this and yeah, it is done. What I found interesting about it is that as terrifying as it was it also seemed kind of peaceful. Once I came to that realization I just kind of let it go. And it was so

violent and then I came to a stop. I rip my helmet off and I am spitting up bloody snow and getting the snow out of my mouth and out of my throat, and I think thank goodness, and I look down at my legs and it is like this [motions that his leg was at a 90 degree angle mid way down his femur] nasty angle in the middle of my quad. People talk about shock and say, oh my God that must have been rough. But compared to what I was going through, I was like sweet. I thought I was going to come to and I was going to be destroyed. I didn't know what to expect.

**John:** Well you accepted death.

**Jonny:** Yeah dude, it was pretty wild. And then I was stuck on the snow for like forty-five minutes while people tried to get to me. That was what it took for them just to get to me. Then we had to get down the mountain.

**John:** So what were you thinking?

**Jonny:** I was thinking about a bunch of stuff. I was mostly disappointed with myself and embarrassed that I had made that mistake.

**John:** Was this in a competition?

**Jonny:** No this was filming, just a few months ago with a European production, which I think was part of the problem. Had I been there with TGR [an elite and experienced extreme sport filming company] I think they would have helped me a lot more. I mean being a rookie in Alaska I don't blame anybody other than myself. But there was a big language barrier so it was all me, I was making all the judgements for myself.

**John:** Like you didn't have Will Burkes (a highly experienced BM free skiing resource person) there to give you some info?

**Jonny:** Exactly or to say like make sure you ski it like this. Or like see that spine it looks this big but it is really three times the size. So stuff like that because everyone I was with there were all rookies in Alaska, even the production company. When I was lying there I was actually thinking about my career, I thought ok this is my femur, it's broken now, how badly I did not know. I had actually thought that my lower leg was broken as well, my tib and fib, I thought I had broken those also. And there was a really good chance that my knee was messed as well. I thought I had destroyed my lower leg, well my entire leg. And yeah I actually came to terms with it though. I was like, I am alive, it is ok. I don't know, maybe stuff that helps you perform well, helps just being able to cope with injury and trauma. A lot of people let it bring them down. If you are not the type of person that can deal with those situations, well you need to make yourself that person. The fact is my reality changed, this is now my reality. I can't be upset over what I am going to miss in the next three months, or what is going to come because of this accident. This is now what I have to deal with. Cope.

**John:** In situations like dropping off eighty foot cliffs, or getting hit by your stuff, you talk about these moments that are filled with a huge amount of information analysis such as decision making, self analysis, and analysis of the conditions. Does time slow down for you during those moments enabling you to perform so much cognitive activity in a single moment?

**Jonny:** Yeah actually it does, and I actually feel that it is those times that you end up being addicted to. It is where everything is forgotten. I find it actually very enlightening. As much as I am thinking about stuff, it is just coming to me. I am not thinking of anything else except for this one very



special time. It might be an eighty footer to stomp. It is the in between where you are in this zone and you are preparing to for what you don't know. But I think it is those moments that you end up being hooked on. You know it is this connection to something. I don't know what.

**John:** What do you think helps you be that connected to the moment when you are skiing?

**Jonny:** Well I think, it has to be the self awareness that allows me to do it. Man, I think it is a number of things that have gotten me to that point. I think injuries have been a big part of it. My first injury I broke my jaw and had my mouth wired shut for a month and I think I got to learn from my mistakes. I can't prevent them. I found that time really tough because I was really on my own. I get these rushes of self-fulfillment over doing something that some people that might find crazy. And it is not self-fulfillment like 'I am the man, I totally stomped that'. It is more like I brought myself to do something and I was able to control the situation. It is a feeling that I can't really describe. I know that the most emotional moment I have had skiing was in France for that final, where I nailed my line and felt really good about it. The finish line was kind of away from where the spectators were watching and there were a lot of them. I came to the finish line and it usually takes a while to allow myself to come down from what I had just done. Your heart is pounding and you are shaking. I put my head down, and this is what I usually do at the end of competitions before I talk to anybody. I stop and I go through what I had just done, I visualize what I did and try to compare it to what I visualized before I had done it. It is a bit of some sort of closure, because you really give a lot of yourself. It is life or death basically. You are not going out there and

swinging a bat. You are controlling a day in your life that could turn out so wrong. I remember getting to the bottom, head down, poles in my armpits, you know just relax, get my heart rate down and visualizing the run that I had just done. And all of a sudden all of these kids surrounded me and they are all yelling in French you know numero une and I didn't know what the hell they were saying but it sounded good. They got me to sign their helmets and stuff and I found that I must have been in a serious emotional state you know because like I said about giving so much of myself out there and I basically broke down, with these kids all around. Because personally just being able to have done what I did, I found very fulfilling and it was also the realization of my ultimate goal of whatever, I guess to have people stoked on me to watch me ski. Never had I thought that I could be one of those guys. I was just going to try to be my best to be one of those guys. And at that moment I totally broke down.

