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Loubna Freih 2024

Swiss Sailing Team : Mental coaching Youths

March 14, 2026

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Introduction

Certified mental coach: (UNIL/EPFL 2022)

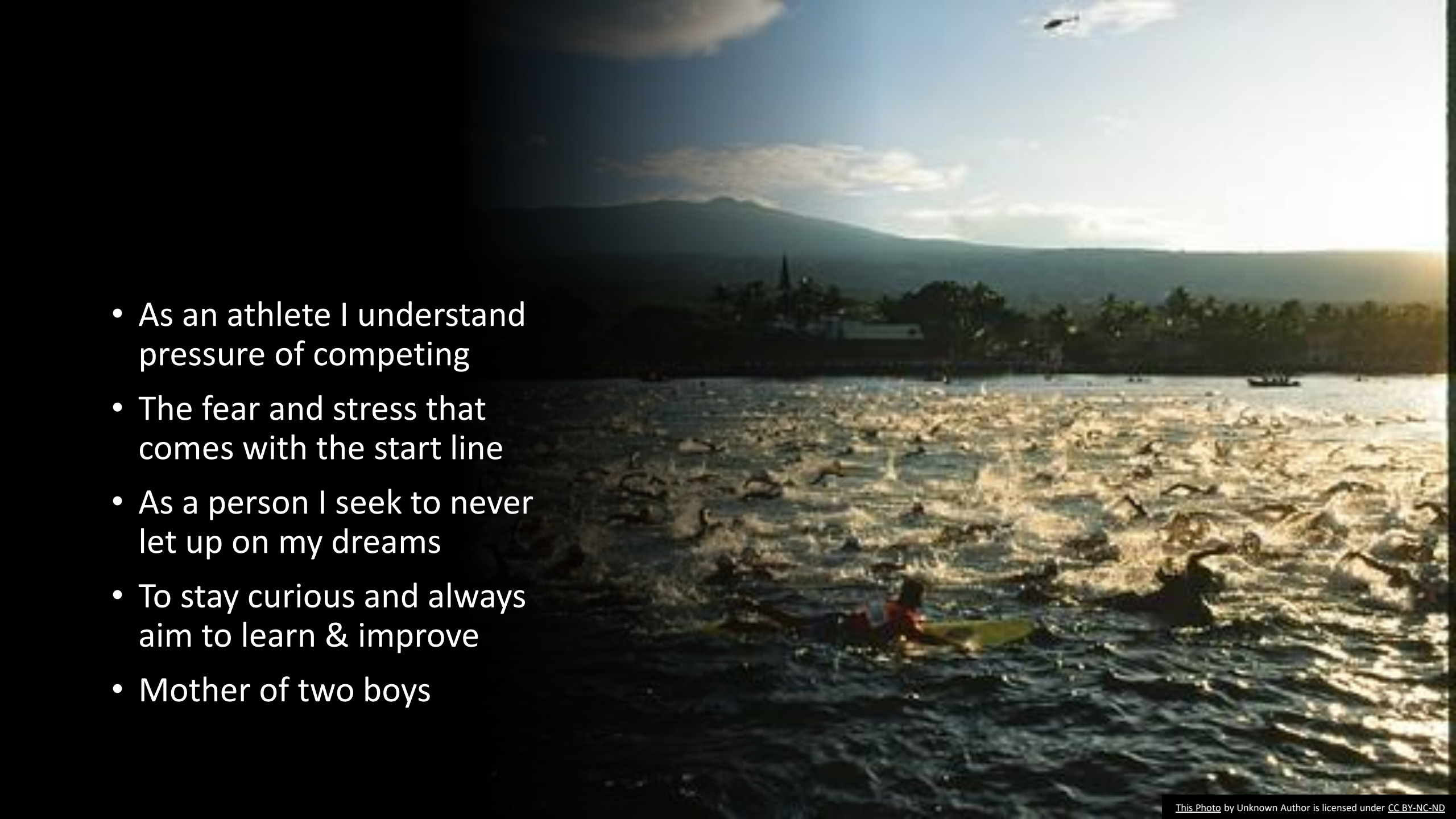
Youth mental coach SST (march 2024)

Certified family mediator, trained to deal with adolescents

Masters from NYU and Harvard

Athlete: 12x Ironman finisher. 7 podiums. *2024 Ironman world champion*

Ski & skimo races. I live in verbier



- As an athlete I understand pressure of competing
- The fear and stress that comes with the start line
- As a person I seek to never let up on my dreams
- To stay curious and always aim to learn & improve
- Mother of two boys

