

## Transcript

### Steve Peters on managing athletes' emotions

#### PROFESSOR STEVE PETERS:

My role, I think, is to come in and help the elite athletes, whoever approaches me, to understand their mind better as a machine, and to get the best out of it. It may be the machine is running well and they're operating well. They may not need my help at all. Or they may say, I'm doing well, could you enhance that? Or they may say, it's not going well, and my thoughts and my behaviors, whatever, my emotions are interfering, is there any way of managing these better? So what I do is give people the ability to function more optimally in sport.

Most people quite naturally and healthy, though it's unhelpful, will get maybe overanxious before a competition, maybe even a couple of days to go. So that's a common scenario. Or within a competition, if it's a longer term thing, where it's competition going over an hour plus, they'll say their mind may defocus or they'll have thoughts that are not helpful. If errors are made in competition, it's a common thing for a lot of people to say, I can't get over the error, it prays on my mind.

So obviously, what I would do, is look at that and say, right, let's try different ways of you understanding what's going on, get insight, and then manage the system. My approach with an athlete that walks in is to roughly follow this series of points. I'd start with understanding of the mind. Let's look at the structure of your brain and let's see what it can and can't do.

So when you understand the generic machine, then we give insights into your machine. And we define what it is they want, and then we start applying, so they start learning how to manage their emotions, thinking mind, and I usually do that away from the sport. And that skill is an emotional skill to manage their mind, recognize what's going on, and then learn how best to deal with it within themselves. And finally, when they've acquired that skill, we fine tune it into the sport. As you say, with the help of the coach. And then maintain the skills.

If somebody gets really physically fit and then they stop for three months, they lose it. And in my experience, if someone gets emotionally fit and learns this skill of managing themselves and getting the best out of themselves, if they don't practice that, they lose it. It defaults back to the sort of base position. I think the successes that the athletes I've worked with have taken it seriously, have challenged me heavily.

So really, it isn't me that got the success, it was them. All I'm doing is supplying the information. I've been successful, particularly with athletes where the coach has joined forces. I don't think you can beat a team, so in that environment, I'm in safe hands. I've got an expert in the coach, I've got the athlete driven to say I want to know more. So it's quite easy to deliver and just give them the insights and work with them.