I focus on getting ready for it. It ends up being quite a rush, a massive rush because all of a sudden people are talking to you and want to do interviews. I kind of ended up losing perspective and I think that's what happened to me this year. I just lost that perspective. I have to re vamp my whole deal, and I think this injury is really going to allow me to do that. That is what I find so crazy about the last year and a half because when I was preparing for all the stuff, I was never thinking that I am going to be this guy. I was always thinking about doing whatever I can to be this guy, I mean what does Gandhi say, "total effort is total victory." And that is how I went into it. So then when it actually happened I wasn't ready for it because I wasn't prepared for it. I never expected it to happen. So yeah so that's what I think I have been trying to deal with the last little bit. In Snowbird I was doing

well, I was actually in third after the first day and that was just this year. I had only skied three days prior to it because I had torn my MCL the month before so I go in and I didn't think I was going to be competitive and I ended up being third. For the final day a TV crew wanted to do a feature piece on route finding, how to choose your route and how to get psyched up. And when you are inspecting to some extent I do think about scoring. You know as much as it is a personal thing I have to think about what other people are going to be going for. And in any case we did a route finding mission and they put a microphone on me and I talked about how to do it, and something like that is really where I want to be right, on TV, one of the celebrities at the comps. But it really affected my focus and my preparation for the final and my inspection for that matter. Usually I am very quiet and alone and here I am with a new responsibility. So stuff like that that you need to deal with once you break into the (celebrity) scene.

**John:** So how did the final go?

**Jonny:** Oh I crashed really hard. It was going pretty well, I had picked a pretty aggressive final part of my line, it was more like a one hundred percent feature. And usually I think in skiing something where you are one hundred percent, you have less confidence, in that as the challenge goes up your confidence kind of goes down.

**John:** Is that because you are so close to a point where you have no previous experience to draw from?

JL Exactly, it is kind of, it can go either way. If it goes over one hundred percent you are pretty much pooched. And maybe, once you are committed to your line after inspection you can't change it. I have to remember

that I am doing them a favor. And I should concentrate on what it is I need to do in order to do well. I should have been a little quicker and said, why don't I compete and then right when it is done we can go back up and pretend it was as before the comp.

**John:** How do you refocus during a run when something unexpected happens?

**Jonny:** Stuff like that happens, even the year I won in Snowbird, I hit a cliff and when I landed there were rocks under the snow, and thinking about that experience, a lot of it comes down to luck. I had no idea it was going to happen, it just worked out. Something like that you just deal with. Sometimes you don't have control over those variables that will get you. Something like that happens so quickly, if you are skiing along and all of a sudden you see something that you didn't see before and maybe for only a split second but at least you have that split second to react. Those unknown variables that you have no control over, you just have to deal with them. I did a downwards sloping cliff where the cliff itself was twenty five feet high and probably sixty feet of distance and I spun off of it. But when I spun off of it, I clipped a rock with my ski. I knew it would be better for me to try to get somewhat around, so I kept with it and I ended up doing this corked three [off axis three-sixty] off this cliff and I stomped it. Sticking with it enabled me to make a less than ideal situation turn out pretty good.

**John:** Is there anywhere else in your life where you get the same enjoyment/love as you do with skiing?

**Jonny:** Um (long pause) uh, (long pause) not so much, not to the same love. I know that in the summers I used to go to this rope swing up at one dock and I remember being there and convincing myself to try a double

back flip because of the whole challenge thing. I am not there to enjoy the beauty of the lake, I am there because there is a freaking rope swing. And you know I had never done a double back flip off of a rope swing but I was thinking that it has got to be doable. And it is the same thing, the consequences are less, I am not working out in order to do better rope swings. You know but it is the same sort of deal where I am on top and I really need to focus on what I need to really focus on, what I need to do. Every once and a while if my take off isn't right and I go for it anyway, it is going to go very wrong. I need to concentrate and focus on that. So I guess that is the same challenge.

**John:** How does skiing a hundred percent feature which has severe consequences if it goes poorly, affect your preparation?

**Jonny:** It shakes you, it makes you less confident. It rocks you and it is the mental strength that carries you through it. It is a no fall zone so your confidence goes down because of that but you have to convince yourself to bring it up because you are fighting it in your head. And until your confidence is at a certain level I don't think you are going to ski at a level to perform there. So if I am not able to get my level of confidence there, that's when I say it is not worth it.