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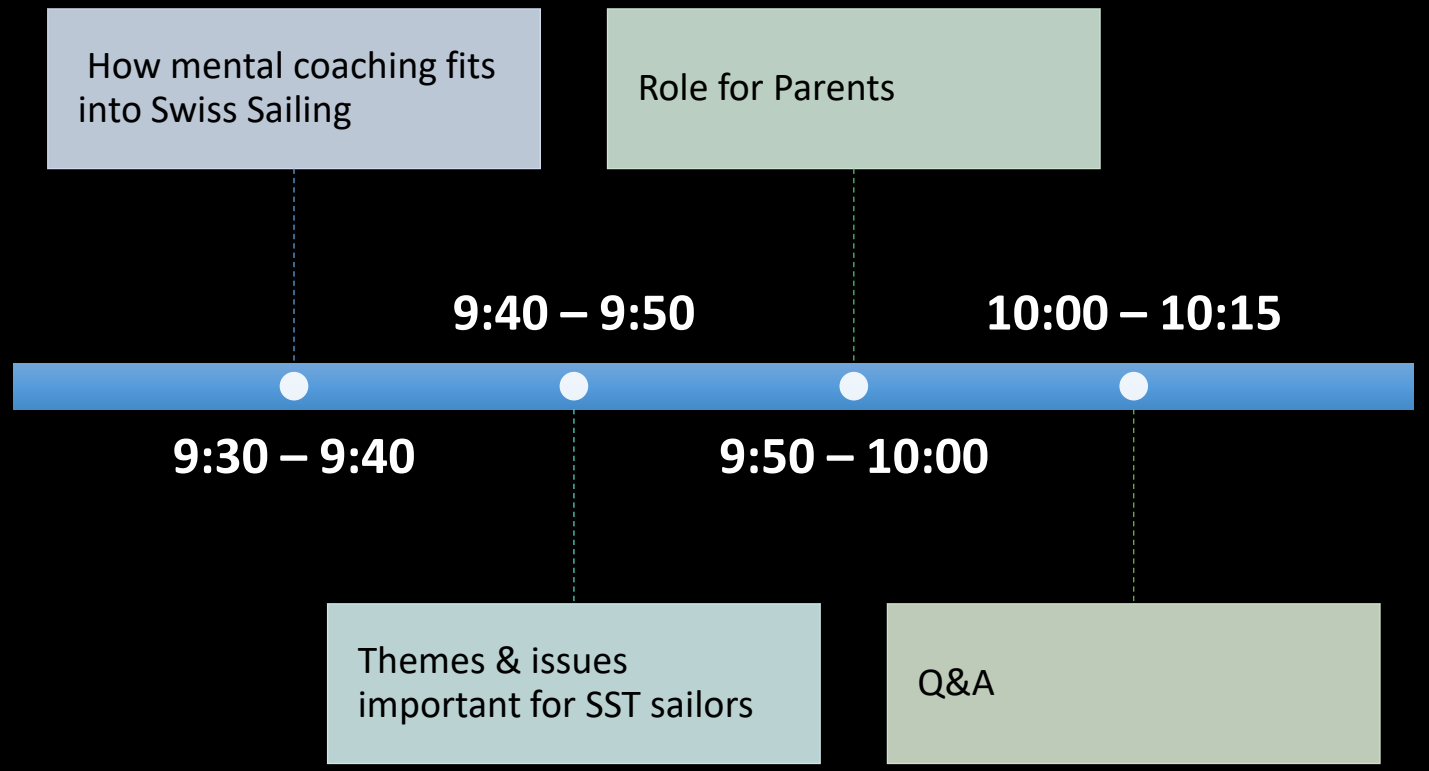
Agenda


How mental coaching fits into Swiss Sailing
Role for Parents
9:40 – 9:50
10:00 – 10:15
9:30 – 9:40
9:50 – 10:00
Themes & issues important for SST sailors
Q&A

My mission as a mental coach for Swiss Sailing Team Youths

- to accompany athletes on their journey toward their goals
- To help develop appropriate and specific mental skills & tools
- To seek to improve both performance and well-being
- To be more intentional in their training and self-reflective afterwards
- To enable athletes to learn, progress & enjoy their time with Swiss Sailing Team

Youth Development programme topics

Race management	1	Meteo Knowledge	1	Wind Forecast	1	Forecast App
					2	Analysis App
			2	Current		
			3	Waves		
			4	Thermical Breeze		
			5	Synoptic wind		
			6	Venue Analysis		
			7	Clouds Strategy		
	2	Strategy on the racing area	1	base of Strategy		
			2	pre-start / Start (routine pre regatta)	1	compass introduction
			3	Use of compass --> first beat	1	last part of the upwind
			4	aproaching and rounding marks		
			5	run and reaching (tactic-strategy)		
			6	sailing in current		
			7	Tactics second round		
			8	reading the race / race analysis (different points of view		
			9	major mistake / gear failure		
			10	Sailing with clouds - observable		
			11	risk management (event management)		
	3	Tactics	1	base of Tactics		
	4	Rules	1	General Test		
			2	Part 2 section B		
			3	Part 2 section C		
			4	Rules on the starting and finish lines		
			5	how to lead the protest		
Mental	1	Fight Spirit				
	2	Know my self				
	3	energy/life management				
	4	Self confidence				
	5	Communication				
	6	Mental Load				
	7	Goal setting				
	8	Routines				
Fitness	1	Nutrition				
	2	Fitness preparation	1	stretching before/after race/training		
			2	Importants of the streatching		
			3	Training with the cardio GPS, how can I reed and use this informations.		
			4	Recovery after/before competition (time recovering before/after race)		
			5	Training and alimentation		
			6	Training without use of weight (Crossfit-Pilates-yoga)		
			7	Training to improuve the weight		
			8	Training to loss weight		
	3	Fisio (prevent Injury)	1	General prevention of injuries, (physio)		
	4	Medical check	1	Fatigue, RED.S		
			2	Concussion		
			3	Psychological aspects focused on Harassment		
			4	General prevention: travel, toolbox, emergency/non emergency		
Boat preparation	1	Rigging				
	2	Material	1	Surface preparation		
			2	Sail trimming		
	3	Boat fitting	1	Boat reparation		
	4		2	Boat rigging		
Financial	1	Sport Army				
	2	Sponsoring	1	Public relation	1	Which tools
					2	How manage the tools
					3	Key factor to be attractive in the media world
			2	How to speak to the media		
			3	Preparation of a sponsor project		
			4	How manage the sponsor		
	3	Swiss System				
Career planning	1	Logistic optimisation				
	2	Education	1	Secondary Education (swiss Olympic school)		
			2	University And Sport		
	2	Sport Army				
	3	Cader transition				