**John:** When your confidence gets knocked down, how do you bring it back up closer to a hundred percent?

**Jonny:** You rely on things like your physical strength. You try to find transitions that are good and you can rely on that to some extent. But I think when the conditions are really bad you can go either way. It is just confidence, it is like a day where there is a ton of snow and I want to hit cliffs, and I get to the cliff I am like, oh no because the cliff is really bad, or I am not feeling it for some

reason. At the same time I am excited because there is a lot of snow, then I can say I can do this because of the snow. But your confidence when there is no snow goes down because you are having trouble getting stoked. There isn't much to get you excited to do this. And a lot of times it can bring you down. Because you realized that you're chances of being injured are that much greater and you just rely on your strength and you spend time skiing in conditions like that. You practice cranking that turn through hard pack moguls. But a lot of times in the comps, generally the stuff that you wouldn't usually do is when the conditions are bad. When the conditions are good, it is all stuff that you would do anyway. But when the conditions are not good it's like even though you are going smaller, you are stepping up even more because the conditions are so poor you are skiing that much better. And mentally you have to be stronger.

**John:** Is there anything you have learned from the mountain that you have taken into the rest of your life?

**Jonny:** Um, (long pause) I think that it touches on how quickly your reality can change, and how you are trying to be in control as much as possible but there are always going to be things out of your control. And you can't let that choke you up. Some people really allow things to get them down especially things that are out of their control. Life is too short, how can you let that stuff bug you man. As much as I prepare for the future, you have to love what is going on at the moment. You can't always say, I can't wait until I am doing this or I can't wait until I have accomplished that. You just have to chill out.

**John:** And being in the mountains has helped develop that?

**Jonny:** That, and all the preparation. I moved to Whistler when I was eighteen. And I remember every spring I would have trouble living because I felt that I needed to do something with my life. I thought, Should I leave Whistler? Should I go to school? And every spring it was becoming more difficult to stay happy. I had this drive that I think is in most people, to want to do something with their lives. I remember one morning I woke up, it was five in the morning and I went and sat in the living room and the sun was coming up and I broke it down. I was like ok, life is about being happy, and I almost said this out loud to myself. Ok so what are you going to do to be happy? What makes you happy? Skiing! Ok so I guess you have to keep skiing. How are you going to do that? And I just tried to figure out what I could do with the limited amount of education that I did have, which was none. And I was like ok, let's try to be a pro. And it took me a year. That first season I got all the equipment that I needed and I played with the world tour and the North American tour, mostly to see if I had some potential. And the next summer I quit smoking, cigarette smoking that is, because I was a cigarette smoker. I was by no means an athlete. I remember my roommate the fall before I did well coming upstairs and I had shaved my head that morning, and I just said, Dan "It is go time!" I gained sixteen pounds of straight up muscle. But it took a lot, a lot of me to make that sort of change in my lifestyle and not only that but the people that I was surrounded by, they were not doing that.

**John:** So did you change that environment?

**Jonny:** No! I was able to focus a lot. I did stay in my room a lot. And there was stress from friends to hang with them. Like, why aren't you partying with me? And you know the preparation was pretty massive. Another quote said "success is ninety nine percent

preparation." I have read some self help books which really stuck with me.

And I think even quitting smoking, that was a big step, it took some serious mental strength. One day I was like no, no more. And I broke it down again. I have to quit at some point. I am either going to have to quit when I am sick and a doctor tells me I have to quit because it is killing me, but I am going to have to quit someday. And I am able to apply that to other things also.

**John:** And then it came together that year?

**Jonny:** Yeah I did one year of comps. And not to toot my own horn but I think it is a pretty crazy story. That spring I decided I was going to do it. That summer I collected all the equipment I needed, to be organized and you know have responsibilities I just decided to bring it upon myself. And then in the fall working at sure foot, I realized that I needed some money to get to comps and I sold this guy some ski boots, and he started an air-conditioning place in Florida when he was twenty. Now he is forty five, and now he is the biggest air-conditioning whatever. And I was like dude, do you ever help guys pursue their dreams? And he was like what do you need? And I told him what I needed and he flew me around and got me some stuff. That year, every comp I went into I fell. But I was nominated for sick birds a lot. And I had lines that people said I would have been top three if that worked out better for me. And that summer I just like, now, now it is for real. I know that I can do it. I just have to put it together.