197 topics 47 7 54

4 weekend, total of 11 hours per weekend Number of hours to be used 44

Youth development programme - Overview

				first year (2023)				second year (2024)				third year (2024)	
				weekend 1	weekend 2	weekend 3	weekend 4	weekend 1	weekend 2	weekend 3	weekend 4	weekend 1	weekend 2
			Dates	5-6 march	15-16 June	7-8 Oct	3-4 dec	15-26 Feb	24th-25th June	14th-15th October	25th-26th Nov	2-3 march	15-16 June
			Main target:	formation	preparation Youth World / daily routine	Testing / formation / know how improvement	Team building / Life style	Mark Rounding / technology tools	Preparation to championship season				Preparation to championship season
Subject	target	teacher											
Tactic and Strategy	have the same view of the strategic situation and plan	Nathalie Brugger / Linda Fhami		Regatta Strategy				Rounding mark	Starts Strategy / use of the compass			Sail with current	Managing the last regatta day
Mental preparation	first approach to the activity. Understand that the mental preparation is a priority part of the preparation.	Maaike Van Der Pluijm / Loubna		How manage my internal voice	Mental routine	target focus	Life hygiene: sleeping, recovery, eating, drinking, phone use, free time, study	3D reality	Energy Management	Routines	Mental load before big events	Communication: sail-partner/ team / coach	Goal settings
Research ROET		Roberto			x			x					
Fisical Preparation	Provide exercise for prepare the base for a good fitness status	Thomas Betzchen		How to improuve my physical preparation	Fitness treasure hunt	x	Fitness topic Life sport routine	Heart rate training. Practical and theory	Recovery after/before competition (time recovering before/after race)	PISTE exercise	Routine in competition	Presentation Exercise Simulation	Pre-sailing warmup
Meteorology	Provide the tools for understand the situation	Marco Versari		Sailing forecast	Windy as tool	sailing strategy (Chris Tipps)			Cards introduction		Analysis venues / Analisy Bilbao	Sail with current	
Nutrition		Amandine			Comment m'alimenter et m'hydrater pour être le plus performant possible pendant les régates ?		Les bases de l'alimentation du sportif, c'est quoi?		Comment optimiser ma récupération ?	Base of nutrition	Importance of comfort food / routine alimentation when is not manageble.	Morning food and practice exercise	
team spirit / team building		Maayke/ Riccardo					We are SST				We are SST		YSWC
Racing Rules		Toni Otero					Racing rules Test		Rules in the starting line				Protest Management
Public Relation		???						Media with Anna Sophie				Marketing Christian	
Project Management / Sponsor management		Christian Scherrer / UNIL											
CHUV (Physiotherapy/medic)		Thomas Schillinger / CMO Vincent Grenneguz					Medical prevention	know how prepare your heart					
Sport Army		Marco Brunner					Army and career planning						
Technology		Thomas Wolin / Marco Versari					Surface preparation	Virtual reality		Use of the GPS traking during thraining			
Sail trimming		Patrick Mugaenin				presentation of the analysis sail software							
Sailors present				30	20	43	42	25	16	40	31	34	25

How mental support works

3 or 4 times a year one-on-one or team sessions (Lausanne)

3 or 4 seminars a year on specific topics, with some activities in groups (Lausanne)

Additional support on Zoom (max. 3 times)

Emergencies/big events

Each athlete is unique

- Start with where the athlete is at – no one size-fits all
- Listen, elicit build **trust**
- Allow the athlete to develop **self-awareness** & learn to articulate his/her needs
- Work on fixed mindset, limiting beliefs, recurrent frustrations
- Develop **athlete-specific tools**
- Use **questionnaires** as benchmarks
- Use games, role models, films, music & other tools

Why mental coaching at SST?

Compiled from different sources

Mental coaching contributes to the understanding and the development of an athlete’s skillset

Mental coaching contributes to the wellbeing of an athlete and her/his self-realization in her/his sport

Mental coaching helps to anchor the learnings and set the goals

Mental coaching provides support for the athlete on her/his way toward auto-determination

Mental coaching/support is key to mental health, auto-compassion & longevity in the sport

How to achieve optimal performance ?

- Develop and practice routines
- Communication with teammate, with coach, in groups
- Confidence and motivation (understand cause of ups and downs)
- work on internal dialogue. Choice of words. Thoughts. Limiting beliefs/abling beliefs.
- Ensure you always have sufficient energy (sleep, food, hydration)

What are the main mental tools/skillset we focus on?

Competencies

1. Emotional management

How to deal with pressure; pre-race jitters; frustrations; defeats & victories. How to be a better sailor.

2. Goalsetting

I'm big on goalsetting : this is how the learning comes.

How to set process goals and learnings for a race, a training, a season, both short-term and long-term & develop a plan to achieve them.

Reassess your goals regularly and against coach feedback. Train as hard as you race.

3. Performance on the water (a mix of competencies)

Routines, communication, work on confidence/ motivation and energy. Are the learnings acquired ?

4. Managing life as an elite athlete

All the other moments in the day/week. Time management. Choices. Life as an athlete.

Self awareness

1

Start with identifying and naming of emotions

2

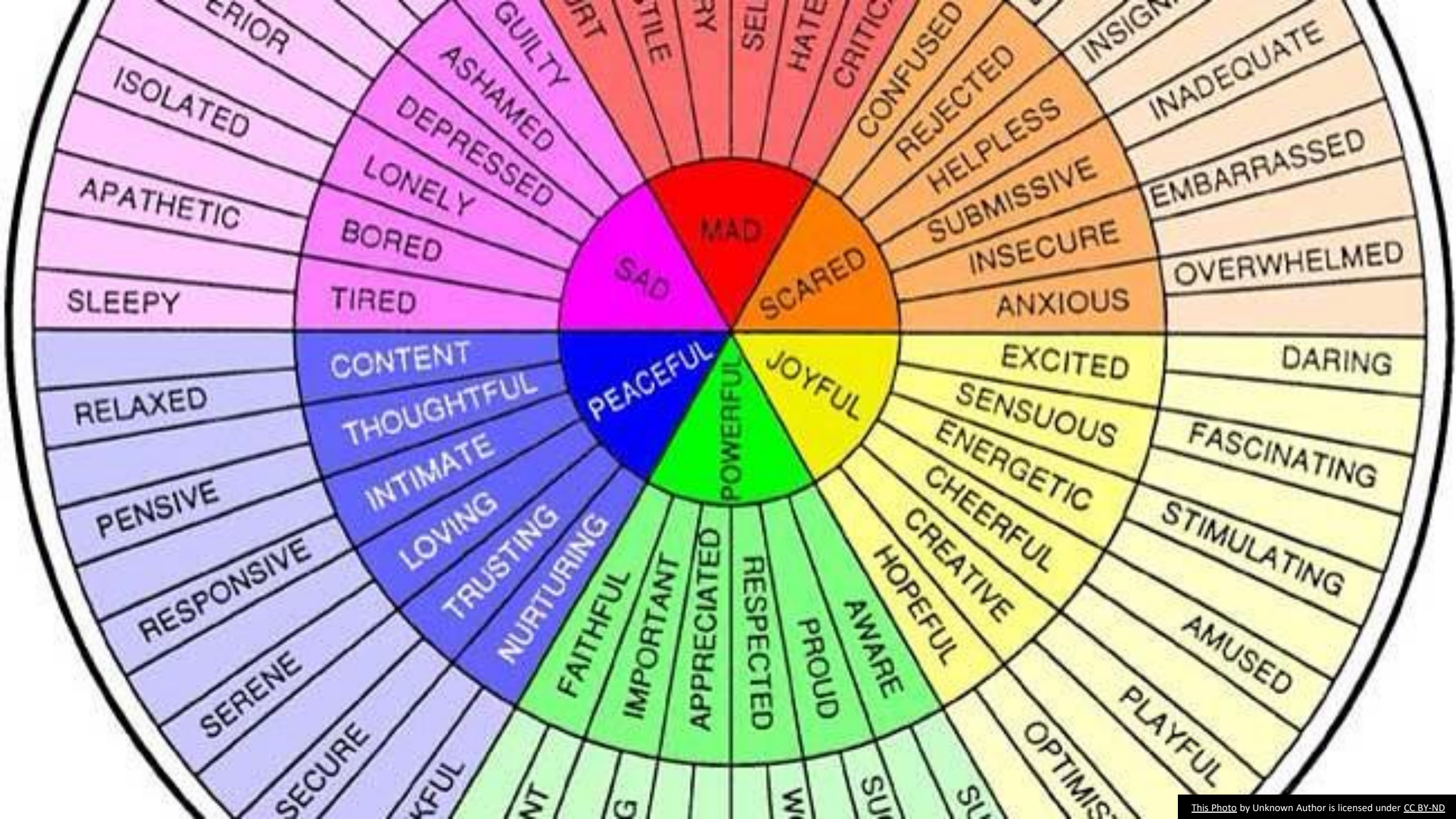
Identify trigger, repetition, patterns

3

Understand impact on self, actions and performance

4

Find tools, activities to help manage and reset ; meditation, breathing exercices, journaling, talking it through with coach, mental coach and teammate



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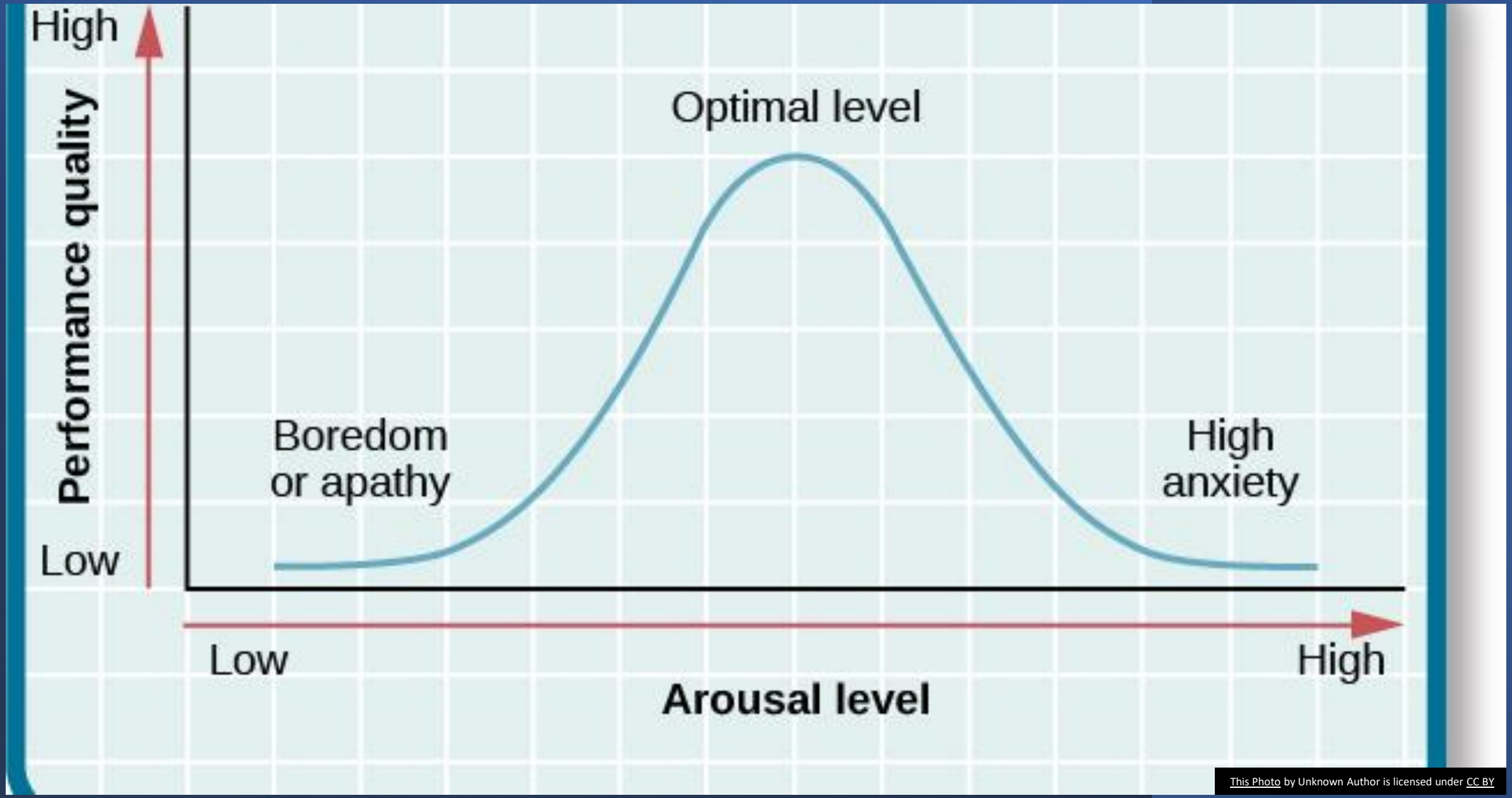
Stress occurs when an athlete perceives a disequilibrium between a demand **(external or internal)** and her/his own resources to respond to this demand