**John:** And then after that first year of falling and getting the taste of it, what did you work on?

**Jonny:** I worked on my focus, and I think working out was a big part of that. Because when I am running I find it to be seriously meditating with the breathing and you do a lot of thinking and I would think about skiing lines and faces and stuff. I really became involved with what it is that I wanted to do. I now had some pictures that I could show to sponsors and stuff like that. I was put on a list of dudes who could make up a good team for Dynastar in Canada. I showed commitment to it, by immediately sending e-mails and some photos. I would spend days writing a one page letter to make sure it was worded properly and that it was saying what I wanted it to say. They put me on the team because I was very passionate, and I had a vision. And that's what is interesting about what I am doing now, because it is not about the skiing. It is a lot of business. There are dudes who were awesome skiers back a few years, but they were the classic ski bum. You know they didn't want to make the phone calls. Like in Snowbird I was staying with the North Face team and I had to go to dinners instead of going to bed. Actually do you know what messed up my focus this year?

**John:** No what?

**Jonny:** A girl! I forgot about that. I don't want to blame her there is no doubt about that. But it definitely changes things. She was also competing. And we were sharing a bed which is not ideal, but oh she is just so sweet. Mmmm. But I should be able to rise above it. But at the end of the day, I am but a man.

**John:** So what do you think about next year with the lady?

**Jonny:** I think it is going to be very much me against myself. Challenging me vs. me because of my injury. I am not going to be out there trying to prove to everyone that I am the best. I am going to be out there proving to myself that I can still ski. You know and at the end of the day if I make it down and my leg didn't hurt that much, then I am going to be stoked.

**John:** What recommendations do you have for people who would like to pursue a career in BM freeskiing?

**Jonny:** Well

. That is pretty much it. At the end of the day, you can't have regrets. Like after my first season, I was like man I would have done well if I was in better shape. You can't expect to be successful if you are not trying your best. Yeah become what you do and take it seriously. And that is the only way you can, and that applies to everything. It is an equation for success. But I think if you are not passionate enough about something, I don't think you are going to be able to do that. I think it has to come from within really. For some odd reason there is the pressure from society, they would say something like, oh you'll grow out of it [BM Freeskiing]. Fuck you! You know, watch this. And that's why I am really hoping to make this into something really great. This whole career thing, you don't need to do what the man tells you to. That's where I think there is a lot of pressure coming from, to do that, and I want to get that message across that you don't have to do that. But I think that I am pretty fortunate in the way that I am able to handle things and look at things. And I thank skiing for it. And not just skiing but I think putting myself in those compromised situations. Experiencing less than ideal situations, and it gives you good perspective. A lot of people are used to days when nothing bad happens, nothing is wrong

and everything goes as they want it to. And then when the movie they wanted to rent is not there, it is the worst day ever.

**John:** Being surrounded by people in the party scene environment, how did that affect your preparation?

**Jonny:** I think being in that environment actually helped a little bit, seeing these guys not do shit, it made me want to try that much harder. They would be like, Jonny lets go bla, bla, bla, and I would be like, ok see you later. I am going to run or go to the gym or work on the computer. And I wasn't trying to be like I am going to do this (in a snooty voice) or that I am holier than thou, nothing like that. I just found that it was motivating that I didn't want to do what they were doing.

**John:** Anything else you would like to add?

**Jonny:** I did some writing recently and I wrote that I found it vexing that temporary

insanity allows a person to experience momentary enlightenment. I think that is what it really comes down to. It is kind of the way it is. You can be out of the realm in order to dive in. I really don't know why I want to do this so much and why I feel it is important. And to try to explain it, it is just hard. Why did people want to have children? I think they just need to.

### **Reader's Note**

When Jonny first read the interview you just read, he emailed us the following response : "I just read it and it's a pretty heavy dive into my frame of mind. I hope people enjoy reading it. I'd say it's cool for my email to be included with the interview. I would be keen to hear what people think. If there is anything more you or Terry would like to explore with me, I'm totally game. I'm in the process of mounting a comeback and I'm finding it to be a very interesting mental challenge".

Email: [jl@jonnylaw.com](mailto:jl@jonnylaw.com)

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The focus of the Journal of Excellence is the sharing of knowledge and wisdom that is relevant to the lived experience of excellence in any domain (including sports, the performing arts, health and well being, business/workplace, education, leadership, children and youth and joyful living). Research of an applied nature, including case studies, interventions, interviews and narrative studies, and personal experiences with the pursuit of excellence are welcomed. The Journal of Excellence also publishes personal accounts, short commentaries, individual interviews, poems or stories that offer insights into the nature of high level challenges, remaining positive under adversity and the mental links to excellence. Reviews of books, videos/CD's, films, conference highlights and new initiatives in an applied setting are also considered. The Journal of Excellence is looking forward to sharing your ideas with others committed to enhancing excellence in all domains.

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