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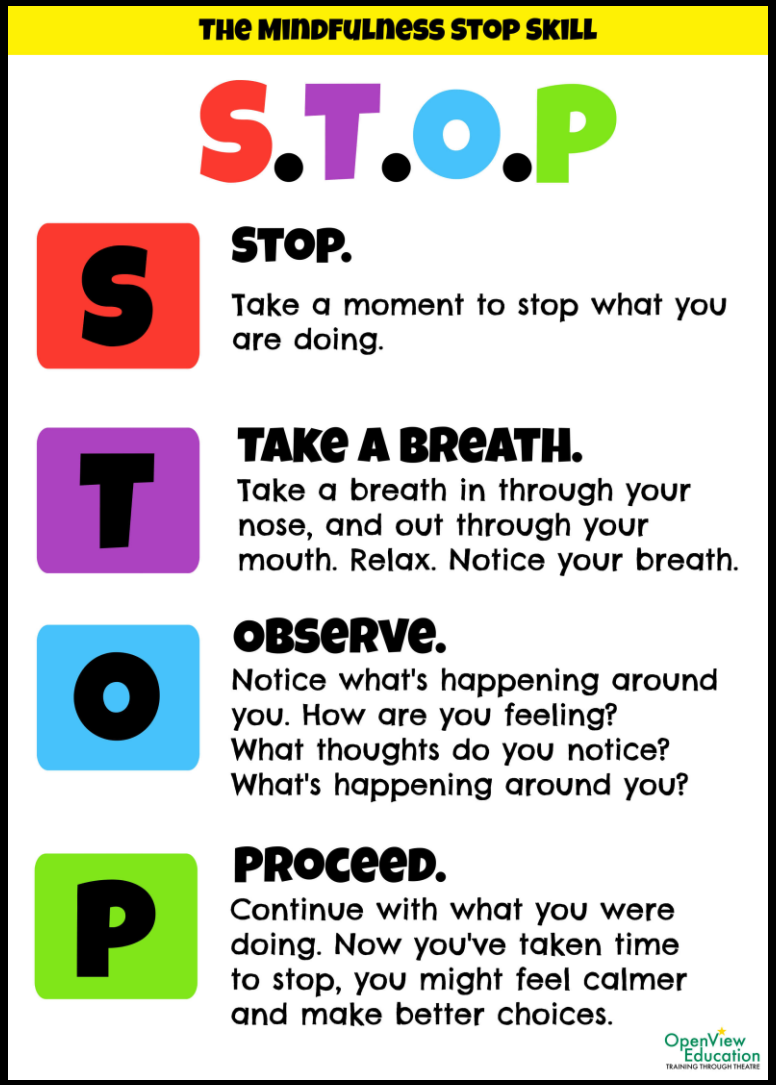
Emotional Reset

- How do my emotions impact my reactions and communication?
- Stress, anger, frustration limit our capacity to process information, take clear decisions and stay lucid
- So, yes you can be angry, frustrated etc. but make sure you stay focused on what is important
- Present moment focus: in case of any emotion or distraction, acknowledge (be aware), breath and come back to present moment

- STOP
- BREATHE
- CONTINUE



EMOTION REGULATION STRATEGIES

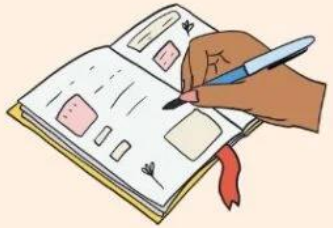
Name the emotion

Validate the emotion

Identify triggers

Meditation or mindfulness

Talking through emotions



Journalling

Notice when you need a break

Good sleep hygiene

Consider Coaching

SimplyPsychology

Goalsetting :

Process – oriented goals versus Result goals

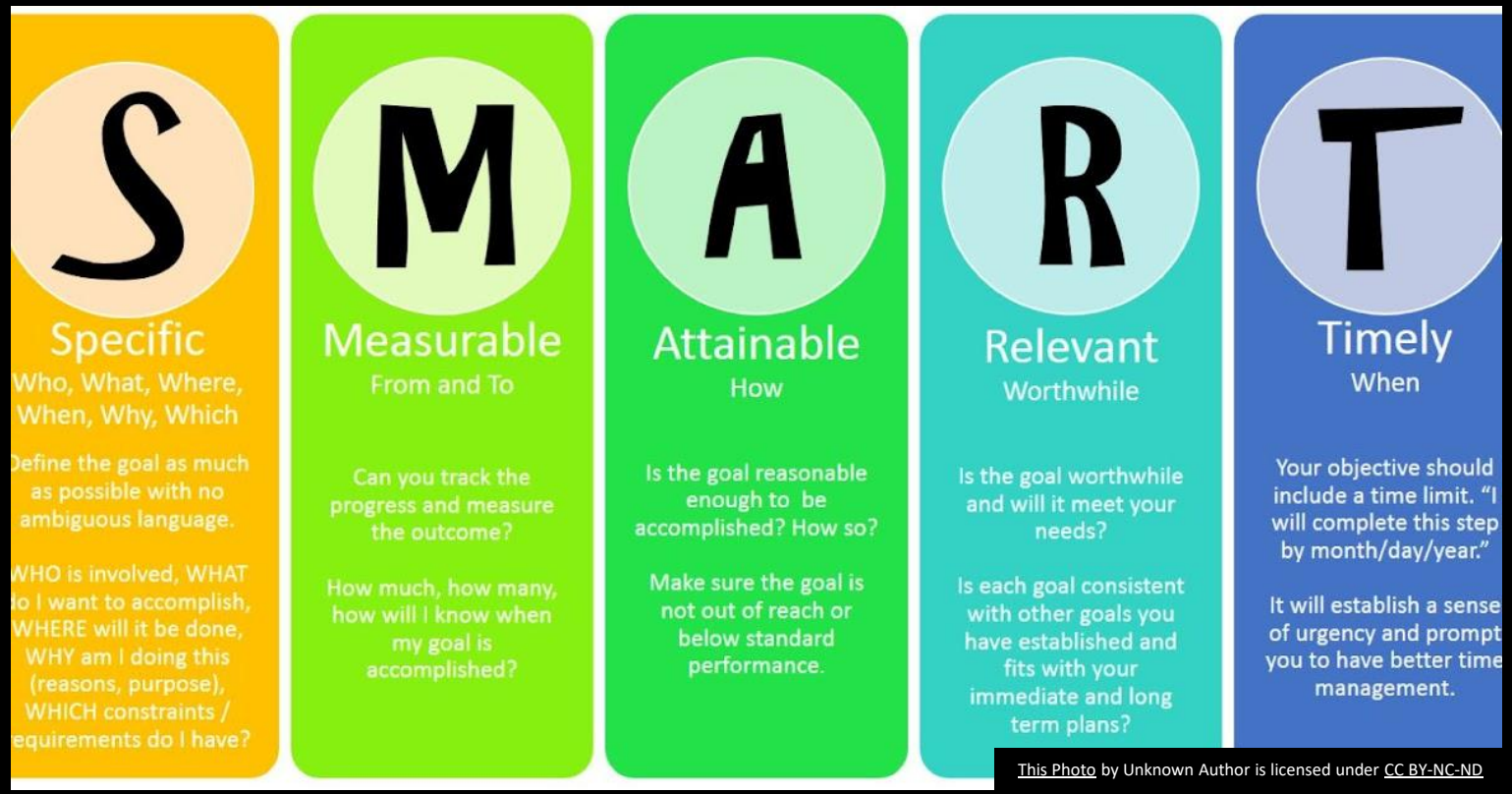
- Result-oriented goals create stress as these are linked to other racers performance and elements outside of the sailor's remit (wind, waves, boat): as the outcome is dependent on others the athlete experiences a loss of control.
- This results in greater uncertainty and potentially anxiety, blockages. It can be motivating for some so long as they win, but generally creates unnecessary stress.
- Process-oriented or learning goals are motivating and seek to achieve progress, technique acquisition and greater mental clarity. This leads to greater self-learning and can help build self-confidence.

Goalsetting : how it works

- When individuals set and pursue specific , challenging goals with commitment and feedback, they are more likely to :
- focus their attention on the task
- Persist in their efforts even when faced with obstacles
- Develop strategies to improve their performance

- Goal setting theory, Edwin Locke & Gary Latham

Process goal setting: 5 principles



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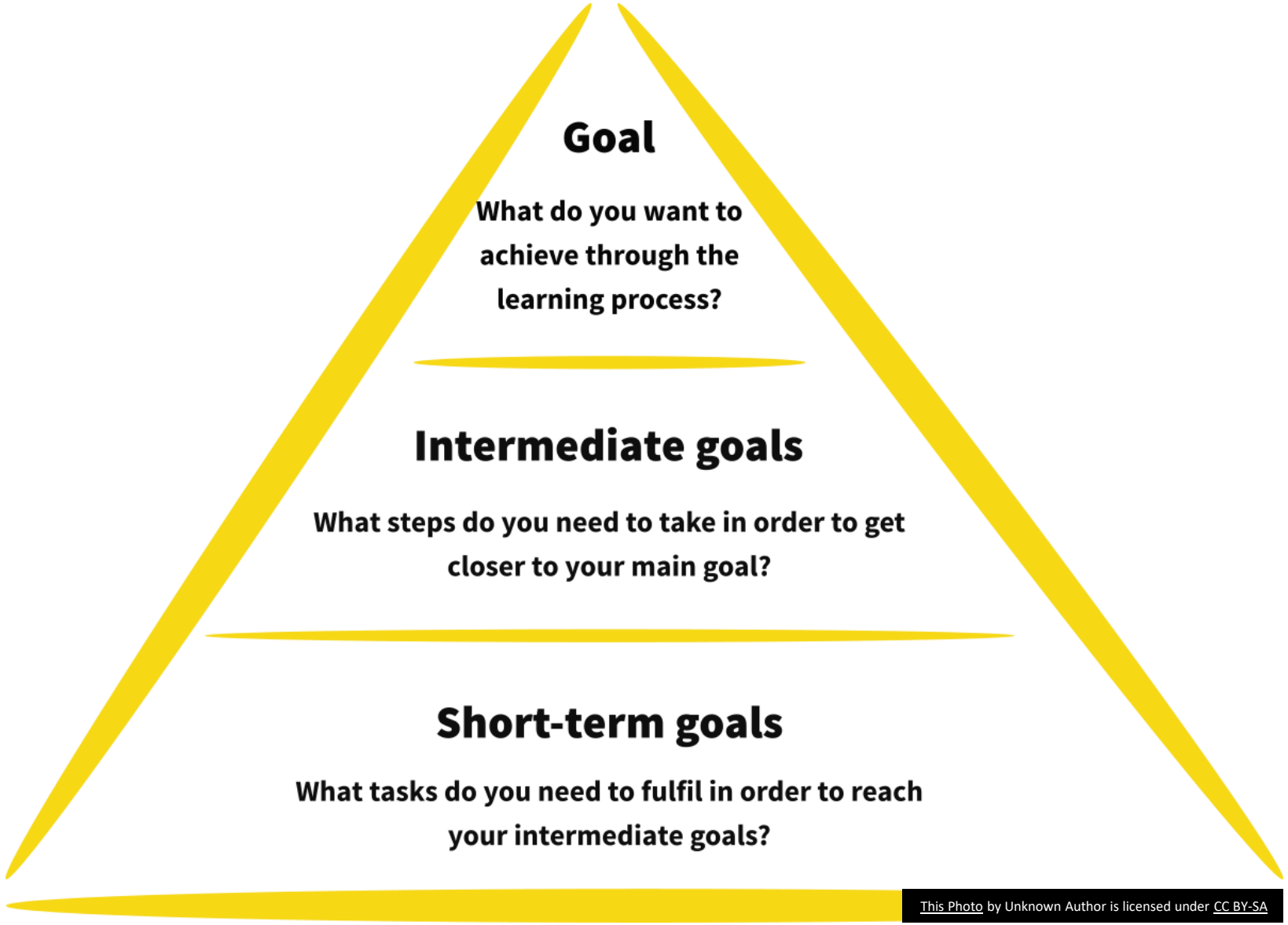

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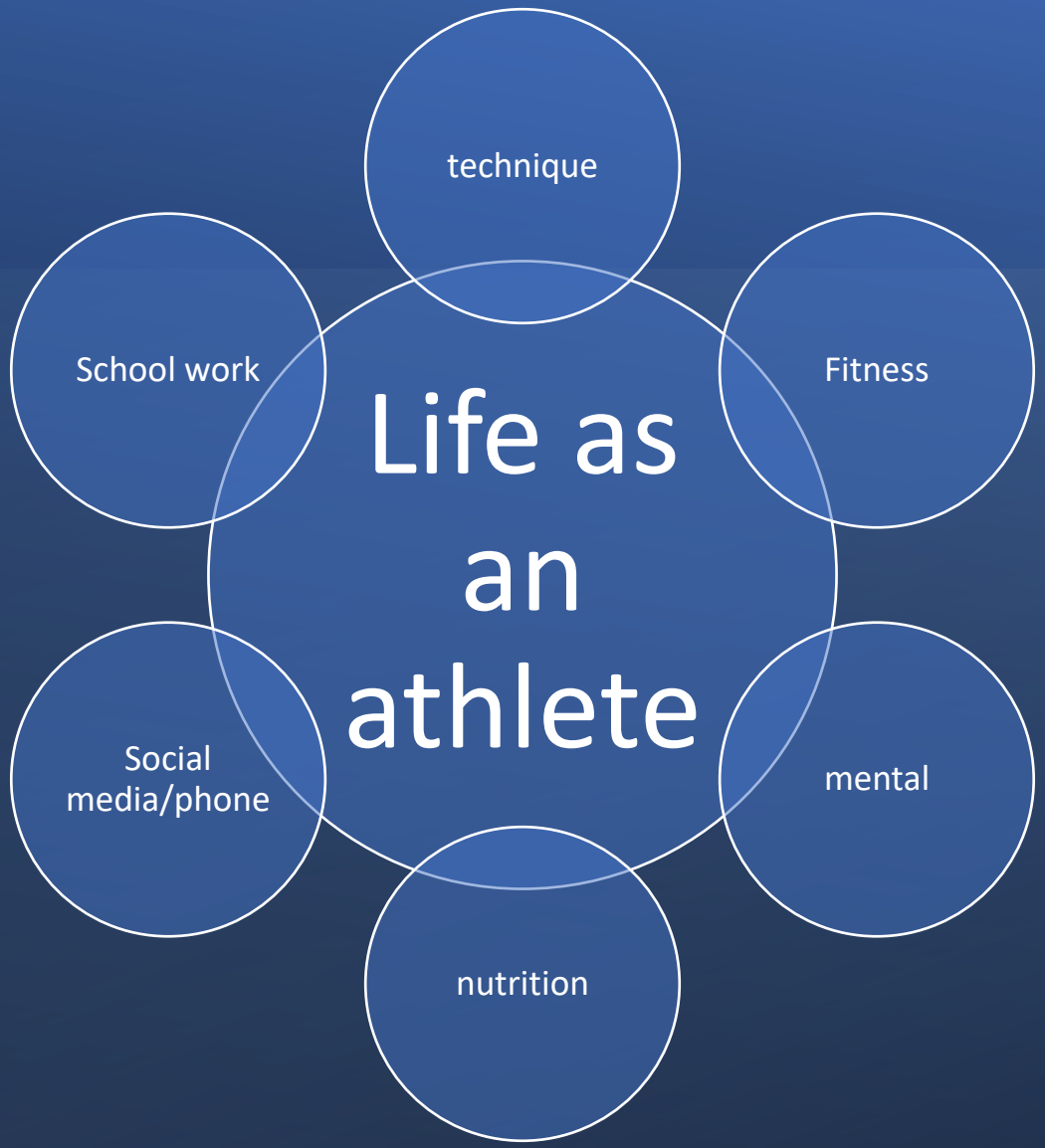
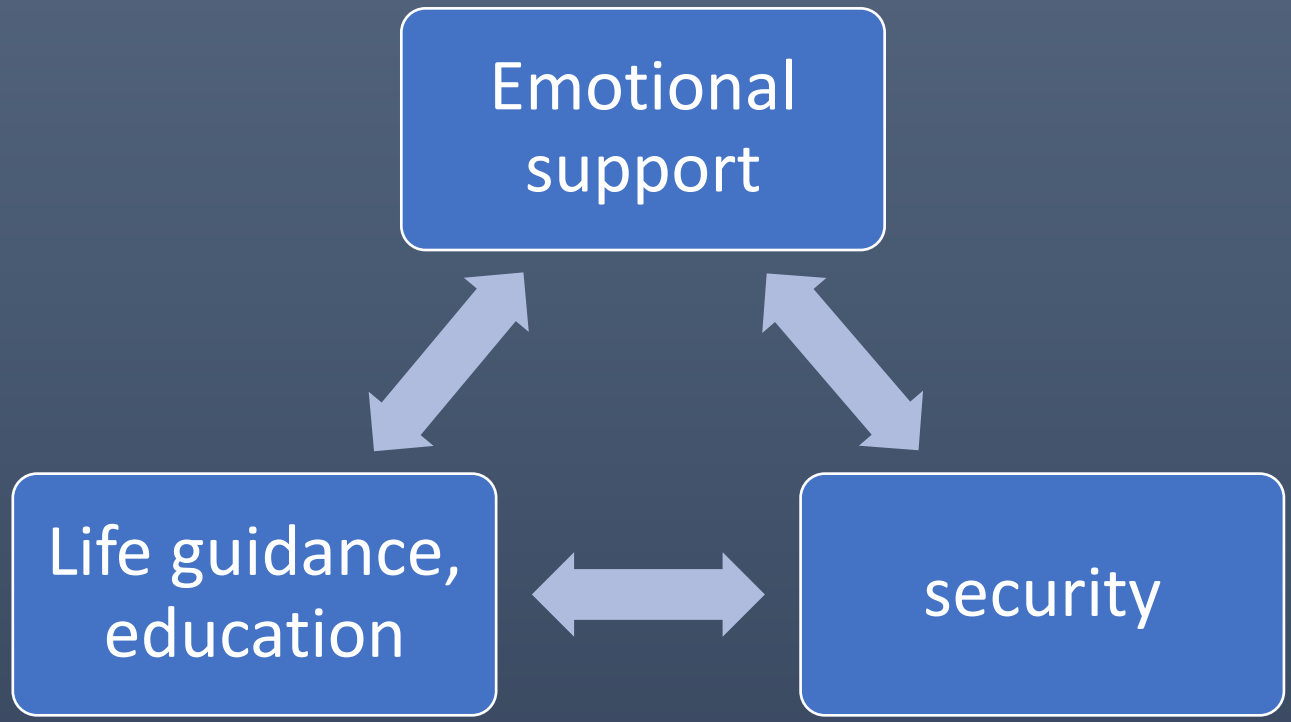

technique
School work
Fitness
Life as an athlete
Social media/phone
mental
nutrition

- Communication under pressure
- Trust/buddy system

Leadership & creativity

2. What role for parents?

Primary role for Parents : support & guidance



Athlete development model, Wylleman & Lavelles 2004

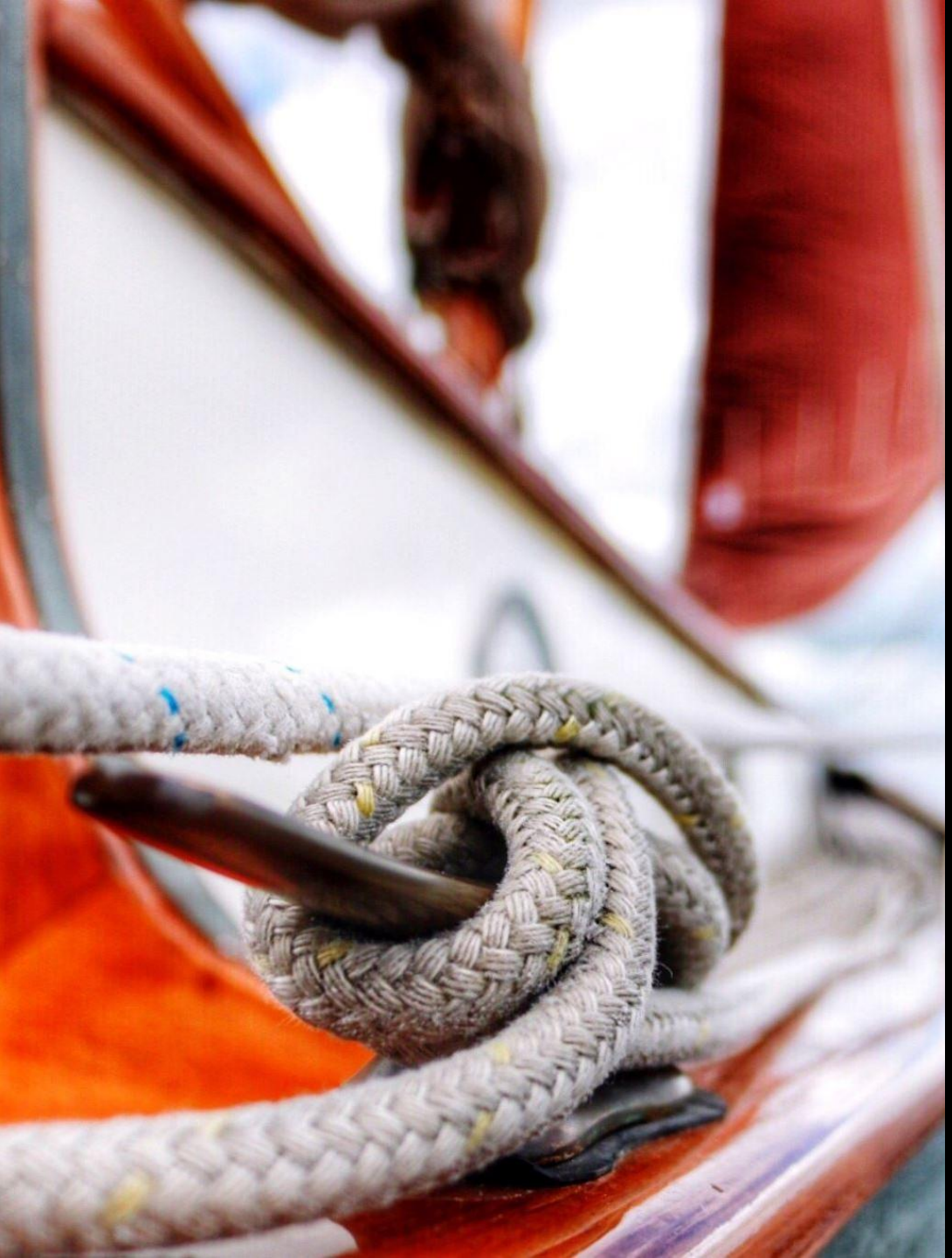
Age	10	15	20	25	30	35
Athletic Level	Initiation	Development	Mastery		Discontinuation	
Psychological Level	Childhood	Adolescence	Adulthood			
Psychosocial Level	Parents Siblings Peers	Peers Coach Parents	Partner Coach		Family (Coach)	
Academic Vocational Level	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education	Vocational training Professional occupation		

Important moments

- Any transition : house, country, school, sport discipline
- Injuries
- Loss (family, friend)
- Selections
- Big races
- New race partners
- Change of coach

When to alert

Be attentive to worrying signals : significant weight loss or gain, change of habits, undue fatigue, morosity, mood swings, sadness, lack of motivation, injuries, sleep problems, visible stress before or after trainings



- Reward efforts, not results
- Stay close to your child’s emotions without intensifying or downplaying them
- Know how best to manage your emotions during a crisis or an important race
- Award responsibilities to build confidence and independence
- Create a positive experience around competitive sailing, focusing on personal growth
- Respect your child's choices
- Show you care - but avoid over-involvement
- Be ready to listen and learn
- Don’t assume, ask !

Coaches and parents work together

Parents must ensure the child is safe and support the athlete's journey including in nutrition, lifestyle, sleep, phone

Parents should alert the coach to distressful family issues, significant observations

Triad Athlete – Coach – Parents

- Your most important role is to ensure the environment is safe & secure for your child
- Respect the coach’s expertise.
- Ensure the coach promotes positive values. Avoid allowing negativity or excessive pressure.
- Maintain open communication with the coach, meet regularly. Don’t avoid discussions.
- What to do in case of friction between parents-coach?

Thank you for your attention.

Questions ?

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